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## **ROUTES TO EFFECTIVE CANDIDATE'S PERFORMANCE AT SPEAKING SECTION OF CAMBRIDGE FCE AND CAE EXAMS: CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT TIPS, ACTIVITIES AND TRICKS**

Students undergoing preparation for any type of Cambridge exams having Speaking paper need to be well-informed about the test format and procedures, what is more – given ideas for simulating these practices in class. Classroom activities focus on skills need to improve speaking as well as general exam competences. Consequently, the aims of present paper are to explore the Cambridge English First and Advanced Speaking papers in detail in order to discuss the tasks to be performed in class with the aim to prepare candidates to meet the exam requirements and the testing focuses; to look at the training activities and forms of classroom interaction that will help teachers prepare their students for these papers.

Due to the fact that a candidate will take the Speaking test with another candidate or in a group of three, they will be tested on their ability to take part in different types of interaction: with the examiner, with the other candidates and by themselves. Good speaking activities, able to provide adequate training should have a number of characteristics. They should engage students by making them want to take part. They should have a definite aim, which is not obligatorily supposed to be of linguistic character. It might require solving a problem, reaching a decision, arguing, defending a certain opinion, etc. they should be designed to maximize the range of language they will use.

Prior to the detailed analysis of each part of the Speaking paper students are to be given a number of practical suggestions as to how to behave and interact with a partner, what to ask, how not to worry. These issues may be discussed in groups/pairs with further panel discussion. A typical list might look like this:

### ***Dos and DON'ts before the exam starts***

- *Don't worry about asking for the instructions to be repeated if you're not sure what to do – you won't be marked down for this.*
- *Be prepared to start the conversation as well as respond to what your partner says, but don't interrupt your speaking partner during their 'long turn' to speak.*

- *Make sure your answers are as full as they can be so that the assessor hears lots of your English.*
- *When the test starts, try to relax.*
- *Express yourself, give personal examples, use humour.*
- *The examiners are friendly and will give you lots of opportunities to show off your English*
- *What matters most is how you see yourself!!!*

EFL teachers doing exam classes are to be aware of the variety of options they could organize speaking interactions. In the book ‘Teaching Practice. A handbook for teachers in training’ we come across the outline of the types of speaking activities used in a language class. [6; p.100-112]

- **Controlled activities** when a teacher guides or limits the student’s use of language – such as by providing: questions to be answered, sentences to be completed, words or pictures to follow.

- **Guided activities /Cued practice** during which language practice takes place within a framework set up by the teacher. The student’s language is produced in response to a cue (words, pictures, actions, quotations, etc.) given by the teacher.

- **Creative or freer communication / Productive practice** where the activities are usually designed to give either creative practice opportunities or general fluency practice. During this practice students use the newly introduced lexis, grammar structures, functional language more freely, with little or no control on the part of the teacher. Students can express their own ideas and opinions in interaction or information gap activities, role-plays, simulations, discussions, games, etc.

S. Burgess and K. Head in their book ‘How to teach for exams’ single out the following types of speaking activities used in an exam preparation class [1; p.99]:

- Interview tasks
- Presentation tasks
- Negotiation tasks
- Discussion tasks

All of them reflect forms of the exam model discourse type and forms of interaction between the interlocutor and each candidate at a real exam format.

### **Part 1. Interview**

In this part of the test, interlocutors will ask candidates a range of questions about their everyday lives, for example sports they enjoy, travel and holidays, work experience and so on. ‘This part tests the candidates’ ability to use social and interactional language.’ [2 ;p.76]

Tips for the classroom activities are:

- encourage your students to respond promptly, with answers which are complete and spontaneous. Rehearsed speeches should be avoided as these might be inappropriate for the question asked;
- give them the opportunity to practice a range of topics for this part of the test in class. Students could role-play social occasions in which they meet new people, e.g. parties, train journeys, starting a new job.

Suggested activities:

- Two circles brief conversations
- Realia initiated monologues
- Talking on the basis of personal belongings ( photos, favourite objects, remarkable events, etc.) [8;9]

- ‘Who are these people to me?’ – conversations
- Discussing selfies and photos from students’ mobiles

### **Part 2. Long turn**

Each candidate talks for 1 minute on a pair of photographs. ‘This part tests the candidate’s ability to produce an extended piece of discourse.’ [2 ;p.76]

Tips for the classroom activities are:

- teach your students to listen carefully to the instructions and to carry them out;
- remind your students that they will not lose marks if they ask the examiner to repeat the instructions;
- students sometimes find that a minute is quite a long time to talk for. Give them practice at talking for a minute about a given topic. Time this practice so that your students get a feel for how long a minute is.

