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Oracy Skills Instruction: Evaluating, Adapting and Creating Listening and Speaking Activities

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ABSTRACT: *The objective of this paper is to evaluate, modify and formulate activities related to the development of 'oracy' skills in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. In this context, 'oracy', as defined by Sifakis (2004/2018), specifically encompasses the skills of listening and speaking. Spoken discourse is differentiated from written in that it requires real-time interaction, presenting a notable challenge for the learners. (McDonough et. al., 2013). It is apparent that oracy skills play a crucial role in the overall development of students' language proficiency as they emphasize their ability to engage effectively in real-life communication situations. In the course of evaluating materials, the paper will utilize relevant literature and employ sets of criteria, tailored to the communicative requirements of spoken interaction. Subsequently, adjustments to existing activities and the creation of original ones will be proposed in line with the theoretical framework. To facilitate this process, the paper will draw on materials deriving from two teaching textbooks and examine two distinct teaching contexts, each aligned with one of the aforementioned language skills; listening and speaking.*

KEYWORDS: oracy skills, English language, foreign language, speaking, listening

INTRODUCTION

The growing demand for effective communication in English in today's society, highlights the crucial role of listening and speaking instruction in the EFL classroom. In this light, considering that there is no ideal textbook, teachers should be eager to reflect on, select, modify and even create original materials with the aim of equipping their students with skills that will make them successful users of the target language in the future.

Within this framework, the present paper addresses the evaluation, adaptation and design of listening and speaking activities in relation to two distinct textbooks and consequently two learning groups. The first part pertains to the description, assessment and subsequent modification of two

listening activities, found in a unit of a coursebook. Following a brief overview of the teaching context, the analysis will proceed by evaluating the listening input and the corresponding activities based on relevant literature. The final section of the first part provides recommendations for improvement grounded in the preceding theory.

The second part relates to the evaluation of the speaking practices of a textbook, based on criteria arising from relevant theories. These criteria will serve as the foundation for an original lesson, designed for the same class. The teaching situation is described in the first section of the second part, followed by a review of the relevant literature and the evaluation of the textbook's activities. These appear in the second and the third sections respectively. Following this assessment, the fourth and fifth sections of the second part delve into the presentation and the critical analysis of the original lesson.

Part 1. Listening

Teaching Situation

The 'classroom' consists of a single male learner who has been taught English privately for about five years and his proficiency level is, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), at B1. He is aged 13, attending the second grade of junior high school. His native language is Greek and he learns English as a foreign language. He is a highly motivated student, perceiving the learning of English as the key to global communication but also acknowledging his upcoming goal: to succeed in his B2 exams.

It is hence apparent that the coursebook currently used is primarily exam-oriented, equipping him with the necessary tools for his examination. This coursebook is called *Full Blast PLUS 4* and it was published by the MM Publications for teaching purposes. It is classified as B1 according to the CEFR and it equally examines the four language skills, building at the same time on vocabulary and grammar.

I tutor the student at his place twice a week for three hours in total, using the coursebook mentioned and adding supplementary materials when needed. The lesson takes place in the student's bedroom, where we are seated at the desk next to each other.

Description and Evaluation of the Listening Input

Below is a detailed description and evaluation of the listening inputs of a particular lesson found in the textbook based on a set of criteria proposed by Sifakis (2004/2018). The first input concerns a news broadcast regarding a robbery. The second input comprises five different conversations, revolving around a crime, an extreme sports event, an adventure, a travel and a film.

Content

Drawing on Brown and Yule's (1983) distinction between the transactional and the interactional function of communication, the first discourse is primarily transactional, with a focus on the transmission of information regarding the robbery. The second input includes elements of both functions, as the expression of content is based upon the interlocutors' social relations in each

conversation. Moreover, concerning familiar and appealing topics, both inputs efficiently activate the learners' schemata and spark their curiosity. It is this stimulation of interest that "can help students lower their affective filters toward listening, and get more out of the learning experience" (Rost, 2016, in Sifakis, 2004/2018, p.155).

Genuineness

Genuineness encompasses the features of natural speech, including natural speed of delivery, natural pauses and intonation, hesitations, false starts, self-corrections, fillers, and the use of slang and colloquialisms (Rost, 2016, in Sifakis, 2004/2018). One could also add increased assimilation, ellipsis and ungrammaticality, as mentioned by Richards (1983). The listening inputs, being scripted and performed feature only a few of the characteristics above. The speech rate is generally natural with limited instances of slowed down speed in the first input (0:48-1:25), and so is the use of pauses. Instances of hesitation can also be detected in the first input (2:07) and the second (0:31). Finally, there is some variety in pitch and volume for emphasis.

Authenticity

As suggested by Sifakis (2004/2018), there are three features related to the authenticity of input: authenticity in origin, authenticity in nature and non-authenticity. The distinction between the first two lies in that the latter is produced for pedagogical purposes, echoing the requirements of the syllabus, whereas the former is the product of "real life communicative needs" (Underwood, 1989, in Sifakis, 2004/2018, p.168). Nonetheless, the examined inputs constitute a typical example of non-authentic oral discourse, serving as a teaching tool and lacking the characteristics of spontaneous speech. This discourse is fully scripted, based on specifications of the syllabus, recorded and recited by actors, "trained to have full control of their vocal performance" (Sifakis, 2004/2018, p.175). This may result in a significant loss in genuineness, as discussed above, but it gains in sound quality and accessibility. (Sifakis, 2004/2018).

