

1995-12-01

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### Recommended Citation

Hayes, David (1995) "Native Speaker Rules of Speaking and Foreign Language Learning," *PASAA*: Vol. 25, Article 3.

DOI: 10.58837/CHULA.PASAA.25.1.3

Available at: <https://digital.car.chula.ac.th/pasaa/vol25/iss1/3>

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# Native Speaker Rules of Speaking and Foreign Language Learning

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## ABSTRACT

Rules of speaking are complex and often differ from language to language. Native speakers of a language only acquire proficiency in their use after years of socialisation in the language environment. For foreign learners of that language to be equally adept they would generally need to have extensive knowledge of the language and the target culture allied to years of experience within it.

Yet most learners of a foreign language will never be able to acquire such knowledge and, indeed, most of them will never need to. This is particularly true of the vast majority of FL learners in schools. In addition, the majority of non-native-speaking teachers of English will themselves be far from "communicatively competent" in the language. How, then, should the teaching of rules of speaking be approached?

This article investigates some rules of speaking for English and their representations in two textbooks. From this analysis general criteria are deduced for the handling of rules of speaking in classes. Some training activities to sensitise non-native-speaking teachers to the complexities of rules of speaking for English are then presented, with an emphasis being placed on a skills-based approach. It is also argued that some of these activities can be equally valid if adapted for use in schools.

## COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Since the term "communicative competence" was first coined by Hymes in the mid-1960s it has become ever more fashionable when describing the aims of foreign language learning (and specifically

English as a foreign language) in formal settings to talk of "communicative activities," "communicative methodology," "communicative performance," "effective communication" and the

like. This seems to be as true of non-Western as Western contexts. For example, Magdalene Chew's *Basic Skills in English* (1987: iii) says it is "the aim of this textbook to help equip students with a linguistic competence that enables them to communicate effectively in everyday situations," and Doff et al., in *Meanings into Words* (1983: 12), declare that "it is important that the student learns to associate the choice of grammatical form or structure with the expression of a conceptual choice; we must also be sure that he can associate the making of conceptual choices with the performance of various types of communicative activity." However they phrase it, writers seem to be saying that learners, after sufficient instruction, guidance, counselling or whatever, should be able to learn (or to "acquire") and then to use the target language in a variety of settings in much the same way that native speakers would, that they should be able to transfer language learnt in the classroom in pseudo-realistic settings to real life itself -- or, perhaps more accurately, that they should have the potential to do so should the opportunity arise. Language teaching has become concerned, then, with the development, to varying degrees, of communicative competence in learners.

But what exactly is it that we are getting ourselves involved with when we try to do this? Saville-Troike (1982: 22) comments:

Communicative competence involves knowing not only the language code, but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in any given situation. It deals with the social and cultural knowledge speakers are presumed to have to enable them to use and interpret linguistic forms.

This "knowing what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately" is enormously complex. Saville-Troike (op. cit.: 22-23) goes on to explain:

Communicative competence extends to both knowledge and expectation of who may or may not speak in certain settings, when to speak and when to remain silent, whom one may speak to, how one may talk to persons of different statuses and rôles, what appropriate nonverbal behaviors are in various contexts, what the routines for turn-taking are in conversation, how to ask for and give information, how to request, how to offer or decline assistance or co-operation, how to give commands, how to enforce

discipline, and the like -- in short, everything involving the use of language and other communicative dimensions in particular settings.

From this it would seem that "communicative competence" is too limiting a term if the object of foreign language learning is to enable learners, potentially, to function in the target language environment, or even to converse with native speakers outside of that environment. Saville-Troike (op. cit.: 23) talks rather of "cultural competence."

The concept of communicative competence must be embedded in the notion of cultural competence, or *the total set of knowledge and skills which speakers bring into a situation*. (my emphasis)

For native speakers the interpretation of utterances or operation of rules of speaking, which constitute use of this cultural competence, is not usually difficult, in spite of the fact that everyday speech is far more complicated than the clear cut representations to be found in most language teaching textbooks would suggest. Giglioli (1972: 13) explains:

... in natural conversations sentences are almost always incomplete or ambiguous. Language provides a variety of different labels to refer to an object or an action; moreover, the social meaning of a term shifts with the situation. Nonetheless, the identification of the "right" term in a semantic field of "correct" ones, or the expansion of incomplete or polysemic utterances is ... rarely problematic for the conversationalists, for they can rely on *their common stock of knowledge*. (my emphasis)

So, if our goal is learners who are communicatively competent in a language, it would seem that we have to teach them, for everything that we deal with, the total set of *common* knowledge and skills which native speakers bring into a situation. The problem for teachers is complicated by two further dimensions. The first is that they cannot rely simply on transfer of rules of speaking from the learners' first language to the foreign language; and the second that the "common stock of knowledge" can vary between different groups of native speakers. The *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (1985: 248) has this to say in defining rules of speaking:

**Rules of speaking.** Rules shared by a group of people which govern their spoken behaviour. Rules of speaking may, for instance, regulate when to speak in a conversation, what to say, and how to start and end a conversation. These rules may vary not only between different countries but also between different regions of a country or different social groups.

There are numerous studies which show cross-cultural variation in rules of speaking. To take a simple example, English has only one 2nd person singular pronoun of address, "you," used in all situations. French, in contrast, uses two, the familiar "tu" and the more respectful or distant "vous." Learners of French would need to know that you should not use "tu" if, for example, you want to ask a policeman the way when lost in Paris. In a case cited by Saville-Troike (op. cit.: 89) a Frenchman was actually fined for addressing a policeman as "tu," the court concurring with the complainant's view that use of "tu" showed lack of proper respect and was intended to be insulting.