Suggested activities:

- timed speeches with the use of two dice
- describing unusual photos of celebrities [5;7;10]
- making up or inventing sentences, stories on the basis of pictures that are absolutely not connected to each other
- talking for a minute on the basis of a visual prompt [5;7;10]
- discussions of the issues on the basis of TED presentations
- describing pictures that are similar in style but different in imagery [5;7;10]

### **Part 3. Collaborative task**

In this part of the test the interlocutor will give candidates a question to discuss or, as in CAE paper, may direct the interaction by asking questions which encourage the candidates to discuss further and broaden the topics.

Tips for the classroom activities are:

- encourage your students to use the written prompts as fully as possible;
- tell your students not to be afraid to disagree with each other politely. When the interlocutor will then ask a question encouraging candidates to reach a decision by agreeing or disagreeing with each other, they will not lose marks if they fail to reach a decision;
- inform that it is very important for candidates to interact with each other when they carry out the Part 3 task. All classroom discussion in pairs and small groups, therefore, provides an excellent preparation;
- remind your students to make positive contributions to move the discussion forward. They should be encouraged to respond to each other’s opinions expressed by agreeing, disagreeing and questioning each other, rather than just giving information about the task;

- in order to raise awareness of the types of questions asked and of effective ways of answering them, it may be helpful to give pairs of students different topics and to ask each pair to think of six discussion questions for their topic;

- remind your students that there are no right answers to the questions and candidates will not be judged on their opinions, only on the language they use to express their opinions.

Suggested activities:

- using ‘post-it’ notes to discuss a text
- using quotations [3]
- paraphrasing a quote [3]
- describing collections of visuals united by a single topic [3]
- discussing provocative issues based on movie episodes/clips [7]
- discussing dilemma questions
- creating mind-maps to organize ideas and structure thoughts

#### **Part 4. Discussion**

Discussion with interlocutor on topics related to the Part 3 task. Candidates may be asked individual questions, or the question may be directed to engage both candidates in the discussion.

Tips for the classroom activities are:

- classroom discussions in pairs and small groups provide excellent preparation;

- encourage your students to give full answers to the questions asked.

Suggested activities:

- listening and commenting on a certain point of view expressed by a group-mate

- organizing a discussion with ‘square technique’, when every participant has the role of a speaker, an opponent, a critic and an observer.

The teacher’s role while managing the above mentioned activities requires utilization of the clearly defined assessment criteria, constant monitoring with error correction and feedback, working on finer details by recording students spoken English and not forgetting to conduct mock exams.

There are three main reasons why it is important to encourage students to speak as fluently as possible. In the first place, speaking activities create a chance for rehearsal as a preparation for using it outside the class. Secondly, when students speak using all and any language they know, it provides valuable feedback about their language competence for both them and their teachers. Thirdly, good structured and managed speaking activities provoke genuine student engagement where they really get involved with the process of language learning in class which in its turn leads to appropriate exam performance.

#### **References**

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Further information

- Keep up to date with what is new via the website:  
[www.cambridgeenglish.org](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org)
- For important information about Cambridge English exams:  
[www.cambridgeenglish.org/help](http://www.cambridgeenglish.org/help)
- TED – [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)
- YouTube channel: Cambridgeenglishtv

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## **DEVELOPING SELF-EVALUATION SKILLS AS KEY FACTORS IN PROMOTING PROSPECTIVE FL TEACHER'S AUTONOMY**

Learner autonomy has become one of the central concerns of modern language teaching. The problem has been studied by a number of scientists (P. Benson, L. Dam, L. Dickinson, H. Holec, T. Lamb and H. Reinders, D. Little, W. Littlewood, D. Nunan, L. Murphy, R. Smith etc.). However, it needs further investigation as even future foreign language teachers demonstrate inability to take responsibility for their own language learning, define goals etc. and reach them without teachers management.

Autonomy is highly desirable as it can be regarded as vital for effective functioning in modern society which develops rapidly and maximises people's choices. Autonomy is an ability to determine the objectives, define the contents and progressions, select methods and techniques to be used, monitor the procedures of acquisition and evaluate what has been acquired [7, p. 3].