Difficulty/ Simplification

The inputs' level of difficulty has been adjusted to address the learner's needs. The majority of linguistic and grammatical features, as well as the context of the inputs are familiar and appropriate for the learner's competence level. Moreover, the high-frequency vocabulary, the rather simple structuring of sentences and the variations in pitch, combined with the use of familiar accents indicate that the inputs have undergone restrictive simplification (Sifakis, 2004/2018). As Sifakis (2004/2018) states, simplified discourse is acceptable as long as it is adjusted to the student's proficiency level.

Relevance

From the above, it becomes apparent that the listening inputs are indeed relevant to the learner's L2 competence and pre-existing knowledge. Additionally, as they derive from a coursebook designed for adolescents, they align perfectly with the requirements of the syllabus and they cater to the student's interests.

Schematic Structuring of Information

This pertains to the "organisation and the internal structure" of input, categorized as narrative, descriptive, causal, contrastive, or problem-solution-oriented. (Sifakis, 2004/2018, p.161). The first input, describing a sequence of events is predominantly narrative. In contrast, the structuring of the second discourse depends on the purpose of each conversation. While most of the conversations are problem-solution-oriented, addressing various everyday issues and proposing suitable solutions, the second dialogue could be identified primarily as narrative, and the final as descriptive.

Description and Evaluation of the Activities

Following the assessment of the listening inputs, I will provide the evaluation of the activities associated with them, in accordance to the criteria organized by Sifakis (2004/2018).

Role of Listening in the Lesson and Overall Learning Purpose

Listening is not the primary focus of the lesson; instead, it is practised alongside reading, speaking and writing. In addition to developing these skills, the lesson also concentrates on the teaching of the grammatical structure -Past Simple and Past Continuous- and the building of vocabulary. All these elements align with the main function of the lesson: narrating past events.

Listening Stages

The sequence process of tasks is crucial in the teaching of listening. In this context, the pre-listening stage provides a purpose and kindles the students' interest by activating their background knowledge. The while-listening stage involves the processing of the input, while the post-listening phase opens up the discourse for further discussion, incorporating the rest of the skills (Sifakis, 2004/2018). The first activity involves two open-ended questions in the pre-listening stage, which draw on the learners' previous knowledge of crime stories and arouse their expectations. The while-listening phase includes multiple-correct-answers and True/False exercises, whereas the post-listening stage is omitted. The second activity consists of a single while-listening multiple-choice task that invites students to select the correct picture based on the input and wh-questions.

Explaining Task Sequencing

Given that inputs address familiar topics, they incite student motivation and they urge them to engage in conversations, through the pre-listening task. Nevertheless, due to the absence of post-listening activities, the extent to which input becomes intake cannot be successfully assessed.

Skills Integration

Considering that listening, according to Sifakis (2004/2018), is 'hidden', the integration of all the skills in the listening activities is of paramount importance. In that respect, speaking is activated only through the pre-listening phase of the first activity. The role of reading, specifically skimming is also quite prominent during the while-listening stage, requiring the learners to read through questions and check their validity based on the input.

Teaching or Testing
The omission of the post-listening stage and the use of close-ended questions indicate that the activities are rather testing-oriented and non-authentic, than teaching-oriented. (Richards, 1983). On the one hand, this emphasis on testing prepares the learners appropriately for the exams, but on the other, it exerts a huge impact on the teaching process by neglecting important aspects of learning (Sifakis, 2004/2018).

Teacher monitoring of tasks
The time allotted for the completion of a task is a crucial parameter of task monitoring (Sifakis, 2004/2018). As the teacher, I allow my student some additional, time to carefully process his response after completing a certain task (i.e. time-on-task).

Feedback
The feedback is provided by me upon task completion and it is focused on accuracy and the overall performance of the learner.

Aim, Function and Learning Objectives of Activities
The listening type in all of the tasks is comprehensive/informational. Generally, the while-listening activities aim to involve students in spotting keywords, identifying topics and drawing on their world knowledge to process new information, hence implementing a combination of bottom-up and top-down processing micro-skills (Richards, 1983). However, these closed-ended activities mainly test memory, rather than comprehension, a practice that prevents students from effectively developing listening micro-skills (Richards, 1983).

Clarity of Rubrics
There are no clear specifications regarding assessment. Each multiple-choice or True/False question can be assigned a point, allowing students' performance to be graded on a scale from one to ten, or one to five, depending on the number of questions.

Relation to Listening Input-Task Authenticity and Relevance
The non-authentic listening inputs, tied with rather non-authentic activities, prioritize testing to teaching. These tasks, though relevant to the syllabus requirements and appropriate for the student's competence, may lack motivation for learners who perceive them as assessments, without connection to real-life situations. (Sifakis, 2004/2018).

