

Chapter 2 Research on the Teaching of Conversation

Questions to consider before reading this chapter:

1. What do you think the role of comprehensible input is in second language acquisition?
2. What are some research questions regarding speaking that you have been curious about?
3. Can you explain the dichotomy between fluency and accuracy?
4. What is interlanguage?
5. What do we mean by negotiation of meaning?
6. Have you ever heard of the term pushed output? If so, what do you think it means?
7. What are some ways in which teachers can make their language comprehensible to students?
8. Tasks can have either one single solution or multiple solutions. For example, trying to come up with a list of the top ten names for baby girls in a certain year (using an actual official list) will have only one solution, that is—there is only one set of ten answers. However, trying to come up with a list of five things to make for a family picnic could have multiple answers. Can you imagine how the number of solutions (one versus multiple) could have an impact on the actual speaking in a speaking task?

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After the chapter:

Activity 1. Annotated Bibliography

Which of the works in the Annotated Bibliography at the end of Chapter 2 sounded most interesting to you? Get the original article. Write a more detailed report about it.

Activity 2. More Annotated Works

Find three additional empirical works related to the teaching of speaking. Submit a 250-word summary of each that includes your reaction to each article.

Activity 3. Moving from General Topic to Specific Task

Give an example of a general topic that you used to plan a specific task.

Activity 4. Your Teaching of Speaking

What do you think is the role of comprehensible input in second language acquisition?

Activity 5. One-Way versus Two-Way Tasks

Give five examples of a one-way task. Give five examples of a two-way task.

Activity 6. One-Way versus Two-Way Tasks

How could you modify one of the one-way tasks from Activity 5 to become a two-way task?

Activity 7. Planned versus Unplanned Tasks

Find an example of a speaking task that allows for a planning phase for learners. (Do not confuse teacher class planning with learner speaking planning.)

Activity 8. Open versus Closed Tasks

Give five examples of an open task. Give five examples of a closed task.

Activity 9. Open versus Closed Tasks

How could you modify one of the open tasks from Activity 8 to become a closed task?

Activity 10. Key Terms

Define these key terms, give examples of them, and discuss their role in teaching speaking: fluency, accuracy, interlanguage, comprehensible input, negotiation of meaning, and pushed output.

Activity 11. Accuracy and Interlanguage

Some errors are a normal part of language growth, or interlanguage. Give examples of errors that teachers should not be concerned about because they are a natural part of a learner's interlanguage.