

Unit 3:

Helping your students to speak English



Teacher Education
through School-based
Support in India

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Introduction

Many teachers find that their students can read and write quite well in English, but that they have problems when they need to speak in English. Being able to speak English well is a skill that will benefit students in life outside and beyond school. It may help them to:

- access higher education, and possibly studies or research abroad
- get a better job in India, or work abroad
- communicate with people from other countries and carry out international business
- engage with English as an associate official language in India, used for inter-state commerce and communication
- become part of an English-speaking culture and develop self-confidence and self-worth.

However, many students do not get opportunities to speak the language in their local environments, and the English class may be the only place where they can practise speaking English. It is therefore important for you to provide opportunities for your students to speak English in the classroom. In [TDU 2, *English in the classroom*](#), some examples were suggested. Students can:

- use English to ask general questions about a lesson such as: ‘What does this word mean?’
- repeat words and dialogue after a teacher as a whole class (choral repetition)
- work in pairs and dictate some sentences from the textbook to each other.

Pause for thought

The simple activities above get students speaking some English, but there are many other activities that teachers can do. Look at the list below. Which speaking activities are easier for students to do in the classroom? Which speaking activities are more difficult?

- Reciting sentences or poems.
- Discussing a topic or a question; for example, ‘Are wars a good way to end conflict?’, ‘What kind of presents do you like to buy?’ or ‘Do you think it is right to kill an animal to save a human life?’.
- Practising formulaic phrases and expressions; for example, different expressions to wish somebody good luck.
- Telling a story; for example, a traditional story; or retelling a story that they have just read in a textbook.
- Describing an event or something that a student has experienced; for example, a day at a fair, or a time when the student was scared.
- Doing an interview or a survey; for example, asking classmates about their likes and dislikes.

- Describing a picture.
- Role plays; for example, one student plays the role of a client looking for accommodation; another plays the role of an accommodation agent.
- Giving a presentation.

Some of the speaking activities above are easier for students in the classroom; for example, practising formulaic phrases and expressions, or any activity where the student is reading text aloud or repeating it. They may have problems pronouncing the words, but the language is provided. They don't have to think about the words they need to use, or the grammar.

Some activities are more difficult in the classroom, such as telling stories or having discussions. In these kinds of activities, much of the language is not provided for students. They have to think about what they are going to say, the words and the grammar that they are going to use, and what the correct pronunciation is. It can be very difficult to think about all of this, and many students find it difficult to speak in English. They lack confidence.

Despite this, it is important for teachers to include all kinds of speaking activities in their classes. This includes activities where language is provided, such as reading aloud and repetition, and also activities where students have to think of the language themselves, such as telling stories and discussions. They can only develop their speaking skills if they have the opportunities to practise and it is up to teachers to provide these.

Teachers can help their students to develop confidence when speaking English and make speaking English easier for them by:

- giving them something to talk about
- giving them the language they need
- not correcting mistakes all of the time.

If you use these techniques in your classroom, your students will be able to speak English more confidently, and this may benefit them in both their school studies and professional lives.

Learning outcomes

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the importance of including speaking activities in the classroom
- prepare simple speaking activities that your class would like to talk about
- prepare students for activities such as telling a story
- explain the role of mistakes in speaking
- give feedback to students after a speaking activity.

1 Give your students something to talk about

As you have read, many students find it difficult to speak in English. There are many ways that you can motivate your students and get them to speak the language. One way is to try to make sure that the topics are interesting. If students know something about the topic and have something to say, then they are more likely to speak.

Pause for thought

Which topics do you think your students like to talk about? Write them down.

Look at the list of topics you have written. Are these topics in the textbooks that you use to teach English?

Here are some topics from the NCERT textbooks for English. Read the topics and make note of the ones that you think your class would enjoy talking about. Discuss the list with a colleague if you can.

Accidents	Fairs and festivals	Monsoons
Animals (pets, wild animals, desert animals)	Faith	Prejudice
Beauty	Friendship and family relationships	Quarrels
Boring or household chores	Fears	Success and hard work
Childhood	Flying	Traditional stories
Climbing Everest	Flying kites	Travel and trips
Courage	Heroes and heroines (for example, Einstein, Anne Frank, Nelson Mandela)	Tsunami
Diaries	Historical events	Vanity
Different places in India	Hobbies	Wedding ceremonies
Disability	Homes	Work and jobs
Dreams and ambitions	Homework	
Education and school	Memory and forgetting things	

You and your colleagues may disagree about your choices, but it is likely that some topics appeal more to secondary students than others.

In this part of the unit you will read a case study about a teacher who wants to get his students speaking as much English as possible. He decides to make the topic that he has to teach from the textbook easier for them to talk about. The case study is followed by an activity that you can try in the classroom, and a further activity related to groupwork.

Case Study 1: Mr Rangan relates the textbook topic to his students' lives

I teach English to Class VIII. I know it's important for my students to practise speaking, and I am trying to get them to speak more English in class, but sometimes it's difficult and they don't have much to say. For instance, one chapter of the textbook had a passage called 'Bepin Choudhury's Lapse of Memory' (NCERT, 2006). This was followed by questions, which I asked my students to discuss in English in pairs:

1. The author describes Bepin Babu as a serious and hardworking man. What evidence can you find in the story to support this?
2. Why did Bepin Babu change his mind about meeting Chunilal? What was the result of this meeting?
3. Bepin Babu lost consciousness at Hudroo Falls. What do you think was the reason for this?
4. How do you think Bepin Babu reacted when he found out that Chunilal had tricked him?