A personal anecdote will illustrate cross-cultural, cross-regional and cross-social group variation. A Malaysian friend went to study at a college in Plymouth in southern England. Arriving at her lodgings in the early evening after a long journey, the landlady asked her if she would like some tea. "No, thank you," she replied. "I had some on the train." It was only when she saw other people eating and the landlady did not offer her any food that evening that she realised she had been offered a meal rather than just a cup of tea. For some social groups in Plymouth "tea" is a cooked meal taken at night, between 7-8 p.m. For other social groups that same meal would be "dinner." When I was at primary school we had cooked meals at midday, invariably referred to as "school dinners." In many parts of Britain the meal at midday is "lunch." In some parts of Britain the meal at night is not "dinner" but "supper." For some others, however, "supper" would be a light snack taken before going to bed. Different rules for the use of these terms obviously operate from one region to another and between one social group and another.

But, in fact, the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* may be rather limiting in its definition. Quirk and Greenbaum's (1973)

*A University Grammar of English* distinguishes six variety classes, those of region, education, social standing, subject matter, medium and interference (from a first language other than English); and allows for the possibility of numerous varieties within each class. Saville-Troike (op. cit.) has an even more comprehensive list. She discusses varieties of language associated with setting; purpose; region; ethnicity; social class, status and rôle; rôle-relationships; sex; age; personality states and "abnormal" speech; and non-native varieties. Rules of speaking for a language can vary along all of these dimensions and, of course, more than one dimension at once for any given situation.

What are ordinary classroom teachers of a language, for my purposes teachers of English, to make of all this?

#### RULES OF SPEAKING AND EFL TEACHING

Consider the situation in average secondary school classrooms. Teachers are faced with 40 or 50 students who may not see the point of learning English at all and teachers themselves may lack confidence in their ability to use or to teach it. I would argue that as far as student motivation is concerned English is no worse off than many other subjects (how many will ever use chemical formulae after they have left school, for instance?) and we must see the teaching of the subject in terms of its place in a general educational philosophy. From this point of view learning an international language is a useful skill and it is part of a teacher's job to provide the relevance in the way the language is taught. We cannot teach English without a long-term view of its being potentially useful. From this position, therefore, we must take account of rules of speaking otherwise the English taught will be useless. But taken account of to what degree and in what manner? Given the complexity of rules of speaking how can teachers even begin to attempt to develop communicative competence in their students? Similarly, are non-native speaking teachers of English ever likely to be fully communicatively or culturally competent themselves? My short answer to the last question is "no" but then I would add that it doesn't really matter (I shall discuss this again later). As far as the teaching of rules of

speaking is concerned it seems, superficially, that these rules are covered in modern “communicative” courses with their emphasis on situational and functional language use. But what about other sources of variation — rôle and power relationships for example? Aren’t these equally important in helping to develop communicative and cultural competence? This is not to say that classroom instruction will be able to, or even should, develop full native-speaker like “cultural competence” in students of a language. However, I would argue that there is a great deal that can be done to make the teaching of a language more fulfilling for those students for whom it will remain just a school subject and more likely to provide the basis for further sustained advancement for those who will have some need for the language beyond school if treatment of rules of speaking is handled in a principled, systematic way. At the moment I think that few textbooks, in spite of their stated “communicative” orientation, do handle them in such a way.

I would now like, therefore, to examine examples of rules of speaking for English and to see how these are treated in some, hopefully representative, coursebooks.

### **Rules of speaking: Example 1 — telephone calls**

There is an extensive literature on the subject of telephone calls and I draw heavily on the discussion of this in Levinson’s (1983) *Pragmatics*. Telephone calls tend to have clearly structured openings and closings. Levinson (op. cit.: 312) summarizes an opening exchange as follows (C = Caller; R = Recipient):

- C: ((rings)) ((SUMMONS))
- T<sub>1</sub> R: Hello ((ANSWER)) + ((DISPLAY FOR RECOGNITION))
- T<sub>2</sub> C: Hi ((GREETINGS 1ST PART))  
((CLAIM THAT C HAS RECOGNIZED R))  
((CLAIM THAT R CAN RECOGNIZE C))
- T<sub>3</sub> R: Oh hi ((GREETINGS 2ND PART))  
((CLAIM THAT R HAS RECOGNIZED C))

The conversation would then move on to topic slots, participants collaborating to construct topical coherence across turns. This would be the real “heart” of the telephone call but, as in practical

ELT terms most coursebooks tend to see such calls as monotopical, I do not wish to discuss the complex rules for topic introduction, maintenance or change here. Rather, let us move on to the less complex ground of closings. Levinson (op. cit.: 316-317) gives us a typical example of a closing.

- R: Why don’t we all have lunch  
C: Okay so that would be in St. Jude’s would it?  
R: Yes  
C: Okay so ...  
R: One o’clock in the bar  
C: Okay  
R: Okay?  
C: Okay then thanks very much indeed George  
R: = All right  
C: // See you there  
R: See you there  
C: Okay  
R: Okay // bye  
C: Bye

This example is then represented thus (Levinson, op. cit.: 317):

- (a) a closing down of some topic, typically a closing implicative topic; where closing implicative topics include the making of arrangements, the first topic in monotopical calls, the giving of regards to the other’s family members, etc
- (b) one or more pairs of passing turns with pre-closing items, like Okay, All right, So ..., etc
- (c) if appropriate, a typing of the call as e.g. a favour requested and done (hence Thank you), or as a checking up on recipient’s state of health (Well I just wanted to know how you were), etc., followed by a further exchange of pre-closing items
- (d) a final exchange of terminal elements. Bye, Righteo, Cheers, etc