Cognitive Processing during Listening Practice
The listening activities engage students primarily in intensive listening, inviting them to pay attention to details. In terms of processing, a combination of bottom-up and top-down analyses is found. Bottom-up processing, (i.e. "the extraction of meaning from the…acoustic signal"), linked to the activation of short-term memory, is practised throughout the while-listening stage, demanding learners to focus on listening input details. (Sifakis, 2004/2018, p.77). This thorough concentration on the listening input is described as hard-focused, contrasting with the soft-focused approach, employed for a general understanding (Sifakis, 2004/2018). Finally, top-down processing is also

exercised, as to make sense of the input and the activities, learners draw on their background knowledge.

Suggestions and Improvements

The information presented so far indicates that the closed-ended listening activities are focused on testing, rather than teaching. Their exam-orientation can be comprehended, considering that the textbook is itself a useful exam tool. Nonetheless, several modifications could be made to render them more authentic and consequently more motivating.

Starting from the first activity, the main 'problem' is the absence of the post-listening stage. The existence of post- and pre-listening phases, is of paramount importance as it allows the incorporation of other skills and shifts the focus from testing to teaching. (Richards, 1983). Another issue pertains to the learning value of the True/False activity. Such activities have been criticized by scholars for being stressful, and dependent on memory and reading rather than comprehension and listening. (Sifakis, 2004/2018; Ur, 2012). For this reason, I suggest the replacement of this activity with a teaching-centered, guessing one, to be employed before the multiple-choice task, during the while-listening stage. This involves pausing the audio at 1:07 and asking the student to predict the rest of the crime story, based on his expectations and what he has heard. Subsequently, he listens to the actual content to compare it with his predictions. By doing so, the student is encouraged to practice top-down micro-skills and apply his world knowledge "to work out purposes, goals and settings", "predict outcomes" and make inferences (Sifakis, 2004/2018, p.139). As a post-listening activity, the student is tasked with writing the crime story from the thief's perspective, drawing upon the input and engaging in imaginative thinking.

With these changes the activity diverges from its strictly testing nature and allows the learner to perceive listening as an integral part of a meaningful and purposeful process. Aware that he is expected to incorporate information gleaned from the recording in oral and written production, the student is motivated to engage actively in listening.

In relation to the second activity, both pre-and post-listening phases should be integrated. Concerning the pre-listening stage, I ask the student to examine the pictures and the questions and attempt to define the context of each exchange (setting, participants), applying his background schemata and inferencing skills. Besides exercising predicting skills, this activity also aims to spark the student's interest and provide a listening purpose. As for the while-listening task, the student is asked to determine the setting and the main topic of each conversation, engaging in soft-focused listening and using a combination of top-down and bottom-up processing. The learner can then listen for a second time, focusing on specific information, required for the completion of the multiple-choice activity.

The student's role in the first part of the while-listening activity resembles that of an attentive eavesdropper. Eavesdropping, as claimed by Porter and Roberts (1981), is an important asset to listening, representing a real-life task and enhancing the authenticity of the activity. After listening my student is tasked with reflecting on the conversations, discussing which one(s) he would be more inclined to join, what questions he would pose to the participants and how his participation would

contribute to the dialogue. In developing the post-listening stage, I drew inspiration from Porter and Roberts (1981) who proposed a similar approach.

While altering the activities I attempted to render them more authentic by connecting them to real-life purposes and aligning them to the learner's prior experiences. Nonetheless, given that the learning objectives of the lesson also include adequate preparation for the language exams, it is essential to maintain certain features that foster testing. This is the reason why I chose not to completely modify the while-listening phase; instead I opted to enhance it by adding elements that go beyond the testing level and allow the integration of the rest of the language skills.

Part 2. Speaking

Teaching Situation

The lesson is addressed to a class of six students (three girls and three boys), who are aged 7-8 and attend the third year of primary school. Despite some prior minimum exposure to English, this marks their first year of active engagement in the four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Their proficiency level, according to the European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is hence assessed at A1, indicating a beginner, or "breakthrough" stage.

The learners are native Greek speakers and learn English as a foreign language. The teaching situation hence belongs to the 'expanding circle', based on Kachru's (1985) categorizations.

All six students share inherent interest in language learning and show high motivation during interactive activities. They also possess a degree of competitiveness, perceiving the learning of English as an entertaining process. However, their learning styles and personalities vary, with some students being confident and boisterous, while others more inhibited and reserved.

The coursebook used, is titled *Young Stars A*, published by the MM publications for teaching purposes. It consists of eight A1-leveled units, centered around everyday topics.

The lessons take place twice a week, lasting fifty minutes each at a typical private language school. The students are arranged in pairs facing a whiteboard and an interactive board. For reasons concerning effective class management, students who are inclined to disturb the lesson are strategically seated next to their quitter classmates.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This part focuses on establishing criteria for evaluating the coursebook's practices and creating an original lesson. These criteria are shaped by the principles of the communicative approach to learning, including Nation's (1989) features and Johnson's (1982) principles regarding effective speaking activities.

