

# Speaking

## Motivation and confidence

**Of the four language skills**, speaking is likely to be the one that trade unionists want to develop as it responds most closely to their perceived needs. If trade unionists are using the target language at work, they are likely to have to initiate telephone calls, receive visitors from the target language country, give oral presentations about trade union structures, procedures or practices, participate in meetings, socialise, and so on.

The learner's earlier language learning experience may have concentrated on the passive, rather than active language skills, or on writing rather than on speaking. If this experience was rooted in a grammar-based rather than a communicative methodology, then speaking in the target language was more likely to have been neglected.

Unlike writing or listening, speaking always involves a recipient (interlocutor), who will indicate whether the message has been received and understood. The speaker of the target language is thus instantly judged on his or her performance. It is therefore of paramount importance to build up the learner's confidence in speaking, which involves the complex interplay of gesture, intonation, stress as well as the words themselves.

*The tutor can set up situations where an authentic exchange of information takes place between the learners*



## The communicative approach

**The learner will feel encouraged** to speak if s/he feels at ease within the learning group. It is important to create a supportive atmosphere within the group, which operates within small groups and pairs as well as when the whole group is working together under the direction of the tutor. Speaking practice will often take place between peers in the learning group, without the presence of the tutor. The learner may need



persuading of the value of these opportunities as a confidence-building mechanism. The learner can practice what has to be said privately, and iron out any difficulties before going public and speaking to the whole group or the tutor.

The learner will speak if s/he feels that s/he has something to say. The tutor should therefore ensure that the materials chosen for the group of learners is appropriate to their needs, and is authentic, varied and stimulating. In addition, the speaking tasks should be as authentic as possible, so that they are meaningful to the trade unionist learner and prepare him or her for using the language outside of the supportive learning environment. The tutor can set up situations where an authentic exchange of information takes place between the learners (e.g. enquiring about each others' trade union functions, etc.) Tasks should involve the learner in expressing opinions as well as in handling factual information.

## Goals

**The learner will feel discouraged** by being asked to do too much. We should therefore ensure that the speaking goals set are attainable. The speaking task can often be shared by members of the learning group, which will help develop a supportive group dynamic and positively contribute to the learning. For example, the group could be asked to prepare a short tour round their home town for a group of visiting trade unionists, and provide the accompanying commentary. This could be divided among the group in terms of the itinerary, or in terms of different aspects which are to be covered: eating and drinking, transport, education, commerce, industry, trade unions etc.

Clear instructions should be given to the learners about the speaking task to be carried out, to ensure that the scope and focus of that activity is understood, and where the division of responsibility for the task lies. The instructions should include an indication of the time required for the preparation and execution of the task.

The tutor should always make a clear distinction between the *fluency* and *accuracy* objectives of a particular speaking task. The learners should be made aware of this distinction, so that they should not expect all errors to be corrected in a fluency activity, but would recognise the real purpose of the activity. Where the objective is accuracy, feedback must be given on the learner's performance in a sensitive and constructive manner taking into account that the adult trade unionist may be embarrassed about making mistakes and having these corrected in front of his or her peers. The creation of a supportive learning group will go some way to avoiding this difficulty, as will the use of individual feedback cards which highlight: the learner's major and persistent errors. The tutor can then discuss these in private tutorials, or deal with the problem for the group as a whole if appropriate, but without drawing undue attention to the individual weakness.



# Example activities

## SPEAKING

### Level 1

#### *Simple Repetition of structures:*

“What do you do in your spare time?”

“I’m .....

“I belong to .....

“I like .....ing”

“I’m a member of .....” .....etc!

### Level 2

#### *Giving oral presentations*

The following is an exercise with pre-listening questions for prediction, and focuses on how the speaker tries to involve the listener.

**Study the text of an informal presentation about “the telephone” and see how the presentation is organised.**

- How does the speaker divide the contents of the presentation into different sections ?
- How does the speaker try to involve the listener?





*"It's quicker than sending a letter and, of course, it's very useful in an emergency"*

“ I'm going to talk briefly about the telephone. I'll say something about the types of phone that are available, then I'll list some of the advantages and disadvantages of the telephone. And finally I'll present my conclusion. Is this OK with everyone?

Well, first of all, the telephone itself. Nowadays we find phones everywhere. Most people have a telephone in their own home and of course we have them in all modern offices. Mobile phones are very, very popular today. These have become very sophisticated and it is possible to send and receive text messages and e-mails. The latest generation of mobiles have the facility of photographic messaging. This is extremely popular with young people. Is this clear so far?

Now what about the advantages and disadvantages?

First of all, the advantages. Obviously it is now so easy to communicate with people all over the world. It's quicker than sending a letter and, of course, it's very useful in an emergency.

Now the disadvantages. One is the cost. It's easy to spend a lot of money on phone calls. Another disadvantage is the disturbance the phone can cause, especially at work. People phone when you are trying to concentrate on some work. It is also annoying when people use mobiles in public places, in restaurants and on trains. I'm sure you'll all have experienced this. Is that right?

Well, in conclusion I would say there are clearly points for and against the telephone, both pros and cons. However, on balance, I believe that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

”

*Exercise: Now practise giving the above presentation about the telephone and remember to emphasise (stress) the key words.*



**Level 3**



**Interviews**

*In pairs, draw up a list of questions to help you interview an English-speaking trade union representative about his or her rôle within their union organisation.*

**Questions should cover the following:**

- name, age, origin
- union and position in union
- workplace and job
- number of members represented
- categories of members represented
- length of service as trade union representative
- special responsibilities or interests

*Use your questions to interview a colleague. If possible, record your interview using a tape recorder or a video camera.*



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