

## Teaching Productive Skills

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- In order for communication to be successful, we have to structure our discourse in such a way that it will be understood by our listeners or readers.
- Coherent writing makes sense because you can follow the sequence of ideas and points.
- When people with similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds get together, they speak to each other easily because they know the rules of conversation in their language and their shared culture.
- When they write to each other, they obey certain conventions.
- Such rules and conventions are not written down anywhere, nor are they easy to define. But at some cultural level, our schemata help us to communicate with each other successfully.

**There are three areas of rules which we should consider:**

#### **1- Sociocultural rules:**

Speakers from similar cultural backgrounds know how to speak to each other in terms of how formal to be, what kind of language they can use, how loud to speak, or how close to stand to each other.

#### **2- Turn-taking:**

In any conversation, decisions have to be taken about when each person should speak. This is 'turn-taking', a term which refers to the way in which participants in conversation get their chance to speak. They do this by knowing how to signal verbally or visually that they want a turn or, conversely, by recognizing when the other speakers are signaling that they want to finish and are therefore giving them space to take a speaking turn

#### **3- Rules for writing:**

writing has rules too, which we need to recognize and either follow or purposefully flout ( e.g. internet chat).

### Different Styles and Genres

- Our language use is determined by a number of factors. First among these is the purpose of our communication, what we want to achieve.
- The form in which we try to achieve that purpose is determined by other parameters such as setting, the channel we are using to communicate by, and the type of communication (genre) which we are involved in.
- If we want to give people facts ( our purpose ) in a lecture theater ( setting) through a microphone ( channel ), we will probably use a lecture genre with its typical patterns of

rhetoric and organization, and this genre will determine the style of the language we use. The whole event will be different from how we might transmit the same information to a friend in an informal conversation. This in turn would be different from the kind of language we might use when writing the same information in a particular magazine or when writing an email to a colleague

- In each of the above cases, the writer or speaker will operate at a different level of formality. We can characterize this as a level of intimacy, where the more distant a speaker or writer feels themselves to be from their audience, or the more tentative they feel about their messages, the greater will be their use of formal grammar and lexis.
- A feeling of distance will make the use of well-formed sentences in writing a priority. Closeness, on the other hand, leads to spontaneity so that in conversation the occurrence of ellipsis, non-clausal sentences, tags is more common.
- In order to speak and write at different levels of intimacy, students need practice in different genres and different styles so that as their level increases they can vary the grammar, functions, and lexis that they use.

### Interacting With An Audience

- Part of our speaking proficiency depends upon our ability to speak differentially, depending upon our audience, and upon the way we absorb their reaction and respond to it in some way or other.
- Part of our writing ability depends upon our ability to change our style and structure to suit the person or people we are writing for.

### Dealing With Difficulty

- When speakers or writers of their own or of a foreign language do not know a word or just cannot remember it, they may employ some or all the following strategies to resolve the difficulty they are encountering.

#### **1- Improvising:**

Speakers sometimes try any word or phrase they can come up with in the hope that it is about right.

#### **2- Discarding:**

When speakers simply cannot find words for what they want to say, they may discard the thought that they cannot put into words.

#### **3- Foreignising:**

When operating in a foreign language, speakers and writers sometimes choose a word in a language they know well ( such as their first language) and foreignize it in the hope it will be equivalent to the meaning they wish to express in the foreign language.

**4- Paraphrasing:**

Speakers sometimes paraphrase, talking about something for cleaning the teeth if they do not know the word 'toothbrush'.

**Problems and Solutions**

- There are a number of reasons why students find language production difficult; however, there are a number of ways in which teachers can help students get as much out of the production classroom activities as possible.

**1- Language:**

Learners engaged in productive task can become very frustrated when they just do not have the words or the grammar they need to express themselves.

**Solutions:**

- a- Supply key language: before we ask students to take part in a spoken or written activity we may check their knowledge of key vocabulary, and help them with phrases or questions that will be helpful for the task.
- b- Plan activities in advance: because of the time-lag between our students meeting new language and their ability to use it fluently, we need to plan production activities that will provoke the use of language which they have had a chance to absorb at an earlier stage.

**2- Topic and genre:**

When students are not interested in the topics we are asking them to write or speak about, they are unlikely to invest their language production with the same amount of efforts as they would if they were excited by the subject matter. If they are completely unfamiliar with the genre we are asking them to write in, for example, they may find it difficult to engage with the task we have given them.

**Solutions:**

- a- Choose interesting topics
- b- Create interest in the topic
- c- Activate schemata
- d- Vary topics and genres
- e- Provide necessary information

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