

Developing an original speaking lesson for the primary EFL learners

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Abstract

English language teachers very often frustrated with coursebooks not aligning to their classroom reality or lacking efficiency in developing foreign language skills create their own lessons, that is ‘original’ lesson plans, either to enrich the existing coursebook material or to make lessons more interesting and motivating to satisfy their learners’ actual needs and interests. This is especially the case with ‘speaking instruction’ in primary education on the grounds that school coursebooks are usually devoid of complete and well-structured speaking lessons to adequately develop primary learners’ speaking skills; thus teachers are challenged to become creative and autonomous ‘decision-makers’ on teaching approaches and materials. Bearing these in mind, the aim of this article is to practise and reflect on the theory for the effective teaching of the speaking skill by recommending an original speaking lesson. This original lesson mainly focuses on teaching speaking by integrating all four skills and exploiting a variety of audiovisual materials and communicative activities appropriately selected and designed for the primary learners following the pre-, while-, post- framework.

Key words: speaking skills/microskills, real speech, listening materials, linguistic input, communicative competence, contextualized practice, simulation, feedback.

Introduction

The principal objective of a speaking component in a language teaching course is to enable the Ls¹ to speak the target language focusing on two main questions: ‘*what to teach*’ and ‘*how to teach*’ speaking. There have been lots of controversies so far regarding matters concerning ‘what speech is appropriate to teach’ and considerations of ‘real speech’ for the language classroom. However, what seems to be fundamental is that language teachers should expose their learners to models of ‘real speech’ using authentic ‘listening materials’ and classroom discourse, and engage them in speaking activities which can enhance the use of such speech and promote communication (Hill, 2004; Hughes, 2011). In other words, the Ls should be engaged in meaningful classroom activities which a. *provide conditions for ‘real*

¹ Ls= Learners

communication' to take place aiding them to develop their speaking skills and b. *require the use of 'real speech'* the choice of which is determined by the purpose of communication.

Description of the original speaking lesson

The topic of this original lesson is "Lost in London: Asking and Giving Directions" and is consistent with the primary school curriculum since it enhances a cross-cultural perspective through the use of the central London map and thus Ls' familiarization with London city and sightseeing (cross-curricular link: *culture* and *geography*). Speaking is the main focus of the lesson aiming to teach how to ask and give directions by taking into consideration Ls' linguistic and cognitive needs, their overall competence and age; that is to say, it is intended for the primary Ls (~10-12 years old) with low L2² competence whose reference level according to the so-called Common Reference Levels of the Common European Framework (CEF-Council of Europe, 2001) is supposed to be the basic one called 'basic user' (A1 'Breakthrough' - A2 'Waystage').

It follows the pre-, while-, post- instructional sequence of teaching speaking. Pre-, while-, post- speaking stages include ten distinct steps to develop and practice Ls' speaking skills and microskills. In the pre-speaking stage, Ls prepare for the actual speaking activity that follows being exposed to visual materials (e.g. a map, a You-tube video) and asking them to do some language awareness activities (e.g. gap filling) as a linguistic input (vocabulary/grammar related to asking and giving directions). In the while-speaking stage, the speaking activity itself is conducted through graded steps, starting from a 'game like' dialogue on directions (pairwork) and moving gradually to a communicative and realistic simulation (Crookall, 1984) by asking Ls to use the real central London map (groupwork). In the post-speaking stage, further activities (e.g. writing, singing) are conducted towards skills integration; there is also feedback provided on the outcome of the whole speaking lesson in order to assess what the Ls have managed to learn by the end of the particular lesson. To this end, the Ls are asked to fill in a relevant questionnaire in the form of a checklist (articulated as 'can-statements') in order to raise their awareness of aspects of speaking and provide them with information about their performance so that they can monitor or improve it in the future.

The lesson's aim and objectives

The lesson's main aim is to expose the Ls to a model of 'real speech'³ (Hughes, 2011), through authentic 'listening material' (derived from a You-tube video) and classroom discourse in order to develop their speaking skills and microskills.

² L2= Second or Foreign Language.

³ It is the speech focusing on communicative fluency and not just grammatical accuracy (Hill, 2004).

Its principal objectives are to: **a.** build activities around a specific scenario ('Lost in London: asking and giving directions') which requires the use of 'real speech' and provide conditions for 'real communication' aiding Ls to develop their speaking skills (Georgountzou, 2004), **b.** offer the Ls the chance to speak for a real purpose/reason (e.g. how to reach specific London sights), **c.** ensure communication which involves the transmission of messages from speakers to listeners (e.g. acting out dialogues) in a collaborative context (Nunan, 1992), **d.** set the *task environment* in a clear and well organized way in order to provide conditions for Ls to use their background knowledge and *communicative competence* avoiding mechanical repetition (simulation activity based on the use of a map), **e.** engage Ls in 'real' communication under 'real' conditions urging them to produce language in the way 'real' speakers do (Crookall, 1984), **f.** build Ls' confidence in producing language by offering them *contextualized practice* in order to realize the link between linguistic forms (e.g. imperatives, prepositions of place) and communicative function (asking and giving directions) as McCarthy & O' Keeffe (2004) suggest.