Communicative Competence

Prior to delving into the theories, it is vital to define the notion of communication as the transmission of information from those who possess it to those who need it. In the absence of this information gap there is no need for interaction and consequently real communication (Hill, 2004/2018).

The focus on language as a means of communication constitutes the cornerstone of the communicative approach (Papadopoulos, 2020; Papadopoulos, 2021; Papadopoulos & Shin, 2021; Papadopoulos, 2022). For this to occur in the classroom though, it is crucial to develop what Hymes (1972) refers to as communicative competence (in Richards & Rodgers, 2014). This concept goes beyond Chomsky's (1965) linguistic theory and involves the knowledge of language rules and their appropriate implementation in various contexts (ibid.) Canale and Swain (1980) identify four dimensions of communicative competence: grammatical (or linguistic), sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic. These pertain to the knowledge of lexis, grammar, and phonology, the extent to which "certain propositions and (…) functions are appropriate within a given sociocultural context", the knowledge and use of lexical relations and the ability to successfully maintain a conversation, preventing it from breakdowns, respectively.

In this context, the CEFR has established certain goal-oriented tasks that cater to the development of communicative competence, specifically targeting the A1 proficiency level. As regards to the linguistic competence, learners are expected to produce and comprehend isolated words and basic structures in relation to concrete topics. In terms of sociolinguistic awareness, it is sufficient for them to employ simple, polite forms of greetings and farewells, along with words, such as "sorry", "please" and "thank you". Finally, concerning discourse and strategic competence, students are expected to link words or group of words with basic connectors and use simple techniques to start, end and sustain conversations (Legak & Wahi, 2020).

Criteria for Effective Speaking Activities

Nation's Features

Aiming at the success of such tasks, Nation (1989) identifies five features and encourages teachers to consider them when designing or adapting materials. The first feature involves the adoption of **roles**, which permit the use of language that may not typically occur in the classroom. The second feature relates to the **outcomes**, referring to "work (that) needs to be done in order (for students) to complete the activity" (Nation, 1989, p.25). The third one concerns the implementation of **procedures**, which divide the activity into steps, ensuring the active participation of each learner. The fourth feature relates to **split information**. This provides students with a reason to engage in a task, as it includes the transmission of information from those who have access to it, to those who do not. Lastly, the fifth feature, concerning the degree of **challenge**, adds to the difficulty and interest of the task.

Johnson's Principles

Similarly, Johnson (1982) proposed five principles to be incorporated in the structure of communicative activities (in Hill, 2004/2018). The **information transfer** principle pertains to the transmission of a message from a form to another. The **information gap** principle ensures that this information is conveyed from those who possess it, to those who need it. Information is thus exchanged to complete the missing parts, or "**jigsaw**", which refers to the third principle. In order for this to occur, a task ought to depend on the linguistic and discourse competence of the learners and assess the effectiveness of students' communicative competence on the whole. These relate to the **task dependency** and **correction for conte**nt principles respectively.

In addition to the above characteristics, it is also practical to draw on Beamont's (in West, 2000) theory and incorporate the element of control in the analysis. It is apparent that the more advanced the learners, the less control is imposed on their productions.

In this respect, considering that tasks should align with the learners' proficiency level, Brown and Yule (1983), differentiate between long turns and short turns in speaking. The former are significantly more demanding than the latter, as they require the speaker to construct a coherent sequence of utterances. (ibid.). The scholars highlight the necessity of long-turn practising, and conclude that short turns are ideal for students at the beginner level.

Types and Place of Speaking Activities

Apart from evaluating and establishing alignment with the above criteria, the paper will also focus on the activity types and their position in the lesson. Littlewood (1981, in Hill, 2004/2018) distinguishes between pre-communicative and communicative tasks; the former lack real communication, falling into the "speaking to learn" rather than the "learning to speak" category as proposed by West (2000). Communicative tasks are further divided into functional and social interaction. Both sub-categories prominently feature the information-gap principle. Their distinction lies in that the latter represent "approximate (…) communicative situations encountered outside the classroom", whereas the former constitute situations structured by the teacher (Hill, 2004/2018, p.358). Functional activities include group/pair-work, discussions and games, while social interaction activities encompass role-plays and simulations.

Speaking can either be the primary focus of a lesson, or hold a supplementary role alongside other skills. In the first case, the entire lesson revolves around speaking activities, employed during the while-speaking and further expanded in the post-speaking stage. Conversely, speaking may be also practised at the post-reading and post-listening stages of reading and listening lessons (Hill, 2004/2018).

Evaluation of the Practices of the Coursebook

Reflecting on the preceding theories, this section proceeds with the assessment of the speaking activities within a module of the aforementioned textbook. This module is centered on the thematic

area of places in town, and its objectives include the ability to identify them, drawing on the structures "there is/are", "where is.." and the prepositions "next to" and "between".

Activity 1

The first activity appears at the final stage of a predominantly reading-based lesson, and involves learners in producing language practised during the previous stages. It specifically, requires them to complete the empty spaces of a shopping centre with three kinds of shops provided. Students are subsequently tasked with asking questions using the "is/are there" structure to discover their partner's selections. They are instructed to involve in short turns interchangeably, following the activity's steps.