Telephone calls are the subject of Chapter 3 of Magdalene Chew’s *Basic Skills in English*. I refer to sections A-E of the “Listening and Speaking” segment (reproduced in Appendix One). From these we can see that not all examples follow the summons-answer and greetings adjacency pairs model. In Section B’s listening comprehension exercise we would expect, for example, Susan to respond to Aishah’s greeting with a reciprocal “Oh, hi, Aishah” before agreeing to her suggestion, but this is absent. Section D has no summons-answer at all. Why? This inconsistency

surely can only cause confusion in the minds of students. For their first pair activity (Section C) they are asked to make up a telephone conversation following a model with summons-answer and immediately afterwards, in section D, are asked to follow a model where this is absent (see Figure 1). Yet, as Levinson (op. cit.: 309) notes, it is the receiver who "almost invariably talks first." I would suggest that for a rule of speaking as basic and indeed as simple as this there is no reason why it should not be represented in any textbook in its correct form. If our aim is to develop any degree of communicative competence, we must aim to illustrate in the classroom as many features of natural native-speaker conversation as is practical. From which I could perhaps deduce the first, self-evident, criterion for dealing with native-speaker rules of speaking:

- (1) If native-speaker rules of speaking are simple, teach them as they are.

There are further aspects of Chew's treatment of telephone calls which I am unhappy with. The first of these centres on the formal-informal dimension. In section A we are given examples of calls between friends (I), between adults engaged

in it. As far as formal calls are concerned, these are developed in Section E but the only practice given is simple repetition of the models. Nowhere is there any opportunity for creative use of the language in a more formal situation. Textbook writers often "preview" items and deal with them later in the course but this is not the case with *Basic Skills in English*: telephone calls do not recur.

I would argue that there is inadequate explanation and practice for the language presented here. This is especially so when degrees of informality are introduced (friend-friend and parent-child). I would contend, in any case, that it is sufficient for students' purposes in schools to present language representing the basic formal-informal, respectful-intimate dimensions, and not varying levels of each. The language taught, then, would be the least "marked." What is most important, of course, is that students be made aware of the distinctions and have the opportunity to practise creative use of the language in situations which would require these formal-informal, respectful-intimate dimensions. I would suggest, then, two further criteria for dealing with native-speaker rules of speaking:

**Figure 1** Telephone conversation model (Chew 1987: 18)

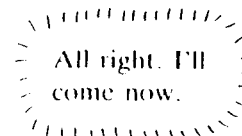
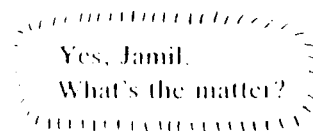
D. The following telephone conversation will be read to you. Listen carefully.



Hello, mother. This is Jamil speaking.



Please come and take me home. The scouts meeting is over.



in a formal transaction (II), and between a child and an adult who is not a relative (III): one informal and two formal calls. However, only type (I) is developed from opening into a topic (in Section B) and then practised (in Section C). Further practice is given in Section D of a child-parent call but, as I have argued, the presentation here does not conform to accepted, simple rules of speaking. The language of the call is also of a different degree of informality to the call between friends. Students are asked to rôle-play similar calls on this model after listening to and reading

- (2) If there are many possible variations in language use for any given situation, confine teaching to gross distinctions using the least "marked" language with the widest applicability.

And:

- (3) Ensure that students are given adequate practice with whatever distinctions or forms of rules of speaking are presented.

In doing this we are then equipping students with language and rules suitable for most situa-

tions. A native speaker would obviously be sensitive to and use language appropriate to the differences in formality between reporting a burglary and buying something in a shop, for example, but a learner could cope with both situations, without giving offence, if just taught what we might call the basic core of "formal" language and rules. This brings me to my final point about telephone calls.

I think what is immediately striking about the textbook data is that there is minimal reference to closings. The only reference is in the exchange in the listening comprehension (Section B) where we have "Good, see you then" followed by "Bye." Students have no opportunity to see this closing in print nor is it a focus of the listening comprehension exercise and, so, in effect, they are being shown how to begin telephone conversations but not how to end them. Yet, as Levinson (op. cit.: 316) comments, closings are as important as openings, if not more so.

Closings are a delicate matter both technically, in the sense that they must be so placed that no party is forced to exit while still having compelling things to say, and socially in the sense that both over-hasty and over-slow terminations can carry unwelcome inferences about the social relationships between the participants.

However, students learning from *Basic Skills in English* would be justified in assuming that the proper way to end a telephone call in English would be simply to put down the receiver. Such a closing could only be interpreted as extremely rude. I would like to propose a fourth criterion, therefore, the criterion of "least offence" which follows from the second:

- (4) When teaching rules of speaking always make sure that what is presented and practised is that which is least open to misinterpretation and least likely to give offence to the hearer if there should be miscommunication.

I would now like to move on to a second example and examine whether these criteria are still valid.

### **Rules of speaking: Example 2 — requests**

Let us start by examining the textbook data which comes from Swan and Walter's *Cambridge*

*English Course: Book 2* (1985: 100-101 [reproduced in Appendix Two]). Here we see two different dialogues dealing with two very different situations and requiring the operation of two different sets of rules of speaking. The first dialogue is between a mother and child, the second between a secretary and her boss. Creative use of the language presented is dealt with in Sections 5 and 6. First of all students are asked to write down 10 or so expressions from the dialogues that they think will be useful to them and then they have to work in pairs to prepare a conversation on one of a selection of topics. Suppose, however, a student decides that she or he wants to use the phrase "Oh, go on ..." from dialogue 1 but chooses to apply it to situation 2 in Section 6. This could lead to an exchange like the following:

Boss: Miss Collins I'd like you to phone Barlow and Fletcher about Tuesday's visit.