Then I walked around the room and listened to some pairs. The students read the questions aloud, but they couldn't answer them very well. Some students read out some sentences from the text, but many students said nothing at all. After the class, I discussed this with a colleague from school.



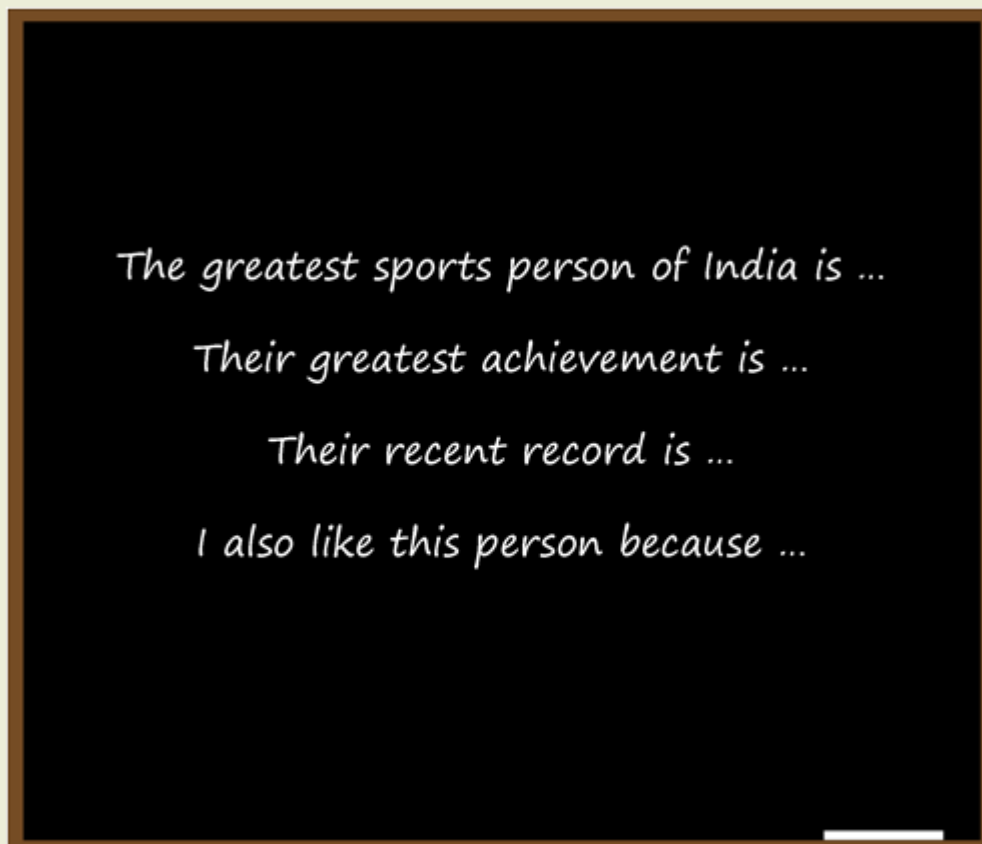
Description

This illustration shows two teachers talking to each other. From the first, there is a speech bubble which says 'Why do you think my students didn't speak in English?' The other teacher replies, 'I suppose there are many reasons. But these questions are not very interesting. Maybe the students are not very interested in talking about this topic.'

End of description.

I decided to make the questions more interesting for the next chapter. This chapter has a passage called 'The Summit Within' (NCERT, 2006). The passage is about Major H.P.S. Ahluwalia who was a member of the first successful Indian expedition to Mount Everest in 1965. The text describes the climber's feelings about reaching the summit of Everest. I know that my students do not know much about H.P.S. Ahluwalia or mountain climbing, and that the event happened a long time ago. But I know that my students are interested in sport, and enjoy talking about it.

I tried a different activity with my class. I asked them to say the names of their favourite sporting heroes. Then I wrote some sentences on the board and I asked them to complete them:



Description

This is an illustration of a board with four sentences written on it. The sentences are 'The greatest sports person of India is ...', 'Their greatest achievement is ...', 'Their recent record is ...' and 'I also like this person because ...'

End of description.

I told students to complete the sentences individually, and then to compare their sentences in groups of four or five. As they discussed, I walked around the room and I listened to one or two groups. Some of the groups were very animated and disagreed about the choices. I noticed that some students were using their home languages at times, and some were mixing English and their home languages. Where this was the case, I encouraged them to use English, and helped them if they needed any words or phrases. I also know that they may use their home languages at times when they are motivated to speak, but I decided that this did not matter so much as long as they were speaking some English, and as long as they were motivated.

After three or four minutes I stopped the activity and I asked three or four groups to say who the greatest sports person of India is. I then asked them to name some sports heroes of the past, but they could only name one or two. I asked if students had heard of Major H.P.S. Ahluwalia. They hadn't, so I asked if they could guess what sport he was famous for. The students guessed a few sports, and then I asked them to open their books at Chapter 5. They immediately saw that he was famous for mountain climbing.

Now, whenever I think that a topic in the textbook is difficult for students to talk about, I try to relate it to their lives and interests. This helps them to speak in English more and to be more interested in the textbook too.

Activity 1: Try in the classroom: relating a textbook topic to your students' lives

In the case study, the teacher tried to provide opportunities for his students to speak in English. He knew that some of the topics in the textbook were difficult for students, so he tried to make them more interesting and easier to talk about by relating them to the students' lives. You can try this technique in your classroom. Follow these steps:

1. What is the next topic in your textbook? Is it one that your students would enjoy talking about?
2. If it is, write down some sentences about the topic that they can complete. For example, if the topic is 'wedding ceremonies', you could write sentences such as:

- The last wedding I went to was ...
- A good wedding should have ...
- The best food at a wedding is ...