Nation's Features and Johnson's Principles

Involving the transmission of information, the activity is classified as communicative according to Littlewood (1981). However, its communicative 'nature' would be further enhanced if the delivered information were somehow processed and used. In other terms, drawing on Nation's feature of **outcome**, despite the **split information**, the purpose of the exchange appears to be missing. Similarly, the features of **roles** and **challenge** are also absent. Lastly, the **procedures** are defined in the lesson's instructions.

Regarding Johnson's (1982) principles, messages are conveyed between pairs to complete the **information gap**, or the **jigsaw** of the activity. **Task dependency** comes into play as learners are invited to use language, presented and practised during the lesson. Concerning **correction for content**, students' communicative efficacy is assessed by their ability to discover their partners' options. To achieve this, they rely on their available resources, activating their strategic competence. However, it appears that the need to **transfer information** between forms is not addressed.

Activity Type

Following Littlewood's classification on communicative tasks, the activity falls into the functional category. It particularly constitutes a typical pair-work speaking activity that involves students in "sharing information with restricted co-operation" (in Hill, 2004/2018, p. 336). This goes hand in hand with Beaumont's feature of control, as the language required for its completion is entirely prescribed. Scholars, including Ur (2012) underline the value of pair-work activities, stating that they mitigate inhibition, and increase the amount of speech and motivation.

Impact and Implementation

The task examined above caters to the students' development as speakers of English, taking into consideration their level and age. Moreover, being success-oriented and manageable, it fosters positive feelings towards L2 learning.

Nonetheless, given that my class exhibits strong performance and enthusiasm for competition, I intensify the difficulty of the activity by setting a time limit and allowing more places to be included, drawing on Nation's challenge. Furthermore, opting for an outcome, I task my students

with recording their peers' choices and deciding together on whose options are more appropriate for an actual shopping-centre.

Activity 2

The second speaking activity in this module plays the primary role in the lesson. It comprises a pre-speaking stage that reinforces new language through the use of pictures, followed by a post-speaking stage that addresses a pronunciation issue. During the while-speaking phase, students are required to form groups of five and participate in a discussion about the locations of places in town. Three students line up, each holding a photocopy that depicts a different place, while the other two engage in questions and answers related to the position of those places. The students rotate to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak. It is worth-noting that access to the pictures is provided to all the participants throughout the entire process.

Nation's Features and Johnson's Principles

From the above, it is evident that the activity does not significantly contribute to the development of communicative competence, except for its linguistic and discourse aspects. Moreover, it does not appear to align with the majority of Nation's features and Johnson's principles, except for the **procedures** involving the steps and the **information transfer** principle, which entails the transmission of information from visual to oral form. **Task dependency** is also addressed, as the activity relies on learners' linguistic knowledge.

Activity Type

In the absence of communication, the activity cannot be classified as communicative, since it lacks the transmission of information to those who do not possess it. Instead, it is identified as pre-communicative, according to Littlewood's (1981) categories. Such activities offer few opportunities for real communication and heavily rely on control (ibid.)

Impact and Implementation

Even though pre-communicative activities could prove helpful, especially for young beginners, (Abbot, 1981), dedicating an entire lesson to the practice of purely mechanical interactions would not be particularly beneficial for them. As highlighted, tasks that lack the information gap principle do not foster communicative competence and hence do not develop learners' ability to interact in real-life situations. For this reason, I modify the while-speaking stage when implementing it.

Specifically, having the whole class participating at once, I divide my students in two groups of three. Each member from the first group decides on one place and holds the relevant card that depicts it. Subsequently, students form a line, standing next to each other without showing their cards to the second group. This group is tasked with discovering the options and sequence of places of the first group by posing questions, such as "Is there…", "Is the pet shop next to the supermarket?". The aim is to discover the position of the first group's places within given time.

With these amendments the activity becomes communicative as the need to bridge an information gap emerges and provides a clear reason for participation. Apart from serving a purpose, this

information gap also calls for the integration of strategic competence. In order for the learners to attain the objective of the task, they need to convey their meanings successfully.

Feedback is provided by the teacher upon task completion. This involves positive comments on the general performance of the class and raises awareness of aspects that could be improved. Such aspects may concern pronunciation and language issues that impede communication. Feedback is thus both structural and communicative according to West (2000 in Hill 2004/2018) and also focused on errors that disturb the successful transfer of meaning.

The post-speaking task is not carried out as it is utterly irrelevant to the previous stages. Instead simple activities that stem from the feedback are assigned if time allows.

Presentation of the Original Lesson (Lesson Plan)
The original lesson is based on the language structures included in the examined unit of the textbook. This lesson follows the 'pre-, while-, post-' framework, with the main speaking activity carried out during the while-speaking phase. It is thus a lesson, entirely focused on the speaking skill. The pre-speaking stage serves as preparation for the while-phase by reviewing the relevant language, while the post-speaking stage comprises the feedback and an additional speaking activity, arising from the while-speaking stage

COURSEBOOK: Young Stars A

CLASS: A Junior

Thematic Unit Title: Places in Town

Educational Materials Used: cards with maps, pictures, reports

Stages	Procedures	Objectives	Interaction	Time
Pre-speaking Stage: Brainstorming relevant vocabulary	Students are given about two minutes to brainstorm words related to places in town that were introduced and practiced in previous lessons and share them with the class. The teacher writes the words on the white-board at the same time.	Communicative Competence *Lexical*: students are expected to produce correctly isolated words related to places in town.	Between the learners and the teacher	3-4 min.