Secretary: But Mr Lewis, I have so much work to do. Can you ask someone else?

Boss: Oh, go on, Miss Collins.

Would this be appropriate? Conceivably there might be a situation in which the boss-secretary relationship would allow it but it would be atypical. More usually the boss would wield the power and not, therefore, need to wheedle a secretary into doing something. From this we could conclude that our fourth criterion is also valid for this example. The textbook exercises here, unless there was a fair amount of intervention from the teacher, could give rise to confusion between formal and informal registers and thus may lead to offense on the part of the hearer. Though the second criterion is adhered to in that there are only two situations presented, the third is violated as inadequate practice is given to enable learners to properly use the language forms presented.

I want now to look briefly at what is known about native-speaker rules of speaking for requests to see whether the textbook data approximates them. Levinson (op. cit.: 360-361) notes that *pre-requests* are a common feature and he suggests that there is a preference ranking for request sequences:

.... what we may now suggest is that there may also be a preference for the avoidance of requests altogether. So, if you can see that someone wants something, and a pre-request

may be an effective clue to that, then it may be most preferred to provide it without more ado, next most preferred to offer, and third in preference to simply solicit the request. If this is correct, then after a pre-request, we have the following preference ranking operating over three kinds of sequences (ignoring those that are aborted when preconditions are not met):

- (i) most preferred:
  - Position 1: (pre-request)
  - Position 4: (response to non-overt request)
- (ii) next preferred:
  - Position 1: (pre-request)
  - Position 2: (offer)
  - Position 3: (acceptance of offer)
- (iii) least preferred:
  - Position 1: (pre-request)
  - Position 2: (go-ahead)
  - Position 3: (request)
  - Position 4: (compliance)

[I should perhaps emphasise that pre-requests are common but not universal features of request sequences.]

Turning to the *language* of requests, Leech and Svartvik (1975: 147) have this to say (the brackets <> indicate variety labels):

It is often more <tactful> to use a request rather than a command: *i.e.* to ask your hearer whether he is willing or able to do something. The auxiliaries *will/would* (= willingness) and *can/could* (= ability) can be used:

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| (A) <i>Will</i> you pass the salt, please?  | (B) Yes, certainly.                 |
| (A) <i>Would</i> you please pass the salt?  |                                     |
| (A) <i>Can</i> you possibly give me a lift? | (B) No, I'm afraid not, because ... |
| (A) <i>Could</i> you lend me your pen?      | (B) O.K. <familiar> Here it is.     |

... *Would* and *could* are more <tactful> than *will* and *can*.

There are many more indirect ways of making a <polite> request; *e.g.* you can make a statement about your own wishes. The following are listed roughly in order of least to most <polite>:

- I wouldn't mind a drink, if you have one.
- Would you mind typing this letter?
- I wonder if you'd mind giving me his address? ... etc.

In Dialogue 2 the request sequence can be equated with Levinson's "least preferred"

sequence. "Er, Miss Collins" functions as a *pre-request* as it gets the hearer's attention and indicates to her that a request to do something will follow. Her "Yes, Mr Lewis?" is the "go-ahead" and then the request follows. There is, however, a departure from the sequence in that the secretary does not immediately comply with the request but attempts to refuse it. It is only when Mr Lewis asserts his power that she complies. But, broadly speaking, the request sequence in the textbook follows a usual native-speaker pattern.

The initial language used in the sequence is also Leech and Svartvik's language of polite requests: Mr Lewis makes a statement about his own wishes. Obviously he expects compliance and when this is not forthcoming he uses an indirect command. The final request "See that gets off today, Miss Collins" -- is, in fact, also a command made more polite by the addition of "would you?" Use of these forms raises questions which could form the basis of useful work about language, and is something to which I shall return in the following sections.

Dialogue 1 has no pre-request, starting with a direct request using language "Can I ...?" that Leech and Svartvik say is less tactful than other forms. It might be argued that, as the child knows his mother will be reluctant to grant his request, it would be situationally more appropriate for him to use more polite language, perhaps in the form of an indirect request, and also that a pre-request might have been useful in assessing whether or not conditions were such that a request was likely to be granted (*e.g.* "Mum, are you and Dad going out next weekend?"). However, as Leech and Svartvik point out (*op. cit.* 25), "when we know someone well or intimately, we tend to drop polite forms of language." Thus, for Tony to use "Can I ...?" in Dialogue 1 and for his mother to use "... will you?" -- less polite forms -- indicates not lack of respect but an intimate relationship. This is true for modern-day English but, obviously, is not necessarily true of other languages in which forms of address to elders/relatives may be more rigidly defined (or even of English at other times). The intimate mother-child relationship may also be the cause of Tony dropping the pre-request: perhaps he feels he knows his mother well enough not to worry about estab-



lishing pre-conditions for the successful granting of his request. We can only postulate reasons in this fictitious dialogue, we cannot posit hard and fast rules. All that we can conclude is that, as far as we are able to judge, the dialogue conforms to rules of speaking for requests for participants such as these who are intimate with each other.

Dialogue 1 leads us into very complex areas, those where we want to judge the acceptability of request sequences and language forms on the basis of the relationship between participants. This will inevitably give rise to a case by case analysis for acceptability of language use by different participants in different situations. Clearly it is not practical for EFL teachers to preface every remark they make about the language in the classroom with "Well, it depends ...". Rather, we must be concerned with a *common core*, whether it be for informal, formal or "neutral" situations. This follows from the second criterion, teaching gross distinctions using the least marked language with the widest applicability.

