

# DEVELOPING SPEAKING SKILLS

A guide for language teachers



# Contents

---

Trinity's approach to language skills	1
Understanding speaking	2
Classroom techniques	3
Adapting and creating speaking resources	4
Assessing speaking	5
Trinity language support resources	6
Glossary of terms	6
Further teacher development	7

---

## USING THIS GUIDE

- ▶ This guide aims to provide a resource for teachers looking to explore and develop speaking skills with their language learners.
- ▶ Definitions of terms marked with an asterisk (\*) can be found in the Glossary of terms.
- ▶ Look out for the Top tips boxes.



These boxes give extra ideas, resources and commentary related to developing this skill.

# Trinity's approach to language skills

Trinity believes that authentic communication is fundamental in language learning and assessment. As such, a collaborative, dynamic approach to learning and teaching is central to developing learners' language skills, reflecting how language is used beyond the classroom. This includes exploring not only each of the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in isolation, but also how the skills relate to and are used in combination with the others.



Top tips

## Message over language

The most important part about speaking is conveying the message. This can be lost if the speaker uses overly complicated language. Sometimes we need to encourage learners to take a step back and ensure that they can use clear and simple language effectively before they move on to incorporating more complex structures.



# Understanding speaking

When exploring speaking with our learners, it's important for both teachers and learners to be aware of the processes and sub-skills\* this involves, as well as consider anyone else involved in the interaction.

1. We usually adapt how we speak according to a specific audience/listener in mind. This means considering the most appropriate language and style (register, tone and genre conventions) in each situation.
2. In our day-to-day life, we often speak in response to something someone else says or something we have seen, read or heard. For example, someone summarising a lecture they've heard, a learner giving a presentation on research findings to a class, a friend telling another about an online post they've just seen.
3. We often have most to say when we talk about ourselves, our interests and our experiences.
4. Longer speaking tasks, for example, presentations or job interviews, benefit from planning, using notes, rehearsing and formative feedback\*.
5. To help convey meaning and logically structure what we say, we use different features of spoken discourse, like stress, intonation, tone, speed of speech and pauses.



Top tips

## Presentation pace

A listener can get lost if a presenter speaks too quickly without appropriate pauses. A natural speed, suitable volume, pausing and rising and falling intonation help keep a listener interested. Encourage learners to notice and analyse examples from recordings of authentic presentations. Drill\* selected sections from the text, to build confidence with stress, rhythm and intonation.



# Classroom techniques

There are many approaches to developing speaking skills. Whichever you take, the following techniques will help address the key points noted above.

1. Allow space for learners to express themselves and share opinions, thoughts and experiences with peers. When learners engage in meaningful, communicative speaking tasks together, the speakers and listeners both develop important language sub-skills\*, like getting the meaning across, asking for clarification, etc.
2. Use role plays to provide opportunities for learners to explore different situations. This enables them to practise responding to each other and use language in a meaningful, authentic way. Consider what situations and contexts learners might need to engage with in their day-to-day lives, and so that may benefit from role-playing.
3. Explore different approaches to planning short presentations. This could include researching ideas, creating mind maps, using bullet points, rehearsing with peers, etc. Topics for presentations could be chosen by the learners.
4. Encourage learners to listen to one another. When learners are speaking in open class, ask peers for reactions to what has been said. Open questions ('What do you think about that?') will generate more discussion than closed ones ('Do you agree?').
5. Train learners to give and receive peer feedback. Tell learners what to focus on and how to give constructive feedback. For example, they can point out two strengths and offer one suggestion on what the speaker could do to get their ideas across more clearly. Give them the opportunity to repeat the task in different groups so they achieve a sense of progress.
6. Regularly incorporate some focus on stress and intonation to help learners notice the rhythm and intonation of English in authentic examples of speech. Include pronunciation drills\* of longer utterances – not just isolated words. While some learners may find this difficult, it will help them convey their message successfully.

## Error correction



Top tips

Incorporate a mixture of on-the-spot and delayed feedback, depending on the type of activity and the focus of the task (fluency\* or accuracy\*). Remember feedback can be on content as well as the use of language.



# Adapting and creating speaking resources

Adapting or creating speaking resources to fit the interests and needs of your learners can be a rewarding and engaging experience.

When searching for examples of recordings to use for analysis (eg to highlight typical use of language, presentation structure, or features of connected speech), the internet can provide a wide variety of authentic sources, from shorter social media videos or news clips, through to longer video presentations or podcasts. Coursebooks and classroom resource sites also provide models, designed for a particular language learning context and proficiency level. These can include everyday transactions, like ordering in a restaurant or asking for directions. With their permission, you could also create clips from homemade recordings of fellow teachers or friends.

Speaking tasks can be set up in such a way that learners focus on accuracy\* or fluency\*. For example, a group discussion about what learners did at the weekend could focus on the accurate use of past verb forms or on strategies for keeping a conversation going (eg asking questions, showing surprise, etc).

The table on the following page provides some example tasks ideas that focus on developing particular speaking sub-skills\*.