3. If the topic is more difficult for them to talk about, then you need to think more about the sentences. For example, if the topic is about a hero that your students don't know, then you could write some statements such as:

- My hero is ...
- I like this person because ...
- This person's greatest achievement is ...

4. In class, write the statements on the board, and ask your students to complete them. Give them a time limit of three or four minutes for this.

5. Organise your class into groups of four or five, and tell them to compare their sentences. Allow five minutes for this task.

6. As they share their sentences, walk around the room and give help students who need it. Encourage everyone to use English where possible, but remember that this activity is to make students feel more confident.

Pause for thought

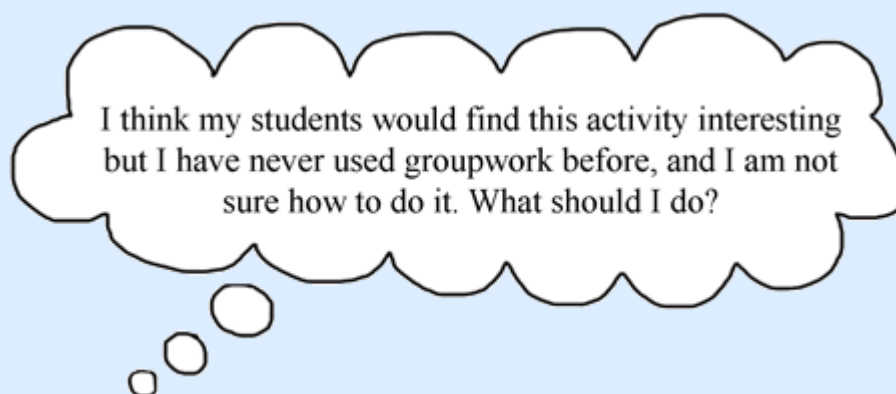
After trying this activity in class, think about the following questions:

- How did the activity go?
- Was it easy to think of sentences for students to complete?
- Did everyone work well in groups?
- How much English and home language did they use?
- How can you encourage them to use more English?
- Can you think of other topics that your students would like to talk about?

Why not ask your students which topics they would like to talk about? You could show them the list of topics you read earlier, and ask them to vote for the topics that interest them.

Activity 2: Groupwork

Read what one teacher thinks about the activity in Case Study 1:



Description

This is an illustration of a thought bubble, which reads 'I think my students would find this activity interesting but I have never used groupwork before, and I am not sure how to do it. What should I do?'
End of description.

Write down some advice that you would give to this teacher and then compare it with the advice discussed below. Add your notes to the list.

Discussion

Make sure students understand what they need to do before they start working in groups. You must give clear instructions.

Set up the groups quickly – for example, the students in one row can turn around to face the students behind them to make a group of four or five. If you do this regularly, students will get used to it, and they will make groups very efficiently. Or maybe they could work outside?

All the students in the group need to be close enough to hear the other members when they speak and see what they have written, if necessary.

Walk around the room when students are working in groups, and help where necessary. You won't be able to listen to every group, so try to listen to different groups each time.

Description

This is an illustration of four speech bubbles, which read 'Make sure students understand what they need to do before they start working in groups. You must give clear instructions.', 'Set up the groups quickly – for example, the students in one row can turn around to face the students behind them to make a group of four or five. If you do this regularly, students will get used to it, and they will make groups very efficiently. Or maybe they could work outside?', 'All the students in the group need to be close enough to hear the other members when they speak and see what they have written, if necessary.' and 'Walk around the room when students are working in groups, and help where necessary. You won't be able to listen to every group, so try to listen to different groups each time.'

End of description.

End of discussion.

2 Give your students the language they need

Students may find speaking in English difficult for many reasons. One of these reasons is that they may not know anything about the topic, or may not be interested in talking about it. Another reason is that they may not have the language they need to speak.

Pause for thought

Imagine that your students have the following task: 'Talk about a time when you were scared.'

They may be interested in this topic, and may enjoy hearing their classmates' stories. However, it is quite difficult to tell a story – even in your home language. Most students would need some support for this kind of activity. They would need help with both the grammar and vocabulary. What could you do to help? Write down your ideas and compare them with the list below. Add any ideas that you missed to your own list.

Teachers could help students with language using any of the following techniques:

- Tell everyone about a day when you were scared. You could prepare the story in advance. Keep the account short, and tell the story slowly. Use grammar and vocabulary that students might use in their accounts.
- Write some useful phrases and sentences on the board, for example: 'One day, I was ...', 'I heard/saw ...', 'It was a ...', 'I felt very scared/afraid/frightened ...' and so on. You can prepare these words and phrases before the class. Lower level students could just complete the sentences, as in [Case Study 1](#).
- Ask a few students to give some examples of when they were scared – they could do this in their home language if necessary. You could write some of the key words on the board in English as they talk.
- Remind them that they need to use the past tense, and quickly revise some common past tenses.
- Remind them of words and phrases that are useful when telling a story such as sequencers ('first', 'next', 'then').
- Give your class some time to think about and note down the words and phrases they will need. Note that it is useful to give students time to think about the event too – they may need some time to think of a time when they were scared.

In this part of the unit, you will read about a group of students who are practising telling a story in English. As you read Case Study 2, think about how the teacher supports them, and helps them with language. This is followed by an analysis, and then an activity that you can try in the classroom.

Case Study 2: Mrs Vaasanthi helps her students to tell a story

I teach English in an Indian language medium school, and I do a lot of speaking activities in my class. Let me tell you about an activity I did recently with Class XIII.