Dialogue 2 also leads us to consider complex rules of speaking — those of "most preferred" and "least preferred" request sequences where compliance is expected and given. What is evident here is that the most preferred sequences require the greatest degree of *interpretation* of situations and the greatest degree of sophisticated language use. In these, the hearer has to (a) realise that the speaker wants something, (b) deduce what it is that is wanted and then (c) offer to provide it to the speaker. Paradoxically, this may be represented by much simpler language *forms* than less preferred sequences. If Dialogue 2 were to follow the most preferred sequence, for example, it would be something like this:

Mr L: Er, Miss Collins.

Miss C: Yes, Mr Lewis? Do you want me to type a letter?

It would be a mistake to assume, however, that what is linguistically least complicated is always easiest to learn how to use. From analysis of Dialogue 2, I would like to infer a fifth criterion for dealing with rules of speaking:

(5) If there are many possible variations in language use for any given situation, teach the most "direct" sequences first: "indirect" sequences will usually involve more sophisticated under-

standing of situations and manipulation of language.

I noted in passing when discussing Dialogue 1 that it is not necessarily true of languages other than English that one tends to drop polite forms with people one knows well or intimately. Some languages make extensive use of honorifics as status-markers and their use would not be relaxed for family relationships, for example. Saville-Troike (op. cit.: 92-93) cites the situation in some Indian villages where women cannot even mention their husband's name. With monolingual classes, or classes where there is a common *lingua franca*, where rules of speaking for these languages are radically different from those of English, there is a case, I feel, for making basic rules *explicit* at some stage in teaching rather than letting students just deduce them from examples without comment. It is possible that they may find some rules so strange that only incomprehension will result. So, for the example from Dialogue 1, if students use formal modes of address to their own parents, we could *tell* them, at some stage of the teaching-learning process, that in western English-speaking countries there is no need for a child to use formal speech with a parent. (Differences such as these can also be exploited and made the basis for language work.) Following from this, I would like to propose a sixth criterion:

(6) Where basic rules of speaking for English are radically different from those of the first language or the *lingua franca* of the class, reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding by making them *explicit* at some stage of the teaching/learning process.

Obviously, for this to be successful the teacher must have adequate knowledge of rules of speaking for the first language or *lingua franca* of the class (which I shall assume to be the case for most national, school-based teaching) as well as of those of English (which cannot be assumed). It is to this question of sensitising non-native speakers to rules of speaking for English that I would now like to turn.

#### SENSITISING NNS TO RULES OF SPEAKING FOR ENGLISH

In the discussion so far I have drawn broad criteria for dealing with rules of speaking which can

be applied to classes of school students. It is, however, *teachers* who will have to operate these criteria. How can they do so successfully?

It is axiomatic that teachers should know more than their students about the rules of speaking for English: it is this fuller understanding which helps them to teach the language effectively. Without it, they are merely attempting to transmit what they themselves have learnt. But just how much more should they know? I do not think it possible or even desirable to quantify this. What I think is much more productive is to provide teachers with ways of approaching, seeing, and analysing the language in use so that they are given the tools to deepen their own understanding for themselves. The answer to the question is skill-based rather than knowledge-based. I would now like to outline, therefore, some suggestions for practising these skills. The suggestions apply either to pre- or to in-service training.

We need to have communication between native-speakers as data for exercises. This could be in the form of video or audio recordings or transcripts of conversations. Sources for such data could be television (few countries do not import English-medium programmes) or radio (the BBC's "World Service," for example). Many British universities also have banks of native-speaker data. A teacher-training exercise in itself would be to ask teachers to make transcripts of parts of programmes. This would give valuable practice in listening to a stress-timed language with its peculiarities (grammatical words often being difficult to hear, for example) and, if done in groups, with problems of literal interpretation of sounds (different people sometimes hear different things). Once we have the data, however, what can we do with it?

Teachers could, first of all, listen to a tape-recording and then be asked to identify the *situation* in which the conversation is taking place. Further, they can be asked to identify the features which lead them to their answers. The most obvious feature is likely to be the *topic* of the conversation, but there are other possibilities such as background noise, voice quality (e.g. a hushed voice in a museum) or specific linguistic markers (e.g. in a school, speaker A addresses B as "Sir"). Even from such a superficial analysis as this

teachers can be asked to speculate about possible rules of speaking for a situation, e.g. "In Britain people usually talk softly when they are in a museum." Another initial approach might be to look at a transcript to identify the situation. Teachers could either be free to suggest situations or be given a series of possibilities: in either case they should also be asked to justify their choice. This would obviously rely solely on linguistic features but has the benefit of getting teachers to begin to identify language specific to certain situations.

What teachers are beginning to do in this is to develop an *interpretative faculty*. This interpretative faculty needs, however, to be further developed and extended by analysing native-speaker data for traits which are usually little covered. What I am referring to are ways in which such things as rôles, relationships, status, social distance, power and language behaviour related to gender and age manifest themselves. (Which of these aspects are explored is, of course, dependent on the nature of the data.)

To continue with analysis of a tape-recording, having identified the situation, teachers could then listen and be asked to try to specify the *relationship* between the participants. (For simplicity's sake I am confining discussion to dialogues.) This could either be done freely or, especially in the initial stages of working with data in this way, teachers could be given a checklist. For example:

The speakers are related/not related.

If related, speakers are:	If not related, speakers are:
husband/wife	manager/worker
mother/child	customer/shop assistant
brothers	teacher/student
etc.	friends
	etc.