Pre-communicative drilling activity	The teacher shows pictures of places in town (Appendix I) and asks students to identify them. Following this, the teacher poses questions such as "where is the museum?" and encourages learners to produce answers, using the "between" and "next to" structure. The teacher also revises the colors by tasking the class with identifying the colors of certain buildings. Then the teacher asks a question, like "It's next to the hospital and it's pink. What is it?" The student who first identifies the item, proceeds with a similar structure. The teacher ensures that everyone participates.	Communicative Competence *Lexical*: students are expected to produce and understand isolated words and simple structures related to the thematic area. *Discourse*: students are supposed to link phrases using the connector "and"	Between the learners and the teacher and between the learners.	7-8 min.
While-speaking Stage:	Students form pairs with the person they are seated next to. Each pair is given two cards depicting a map of a street and some places. Each student gets one card and is	Communicative Competence *Lexical*: students are expected to	Between the pairs	12-15 min.

Game based on the structures of the pre-stage activities	told not to show it to the others. (Appendix II) The maps given to a pair are identical but each student possesses different information. Only some information is shared to both. The aim is to complete the missing information by engaging in a question-answer dialogue with their partners. Student 1 starts by asking a question like "is there a cinema?" and student 2 answers with "yes, there is/no, there isn't" or simply "yes/no", since the focus is on fluency rather than accuracy. If the answer is "yes", then student 1 continues with "where is the cinema/it?" and receives a reply such as "it's next to the school." When clarification is needed student 1 is also encouraged to ask about the color of the building. Then their roles change. Students are told that some places may appear more than once in	identify, produce and comprehend structures and words related to the thematic area accurately so that they are understood. *Discourse*: students are asked to link structures together when necessary using simple connectors. *Strategic*: students are expected to communicate effectively in order to complete their blanks correctly.		

	their maps. The pair that will first complete their empty spots correctly are the winners. The teacher monitors, supervises, supports and makes sure that rules are followed.			
Feedback	The teacher provides focused feedback, specifically on the issues that hinder successful communication. Positive comments on the students' performance are also incorporated.		Between the students and the teacher	5-6 min.
Post-speaking Stage Class discussion arising from the game	Each pair is given a report which includes all the places students have learned throughout the module (Appendix III). Based on their maps they have to check the places that appear and the number of times (e.g. hotels-2) Students then take on the roles of presenters and audience to engage in a class discussion. The	Communicative competence *Lexical*: students are anticipated to produce, identify and comprehend simple structures related to the thematic area. They are required to pronounce each	Between the pairs and the whole class	8-10 min.

	first thing they do is present the information of their maps in pairs. Starting from the first pair, both students are expected to provide a few sentences, such as "there is a hospital and two supermarkets". The rest of the students note in their reports the information they hear, just as they did with their own maps. The same report is used for all the pairs. In case they miss part of the information, they are encouraged to ask "can you repeat please?" Following the first pair, the second and the third ones engage in the same process. The activity ends when the students chorally share the results of their reports, using phrases like: "There are two hotels." The teacher makes notes on the board. Feedback is provided by the teacher to the students based on their overall performance and with focus on their communicative	word intelligibly to be understood. *Discourse*: students are expected to link structures, using simple linking words, such as "and" *Strategic*: students are required to convey their messages effectively, to enable their classmates to fill in the reports easily. *Sociolinguistic*: students are expected to use the words such as "please" and "thank you" when they interrupt their classmates who present, respecting their interlocutors. Students are expected to consider the feedback		

Feedback and reflection	competence. Subsequently, if time allows, learners, acting as town-planners reflect on the places of the town that appear in their reports and make suggestions. For example they may state that there need to be more parks and less schools. As their proficiency level is low, they are encouraged to use their L1 too.	They are also asked to reflect on their reports and make suggestions for improvement regarding the town.	Between the teacher and the students.	7-8 min.

Justification of the Original Lesson

This section pertains to the analysis of an original lesson, as it is presented above. The designed activities conform to the theories introduced earlier, as well as the profile of the students. Below, a justification is provided for each activity appearing in these stages.

Pre-speaking

The first activity of the pre-speaking stage involves students in brainstorming places in town and sharing them with the class. This kind of activity is significantly successful with young learners as it gives them the opportunity to take the floor and contribute their ideas to the classroom without fearing that they may be criticized (Pratama & Awaliyan, 2016).

Although classified as pre-communicative, the activity exhibits some of Nation's features and Johnson's principles. While there is no **information gap**, since the relevant vocabulary is familiar to everybody, students are encouraged to go beyond the textbook and share their personal ideas and knowledge. Furthermore, the fact that there is time limit renders the activity more demanding, echoing Nation's **challenge** and provides learners with an **outcome**: to collect as many words as possible within given time. Finally, it aligns with the **task dependency** principle, engaging students in utilizing information that was presented in the course of the unit.