We were studying Chapter 2 from the NCERT Class VIII textbook, *Honeydew*, which had a traditional story about an ant and a cricket. My students know many different folk tales about animals, so I thought that they could learn to tell one in English. I decided to use one of my daughter's favourite stories: the Panchantra tale called 'The Snake and the Crows'. [See [Resource 1](#) for a simple version of this story.]

I began the story by showing my class pictures of three animals: a snake, a crow and a fox. I found the pictures in my daughter's story book.



Description

This is an illustration of a cartoon snake, crow and fox.

End of description.

I drew a tree on the board and stuck the picture of the crow at the top of the tree, and stuck the snake at the bottom of the tree. Then I told the simple story, asking questions along the way. Here is an example:

Me	This is a story about a crow and his wife. They lived at the top of the tree in a nest. What was in the nest? Can you guess?
Student	Eggs?
Me	Yes, that's right. There were eggs in the nest. How many eggs?
Students	Three? Two? Six? Four?
Me	Good! There were four eggs in the nest. Now, there was a snake at the bottom of the tree. What do you think the snake liked to eat?
Student	Crows?

Me	Not quite! The snake liked to eat eggs, and he wanted to eat the crows' eggs. He couldn't eat them because the crows were always there, looking after the eggs. But soon, they were hungry, and they left to find some food. What did the snake do? Can you guess?
Student	He ate the eggs!
Me	Yes, that's right! He climbed up the tree and he ate all of the eggs. How do you think the crows felt?
Students	They were sad.
Me	Yes, they were very upset. After a few weeks, they had more eggs.

In this simple way, by asking lots of questions and using the pictures, I told the story to the group. Once the story was finished, I invited my students to tell me the story again in English: one told the first line, another told the second and so on. As they told the story, I wrote key words on the board ('crows', 'nest', 'at the top', 'snake', 'at the bottom', 'upset') and I also wrote some key verbs in the past ('lived', 'liked', 'wanted to eat', 'climbed'). I reminded everyone that we use the past tense to tell stories.

Then I put students into groups of four or five. They are used to working in groups, as we often do this, so they got into groups quickly. Then I told everyone to start telling the story to each other. I told them that one student would start the story, the next would continue and so on. The groups started to tell the story, and as they spoke, I walked around the room listening to make sure that they understood the task and to see how they were performing the task.

When most groups had finished telling the story, I told everyone to stop, and asked:

Do you feel that you could have told the story better?

Description

This is an illustration of a speech bubble, which reads 'Do you feel that you could have told the story better?'

End of description.

Most students agreed that they could, so I asked them to tell the story again. This time, I asked them to choose different parts of the story, so that the person who began the previous time would not begin this time.

Groups began telling the story again and as they spoke, I moved around the room once more, listening to two or three groups. I noticed that they were better this time. There was an improvement in the use of language, and students could speak more quickly and confidently. They were more fluent. They made some mistakes, of course, but I didn't interrupt them – I just listened.

When most groups were ready to finish, I told students to stop the activity, and I told them that they were better the second time they told the story. My students were pleased that they could tell a story together.

Activity 3: Analysing Case Study 1

What do you think about the activity that Mrs Vaasanthi did with her students? Think about the following questions, and if possible discuss them with a colleague. You can make notes.

- The teacher used pictures in the case study. How can pictures be useful?
- It is very difficult for most students to tell a story in English without any support. How did the teacher help her students?
- They told the story to each other in groups. What is the benefit of working in groups for this activity?
- Groups told the story again. Why?

Discussion

- Pictures can be a really good way to get students speaking. You can show a picture and ask them to guess what is happening, or you can use them to help students understand a story. In the case study, the pictures also acted as prompts when the class was ready to tell the story.
- In the case study, the teacher and students constructed the story together, and they listened to the teacher telling the story. The teacher wrote key words and phrases on the board. When students told the story in groups, less confident ones were able to use the support on the board, and more confident members of the class were able to use different words and phrases if they wanted.
- If we ask one or two individuals from a class to tell a story, then only those individuals get to practise speaking. If students work in groups to tell a story, then everybody gets a chance to speak. It is important for *all* students to practise speaking as much as possible. It is only by speaking English as much and as often as possible that students can improve.
- It can be very useful for students to do a speaking activity twice sometimes. The first time is a kind of rehearsal and allows them to practise what they are going to say; on the second time, it will be easier for them to use new language, and they will be more fluent and confident.

End of discussion.

Activity 4: Try in the classroom: helping your students to tell a story

In Case Study 1, the teacher told students a simple story using pictures. She wrote key words and phrases on the board, and then asked them to retell the story in groups. Do the following steps to try a similar activity in your classroom:

1. Choose a story that you and your students can tell. The story could be:

- A traditional story of your or your students' choice. See [Resource 1](#) for some examples of simple traditional stories.
- Events from a story or passage that they have read in class (for example, they imagine that they are a character from a story and describe what happened).
- A local news story that has captured the interest of your class.
- An event from personal experience (for example, a time when you were scared or very happy, or a day at a fair, wedding or picnic).

2. Before the class, find some pictures that relate to the story. This could be a picture from a story book or the textbook; a picture from a magazine or newspaper; or a photo of an event, such as a wedding or picnic. If it is not possible, you could draw a picture on the board, or ask a student to draw the picture.



