

A Balanced Approach to Teaching L2 Speaking in China

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ABSTRACT

In many EFL contexts, the ability to speak fluently is often the goal of L2 learning. However, L2 teachers may not be well-equipped to help their L2 learners achieve this goal. Some may still be using antiquated teaching methods that may in fact impede or even harm learners' speaking development, while others may use teaching methods that overly emphasize certain dimensions of speaking skills (e.g., linguistic or cognitive aspect) and neglect the other equally important dimensions (e.g., affective and metacognitive aspects). This paper first examines two approaches to teaching speaking: the direct/controlled approach and the indirect/transfer approach, highlighting their major strengths and weaknesses. It then describes a more recent approach, proposed by Goh and Burns (2012), which combines the strengths of the older approaches into a more coherent and comprehensive model for teaching speaking. A lesson plan will then be presented to exemplify how this approach might pan out in a speaking lesson designed for a group of intermediate students in China.

KEYWORDS: approaches to L2 speaking, L2 speaking lesson plans, teaching L2 speaking

Introduction

The ability to speak accurately and fluently is often the ultimate goal of L2 learning. However, there seems to be little consensus in terms of which approach would work optimally for different groups of learners learning English in different contexts. Broadly speaking, the many approaches to teaching speaking could be categorized into two types: the direct/controlled approach which focuses more on language form, and the indirect/transfer approach which gives more emphasis on language use in communication. In the direct/controlled approach, teachers tend to give too much emphasis on the language aspects of speaking, so much so that learners may develop grammatical competence but may not be able to use the target language appropriately in communicative situations. In the indirect/transfer approach, heavy emphasis is put on teaching the communicative aspects of speaking with very little attention to helping learners develop their language competence. This often results in learners who may be able to express their thoughts and feelings fluently but their speech may contain serious language-related problems. Hence, what is needed is a model of teaching speaking that takes into account both the linguistic and communicative dimensions of speaking.

This paper first offers brief discussions of the two groups of approaches, highlighting their advantages and limitations, and then proposes a lesson plan which is based on a model of teaching L2 speaking proposed by Goh and Burns (2012). Referred to as a teaching-speaking cycle, this model provides a more balanced approach to teaching speaking, addressing not only the linguistic but also the communicative needs of the students in a systematic and coherent manner. In addition, this model incorporates a strong metacognitive component in the various stages of the cycle so that students become more aware of the linguistic and cognitive processes that underpin the conceptualization, formulation and production stages of L2 speech (Goh, 2007).

Direct/controlled approach

Taking the practice of focusing on language forms as the core of teaching, the direct/controlled approach focuses on language accuracy and makes great use of repetitive drills. As noted by Ellis (2008), “(such) practice... involves an attempt to supply the learner with plentiful opportunities for producing targeted structures in controlled and free language use” (p. 480). With the targeted structures as the major focus, teachers would ask students to repeat basic structures in translation exercises as in a Grammar Translation method, or they might engage students in repetitive and mindless drills as in an Audiolingual Method (DeKeyser, 1998). These types of activities are particularly useful to help students memorize targeted structures accurately (DeKeyser, 2001), and raise learners’ awareness of the language knowledge (Goh & Burns, 2012), but may not be effective in preparing students for authentic communication (DeKeyser, 1998; Ellis, 2008; Johnson, 1996). In other words, although the direct/controlled approach could help foster isolated speaking skills, it has paid insufficient attention to how language is used in authentic and realistic contexts and thus cannot provide effective support to learners’ speaking development in the long run.

Indirect/transfer approach

The indirect/transfer approach was introduced in the 1980s when the theory of communicative competence gained popularity. According to this approach, teachers should plan activities that prompt authentic communications, where students would focus on the negotiation of meanings rather than on the accuracy of language features. It is said that instructions of this type would help learners develop fluency in spoken English and later transfer their speaking skills to real-life situations. Based on the assumption that L2 can be acquired through real-life communications with people speaking that language, teachers in the programme would encourage students to

express their ideas using whatever linguistic means they have at their disposal. Since the key consideration is that they should produce language that is understood by their interlocutors, students in this programme are normally given a lot of opportunities to communicate with their teachers and peers. Recent studies (e.g., Lyster, 1994; MacFarlane, 2001; Mougeon & Rehner, 2001), however, have shown that the language produced by learners involved in communicatively-oriented language programmes is seldom accurate and rarely “target-like” (Ranta & Lyster, 2007, p. 148).

