

**Conversation in the classroom
Language World 2012**

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Speaking another language is an accomplishment and a great motivation; it is challenging (difficult) but practical.

OFSTED 2011 (extracts)

- Weaknesses in too many lessons, particularly in speaking, listening and reading ..
- Too much speaking still relied on writing ..

- .. opportunities for students to listen to and communicate in the target language were often limited by many teachers' unpreparedness to use it..
- Teachers relied too heavily on exercises from text books ..

- Secondary schools should:
- broaden approaches to teaching and learning to enthuse students and increase their confidence, competence and ambition in modern languages
- consider, as a matter of urgency, the implications of recent developments in primary languages for their curriculum in Year 7 and how they build on students' prior attainment.
- Too many of the students ... were ... 'rote learning' ... and (relied) on written work. Although they generally gained good results, this did not necessarily equate to competence in a language ..

But we are labouring to serve more than one master; the primacy of exam results means that minds are concentrated on success in passing those, not necessarily the same a success in learning the language.

What do we talk about?

How much time do we give it?

Is Talking the same as AT2 Speaking?

The aspiration of the original National Curriculum was to make the TL the language of communication of the classroom, but, because speaking is something we have to assess there is a risk it simply becomes part of the content to be delivered, and remains in a sort of Speaking ghetto. Learners develop strategies for doing what they need to do to keep the scheme of work happy.

A topic-based approach also tends to mean Progression is difficult to sense as the learner is frequently returning to Level 1 when the topic changes.

Projects which have prioritised 'Conversation' and presented at previous Language World Conferences:

The **Talk Project** in the 1990s

Group Talk

Teachers thinking how to ..

- Structure and support a conversation (but not script it)
- Engineer spontaneity
- Put in the language we want them to bring out later on
- And then create the Spontaneity Moment for them to do that

Example:

Learners ask questions (previously taught), offer opinions about a personal photo

- Is that you?
- Who is ...? .. on the left?
- Where is it?
- When was that?
- Have you been ..?
- Did you really have dark hair?
- What are you doing?
- How embarrassing!

What learners need to know and we (and others) need to reinforce ...

- Speaking is an important activity and is proper Work, even though fleeting
- Speaking well requires lots of practice and feedback
- Speaking has an impact on other people and the situation you are in
- Talking involves Listening as well as Speaking

Develop strategies for building confidence / competence - Opposite of spontaneous, but effective training

- Focus on graphemes and phonemes
- Trying to say unfamiliar words
- Reading aloud from interesting texts
- Rehearsal
- Recital

These are just my views – please talk about them!

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