This warm-up activity is followed by a pre-communicative drilling one that involves controlled, mechanical interaction between the teacher and the learners and subsequently the learners themselves. The use of repetitive language is heavily criticized by the advocates of the communicative approach to learning for failing to promote real communication (Abbot, 1981) Nonetheless, the principles of the audiolingual approach, including drills, repetition, and sentence

substitution, can serve as a valuable tool for practicing linguistic structures and boosting the self-confidence of young learners, whose exposure to L2 communication outside class is limited (Pratama & Awaliyan, 2016, Ohashi, 2015). Besides, it is worth-noting that this activity is not the main focus of the lesson; it rather prepares the ground for the communicative tasks that are to follow.

However, it still incorporates Nation's **procedures** as it guides students from uttering individual words to connecting and generating phrases. Finally, with regards to Johnson's **information transfer**, messages are conveyed from visual to oral medium. The rest of the features or principles are not addressed.

While-speaking
The while-speaking activity involves students in exchanging information in pairs regarding the location of places on a street. The pair that discovers the missing information first wins (refer to Lesson Plan for instructions and V for tasksheet).

Activity Type
Drawing on Palmer and Rodgers' (1983) analysis, the activity is classified as game aligning with the characteristics of 'gaming'. It is competitive (students compete against each other), rule-governed (the players are not supposed to access their partners' maps or use their L1), goal-defined (the purpose is to discover the missing information before opponents) has closure (it ends when the first group completes the task) and is engaging- motivating and challenging learners.

The value of games in EFL teaching, particularly with regard to young learners, has been widely recognized by scholars. In this context, Dorry (1966, in Palmer & Rodgers, 1983) emphasizes the children's 'competitive spirit,' asserting that games engage them in learning without realizing it. Similarly, as stated by Lee (1979, in Palmer & Rodgers, 1983), and Moskowitz (1979, in Palmer & Rodgers, 1983) co-operation in games is not only highly enjoyable but also a source of real communication. For these reasons, and considering my class's enthusiasm for competition, I incorporate this particular activity in my lesson.

Despite the controlled language and its exchange in short turns, the activity features meaningful communication and nurtures learners' communicative competence. In addition to promoting awareness on the lexical and discourse levels, the game also caters to the development of students' strategic thinking. To attain the goal, they are expected to deliver their messages clearly, making the most of their limited language resources.

Nation's Features and Johnson's Principles
The activity also appears to align with almost all of the Nation's features and Johnson's principles. Even though, **roles**, in their traditional sense, are absent, students become questioners and responders. This entails practicing diverse intonations and sentence structures depending on the purpose of each utterance. The **outcome** involves co-operating towards completing missing

information on the map, while the **procedures** ensure that every learner participates. **Split information**, or in Johnson's terms, an **information gap** emerges as each student possesses different knowledge that is exchanged to complete the **jigsaw**. This is accomplished in a competiti ve manner that adds to the activity an extra **challenge**. In terms of **information transfer**, learners convey their messages from visual to oral form. Lastly, the task requires them to apply the information of the unit meaningfully, assessing their ability to exchange it successfully, since task completion depends on effective communication. These aspects pertain to the **task dependency** and **correction for content** principles.

Feedback

Upon task completion feedback is provided by the teacher. This involves comments on the overall class performance and highlights areas for improvement. It addresses both structural and communicative aspects according to West (2000), targeting those that impact successful communication, such as grammar or pronunciation issues. Focusing on every individual error is not only time-consuming but also intimidating for the learners, potentially making them reluctant to speak (Pratama & Awaliyan, 2016). Conversely, to boost students' self-confidence, feedback should center on specific areas, including positive comments on their achievements too.

Post-speaking

In the post-speaking activity, students are assigned to present the places marked on their maps and complete reports using information gathered from their classmates (refer to Lesson Plan for instructions and VI for tasksheet).

Activity Type

Requiring the participation of the entire classroom, this activity falls into the discussions, according to Littlewood's categories. Although discussions typically engage learners in 'long turns' (Hill, 2004/2018) this aspect has been modified to address the needs of my classroom. In this context, language use is carefully restricted and controlled.

Moreover, in addition to speaking, the activity assigns students the task of active listening, requiring them to pay close attention to the presentations in order to complete their reports successfully. This is also what renders it purposeful and gives learners a reason to participate.

Class discussions are a valuable teaching tool, as they lay the foundations for effective communication. Starting from a young age, students learn the rules of turn-taking, clear speaking and active listening. For these reasons I choose to incorporate them in my classroom.

Nation's Features and Johnson's Principles

With respect to Nation's features and Johnson's principles, the activity exhibits an **information gap, or split-information** and provides learners with a clear **outcome**: to complete their reports and share their findings. Students' communicative efficiency, referring to **correction for content** principle, is hence assessed based on their ability to convey their messages successfully. To achieve this, they need to activate their strategic awareness. The **procedures** require the members

of each group to take turns speaking, with each pair assuming the **roles** of "presenters" and "audience". Regarding **task dependency**, the content of the task not only conforms to that of the previous activities, but also to the learning objectives as described in the textbook. However, unlike the previous activity, the one presented here does not pose a particular **challenge**. The need to **transfer information** between forms, is not addressed either.