Some of the key differences between the two approaches are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Differences between Direct and Indirect Approaches

	Direct approach	Indirect approach
Teaching objective	Accuracy of speech	Fluency and appropriacy of speech
Type of Practice	Repetitive drills	Extensive communicative tasks e.g. information-gap tasks
Expectations	To learn speaking knowledge and strategies explicitly	To learn speaking knowledge and skills implicitly
Criticism	Does not prepare students adequately for authentic communications	Language produced by learners often lacks grammatical accuracy

Teaching-speaking cycle

Today, many teachers are keenly aware that both the direct/controlled approach and indirect/transfer approach have their strengths and limitations, and that the teaching of speaking should focus on both fluency and accuracy. One of the recent efforts to synthesize the two approaches is a model for teaching speaking, known as the teaching speaking cycle, which Goh and Burns (2012) propose. According to them, the teaching of speaking may follow a seven-stage cycle that can be adapted to meet the particular needs of students in different contexts. The stages incorporate activities that address the linguistic, cognitive, metacognitive and affective needs of the L2 learners. The stages are briefly discussed below.

Stage 1. Focus learners’ attention on speaking. Students are usually given prompts in relation to at least one type of the metacognitive knowledge: person knowledge, task knowledge, and strategic knowledge. Questions on the prompts may include “what do you like most about learning to speak English?” (person knowledge), “what do you know about ordering food in a restaurant?” (task knowledge) and “what do you usually do when you forget the English expression for a key concept while talking with others?” (strategic knowledge).

Stage 2. Provide input and/or guided planning. Teachers provide various scaffolding to ensure the progression of the speaking tasks: vocabulary support, modeling of the task, and introduction of knowledge based on identification of possibly challenging points in the speaking task.

Stage 3. Conduct speaking tasks. At this stage, learners are encouraged to focus on meaning, expressing their thoughts using the target language. The purpose here is for students to develop speaking fluency by completing communication tasks via pair work and group work.

Stage 4. Focus on language/skills/strategies. Unlike Stage 3, this stage puts its emphasis on language accuracy rather than fluency. Learners are guided to focus on specific language features such as discourse markers and intonation patterns.

Stage 5. Repeat the speaking task. Here, learners are to repeat the speaking task of stage 3 so that they can practice knowledge and skills introduced at the earlier stages. It should be noted that minor changes in the repetitions are needed so as to make the task repetition interesting and engaging.

Stage 6. Direct learners' reflection on learning. Activities at this stage encourage learners to reflect on what they have learned in the speaking lesson. Structured reflections that encourage students to examine what they have or have not done well is believed to have facilitative effects on language acquisition (Goh & Burns, 2012). Guided reflection can also help students notice their small improvements and hence motivate them to further improve their speaking skills.

Stage 7. Provide constructive feedback on learning. Feedback is essential for learning and this stage allows teachers to provide personalized feedback based on each individual student's reflections produced in Stage 6.

Application of the teaching-speaking cycle

Learners and learning contexts

In China, English has for years been regarded by the government as an important tool in modernizing the country and thanks to that, the English course has been a required basic course for children since they enter the secondary school. Among parents, English is highlighted to such an extent that an increasing number of private training centers have rushed in to offer English courses to young children in kindergartens. Given the increasing popularity of English, it is not surprising that English has become a huge industry in China.

English is important for college students too. According to Yang (2008), the majority of Chinese college students think that acquiring English is important to them and it is very desirable to speak English well. Interestingly, despite such great enthusiasm for English learning, the English speaking competence of most Chinese college students remains unsatisfying. According to Chen and Luo (2012), non-English major students in China are generally weak in spoken English: students' speech is usually marked by a lack of fluency, poor pronunciation, and inaccurate use of vocabularies.