ORIGINAL SPEAKING LESSON PLAN

'Lost in London: Asking and Giving Directions'

Class profile:

5th or 6th Class of the State Primary School

Level: A1-A2

Time: 45 min

Materials: a central London map, You-tube videos, a lap-top, worksheets.

Aim: To foster Ls' speaking skills and microskills in the primary EFL classroom by creating a 'real-life' communicative setting.

Specific aims:

1. To develop Ls' speaking skills
2. To encourage asking and giving directions in L2
3. To develop Ls' speaking microskills
4. To raise Ls' communicative skills
5. To achieve skills integration
6. To enhance Ls' collaboration

| Procedure | Objectives | Time |
|--|--|-------|
| <p>A) Pre-speaking stage</p> <p>Step 1: a. The teacher introduces the topic by showing the Ls⁴ a map of central London and asking questions</p> | <p>- This warm-up task aims to</p> <p>a. activate prior world knowledge and relevant content schemata (related to target culture</p> | 1 min |

⁴ Ls=Learners

⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-SU_DYxI8SU

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| <p>e.g. <i>What's this? Have you ever needed or used a map? Why do we usually need a map?</i> b. Predicting/Guessing: Ls are asked to make guesses about the purpose of the lesson, e.g. <i>What are we going to talk about today?</i></p> | <p>awareness) and b. motivate Ls by creating expectations</p> | |
| <p>Step 2: Ls are invited to listen to a 'real-life' dialogue derived from a You-tube video⁵ in which two interlocutors are talking about directions: the man asking for directions is a foreigner / tourist lost in the capital of Britain and his interlocutor is British able to give the directions needed based on a map. While listening to the dialogue, Ls carry out a relevant gap-filling task.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To provide Ls with the necessary linguistic input - To make Ls active listeners - To integrate listening with writing | 2 min |
| <p>Step 3: Ls are asked to watch the You-tube video with the subtitles in order to check their answers on their own first; then the teacher gives feedback.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To motivate them through You-tube technology - To create a 'real-life' context - To encourage self-correction | 2 min |
| <p>Step 4: Ls are also provided with pictures to help them understand the meaning and use of key imperatives for giving directions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To practice language related to asking and giving directions - To practice imperatives | 5 min |
| <p>B) <u>While-speaking stage</u></p> | | |
| <p>Step 5: Ls work in pairs and are provided with two maps. The idea of this task is information gap. Each learner gets a different handout with different buildings marked on the map. The Ls' job is to exchange information in order to complete their maps. They should ask <i>Excuse me,</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To make Ls act out a dialogue - To motivate Ls by visual aids - Skills integration - To check comprehension - To encourage communication - To engage Ls in a speaking game - To encourage peer correction | 8 min |

| | | |
|--|--|--------|
| <p>how can I get to...? questions. Some buildings (e.g. Railway Station) are marked on both maps to give students some point of reference. The teacher has to mark X on all the handouts by hand and make sure it's in the same place on both copies (Student A and Student B) as the activity won't work otherwise.</p> | | |
| <p>Step 6: The teacher sets the scene: Ls imagine they are a group of friends visiting London as tourists but they feel lost and need somebody's help to continue their sightseeing. Fortunately, they've got three maps of central London. To save time, they decide to be divided into 3 groups to ask directions for three different places of interest (a. The Houses of Parliament, b. The Buckingham Palace and c. the Tower of London. The 3 groups manage to find somebody to ask directions. Two members of the group act out the dialogue to the whole class. To facilitate Ls to carry out the speaking task, the can teacher provide them with a list of helpful expressions and vocabulary for asking and giving directions.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To consolidate vocabulary for asking & giving directions - To encourage Ls act out a 'real-life' dialogue - To enhance group work - To create a 'real-life' communicative setting - To promote Ls' interaction - To develop Ls' speaking skills & microskills - To make Ls realize how to use a map - Skills integration (listening & speaking) | ~15min |
| <p>C) <u>Post-speaking stage</u> Step 7: Each one of the above groups writes a paragraph summarizing the directions for the specific place of interest they were assigned to find. They are asked to use appropriate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To develop Ls writing skill using the appropriate linking expressions - Skills integration (writing & listening) | 5 min |

| | | |
|---|--|-------|
| linking expressions. Step 8: A representative of each group reports the paragraph back to the whole class. While reporting back, the other groups listen carefully to trace the way on their maps and circle the destination. | - To make Ls active listeners - To engage Ls in a speaking game - To check comprehension | 5 min |
| Step 9: Ls are given a self-assessment questionnaire to fill in by Ticking ✓ what's true for them in order to get a lesson feedback as well. | - To provide and receive feedback | 1 min |
| Step 10: Ls view a videoclip with a relevant song, entitled 'Follow Directions' ⁶ ; they sing following the lyrics in the subtitles and dance all together. | - To listen & sing - To practise pronunciation - To listen, sing and dance for fun | 1 min |

⁶ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=atFupd8NxRE>

WORKSHEETS

A) Pre-speaking stage:

Listen carefully to the dialogue and fill in the following gaps. Then watch the relevant video and pay attention to the English subtitles to check your answers on your own.