Feedback
Lastly, students' sociolinguistic awareness is also activated to some extent. Respecting the social code, they are encouraged to use polite forms such as "please" and "thank you" when asking their peers for clarifications. The need for clarifications operates as learner-initiated feedback, giving opportunities for 'repairs' and integrates the speakers' strategic competence.

At the end of the lesson feedback is also delivered by the teacher, incorporating again positive comments and tackling aspects that may hinder the effectiveness of communication.

Teacher Roles
Besides providing feedback, the teacher assumes various roles throughout the entire lesson. These roles encompass introducing information, observing the speaking activities and interfering to offer assistance when necessary (Pratama & Awaliyan, 2016). The teacher must also clarify the rules and ensure that the lesson progresses smoothly, according to the plan.

CONCLUSION

The paper has attempted to show that the instruction of oracy skills should establish the foundations for effective communication. This involves encouraging the integration of listening micro-skills, and fostering the development of learners' communicative competence. However, the teaching of spoken discourse is far from straightforward. Teachers should remain open to adaptations and the creation of new materials, bearing in mind the age, proficiency level, personalities and needs of their students. Additionally, they should consider the objectives of the lesson, ensuring that their teaching is tailored to align with these various features.

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Appendices

Appendix I

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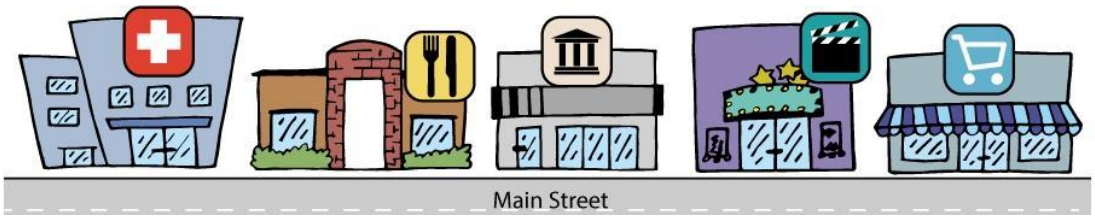
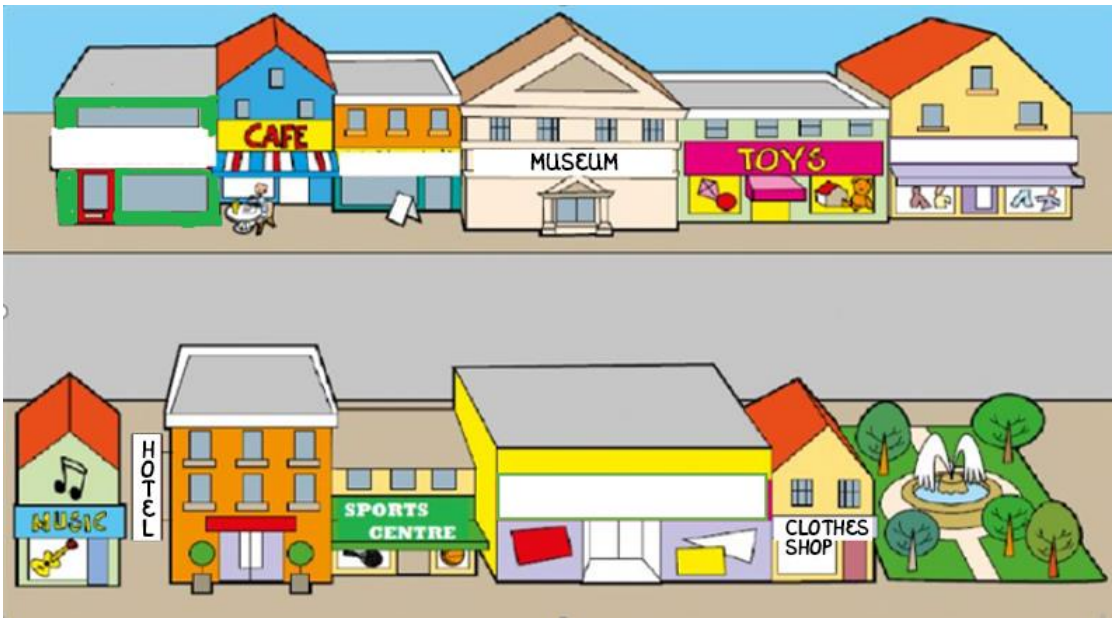


Appendix II

Student A



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Student B

These are the cards given to the students of the first pair. The rest of the pairs receive almost identical cards (there are some differences in the colours) with the buildings labelled differently.

Appendix III

Places	**Times**
Museum	
Cinema	
School	
Park	
Supermarket	
Pet shop	
Toy shop	
Clothes shop	
Shopping centre	
Zoo	
Playground	
Hospital	