The reasons behind such weakness are three folds: first, while English study tends to take a large amount of students and teachers' time, the focus of the study is seldom placed on speaking. Assessed in neither *Gao Kao* (the entrance examination for college in China) nor the College English Test Band 4 (CET 4), the renowned standardized English test directed by the Higher Education of the Ministry of Education in China, speaking skills are understandably neglected in most English classrooms. Second, since English is a foreign language in China, learners do not really need to utilize the spoken form of the language in their daily life and therefore lack the motivation to improve their speaking competence. The third reason is related to the way spoken English is typically taught in China. More often than not, the objective of a speaking class is to help students acquire vocabularies and syntactic patterns related to a particular topic so that students can find something to say when they have to talk about things in English. A typical speaking lesson in China would start with an introduction of a topic, and then the teacher would present templates and samples that students should learn about by the end of the class. After that,

students would be given 15 or 20 minutes to work in groups on a speaking task, applying the templates into their own talks.

The teacher would then walk around the classroom to provide help. Once that is done, each group would take turns giving a class presentation. Finally, the teacher would comment briefly on students' performance and highlight key learning points (normally some language-related aspects) for further reinforcement (Li, 2014). Thus the teaching approach is more closely associated with the more direct/controlled approach and may have limited effects on students' L2 speaking development.

The lesson plan proposed in this paper is targeted towards a group of non-English major undergraduates in China for a course titled "English Speaking for Communication". This course is a recent effort to reform the traditional English course called College English (CE), a required basic course for all non-English major undergraduates in Chinese tertiary education. According to the course outline, the objective of the course is to develop students' speaking performance in authentic communications, especially in situations where the purpose of the talk is to complete other activities. To that end, students are given a 2-hour instruction on a weekly basis for 16 weeks. Two common complaints of teachers of this course are that the students' speech is usually not fluent and hard to follow, and that many do not know how to respond when failing to understand their partners.

Although the lesson plan is developed in the context of ELT in China and seems to target a topic that is somewhat specific to the Chinese context, the theoretical rationale of the lesson and the instructional procedures outlined in the lesson can be easily adapted to similar L2 learning contexts in different parts of the world. In many other ELT contexts where English is taught as a foreign language (e.g., Cambodia, Indonesia, Korea and Japan), learners often face similar problems when trying to use English for authentic communication; some may have strong grammatical competence, but can barely use them in real situations while others are fluent users but whose speech production is often marked by linguistic inaccuracies (Renandya, 2013; Richards, 2008, 2010). The lesson plan outlined below aims to address this imbalance, by giving attention to both language accuracy and fluency and providing learners with opportunities to use language appropriately according to the demand of the communicative contexts.

Speaking Task	Role-play task	
Theme/Topic	Ordering food in a western food restaurant	
Time	2 hours, with a 10-minute break	
Speaking Skills Developed	To develop students' skills in asking for/giving information; to enrich knowledge about prosodic features	
Speaking Strategies Practiced	Interaction strategies such as confirmation checks, repetition and clarification requests	
Stages	Activities	Materials
Stage One (30 min) Pre-speaking tasks: to create a relaxed atmosphere and to	1. Warming-up activity: each student is given a card with a picture and asked to find out those who get the same picture as he or she does. They are told to: a) keep	CD: the video file Appendix A: Worksheet

prepare learners for the speaking task in the next stage.	<p>the picture to themselves; b) try to use English as much as possible. The teacher would write down some expressions that might be used in this activity on the whiteboard.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Planning activity: once students sit down with their new group members, ask them to work on the worksheet (see Appendix A). 3. Building the context: a) play a video (see the CD) for the students, and ask them to note: what is the food ordering procedure in the video? b) give students the script of the video (Appendix B) and explain the relevant cultural knowledge by drawing examples from the video. c) Play the video again. 4. Group discussion: give students another conversation in this context (see Appendix C) and ask them to work on the worksheet (Appendix D) in groups. 5. Modeling: a). invite students to answer questions on the worksheet (Appendix D); b) based on students' answers, elaborate on issues related to formulaic expressions in this context, and formulaic phrases related to interaction strategies. 	<p>Appendix B: Script of the video/ Conversation One</p> <p>Appendix C: Conversation Two</p> <p>Appendix D: worksheet</p>
Stage Two (20 min) Speaking task: Communication-gap task	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide each group a menu and each member a prompt that only he or she could read (See Appendix E). 2. Students read the prompts on their own and are encouraged to use online resources to understand more about the contents in the prompts. 3. Group members role play a scenario of food ordering based on the prompts they get. 	Appendix E: Menu and Prompts for the communication-gap task
Break (10 min)		

