

Chapter 1 Five Fundamental Factors in Planning and Teaching a Conversation Class
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Questions to consider before reading this chapter:

1. Make a list of the top ten factors you consider most important in teaching a speaking class. Can you give personal experience (as a teacher or as a learner) to support your top three choices? Can you give any research citations to support your choices?
2. How would the learners influence how you teach a speaking class? Discuss these learner characteristics: (a) age, (b) gender, (c) proficiency level, (d) motivation level, (e) reason for wanting to learn English (e.g., to pass a required school subject, pass a national English exam, get a job, or talk to their children's teacher).
3. How would the type of school or program that you teach in affect how you teach speaking?
4. If the school is heavily focused on grammar, how would this impact speaking?
5. Can you give examples of activities that are considered communicative? If you want to add a grammar or language component to these activities, what could you do?
6. Think of a specific speaking class that you are currently teaching, have taught in the past, or might teach in the future. What is the setting? Make a list of twenty topics that would be of interest to these students. Later, compare your answers to see how the topics change according to the learners in different settings.
7. What topics have you seen in books or that other teachers have used for speaking that you would probably not use with your class? Explain why these choices would not be acceptable.
8. A common speaking activity that is used at the beginning of a course is called "Find Someone Who." (You can see an example of this in Activity 1 of Chapter 4.) What language would you pre-teach your students? In other words, what language do you think is needed FOR the task?

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After the chapter:

Activity 1. Five Factors in a Real Classroom

Use your own classroom or another teacher's setting to analyze one speaking task with regard to each of the five factors. (Alternatively, you could choose an activity from a student speaking textbook.)

Activity 2. Comparing the Language IN a Task versus FOR the Task

In question 8 of the pre-reading questions, you were to study Activity 1 from Chapter 4, "Find Someone Who," which is a common speaking activity that is used at the beginning of a course. Now consider what would happen in a real classroom situation. What language would native speakers (or your own students) actually use to complete this task? What is the same? What is different?

Activity 3. Learner Characteristics

Question 2 in the pre-reading activities asked you to consider how certain learner characteristics would impact the way you teach a speaking class. Re-read your answer. Is there anything you would like to add or revise now? [Reminder: The characteristics included (a) age, (b) gender, (c) proficiency level, (d) motivation level, (e) reason for wanting to learn English (e.g., pass a required school subject, pass a national English exam, get a job, talk to their children's teacher)].

Activity 4. Acceptable and Unacceptable Speaking Topics

Questions 6 and 7 in the pre-reading activities asked you to make a list of acceptable and unacceptable topics for a speaking class. Compare your answers with a classmate. Is there any overlap between these two lists?