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978-1-107-01123-6 - Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach

Christine C. M. Goh and Anne Burns

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*From Christine: For Paul and Nicole*

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978-1-107-01123-6 - Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

Contents

Series editor’s preface ix  
Acknowledgments xi

Introduction 1

PART I: SPEAKING PROCESSES AND SKILLS

Chapter 1 Speaking and the language learner 15  
Chapter 2 Cognitive processes in speaking 35  
Chapter 3 Speaking competence 49

PART II: SPOKEN DISCOURSE

Chapter 4 Speech: features, grammar, and pronunciation 75  
Chapter 5 Spoken discourse and genres of speaking 104

PART III: DESIGNS AND APPROACHES

Chapter 6 A methodological framework 133  
Chapter 7 A model for teaching speaking 151  
Chapter 8 Planning a speaking course 169

PART IV: CLASSROOM PRACTICES AND PROCESSES

Chapter 9 Speaking tasks 201  
Chapter 10 Enhancing speaking performance 225

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-107-01123-6 - Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach  
Christine C. M. Goh and Anne Burns  
Frontmatter  
[More information](#)

---

viii *Contents*

Chapter 11 Raising metacognitive awareness 237

Chapter 12 Assessing speaking 255

References 283

Index 295



Cambridge University Press

978-1-107-01123-6 - Teaching Speaking: A Holistic Approach

Christine C. M. Goh and Anne Burns

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## *Series editor's preface*

The mastery of speaking skills in English is a priority for many second language learners. Learners often evaluate their success in language learning, as well as the effectiveness of their English course, on the basis of how well they feel they have improved in their spoken-language proficiency. Oral skills have hardly been neglected in EFL / ESL courses (witness the huge number of conversation and other speaking coursebooks in the market), though how best to approach the teaching of oral skills has long been problematic, partly as a consequence of the complexity of spoken interaction and the difficulty of developing principled pedagogical approaches that reflect this complexity.

Both our understanding of the nature of speaking skills as well as approaches to teaching them have undergone a major shift in thinking in recent years. Traditional approaches to the teaching of speaking often involved the use of dialogues and repetitive drills reflecting the sentence-based view of proficiency prevailing in the methodologies of Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching. In the 1980s, the emergence of the constructs of communicative competence and language proficiency led to major shifts in conceptions of syllabuses and methodology, the effects of which continue to be seen today. The theory of communicative competence prompted attempts at developing communicative approaches to the teaching of spoken English. Fluency became a goal of speaking courses, and this was developed through the use of information-gap and other tasks that required learners to attempt real communication, despite limited proficiency in English. In so doing, they would develop communication strategies and engage in negotiation of meaning, both of which were considered essential to the development of oral skills.

More recently, the notion of English as an International Language has introduced the concept of intercultural competence, a goal for both native speakers and second language users, with a focus on learning how to communicate in ways that are appropriate in cross-cultural settings. At the same time, it is now accepted that models for oral interaction cannot be based simply on the intuitions of applied linguists and textbook writers, but should be informed by research on the nature of authentic spoken discourse. Advances in discourse analysis, conversational analysis, and corpus analysis, in recent years, have revealed a great deal about the complexity of spoken interaction

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

x *Series editor's preface*

and the cognitive processes involved in producing and processing spoken language, as well as the characteristics of spoken discourse itself. Such information can inform the design of classroom instruction and teaching materials.

The brief summary above of approaches to the teaching of spoken English reflects a narrative that is developed with considerable depth and breadth in the present book. Drawing on wide-ranging literature from a variety of relevant disciplines, as well as their own extensive experience in teaching spoken English, the authors give a fascinating, comprehensive, and insightful account of the nature of second language speaking skills. The research and theory they survey then serves as the basis for the principles, strategies, and procedures they propose for the teaching of spoken English. This book will, therefore, provide an invaluable resource for teachers, teachers in training, and researchers, providing both a state-of-the-art survey of the field as well as a source of practical ideas for those involved in planning, teaching, and evaluating courses and materials for the teaching of spoken English.

Jack C. Richards

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On page 119, extract from de Silva Joyce, H. and Hilton, D. (1999) *We are what we talk: Teaching and Learning Casual Conversation*, Sydney: NSW Adult Migrant English Service, 84; used by permission.

Table 5.1 on page 120, based on Slade, D. (1997) Chunks and chats, stories and gossip in English: The macro-structure of casual talk, *Prospect*, 21(2), 43–71.

Figure 5.2 on page 125, Concordance with search word *worry*, Cambridge English Corpus, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; extract reproduced with permission.

Figure 8.8 on page 187, adapted from Hammond, J. et al. (1992) *English for Social Purposes: A Handbook for Teachers of Adult Literacy*, Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching and Research, 17.

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