<p>Stage Three (20 min) Post-speaking: to focus learners' attention on language use as well as the prosodic features.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite one group to perform their role-play in front of the whole class. 2. Comment on the performance by incorporating key points concerning language accuracy and interaction strategies. 3. Play the previous video again and draw students' attention to prosodic features specifically. 	
<p>Stage Four (15 min) Task Repetition: to reinforce knowledge discussed in the earlier stages, and guide students to notice some prosodic features used when ordering food.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Role play: ask students to role play the food ordering scenario again, and tell them that this time they should pay attention to language accuracy as well as prosodic features discussed in the previous stage. 2. Once they are ready, they should do it again and record their own performance using their smart phones. 	
<p>Stage Five (15 min) Directing learners' reflection on learning</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students watch their previously recorded performance and write reflections based on the provided prompt (see Appendix F). 2. They then share their reflections with their partners. 	Appendix F: Prompts for Reflection
<p>Stage Six (10 min) Summary of key learning points & teacher feedback</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teacher summarizes the key learning points of the lesson. 2. Teacher provides both general and specific feedback on student performance. 	

Overall, the lesson plan here is an application of the teaching-speaking cycle proposed by Goh and Burns (2012). The lesson plan aims to develop students' knowledge and skills for engaging in conversations, and specifically, conversations about food ordering in a western food restaurant. It is hoped that, by the end of the lesson, students can acquire relevant formulaic expressions commonly used in this setting and develop interaction strategies necessary for meaning negotiations.

In this lesson plan, formulaic expressions refer to prefabricated language used for a specific occasion (such as What do you recommend? and Any suggestion?). As pointed out by Goh and Burns (2012), formulaic phrases can facilitate lexical access, helping learners cope with "limited processing capacity and time pressure" (p. 41), and at the same time, "alleviate the pressure to produce oral language in real time" (p. 94). Lexical access rate is particularly important when working with EFL students because it could be one major reason why many students fail to produce fluent speech. In China as in many other EFL countries, the importance of vocabulary in English study is never neglected, and yet vocabularies have often been memorized as items in

glossaries that stand isolated from each other. As a result, students often cannot recall and use words which they have tried hard to remember in real communicative contexts. The slow rate of processing not only makes learners easily lose their turn in real time communication, but also has a demotivating effect on their language learning. By introducing knowledge of formulaic expressions and promoting its automatization (via task repetition in Stage 4 above), it is believed that this lesson can help promote fluency and benefit students' speech production.

“Interaction strategies”, according to Goh and Burns (2012), refer to those strategies that speakers use to express and comprehend meaning when communicating with other people. These include making comprehension checks, giving examples, and requesting clarification. These strategies are essential to novice English speakers because they enable more opportunities of output production, and therefore should be included into speaking curricula and lessons (Goh & Burns, 2012). Hopefully, by fostering interaction strategies, teachers can help students respond in an appropriate way when they fail to understand their partners.

The first point worth highlighting in this lesson plan is the warming-up activity in Stage One. In this activity, each student is given a card with a picture, and asked to find those who get the same picture as he or she does. They are told to: a) keep the picture to themselves; b) try to use English as much as possible. In order to facilitate the communication here, the teacher would write down some useful expressions for this task on the board. The major purpose of this activity is to make the classroom environment less threatening and thus relieve students of language anxiety. A low anxiety classroom atmosphere, according to Goh and Burns (2012), can have “a significant influence on the effectiveness of language learning and processing” (p. 26). This activity is considered especially necessary in this lesson because many L2 learners are normally quite reluctant to participate in formal speaking tasks at the very start of the class (Bao, 2014). In addition, the activity also prepares students for the speaking activities at the next stage: it regroups students in a way that the teacher can exert some positive influence, and it gets students to talk in English even before the speaking task begins.

The second point here is the planning activity in Stage One. This activity requires students to work on a worksheet in groups in which students are presented a menu and asked to discuss questions related to the main speaking task. In answering questions such as “what do you know about ordering food in a western-food restaurant?” and “what are the possible words and expressions you may use in a conversation of food ordering?”, learners get ample opportunities to familiarize themselves with the food-ordering role-play task of the next stage and think about the linguistic knowledge they would need to accomplish the task. According to Goh and Burns (2012), this familiarizing process can facilitate learners' conceptualization and formulation in speech production by activating their prior knowledge about the speaking task.

