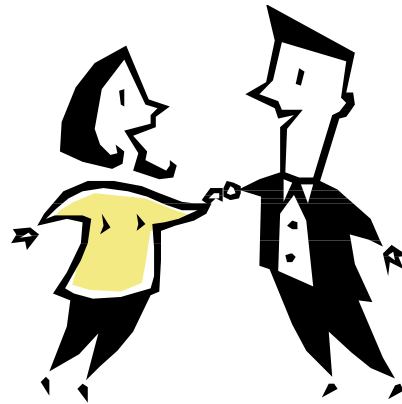




# Developing Oral Proficiency



# Why oral proficiency is important

- ✿ Current approaches emphasize speaking (ALM methodology, communicative competence) and meaningful interaction (tasks)
- ✿ Research underscores the importance of oral interaction in language development (Gass, Swain – group and pair work)
- ✿ Students use speaking ability as a primary goal and as a way to measure their learning



# According to the Standards

## Communication

- Interpersonal: when individuals converse
- Interpretive: interacting with a text
- Presentational: presenting ideas to an audience of listeners



# Interlanguage: True or False?

- ✦ Interlanguage is an intermediate system located somewhere between the learner's native language and the target language, but governed by its own unique and coherent internalized rule system that eventually becomes totally congruent with the system of the second language.

# The Nature of Interlanguage

- ✦ Corder (1967): language-learner language = “transitional competence”
- ✦ Nemser (1971): developing grammar = “approximative system”
- ✦ Selinker (1972): learner’s development system = “interlanguage”

**What is fossilization?**

# ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Speaking

- ✦ Set of guidelines
- ✦ Descriptions of typical competencies (& patterns of weakness) rather than set of goal statements in and of themselves
  - <http://www.languagetesting.com/scale.htm>

**The ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines are evaluative in nature and should not be used directly as course objectives.**

# Sample Formats for Oral Practice

- ✦ Sentence builders
- ✦ Contextualized grammar practice activities
- ✦ Personalized either-or questions
- ✦ Word association activities
- ✦ Logical conclusions
- ✦ Personalized completions
- ✦ Conversation cards (pushed output, monitor, prompt)
- ✦ Group Puzzles
- ✦ Calendar Activity
- ✦ Family Tree
- ✦ Group Decision Making
- ✦ Social Interaction
- ✦ Situational Role Plays



# What Do You Think?

- ✦ Should directions/content of controlled oral practice situations and activities (e.g., conversation cards, role-plays) be given in the target language or in the native language? Explain.

# What do you think?

- ✿ List some advantages of using small group or paired activities for building oral skills.
- ✿ What are some potential problems or disadvantages in using this type of instructional format?
- ✿ How can such problems be handled or avoided?
- ✿ What are some important considerations to bear in mind when planning small group work?

# Creating with the Language

- ✦ Four types of divergent-production factors to assist in developing creativity  
(Birchbichler, 1982 based on Guilford's 1959 Structure-of-Intellect Model)
  - Fluency of ideas – produce large number of ideas quickly [ex: brainstorming activities]
  - Flexibility – produce a diversity of ideas from different classes [ex: change the story]
  - Elaboration – add or embellish ideas [ex: cue insertion]
  - Originality – produce uncommon or clever ideas [ex: inventing machines]

# Function and Functions

- ✦ **Function:** a set of generic global tasks that language learners must perform at a given level (obtain info, express one's point of view)
- ✦ **Functions:** “hundreds of purposes for which people communicate” (Guntermann & Phillips, 1982) (socializing, maintaining relationships, influencing others, etc.)

# Errors

- ✦ Where do errors come from?
- ✦ How can students develop more precise and coherent language use?  
How can teachers be of assistance in this process?
- ✦ How do native speakers react to language-learner language?

# Important concepts in errors

Selinker, 1974

- ✿ **Language transfer** – interference from the mother tongue
- ✿ **Transfer-of-training** – errors due to nature of materials or approaches
- ✿ **Strategies of L2 learning** – errors due to the learner's own approach to material
- ✿ **Strategies of L2 communication** – errors due to the way learners attempt to communicate with natives
- ✿ **Overgeneralization** – errors due to the way learners restructure and reorganize linguistic material

# Errors: what the research says...

- ✿ Many grammar errors made by NNS do not interfere with comprehensibility
- ✿ Cultural differences may be a factor in error tolerance
- ✿ Studies generally suggest that some attention should be paid to errors (especially when they interfere with comprehensibility), but teachers need to choose the types of errors to correct, and when & how to treat them

# True or False?

- ✚ Much of the research on native-speaker reactions to non-native speaker language indicates that most of the grammatical errors made seriously interfere with the comprehensibility of their speech.
- ✚ The type of feedback one provides to students should vary according to the purposes of the activity in which they are engaged.
- ✚ In general, it is better to correct student errors and to offer consistent corrective feedback rather than to ask the students about their own preferences for correction.

# On Providing Feedback...

- ✿ Type of feedback should vary according to the purpose (focus on form exercise vs. open-ended task)
- ✿ Feedback strategies may differ for different learning styles
- ✿ Different types of feedback may benefit students
- ✿ Students generally want to receive some type of feedback

# Some suggestions...

Burt & Kiparsky (1974), Alwright (1975), Cohen (1975), Hendrickson (1979), Ervin (1981), Walz (1982) suggest...correcting errors that interfere with comprehension as well as:

1. Errors of high frequency
2. Errors that are stigmatizing
3. Errors that are the subject of pedagogical focus

# Some suggestions

## Types of Feedback

1. Explicit correction (provide correct form, tell what is incorrect)
2. Clarification requests (teachers indicate they don't understand – “Pardon”)
3. Metalinguistic feedback (comments on or asks questions about the form of the students' utterance w/o explicit correction)
4. Elicitation (try to get students to produce the correct form by completing a teacher's restatement or repeating what the student just said)
5. Repetition (of incorrect utterance, sometimes with rising intonation or emphasis)

# To Review ...

 Briefly define the following terms:

1. Interlanguage
2. Sentence builder exercise
3. Language transfer
4. Feedback
5. Fossilization
6. Performance error
7. Either/or questions

# What would you say?

- ✦ You have been put in charge of the lower-level language sequence at your school — beginning and intermediate courses. You are very familiar with the discussion of the three communicative modes as they appear in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning. How would you explain to the teachers in your lower-level how shifting the focus of speaking activities to address these three modes is a change that needs to be made?