Again, teachers need to *justify* their choices. What is it in the recording that tells them that participants are friends rather than customer/shop assistant, for example? They can also identify respective rôles where there is a choice and be asked to say what it was in the recording that led them to their conclusions.

Once the relationship between participants has been made clear, further analysis can be made of that relationship, e.g.: "Is A superior to B, or vice-

versa? How can you tell?" Teachers may perhaps give rather general answers at first ("A is superior to B because s/he sounds more important") but they can then be led to look more closely at the features with which power and superiority are manifested in a conversation. For example:

- (1) *Time* the conversation. Time how long A speaks and how long B speaks.
- (2) Who chooses the *topics* of the conversation? Count how many times A and B introduce topics.
- (3) Count the number of *turns* A and B have in the conversation.
- (4) How many times does A *interrupt* B and vice-versa?
- (5) How does A interrupt B and vice-versa: what sort of *language* is used?

From an analysis such as this, teachers can then be asked to draw general conclusions about the behaviour of the participants, which in effect gives them rules of speaking for the situation. They might conclude, for example:

People in positions of power can interrupt inferiors without fear of sanction.

Or:

People in positions of power tend to have most talking time in conversations.

Teachers could also be asked to look closely at the *language* that is used by participants in the dialogue, seeing how specific language is used by, for example, those in a superior position to claim turns or those in an inferior position to interrupt superiors. Particular social relationships, rôles, and identities are encoded in particular language and teachers ought to be aware, at least generally, of the linkages.

Use of video recordings presents additional opportunities to explore different aspects of rules of speaking. Videos obviously reveal contextual clues that cannot be gained from audio recordings alone and, more to the point here, they allow viewers to examine paralinguistic features. This might be an interesting way to examine how *gender* and *age* affect, for example, how participants relate to one another in a conversation. Suppose, for example, a video recording showed the work situation of a male manager talking to a female secretary. Teachers could watch this without the sound and

be asked to say what the manager's *attitude* is towards his secretary, and vice-versa. Teachers could be free to describe for themselves or they could be given a list of adjectives from which to choose, e.g.:

The manager is:

domineering  
deferential  
respectful  
patronising  
fawning  
aloof  
friendly  
etc.

(It would be interesting if teachers were asked to choose from the same list for both manager and secretary — also revealing something perhaps of their own attitudes to gender.) They would, once again, have to identify features which led them to their conclusions, focussing on "body language": facial expressions, head and eye movements, gestures and even posture. Conclusions could be verified by reviewing the video with sound and then further analysis of the kind described previously could be done.

All conclusions, whether derived from linguistic or paralinguistic features, will obviously be data-specific and the question of their generalisability needs to be considered. This is something that teachers ought to do for themselves as they encounter further instances of English in use, rather than relying on, say, a college lecturer with a greater degree of cultural competence to do it for them. When learning the grammar of a language, learners test hypotheses against new samples of language and hypotheses about rules of speaking can also be tested in much the same way. This is the advantage of giving teachers tools for analysis, skills, in preference to someone else's knowledge.

An aid to analysis that I have only briefly touched on so far is knowledge of a first language or *lingua franca*. Teachers and students of EFL come to the classroom as successful learners of at least one other language and I would contend, as far as rules of speaking are concerned, that this is something to be capitalised upon rather than seen as just a source of "interference." Teachers should be encouraged to make cross-cultural com-

parisons about rules of speaking. Prior to analysing native-speaker data, for example, teachers could be asked to explain what they know of rules of speaking for similar situations in their first language or *lingua franca*. (This could replace the earlier exercise on identifying situations.) They could then speculate from their existing knowledge as to whether rules for English are likely to be similar or different (in terms of kinds of language used, levels of formality, etc.). It follows from the sixth criterion proposed earlier that teachers need to know about rules of speaking for their first language or *lingua franca* in order to judge whether or not to make a rule of speaking for English explicit, and this type of exercise could assist in raising their awareness of them.

In this section I have tried to show how teachers can be guided in analysing native-speaker language data in such a way that they can consider features associated with power, gender, age, rôles, relationships and so on — part of the basis of rules of speaking. I would argue that these kinds of features are neglected in traditional EFL teaching at all levels. All too often exercises are limited to questions about feelings — “Which words show you that X is angry/happy/sad, etc.?” I have also briefly suggested that exercises highlighting cross-cultural comparisons can be valuable in both understanding rules of speaking for English and raising awareness of them in the first language or *lingua franca*. I have said that knowledge of both sets of rules is needed for teachers. I am not, of course, suggesting that there should be an unvarying diet of in-depth analysis such as this but only that it has an important place in teacher training, in leading teachers to a greater degree of understanding of rules of speaking and, therefore, of cultural competence. It is doubtful if non-native speaking teachers, especially those working in environments where English is a foreign rather than a second language, will ever be fully “culturally competent.” Provided, however, that they have developed sensitivity to rules of speaking they will have the basis from which to make informed judgements about what to teach their students. I would now like to consider briefly in what ways native-speaker rules of speaking may be approached for *students* of English as a foreign language.

## NS RULES OF SPEAKING AND EFL TEACHING IN SCHOOLS

I want to suggest that some of the approaches and activities I have outlined for teachers are also relevant to students in schools. Obviously, there are differences which would require modification of them. Students’ language level and, thereby, cultural competence are much lower than teachers’ and I have suggested already that teachers will have to “grade” rules of speaking in various ways so that students will derive maximum benefit from their lessons. However, students also have a *developing* competence and teachers can grade the activities discussed previously to suit their classes as, indeed, they grade other kinds of exercises. I would argue the case for making students more aware of those neglected areas of language in use that I spoke of earlier. Additionally, these activities may help to redress problems caused by weaknesses such as the ones I explored in my examination of textbook data and which led to my outlining six broad criteria for dealing with native-speaker rules of speaking. To contextualise proposals a little, what follows may be said to be broadly suitable for upper secondary, intermediate level students.