Another crucial point in this lesson plan is the information-gap speaking task in Stage Two. In this task, every group member is encouraged to contribute their ideas (based on the prompt they receive) to complete the food-ordering task. Since each is given a different prompt and would know only part of the knowledge necessary for the task, there would be real gaps in their knowledge that can only be filled by listening to other members in the group. Besides the motivating effect, an information-gap task also enables learners to focus on meaning rather than form, and such a focus can certainly lead to higher fluency. Some may argue that the Italian menu and prompts (see Appendix E) are too demanding to the students, and that a local menu in which everyone knows how to pronounce names of the dishes properly might be a better choice. This might be a reasonable concern, but in that case, there would not be real gaps in interaction, and the task would become much less authentic. Considering that students are given some time to

explore the prompts on the Internet before the task and each has only two or three dishes to learn about, the task should not be “too” demanding to complete.

The fourth point to make about this lesson plan is the task repetition in Stage Four. Task repetition is of great benefits to learners and has been shown to positively affect their subsequent task performance (Skehan, Bei, Li & Wang, 2012). In addition, as pointed out by Goh and Burns (2012), task repetition not only “reduces (the) cognitive load” and “facilitates automaticity in combining various types of linguistic knowledge and skills” (p. 161), but also enhances learners’ self-efficacy about English speaking. In this lesson plan, the difference between Stage Two and Stage Four is that the latter involves a practice of the prosodic knowledge. Such a repetition can, on the one hand, enable students to focus on language accuracy as well as interaction strategies emphasized at the earlier stages, and on the other hand, encourage a deliberate use of the prosodic knowledge discussed in Stage Three. In relation to the task repetition, the recording-procedure that follows deserves a special mention. Given the big class size in many EFL contexts, it is impossible to invite every group to give presentations. To avoid demotivating students who are not given a chance to demonstrate their work to the whole class, the teacher would ask students to record their own performance, and then have their recordings uploaded on the Internet (e.g., youtube). This activity is also nicely linked to the next stage of this lesson (the reflection stage), where students are given time and structured guidance to reflect on their task performance by watching their recordings.

As mentioned above, the reflection task in Stage Five encourages students to watch their own performance individually, and write a reflection in either English or their first language. It is believed that such an activity could benefit learners cognitively, metacognitively and affectively. Cognitively speaking, the reflection offers a good opportunity for students to review what they have learned in this lesson, and to “consolidate their new knowledge about language, skills and strategy use” (Goh & Burns, 2012, p. 161). Then, it encourages learners to self-regulate their own performance and develop higher metacognitive awareness about the knowledge and skills needed to produce fluent and accurate language. Finally, since English speaking is not a skill that can be developed in one lesson or two, it is necessary to make students see the small successes they have achieved in regard to English speaking, which can be immensely motivating. Also, by allowing students to write reflections in their preferred language, the lesson can further lower their language anxiety and bring about a sense of self-autonomy, which can also have a motivating effect (Dörnyei, 2001; Renandya, 2014).

A final point to make about this lesson plan is the prompt for learner reflection (see Appendix F) that is to be used in Stage Five. The prompt not only facilitates students’ reflection on their learning experience, guides them to self-regulate their learning and evaluate what they have learned from the lesson, but also leaves space for teachers to write carefully selected comments that clearly state areas that need improvement and, more importantly, areas that students have done particularly well. We feel that it is important to not only correct students’ mistakes but also highlight their achievements, regardless of how small these might seem to be. By focusing on the students’ achievements in the feedback session, we want to send a strong message that we value their efforts and hard work in the learning process. It should be noted that the written comments are unlikely to be available until the teacher has watched the students’ performance on the video and has read their personal reflections. Therefore, students would receive the feedback sheets at a later time after the class.

Conclusion

One obvious advantage of the teaching-speaking cycle is that it reflects a more balanced approach to teaching speaking and takes into account all key factors (i.e., linguistic, cognitive, metacognitive and affective factors), which can help ensure that students' language learning needs are adequately addressed. Cognitively speaking, the planning activity in Stage One activates learners' prior knowledge for the speaking task and makes it easier for them to formulate the speech; the task repetition activity of Stage Four is in line with skill acquisition theories, enabling learners to move from a more controlled to a more fluent processing of speech; the feedback stage that is deliberately incorporated in the lesson plan is another feature that allows teachers to revisit and re-teach some key learning points of the lesson.