3. If students don't know the story already, tell them the story simply and slowly. You can practise telling the story before the class. Remember to ask questions as you tell the story. If they already know the story, ask lots more questions so that you and the students tell the story together.
4. Write useful words and phrases on the board. You can adjust the amount that you write on the board depending on the level and ability of your students. Students who are not used to speaking English may need more support with language. If the story is 'A day at a picnic', you might write the following phrases:



Last ... I went on a picnic.
It was a ... day.
I went with ...
We ate ...
We drank ...
I felt ... because ...
week, Saturday ...
sunny, rainy ...
friends, mother, sister, grandparents ...
rice, fish, mangoes ...
milk ...
happy ...

Description

This is an illustration of a board with several words and phrases on, which read 'Last ...I went on a picnic.', 'It was a ... day', 'I went with ...', 'We ate ...', 'We drank ...', 'I felt ... because ...', 'week, Saturday ...', 'sunny, rainy ...', 'friends, mother, sister, grandparents ...', 'rice, fish, mangoes ...', 'milk ...' and 'happy ...'

End of description

5. Put students into groups and ask them to take it in turns to tell their stories. Remember that groups are speaking at the same time.
6. Move around the room as students tell the stories. Listen to some groups. Make sure that you listen to different students each time you do a speaking activity, and listen to ones from the back of the room as well as the front.
7. When most groups have finished telling their stories, end the activity.
8. If you have time, students could tell their stories again.

Pause for thought

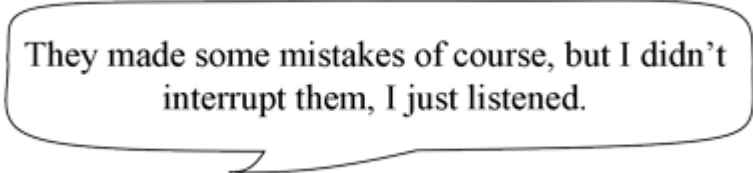
After trying this activity with your students, think about the following questions:

- How easy was it to choose and tell the initial story?
- Did the words and phrases help the students to tell their stories?
- How did they work in groups? Did it go well?
- Did *everyone* have the opportunity to speak in English?
- What would you do differently next time?

3 Don't correct your students all of the time

So far in this unit, you have learned about techniques that teachers can use to get their students speaking more in English: relating topics to students' lives and providing language support. These techniques help students to be more motivated about speaking, and to speak more confidently in English, but this does not mean that they will not make mistakes when they speak. Learning to speak another language takes time, and it is very likely that most of your students will make mistakes when they speak in English. These might relate to vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation.

In [Case Study 2](#), you read about a teacher who did a storytelling activity in groups with her students. Did you notice that the teacher said the following?



They made some mistakes of course, but I didn't interrupt them, I just listened.

Description

This is an illustration of a speech bubble, which reads 'They made some mistakes of course, but I didn't interrupt them, I just listened.'

End of description

Pause for thought

Why do you think the teacher didn't correct her students when they were doing the speaking activity? Write your ideas down, and if you can, discuss them with a colleague.

There are times when it is useful to correct students' mistakes, for example when they are practising a specific grammar point or the pronunciation of vocabulary or sentences.

If the focus of your activity – or lesson – is on *accuracy*, or using grammar, words or pronunciation correctly, then it is a good idea to correct. However, if the focus of your class is *always* on accuracy and students are corrected *every time* they speak, they may become demoralised, and may decide that it is 'safer' not to speak at all. There is also evidence that correcting mistakes does not help learners of a language speak more accurately. It is believed that mistakes play a role in language learning, and when students make mistakes, they are learning and internalising the language. Making mistakes is

part of the language learning process. In any case, it is not possible to correct every mistake when students are doing speaking activities in groups.

If students are to become fluent, confident speakers of English, then they need to practise English and make mistakes. Classes need to include some activities in which they can speak without being interrupted.

Pause for thought

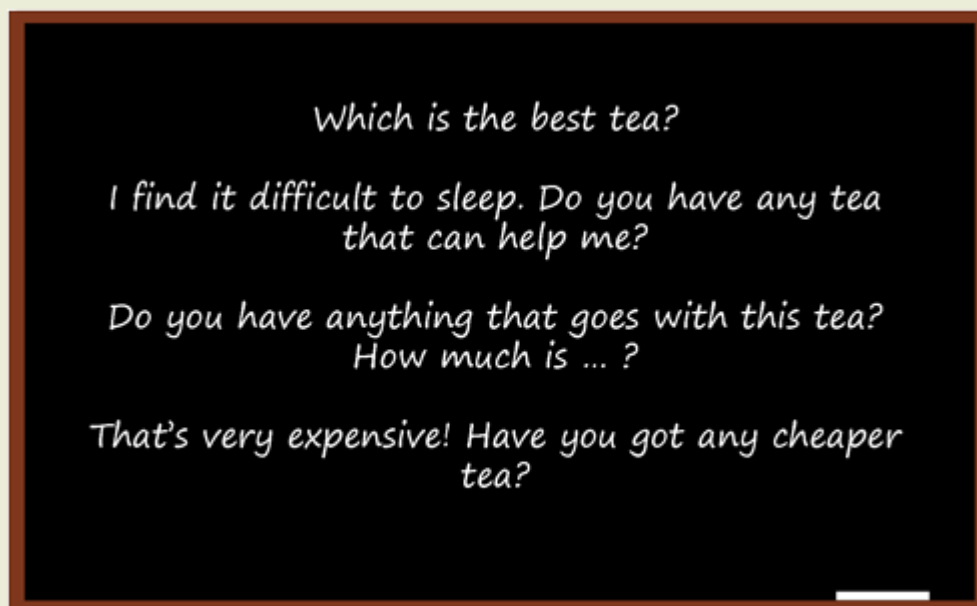
So what can teachers do when students make mistakes as they are doing a speaking activity in groups? Write down your ideas, and if you can, discuss them with a colleague.