As I have already mentioned, students come to the classroom as successful learners of at least one other language and, in many cases, of more than one. They have, therefore, knowledge of how a language operates even though this may be passive knowledge which is only subconsciously used. I would suggest that this be made more active and used to create similar awareness of rules of speaking for English. To take a simple example, students will have an intuition that they cannot express some things in their first language or *lingua franca* in the same way to all kinds of people. If a class comes to the topic, say, of “giving excuses,” students could first of all be asked to list how they would give excuses in a variety of situations in their own language. (Give an excuse to your teacher for not doing your homework. Give an excuse to your friend for forgetting to give back the money you borrowed. Your grandfather says you walked past him in the street without greeting him — make an excuse. And so on.) They could next be asked if they could use the same phrases in all situations and, if not, why

not. Presumably they would say not, because "it wouldn't be appropriate" or "you just don't speak like that to your grandfather" or whatever. This should not be a protracted exercise but done quickly to make students conscious of the issue of situational appropriacy. This awareness can then be used as the starting point for work on "giving excuses" in English in different situations. The rationale is that, if students of EFL have no support for their language learning efforts outside the classroom, they will perhaps remember something more readily if they have some existing knowledge to relate it to, in this case knowledge of different ways to give excuses and to whom in their own language. Cross-cultural differences in rules of speaking can be exploited to the same end, highlighting contrasts also serving as a memory prompt of how English operates in a different way to the first language or *lingua franca* in a similar setting. (I have said previously that making radical differences explicit may also be necessary to prevent misunderstanding and misuse of rules for English.)

Linkage of specific language to specific situations (and, therefore, the beginning of understanding of rules of speaking) can be done by asking students to listen to recordings or to look at transcripts of dialogues in order to identify where certain conversations might be heard. Swan and Walter's *Cambridge English Course* (op. cit.: 92) has an exercise matching *phrases* to situations but I think this would be more productive if it were in short dialogue form, thus giving a better "flavour" of situational appropriacy.

Other aspects of rules of speaking can be investigated via tape recordings — cassettes accompany most English courses nowadays and these commonly use dialogues for listening comprehension exercises. As with teachers and native-speaker data, students could be asked to guess the *relationship* between the participants and perhaps their *status*. Depending on the dialogue they could then be asked to look at language used by the different participants. Going back to the second dialogue in example 2 concerning "requests," students could be asked to pick out expressions which show that Mr Lewis is "in charge" or to see how Miss Lewis tries to evade complying with the request and how her language

changes when Mr Lewis asserts his power. (What does Miss Lewis say when she wants to refuse the request? What does she say when Mr Lewis *tells* her to do something?) If this language specifically linked to rôles is also combined with work on *attitudes* (Mr Lewis is: bossy/impatient, etc. How does he show this?), it makes ensuing preparation of conversations/rôle play that much more realistic. Students could then be led to play rôles with feeling rather than simply mechanically mouthing phrases that have no real life or meaning for them.

The suggestions I have given here are obviously limited but I hope the principle is clear. To begin to develop communicative or cultural competence students as well as teachers must be led to consider in more detail on occasion aspects of rules of speaking which English courses rarely address. I have suggested broad criteria for selecting *which* rules to teach but the depth in which these are investigated is a teacher's decision. Treatment will inevitably vary from rule to rule but underlying all should be the aim to give students *skills* with which to continue their own development as well as simple *knowledge*.

## CONCLUSION

In this article I have looked at some of the difficulties inherent in the trend towards basing the teaching of English as a foreign language in schools upon the development of "communicative competence" in learners. I have suggested that what this logically entails may not always be sufficiently taken account of in teaching. I have examined examples of rules of speaking for English and compared these with their representations in two textbooks. I have indicated that rules of speaking may sometimes be poorly or confusingly presented to students and offered six broad criteria to help teachers in their approach to teaching them. (There are obvious implications for textbook writers here, too.) I have outlined some ways in which teachers may practise skills to develop their own communicative or cultural competence as the basis from which to operate these criteria. I have, finally, argued that students would also benefit from learning various aspects of rules of speaking or communicative behaviour (such as those relating to rôles, relationships, power, gender, etc.) which are often neglected. If

the teaching of English as a foreign language in schools is to have validity, it must take account of native-speaker rules of speaking but this should not be confined to the transmission of knowledge

about rules. Students should also practise skills to see how such rules operate. These skills will be valuable at whatever level of complexity the rules are presented.

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APPENDIX ONE — TEXTBOOK DATA FROM *BASIC SKILLS IN ENGLISH*

## 3

## Hello, Can I help You?

A. You are going to listen to the following telephone conversations. Repeat each sentence you hear.



## TAPESCRIPT FOR SECTION B

*Susan:* Hello!

*Aishah:* Hello, good morning. May I speak to Susan, please?

*Susan:* Speaking.

*Aishah:* Hi, Susan. This is Aishah. Would you like to come to my house and play 'Scrabbles' today?

*Susan:* Yes, I'd like to. I'll come over now.

*Aishah:* Good, see you then.

*Susan:* Bye.

## True/False Statements

1. Aishah calls Susan in the morning.
2. Aishah picks up the telephone when it rings.
3. Aishah invites Susan to her house for lunch.
4. Susan is going to Aishah's house



## C. Pair Activity

Choose a partner. Then carry out a telephone conversation with your partner according to the situations given.

