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Teaching Speaking: Task 3

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BEFEKTETÉS A JÖVŐBE



Task 3

Let us see a selection of coursebook speaking tasks and how they cater for the success of the speaking experience. Click on the following links and study the following sample unit from:

https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/one-dot-com/one-dot-com/english/SampleMaterials/business-english/lifestyle_pre-int_sample.pdf

Fill in the tables below and answer the following questions.

- 1) What is the aim of the speaking activities in the unit?
- 2) Which of the above common problems does the coursebook material provide help the learner with and how?

Lack of topic knowledge

Language deficiencies

Personality type

No reason to talk

Inhibitions

Lack of time to think

a) Exercise 9 (page 63) – but look at the whole of pages 62-63

Aim of the activity:

The problem it helps the learner with	How?

b) Exercise 9 and 10 (page 65) – but look at the whole of pages 64-65

Aim of the activity:

The problem it helps the learner with	How?

c) Exercise 8 and 9 (page 67) – but look at the whole of pages 66-67

Aim of the activity:

The problem it helps the learner with	How?

d) Exercises 7-14 (page 69)

Aim of the activities:

The problem it helps the learner with	How?



Key

a) Exercise 9 (page 63)

The aim is to talk about recent updates and upgrades and, through that, practice the recently learnt (or revised) grammar structure: the present perfect.

These two aims reinforce each other perfectly: talking about updates is a natural context for using the present perfect, thereby helping the learners to grasp when and where this structure is typically used in English. On the other hand, talking about recent updates and upgrades is a topic that the learners are likely to meet in real (work or private) life and in order to talk about the issue, the present perfect is needed.

In the exercises before the speaking task, the learners gain an understanding of and practice in the structure, which helps them with the problem of ‘how to say it in English’ (*Language deficiencies*)

In the speaking task, the learners are asked to carry out a clearly defined role-play of a conversation that imitates a potential real life scenario. This gives the learners a clearly defined and plausible, realistic purpose to talk (*No reason to talk*).

The wording of the task itself helps the learners with ideas regarding what to say (*Lack of topic knowledge*) and relevant vocabulary (*Language deficiencies* - this time vocabulary). According to their personalities, life situation and background knowledge, learners can decide to rely on only these, or bring in their own ideas as well, which is encouraged in the task (‘Use the information on the website and make up any other information you like.’)

Preparation is also encouraged (*Need time to think*).

When they have finished the role play, the students are asked to switch roles and do it again. This serves as a kind of *repetition* (see Note 7 to Task 1). Although the learners don’t strictly repeat what they were saying the first time round, of course, they can learn a lot from listening to what their partner said when in that role.

The ‘Talking Point’ exercise at the bottom of the page is a free discussion activity of the topic – which the teacher can decide to use in the lesson or not, depending on the needs, interests and background knowledge of his students, as well as their willingness to discuss ideas with each other.

b) Exercise 9 and 10 (page 65)

The design of these two pages is very similar to that of pages 62-63 – this time with another, but closely related language item to learn and practice. Using the comments above for pages 62-63, try to formulate your ideas for these two pages – in more detail this time round.

c) Exercise 8 and 9 (page 67)

The aim of the activity is to practice sharing ideas: making suggestions and responding to these. The reading passage and the tasks surrounding it place the ensuing speaking activity

in a possible real life context (discussing suggestions for changes in some areas of life, here the design of hospitals). It also clarifies the use of some crucial vocabulary items related to the topic (suggest, propose, recommend). There is a short immediate practice activity to consolidate this (Exercise 4 on page 66).

The listening exercise on page 67 serves as a model for the deigned speaking task. The students have the chance to hear an example of what they are supposed to produce later on. In Exercise 6 they also gather the relevant functional language (see Note 5 to Task 1): Exercise 7 discusses what expressions and structures the learners can use to make suggestions and respond to them. The book then goes right on to the actual speaking activity (Exercises 8 and 9). With learners who only have to be reminded about the relevant functional language, this might work. For those, however, who first need to learn (some of) these, it is unrealistic to expect that they will be immediately able to use these expressions in fluent speech, while also thinking about what they want to say. Some kind of practice phase with lots of repetitions of these phrases is necessary between the two tasks. Experienced teachers notice these gaps in the coursebook material immediately and have (or design, when preparing for the lesson) ways to fill in what is missing.

Exercises 7-14 (page 69)

This is a complex group-work activity, consisting of many steps. It aims to allow the learners to practice – this time in free speech – the grammar structure (present perfect) and the functional language (sharing ideas) that was practised using more guided/controlled tasks throughout the unit.