Read Case Study 3, in which a teacher describes how he deals with mistakes made in activities designed to encourage fluency. This is followed by an activity that you can try in your classroom.

Case Study 3: Mrs Elam deals with mistakes made in a speaking activity

Let me tell you about a speaking activity that I did with my Class X students. We had just been studying the passage 'Tea from Assam' from Chapter 7 of the NCERT Class X textbook *First Flight* [see [Resource 2](#)]. Students had discussed a lot of information about tea: its popularity around the world; the best tea and how to make it; the history of growing and drinking it; and legends surrounding the drink.

Now I asked the class to imagine that they wanted to buy some tea, and I asked them what phrases they might use and wrote them on the board.

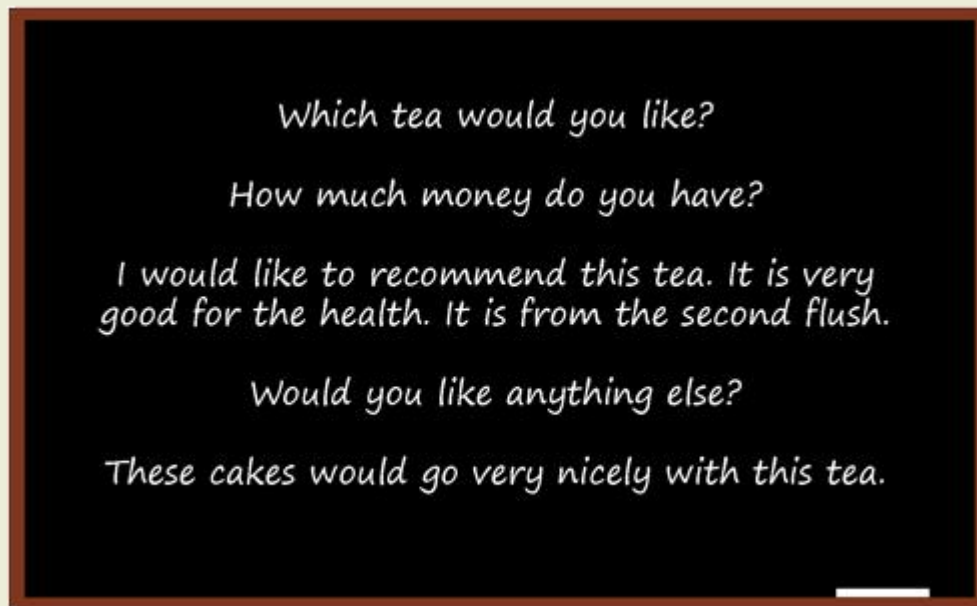


Description

This is an illustration on a board on which five phrases are written, which read 'Which is the best tea?', 'I find it difficult to sleep. Do you have any tea that can help me?', 'Do you have anything that goes with this tea?', 'How much is ...?' and 'That's very expensive! Have you got any cheaper tea?'

End of description

Then I organised my students into pairs and told them to imagine that they owned a tea shop. I told them to imagine what they sold in the shop and to write a menu with prices. I gave them around five minutes to do this. I then asked them what phrases they might use to sell their items and wrote them on the board.



Description

This is an illustration on a board on which five phrases are written, which read 'Which tea would you like?', 'How much money do you have?', 'I would like to recommend this tea. It is very good for the health. It is from the second flush.', 'Would you like anything else?' and 'These cakes would go very nicely with this tea.'

End of description

Finally, I put two pairs together to make groups of four. I gave them these instructions:

One pair in the group owns a tea shop, and the other two are customers. The tea shop owners must show their menu to the customers. The customers have 100 rupees to spend – they must spend all of the money.

Customers – buy as much as you can for the best price!
Shop owners – sell as much as you can for the best price!

Description

This is an illustration of a speech bubble, which reads ‘One pair in the group owns a tea shop, and the other two are customers. The tea shop owners must show their menu to the customers. The customers have 100 rupees to spend – they must spend all of the money. Customers – buy as much as you can for the best price! Shop owners – sell as much as you can for the best price!’

End of description

I told the groups to begin, and they began playing the roles of shop owners and customers.



Description

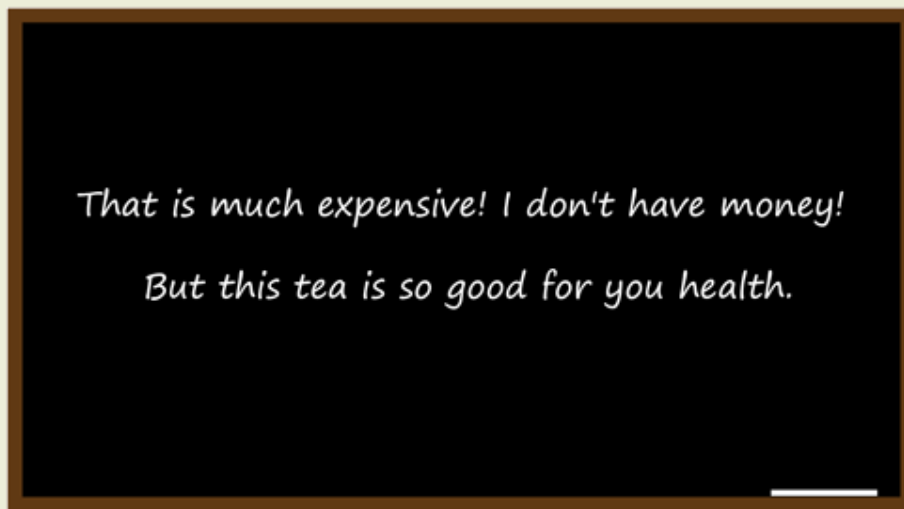
This is a photograph of a teacher listening to her students carry out a role play as a group.