Situation I	You want to invite your friend to your house for tea.
Situation II	You want to ask your friend to lend you a book.

D. The following telephone conversation will be read to you. Listen carefully.



Hello, mother. This is Jamil speaking.

Yes, Jamil.  
What's the matter?



Please come and take me home. The scouts meeting is over.

All right. I'll come now.

## Pair Activity

Follow the above telephone conversation and role play these situations with your partner.

Situation I	Your friend's birthday party is over. You want to ask your father to take you home.
Situation II	Your karate lesson is not over yet. You want to tell your mother to fetch you an hour later.

E. What do you do when there is an emergency like an accident, a fire or a robbery? See what Raju and Amin do in the following situations. Repeat the conversations after your teacher and then role-play the two situations.

<b>I There has been a robbery. Raju quickly runs to a telephone booth and calls the police.</b>	
<i>Police:</i>	Hello, can I help you?
<i>Raju:</i>	Is that the police station, please?
<i>Police:</i>	Yes, this is the police station.
<i>Raju:</i>	There has been a robbery in Jalan Wangi.
<i>Police:</i>	What is the address, please?
<i>Raju:</i>	22, Jalan Wangi, Ipoh.
<i>Police:</i>	We'll send our men over right away.

<b>II Amir's neighbour's house is on fire. He quickly dials 999.</b>	
<i>Operator:</i>	Hello, 999. Can I help you?
<i>Amin:</i>	Yes, my neighbour's house is on fire. Please send for the fire brigade at once.
<i>Operator:</i>	What is the address, please?
<i>Amin:</i>	92, Jalan Sentosa, Segamat.
<i>Operator:</i>	Right, the fire brigade will be there in a few minutes.

## APPENDIX TWO — TEXTBOOK DATA FROM CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH COURSE, BOOK 2

## Unit 24

**B**

All right, I suppose so



**1** Read the dialogue and then listen to the recording. There are twelve differences between the recorded version and the printed version. Can you find them all?

TONY Mum, can I have a party next weekend?  
 MOTHER Well, I don't know. How many people?  
 TONY About 20, I think.  
 MOTHER You're not going to invite that Edwards boy, are you?  
 TONY Well, —  
 MOTHER Because I'm not having him in the house  
 TONY All right, Mum, Well, can I?  
 MOTHER You remember what happened last time?  
 TONY Oh, go on, Mum. We'll be very careful. I promise  
 MOTHER Well, all right, I suppose so. But you *must* tell me exactly how many are coming, and you *must* tidy up afterwards  
 TONY OK, Mum  
 MOTHER And do be careful of the carpet.  
 TONY All right, Mum.  
 MOTHER And you won't play your father's jazz records, will you? You know he doesn't like you to  
 TONY No, Mum. OK.  
 MOTHER And you *must* get everybody out by midnight  
 TONY Yes, Mum.  
 MOTHER And don't make too much noise, will you?  
 TONY No, Mum  
 MOTHER And don't . . .



**2** Try to complete this dialogue with the words and expressions from the box. Then listen to the recording and see if you were right.

afraid   been trying   been waiting   by  
for   goes   have to   have to   if me to  
month   must   must   to   urgent   us to  
won't   you to

MR L: Er, Miss Collins.  
MISS C: Yes, Mr Lewis?  
MR L: I'd like ..... do a couple of letters for me, ..... you don't mind.  
MISS C: Well, er, Mr Martin has just asked ..... do a letter for him. He says it's .....  
MR L: Well, I'm ..... he'll ..... wait. I've ..... to get these letters written all week, and they ..... go today. I ..... keep you long.  
MISS C: Right, Mr Lewis.  
MR L: This letter is ..... John Barlow, at Barlow and Fletcher, in Manchester.  
'Dear Mr Barlow  
Thank you for your letter of April 14, in which you ask ..... wait a further six weeks for delivery of our order. I am afraid that this is out of the question. We have already ..... eight weeks ..... these urgently needed parts, and we ..... have them by the end of the ..... If they do not arrive ..... April 30, I regret to say that we shall ..... cancel the order and look elsewhere.  
Yours sincerely  
Paul Lewis'  
See that ..... today, Miss Collins, would you?  
MISS C: Yes, of course, Mr Lewis.  
MR L: And now a letter to ...

**3** Can you complete the sentences?

1. Tony's mother told him ..... invite the Edwards boy.
2. She told him ..... her how many were coming.
3. She ..... tidy up afterwards.
4. She ..... of the carpet.
5. She ..... play his father's jazz records.
6. .... everybody out by midnight.
7. .... noise.
8. Mr Lewis asked Miss Collins ..... a couple of letters for him.
9. Mr Barlow had ..... Mr Lewis ..... six more weeks.
10. Mr Lewis ..... see that the letter went the same day.

**4** Say these sentences in two ways: first with an ordinary pronunciation of *must* (/ms/) and then with an emphatic pronunciation (/mast/).

1. You must tell me.
2. You must tidy up afterwards.
3. You must get everybody out.
4. They must go today.
5. We must have them by the end of the month.

**5** Look at the dialogues and write down ten or so expressions that you want to learn and remember.

**6** Work with another student and prepare a conversation for one of the following situations. Use some of the expressions that you have learnt from the dialogue.

1. A fifteen-year-old asks his or her father or mother for permission to go on a cycling holiday abroad.
2. A boss asks his or her secretary to do something; the secretary has too much work.
3. A fourteen-year-old wants to go to an all-night party; father or mother doesn't like the idea.
4. A shop assistant asks the manager for a day off.

**Note:** For the next lesson (Unit 25 Lesson A) you may need to bring pictures. Ask your teacher.