Metacognitively speaking, the planning activity in Stage One develops learners' metacognitive knowledge about the speaking task by asking questions such as "what do you know about ordering food in a western-food restaurant?" and "what are the possible words and expressions you may use in a conversation of food ordering?"; the recording activity in Stage Four raises learners' awareness of monitoring the speech, and the reflection task in Stage Five encourages learners to evaluate their learning. Finally, in terms of affective aspects, the warning-up activity at the very start is an attempt to lower students' anxiety level, and both the modeling task in Stage One and the repetition activity in Stage Four can make the task more accessible to the learners, which thus relieves students' anxiety and raises their self-efficacy about the English speaking. This approach is also motivating in the sense that learners are guided deliberately to observe their own progress gained from the class (i.e., the reflection activity in Stage Five).

Another key feature about this approach is that it is flexible and can be adapted to meet learners' different needs in various contexts. Rather than being a rigid template to follow, this teaching-speaking cycle is more like a general guideline that can be adapted in creative ways to suit diverse learning contexts and learner needs. In this lesson plan, for instance, since the class is to target students who are particularly weak in fluency, an information-gap task of Stage Two is specifically designed to create the need of focusing on meaning. In classes that regard language accuracy as the major objective, however, teachers can easily introduce a different type of speaking task and/or allocate more time in Stage Four and engage students with tasks activities which are specifically designed to enhance the grammatical and lexical accuracy of their speech.

Speaking is a basic and yet difficult skill for EFL students. In the past few years, different approaches have been proposed to guide the teaching of speaking. The lesson plan proposed in this paper is an example of a possible application of the teaching-speaking cycle proposed by Goh and Burn (2012). Targeting specifically a group of non-English major undergraduates in China, it takes the actual ability and needs of the learners into consideration, and aims to teach "how to speak" in a pedagogically authentic speaking lesson. Given the theoretical insights that take into account the varied and complex dimensions of L2 speaking, we believe that this lesson plan can help teachers provide more systematic and structured scaffolding to their students and guide them in ways that are linguistically, cognitively and affectively well-aligned with sound principles of second and foreign language learning.

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Appendix A Worksheet 1

Group Discussion:

In the speaking task that you will be doing, you would role-play a scenario of food ordering in a western-food restaurant. Look at the following menu and discuss in group:

SPECIALS	
Starters	GRILLED PRAWNS WITH GARLIC MINISTRONE SOUP
Main courses	MOUSSAKA CHILLI CON CARNE CHICKEN CURRY
Desserts	APPLE STRUDEL CHOCOLATE BROWNIE FRUIT SALAD ICE CREAM

1. What do you know about ordering food in a western-food restaurant?
2. What are the possible words and expressions you may use in a conversation of food ordering?
3. What are the possible difficulties you might encounter in this role-play activity?

Appendix B Script of the Video/Conversation One

(You can find the menu in this video in Worksheet 1 of Appendix A)

Kate: Oh, this seems nice.

Mark: Cool.

Waitress: Good afternoon. Take a seat please.

Kate: Come this way.

Mark: Let's have a look at the menu. Thank you.

Kate: Thank you.

Waitress: The specials are on the board.

Kate: So, what sort of food do you like, Jennet?

Jennet: Well, I like spicy food, and I am not very fond of raw food. What would you recommend?

Mark: Why don't you try the chicken curry? That's nice and spicy.

Jennet: What's in it?

Mark: Chicken cooked in tomatoes and onions with Indian spices.

Jennet: I'll try it. Do we all choose the selection of dishes to share or only one dish per person?

Mark: Usually one dish per person.

Kate: Or the Moussaka looks good.