End of description

It wasn't possible for me to listen to all of the groups in that time, so I concentrated on three groups. I always make sure that I focus on different groups of students each time we do a speaking activity in class. As they spoke, I listened and made a note of mistakes that they were making. I didn't

note down every mistake, of course, but I noted down mistakes that were common. I also noted down some good phrases that students were using. After four minutes or so, I told everyone to swap roles – that is, the shop owners were now customers and vice versa. This time they were really getting into the roles and were making some good bargains!

When they had finished, I looked at my notes, and told the class things that they had done well, and gave some examples of good language use. Then I copied ten of the sentences with mistakes on the board. I chose mistakes which many of the students made, and I was careful not to say who made the mistakes, as that could be humiliating. Here are some examples of the sentences with mistakes:



Description

This is an illustration of a board, which reads 'That is much expensive! I don't have money!' and 'But this tea is so good for you health.'

End of description.

I then said:

Here are some of the sentences I heard. These sentences have mistakes. Can you write down the sentences correctly?

Description

This is an illustration of a speech bubble, which reads 'Here are some of the sentences I heard. These sentences have mistakes. Can you write down the sentences correctly?'

End of description

I gave everyone five minutes to write the sentences correctly, and then I asked them for the correct versions. As they read out the correct versions, I corrected the sentences on the board. I believe that this is a useful activity to do because it helps students think about their mistakes and grammar, and it also helps them to see that we are correcting their mistakes when they do speaking activities.

The notes I make when students are speaking are also useful for me in keeping records for CCE (see [TDU 13, *Assessment for learning*](#) and [TDU 14, *Assessment 2*](#)). After speaking activities, I make notes about the students I listen to, and it helps me to see their progress and assess them.

Activity 5: Try in the classroom: dealing with mistakes after a speaking activity

In Case Study 3, students do a speaking activity in groups. They play the roles of shop owner and customer. This kind of activity is called a *role play*. As they act out the roles, the teacher listens to some groups and notes down some common, typical mistakes. You can use this technique when your students are doing any speaking activity. Follow these steps:

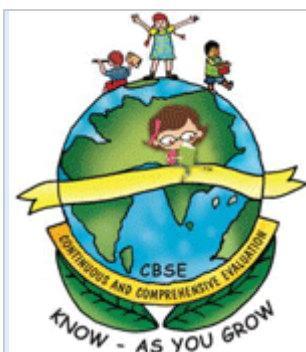
1. The next time your students carry out a speaking activity in groups, focus on one or two groups. Make sure you choose different groups and students each time.
2. Write down common and typical mistakes in your notebook (remember that you can write down positive things too, such as phrases that are used very well).
3. After the activity, write no more than ten of the sentences with mistakes on the board.
4. Tell students that the sentences have mistakes but don't tell them what the mistakes are. Remember not to tell students who made the mistakes as this can be humiliating for them.
5. Give your students some time to think about and correct the mistakes individually.
6. Ask students to correct the mistakes on the board. Make sure you correct the versions written on the board.
7. Always make sure you tell your class what they did well too.

Pause for thought

After trying this activity with your students, think about the following questions:

- Was it easy to note down common and typical mistakes?
- Were your students able to spot and correct the mistakes by themselves?

Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)



Description

CCE logo.

End of description

This technique is useful for focusing on mistakes and grammar. Your notes are also useful for CCE. You can use them as records about students' performance in speaking. Make notes about different students each time they do a speaking activity. Remember that students respond to positive feedback too.

Reward them for using English in the classroom. You could create a chart that lists all your students' names. Each time one of your students speaks some English in class, you could add a star next to their name.

4 Summary

Learning to speak in another language is difficult and it requires confidence. In this unit, you have considered three ways that you can make it easier for students: by giving them interesting topics to talk about (that relate to their lives); by giving them the language they need for speaking activities; and by using an alternative way to correct students' mistakes when speaking in English.

What three key things have you learnt in this unit?

You have had the opportunity to try some techniques out in the classroom:

- Which techniques have worked well with your students?
- Which activities did not work so well?
- Can you make any changes to make them work better?
- Which activities will you continue to use?

What next?

If you would like to develop your own speaking skills, see [Resource 3](#). See [Resource 4](#) for links to further reading.

5 Resources

Resource 1: Traditional stories

The Snake and the Crows

There were two crows that had a nest at the top of a Banyan tree. A snake lived at the bottom of the tree. The crows had four eggs in the nest, and didn't want to leave the nest. They were afraid that the snake would eat the eggs. Eventually, they were hungry and flew from the nest to find food.

While they were away, the snake climbed the tree and ate the eggs. The crows were very sad.

A few weeks later, they had four more eggs in their nest. They were afraid to leave the nest so they stayed there as long as they could. Eventually, they needed to leave to look for food. One again, the snake climbed the tree and ate the eggs. The crows were very upset.

They talked to a fox who gave them a cunning plan. The crows flew to the King's castle and stole the princess's favourite necklace. They flew past the guards, showing the necklace. The guards chased the crows towards the tree. The crows dropped the necklace onto the snake. The guards killed the snake and got the necklace. Now the snake was dead the crows could have some babies.