'Asking and giving directions' - Transcript

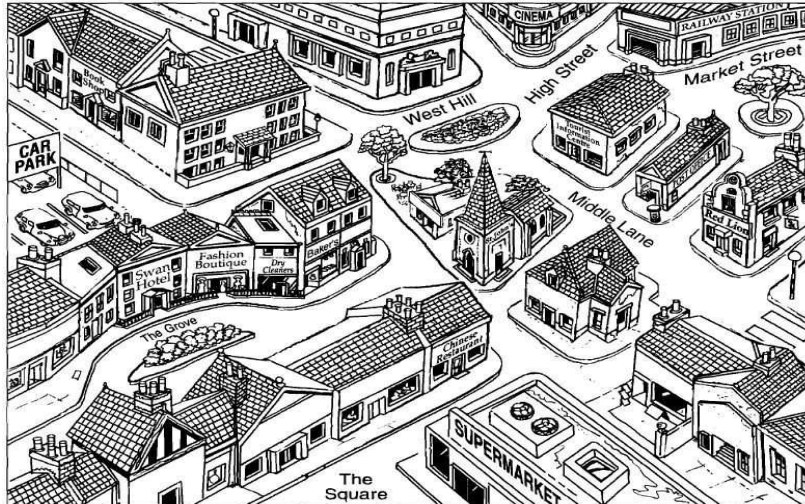
- Excuse me!
- Yes, _____ can I help?
- _____, ehm, can you tell me the _____ to Waterloo Station? I think I'm lost...
- I think you might be, yeah... You're actually here right in the middle of Hyde Park.
- Oh dear...
- It's _____ at all! All you need to do is continue _____ on through St James' Park...
- Yes...
- And then, when you get to the Houses of Parliament, _____ left...
- Hhmmm...
- Then go _____ the bridge...
- Ok...
- And then it's first _____ and you're there, that's Waterloo Station.
- Great, ok, so...ehm... Through Hyde Park, and then _____ at the Houses of Parliament...
- No, no, no, LEFT at the Houses of Parliament!
- Right! (=Ok). _____ at the Houses of Parliament. Ehm... Cross the bridge...
- That's it!
- And then... to the _____?
- First on the right!

- First on the right!
- And that's Waterloo Station!
- Fantastic! Thank you very much.
- No problem, you're _____ !
- Bye!

B) While-speaking stage:

B1. Look at the map below. There are buildings that are not marked on your map, but they are marked on your friend's map. You are at "X". Ask your friend how to get there and mark the ten buildings on your map. What question will you ask? What phrases will you use to answer the question?

MAP 1/STUDENT A



How can I get to ...?

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
| the police station | the bank | the hospital | the chemist | the charity shop |
| the disco | the shoe shop | the newsagent's | the internet cafe | the snack bar |

MAP 2/STUDENT B



How can I get to ...?

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| the post office | the Chinese restaurant | the bookshop | the cinema | the fashion boutique |
| the supermarket | the car park | the baker's | the dry cleaner's | the Swan Hotel |

B2. Simulation Activity: ‘Lost in London: How to get to ...?’

1. You are a group of friends visiting London as tourists and you’ve just visited the British Museum. 2. At the moment, you feel lost and need somebody’s help to continue your sightseeing. Fortunately, you’ve got three maps of central London. To save time, you decide to be divided into 3 groups to ask directions for three main London sights: a. The Houses of Parliament, b. The Buckingham Palace and c. The Tower of London. 3. In your groups study the map of central London and prepare a dialogue about asking and giving directions for one of the three different sights. 4. Two members of your group act out the dialogue to the class.

C) Post-speaking stage:

C1. Work in your groups again and write a paragraph to summarize the directions for the London sight you were assigned to ‘find’ using appropriate linking expressions. Then a representative of each group reports back to the class and the other groups listen carefully to circle the destination ‘tracing’ the way on your maps.

C2. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Tick what’s true for you

| Now I can: | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ask directions for a place | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| give directions to a place | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| act out a dialogue about directions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| take notes while listening to directions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| take turns while acting out a dialogue | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| use a map to get to a place | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| use imperatives to give directions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| use prepositions of place | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| write a paragraph about directions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| work well with my classmates | <input type="checkbox"/> |

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