FOCUS ON	CAN DO	EXAMPLE TASKS
<p><b>Communicative effectiveness</b></p>	<p>The speaker can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ initiate and maintain conversation</li> <li>▶ respond to prompts appropriately</li> <li>▶ seek clarification and clarify breakdowns in communication</li> </ul>	<p>Plan a weekend trip in small groups.</p> <p>Role-play booking a table at a restaurant.</p> <p>Practice phrases to use when there's a bad connection on a video call eg <i>Sorry, I think you're on mute...</i></p>
<p><b>Language control</b></p>	<p>The speaker can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ use a range of language functions, grammar and vocabulary</li> <li>▶ use language functions, grammar and vocabulary accurately</li> </ul>	<p>Discuss your favourite book, including when you read it, why you like it and why you would recommend it to others (focus on fluency).</p> <p>Record a short welcome message to new students, recommending a learning app to use outside the classroom (focus on accuracy).</p>
<p><b>Delivery</b></p>	<p>The speaker can use clear and understandable pronunciation, including appropriate speed, stress and intonation.</p>	<p>Present a two-minute talk on a topic of your choice. An audience of peers completes a feedback form, with a focus on an aspect of delivery, eg speed or pausing.</p>

# Assessing speaking

---

Regular formative assessment\* of speaking provides the opportunity for teachers to give feedback on learners' strengths and areas for improvement. This plays an essential role in the development of speaking skills.

To provide a targeted focus for learning, it is often a good idea to focus on one aspect of speaking sub-skills\* (eg delivery). This can help avoid overcorrecting, which can be demotivating for the learner.

Following a communicative approach, it is also beneficial to react to the content of what learners produce. For example, expressing surprise, interest or asking follow-up questions when a learner tells you about their weekend plans shows you have understood their message and are fully engaged with it.

For further formative assessment\* feedback, encourage and develop peer and self-assessment amongst your learners. This may require some training, with guidance on how to provide constructive feedback. A checklist or feedback prompts, which focus on the speaking objective of the lesson, can often be of use to support this.

When preparing learners for language exams with an assessed spoken component, such as Trinity's GESE: Graded Examinations in Spoken English or ISE: Integrated Skills in English, it is important for both the teachers and learners to understand both the format of the test (ie tasks and timings) and the official assessment criteria (eg what is being assessed). This ensures that everyone knows how to meet expectations on the day of the exam.



# Trinity language support resources

Trinity offers a wide range of free English language resources and teaching materials. These support our qualifications, which cover every stage of learning, from beginner to advanced. We offer two-skill oral assessments (GESE: Graded Examinations in Spoken English) and four-skill assessments (ISE: Integrated Skills in English).

Visit [trinitycollege.com/English-resources](https://trinitycollege.com/English-resources) to find these.

## Replaying a recording



Top tips

Replaying a text (or section of a text) provides further opportunities for learners to develop different listening sub-skills. Consider empowering your learners by giving them control over how many times to listen, within practical boundaries.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Accuracy

The focus on the 'correct' use of lexis, pronunciation and grammatical structures.

### CEFR

The Common European Framework of Reference for languages. An international standard for describing language proficiency.

### Drilling

A 'call and response' activity in which learners repeat models of the pronunciation of a word or phrase.

### Fluency

The focus on learners' ability to communicate an idea. They might use whatever language and structures they need to do this, even if the language is not correct.

### Formative assessment

Assessment at different stages during a task, lesson or course that results in feedback that can inform learners of their progress and gives guidance in helping them develop their knowledge and skills.

### Speaking sub-skills

Automatic processes that proficient speakers use to help manage their spoken communication. These include turn-taking, pronunciation, language use, appropriacy, opening and closing strategies and pausing.



# Further teacher development

## Transformative Teachers webinars

This webinar series is aimed at English language teaching professionals who would like to participate in regular development opportunities.

Coordinated by Trinity's Academic team, the webinars include a wide variety of speakers from around the world presenting on current trends and ideas that are shaping how we teach and learn English. Find out more at [trinitycollege.com/tesol-events](https://trinitycollege.com/tesol-events)

## TESOL qualifications

Trinity's Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualifications are designed to support teachers throughout their careers – from early practitioner to experienced professional. Our internationally recognised professional development suite comprises:

Qualification	RQF & EQF levels*	Guided learning hours (GLH)**	Total qualification time (TQT)	Focus of pedagogical knowledge and skills
CertTESOL	Level 5	130	200	Essential TESOL
TYLEC	–	58	100	Specialist young learner TESOL
CertOT	RQF – Level 4 EQF – Level 5	30	50	Specialist online teaching
CertPT	Level 6	30	100	Specialist TESOL professional development
DipTESOL	Level 7	150	600	Advanced TESOL

\* RQF = Ofqual's Regulated Qualifications Framework | EQF = European Qualifications Framework

\*\* minimum time






Visit [trinitycollege.com/TESOL](https://trinitycollege.com/TESOL) to learn more.

## Trinity Teach English Online: Developing speaking skills

This asynchronous online unit from our Trinity Teach English Online course gives you practical and reliable ideas for developing your learners' speaking skills in an online lesson. This includes advice, tools and techniques, and videos of real teachers in real classrooms, accompanied by guided observation tasks and professional commentary.

Visit [trinitycollege.com/TEO](https://trinitycollege.com/TEO) for more details.

*'Transforming lives through the power of communication and performance'*

- 
-  /TrinityTESOL
  -  /trinityenglishlanguage
  -  /TrinityVideoChannel
  -  /TrinityC\_L