Resource 2: Excerpt from textbook

Excerpt from NCERT Class X textbook, *First Flight* (Chapter 7)

Tea from Assam

Pranjol, a youngster from Assam, is Rajvir's classmate at school in Delhi. Pranjol's father is the manager of a tea-garden in Upper Assam and Pranjol has invited Rajvir to visit his home during the summer vacation.

'*CHAI-GARAM... garam-chai,*' a vendor called out in a high-pitched voice. He came up to their window and asked, '*Chai, sa'ab?*'

'Give us two cups,' Pranjol said.

They sipped the steaming hot liquid. Almost everyone in their compartment was drinking tea too.

'Do you know that over eighty crore cups of tea are drunk every day throughout the world?' Rajvir said.

‘Whew!’ exclaimed Pranjol. ‘Tea really is very popular.’

The train pulled out of the station. Pranjol buried his nose in his detective book again. Rajvir too was an ardent fan of detective stories, but at the moment he was keener on looking at the beautiful scenery. It was green, green everywhere. Rajvir had never seen so much greenery before. Then the soft green paddy fields gave way to tea bushes.

It was a magnificent view. Against the backdrop of densely wooded hills a sea of tea bushes stretched as far as the eye could see. Dwarfing the tiny tea plants were tall sturdy shade-trees and amidst the orderly rows of bushes busily moved doll-like figures. In the distance was an ugly building with smoke billowing out of tall chimneys.

‘Hey, a tea garden!’ Rajvir cried excitedly. Pranjol, who had been born and brought up on a plantation, didn’t share Rajvir’s excitement.

‘Oh, this is tea country now,’ he said. ‘Assam has the largest concentration of plantations in the world.’

‘You will see enough gardens to last you a lifetime!’

‘I have been reading as much as I could about tea,’ Rajvir said. ‘No one really knows who discovered tea but there are many legends.’

‘What legends?’

‘Well, there’s the one about the Chinese emperor who always boiled water before drinking it. One day a few leaves of the twigs burning under the pot fell into the water giving it a delicious flavour. It is said they were tea leaves.’

‘Tell me another!’ scoffed Pranjol.

‘We have an Indian legend too. Bodhidharma, an ancient Buddhist ascetic, cut off his eyelids because he felt sleepy during meditations. Ten tea plants grew out of the eyelids. The leaves of these plants when put in hot water and drunk banished sleep.’

‘Tea was first drunk in China,’ Rajvir added, ‘as far back as 2700 BC! In fact words such as tea, “*chai*” and “*chini*” are from Chinese. Tea came to Europe only in the sixteenth century and was drunk more as medicine than as beverage.’

The train clattered into Mariani junction. The boys collected their luggage and pushed their way to the crowded platform. Pranjol’s parents were waiting for them. Soon they were driving towards Dhekiabari, the tea-garden managed by Pranjol’s father. An hour later the car veered sharply off the main road. They crossed a cattle-bridge and entered Dhekiabari Tea Estate.

On both sides of the gravel-road were acre upon acre of tea bushes, all neatly pruned to the same height. Groups of tea-pluckers, with bamboo baskets on their backs, wearing plastic aprons, were plucking the newly sprouted leaves. Pranjol's father slowed down to allow a tractor, pulling a trailer-load of tea leaves, to pass.

'This is the second-flush or sprouting period, isn't it, Mr Barua?' Rajvir asked. 'It lasts from May to July and yields the best tea.'

'You seem to have done your homework before coming,' Pranjol's father said in surprise.

'Yes, Mr Barua,' Rajvir admitted. 'But I hope to learn much more while I'm here.'

Resource 3: Develop your own English

Here is a list of phrases that could be useful for carrying out the activities in this unit.

Telling a story

Would you like to hear a story?

One day, many years ago, there was a ...

What do you think happened next?

Can you guess?

How did he/she feel? What do you think?

Now it's your turn.

Correcting mistakes after a speaking activity

You spoke very well.

Look at these phrases on the board.

There are some mistakes.

What are the mistakes?

What's wrong with this sentence?

What's wrong with this word?

Does anyone know the correct word?

Can anyone write the correct sentence?

Here are some tips and links for developing your own speaking skills:

- Listen to as much English as you can, for example on the radio or the Internet.
- Watch movies or TV programmes in English if you can.
- Read English texts aloud to yourself. If you can, record yourself and listen to it. Then do it again!

Practise speaking with your colleagues or anyone else who speaks English. Perhaps you could start a local English club where you chat in English for one hour a week?

Resource 4: Further reading

Here are some links to articles and tips for teachers of English about helping students to speak in English:

- [‘Teaching speaking skills 1’](#) (TeachingEnglish, 2003)
- [‘Getting teenagers talking’](#) (TeachingEnglish, 2011)
- [‘Reluctant talkers 1’](#) (TeachingEnglish, 2009)
- [‘Reluctant talkers part 2’](#) (TeachingEnglish, 2010)

Find many more traditional stories on these websites:

- [‘Animation stories’](#) (Jingukid, undated)
- [‘Stories for kids’](#) (Mocomi, undated)

An article about correcting mistakes in speaking activities:

- [‘Classroom management: speaking correction techniques’](#) (Mumford and Darn, 2005)

A series by the BBC World Service about improving speaking skills:

- [‘Talk about English: better speaking’](#) (BBC Learning English, undated)

Articles and websites about storytelling:

- [‘Storytelling – benefits and tips’](#) (TeachingEnglish, 2003)
- [‘Telling a story’](#) (TeachingEnglish, 2009)
- [‘Storytelling in the classroom’](#) (Story Arts, undated)
- [‘Storytelling in the EFL speaking classroom’](#) (Jianing, 2007)

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