- Jennet: What's it made with?
- Kate: It's made with lamb and eggplant. It's a Greek dish.
- Jennet: How is it cooked?
- Kate: It's baked in the oven.
- Jennet: That sounds good too.
- Kate: And the starter?
- Jennet: What's Minestrone soup?
- Mark: It's an Italian soup, with vegetables and pasta. It's delicious.
- Jennet: OK. I'll have that.
- Kate: Waitress!
- Waitress: What can I get for you?
- Kate: Well, for the starter, can we have two Minestrone soups? And for the main course, one Moussaka, and one curry please? What about you, Mark?
- Mark: I'll have the prawns with garlic, and the Chilli con cane. And could you bring us some water please?
- Waitress: OK.
- Mark: Thank you.
- Kate: Thanks.
- Jennet: Thanks. What's Chilly con cane?
- Mark: It's a spicy Mexican dish with beef and beans. It's very hot.
- (After the dishes)
- Jennet: That was great. Except that I don't like cold water. I usually drink hot water.
- Kate: Hot water? We never drink hot water, except with tea. Let's have a dessert. What would you like, Jennet?
- Jennet: Any suggestions?
- Kate: Well, why don't you try the Apple Strudel? It's an Austrian dish. It's made with apple, pastry, and spices.
- Jennet: No, I am not very keen on pastry. What's the Chocolate Brownie?
- Mark: It's a kind of chocolate cake.
- Jennet: How was it made?
- Kate: It's made with flour, egg and butter.
- Mark: And lots of chocolate.
- Kate: You would love it.

- Jennet: What kind of ice-cream is there?
- Kate: I'll ask. (to the waitress) Excuse me? What flavour of ice-cream do you have?
- Waitress: Strawberry, vanilla and chocolate.
- Kate: I'll just have a fruits salad, I think.
- Mark: And Kate, what're you going to have?
- Kate: Same for me.
- Mark: Could you bring us two fruits salads and a Chocolate Brownie?
- Waitress: Sure.

Appendix C Conversation Two

- Waiter: Good evening! This way please.
(Bringing a menu to the customer and then leave.)
- Kim: Waiter!
- Waiter: Hello. Are you ready to order?
- Kim: Yes.
- Waiter: Would you like a starter?
- Kim: Yes, I'd like a bowl of chicken soup, please.
- Waiter: And what would you like for a main course?
- Kim: What would you recommend?
- Waiter: Our restaurant is famous for cannelloni.
- Kim: Cannelloni? What is that?
- Waiter: It is one of the most popular Italian pasta al forgo dishes.
- Kim: Sorry, can you say that again?
- Waiter: Well, al forno is an oven baked pasta. It is an Italian food. It's very delicious.
- Kim: OK. I think I would give a try.
- Waiter: Do you like spinach?
- Kim: Spinach? You mean the vegetable?
- Waiter: Yes. Our traditional recipe includes spinach, but some people don't seem to like spinach. So we offer a choice.
- Kim: Do you mean that I can choose between a pasta with or without spinach?
- Waiter: Yes.
- Kim: Well, spinach is fine with me.
- Waiter: OK. Would you like anything to drink?

- Kim: Yes, I'd like a cup of tea, please.
(... After Kim has finished her supper)
- Waiter: Can I bring you anything else? Any dessert?
- Kim: What do you recommend?
- Waiter: Do you want to try Lemon Sorbet?
- Kim: I know Lemon, but what is Sorbet?
- Waiter: It's a frozen dessert made from lemon juice. Or you can try Tartufo ice cream. It is one of the favourite of our customers.
- Kim: Tartufo?
- Waiter: Yes. Tartufo is an Italian ice cream dessert. It is composed of two flavours of ice cream, with fruit syrup in the centre. It is covered in a shell made of chocolate and nuts.
- Kim: Sorry, I didn't quite catch you. Can you slow down a little bit?
- Waiter: Sure. In simple words, this is an ice-cream with two flavours. The ice-cream is covered by chocolate and nuts.
- Kim: That sounds nice. Can I choose the flavours?
- Waiter: Yes, we have raspberry, strawberry, vanilla and cherry, and which two do you want?
- Kim: Oh, I like raspberry and vanilla.
- Waiter: Sure.

Appendix D Worksheet

Group Discussion:

Read the two conversations (as in Appendix B and Appendix C) carefully and discuss the following questions.

a. Complete the following table.

	Conversation One	Conversation Two
Starter(s)		
Main Course(s)		
Drinks		
Dessert(s)		

b. What is/are the tense(s) used in these two conversations?

c. What are the expressions tied to this food-ordering context?

d. In the two Conversations, what expressions have been used to ask for advice? How about those used to give advice?

e. In Conversation Two, is the customer familiar with the dishes on the menu? If not, what expressions does she use when she could not follow the waiter? What interaction strategies can you identify from these expressions? Can you think of other expressions that facilitate meaning negotiation in interactions?

Interaction Strategies	Definition	Examples
Exemplification	Offering an example to make one's point clear	
Confirmation checks	Asking listeners whether they have understood the message.	
Comprehension checks	Paraphrasing what is heard to confirm one's understanding	
Repetition	Repeating all or part of what is said to check one's own understanding	
Clarification requests	Asking the speaker to explain a point further	
Repetition requests	Asking the speaker to say something again.	
Exemplification requests	Asking the speaker to give an example.	
Assistance appeal	Asking the listener for help with difficult words.	

Appendix E Menu and Prompts for the communication-gap task*

MENU	
Appetiser	
Bruschetta	Antipasti Assortiti
Insalata Caprese	
Pasta	
Penne Arrabbiata	Spaghetti Amatriciana
Spaghetti alla Carbonara	
Dessert	
Tiramisu	Cassata Siciliana
Cannoli Siciliani	Tartufo di Pizzo

Each group member would get one of the following prompts.

Prompt A

You and your friends are on a trip in Italy and now you are to make decisions on what food to order before the waiter/waitress comes. Before the journey, you have read something about the appetizer, and you would want to contribute what you know to help your friends:

Bruschetta: A starter dish from Italy consisting of grilled bread rubbed with garlic and topped with tomatoes, mozzarella (a type of cheese), and olive oil.

Insalata Caprese: a simple Italian salad, made of sliced fresh mozzarella, tomatoes and basil, seasoned with salt, and olive oil. It was made to resemble the colours of the Italian flag: red, white, and green.

Prompt B

You and your friends are on a trip in Italy and now you are to make decisions on what food to order before the waiter/waitress comes. Before the journey, you have read something about the pasta, and you would want to contribute what you know to help your friends:

Penne Arrabbiata: Penne is a type of pasta with cylinder-shaped pieces. This dish is Penne served with a spicy sauce made from garlic, tomatoes, and red chilly peppers cooked in olive oil. “Arrabbiata” literally means “angry” in Italian, and the name of the sauce is due to the heat of the chilly peppers.

Spaghetti alla Carbonara: Spaghetti is long, thin, cylindrical, solid pasta. Carbonara is an Italian pasta dish from Rome based on eggs, cheese, bacon and black pepper.

Prompt C

You and your friends are on a trip in Italy and now you are to make decisions on what food to order before the waiter/waitress comes. Before the journey, you have read something about the dessert, and you would want to contribute what you know to help your friends:

Tiramisu: Meaning “pick me up” or “lift me up”, Tiramisu is a popular coffee-flavoured Italian dessert. It is made of ladyfingers (a finger-shaped biscuit) dipped in coffee, layered with a whipped mixture of eggs, sugar, and cheese, flavoured with cocoa.

Cannoli Siciliani: Italian pastry desserts. Cannoli consists of tube-shaped shells of fried pastry dough, filled with a sweet, creamy filling usually containing ricotta.

Prompt D

You and your friends are on a trip in Italy and now you are to make decisions on what food to order before the waiter/waitress comes. Before the journey, you have read something about the dessert, and you would want to contribute what you know to help your friends:

Cassata Siciliana: A traditional Sicily sweet, it consists of round sponge cake moistened with fruit juices or liqueur and layered with ricotta cheese, candied peel, and a chocolate or vanilla filling similar to cannoli cream.

Tartufo di Pizzo: Pizzo is the name of an Italian city. Tartufo is an Italian ice-cream dessert originating from Pizzo. It is usually composed of two or more flavours of ice cream, often with either fruit syrup or frozen fruit -- typically raspberry, strawberry or cherry -- in the centre. It is typically covered in a shell made of chocolate or cocoa, but cinnamon or nuts are also used.

*the prompts are adapted from www.wikipedia.com

Appendix F Prompt for Reflection

Directions:

Watch the video of your own performance individually, and write **Your teacher's response:** a reflection in either English or Chinese at your own choice.

1) Is the language you used appropriate to the context? If yes, in what way? If not, can you give some examples?

2) How do you think of your speaking performance today?

3) Do you find the tasks easy or difficult? Can you give an example?

4) What have you learned from today's class about yourself, about the scenario of food ordering, and about speaking strategies? What else have you learned?
