

Effective and engaging transactional activities

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Purpose of these sessions

- » To enable you to reflect in a more focused way about your classroom practice
- » To provide practical suggestions which may be relevant and useful to integrate into your classroom practice
- » **Note: Link to slides provided at the end of the session**

Overview

1. What is transactional language, and what challenges do ESOL learners face?
2. Strategies for supporting students to mitigate TL challenges
3. Activities for supporting students to mitigate TL challenges
4. Summary

1. What is transactional language, and what challenges do ESOL learners face?





What is transactional language?

- Used when there is a particular goal or desired result of the interaction – the emphasis is on the transmission of information (e.g. asking a question in a shop; giving a presentation; buying a ticket)
- Important to note that most exchanges are a mixture of the transactional and interactional (i.e. language for the maintenance of social relationships)



What challenges does engaging in TL exchanges present?

- Perception of own language ability;
- Concerns over misunderstanding (e.g. dialect-based);
- General anxiety;
- Power relations;
- Underlying commercial aspect;
- Real or perceived opinion of interlocuter.

2. Strategies for supporting students to mitigate TL challenges





Raise awareness of TL ‘scripts’

- Don’t be afraid of talking about text features, genre, scripts etc. – focus should still be on ‘language’ not ‘linguistics’, but this can help;
- Encourage students to share their real life experiences of TL situations – and to reflect critically on this;
- Authentic examples better than bowdlerised ones – but this requires trust between T and SS, and between SS



Adjacency pairs (e.g. for transport)

Example conversations

Example 1

- Excuse me. Is the train / bus for X?
- Yes it is / No it isn't / I'm not sure

Example 2

- I'd like a return to Twerton please
- That's two pounds seventy please

Example 3

- What does the train for Oldfield Park leave / arrive?
- 5 o'clock.

Example 4

- Do you have a pass?
- Yes I do / No I don't

Example 5

- Can I order a taxi please?
- Where are you going / Where to?
- The city centre
- It'll be with you in ten minutes.

Example 6

- How long does the journey take?
- About half an hour.

Example 7

- What's the best way to get to Bristol?
- By train / By Bus



Bring ‘semi-strangers’ into class

- Classroom conversations are crucial and valuable, but should be seen as a stepping stone to interacting IRL;
- Identify people who would be willing to come to class and ‘transact’ with students – and perform semi-authentic role plays (shopworkers, medical practitioners, council workers etc.);
- Semi-strangers would need to be prepared/ supported beforehand.



Language learning ‘in the wild’

- Once students have built confidence via ‘semi-strangers’, ‘language learning in the wild’ may be the next step;
- Underlying premise: language development requires that learners participate in relevant and meaningful interaction;
- The classroom is still important – but its role is perceived slightly differently – e.g. as a space to prepare students for the wild, and as a space to ‘harvest and share their experiences



“Language learning in the wild is about using the resources available in the second language life world of the newcomers to a language. When newcomers have arrived in a new society, the new language plays an immediate role in their everyday lives. As a minimum, newcomers are overhearers of and eavesdroppers to spoken and written encounters in public life, education, or at workplaces and in the media. In this way, the second language has a paramount presence in the learners’ daily lives even before they have acquired the nuts and bolts for using it actively.”



Managing 'wild' language learning

- Talk to local museums / shops / services who might be sympathetic so they are aware of this scheme;
- Encourage students to identify times when their interlocutors are free, in order to minimise anxiety and maximise interaction;
- Tell students to 'rehearse' their interactions beforehand (this can also be done in the classroom).



Familiarise students to appropriate ‘Englishes’ (1)

- Many materials (coursebook and those more generally available online) only dominated by acrolects (prestige dialects / accents);
- Providing useful functional language for SS to use (e.g. *Can you repeat / spell that please*);
- Create a classroom list of ‘tricky words’ (this is non-judgemental – identified by students themselves)



Familiarise students to appropriate 'Englishes' (2)

- Compile a YouTube playlist with videos where this accent is used so that SS can practise listening in their own time;
- Employ and reinforce a pedagogy which emphasises communicative competence, and that all forms of English have value.

3. Activities for supporting students mitigate TL challenges



Activities to develop sub-skills

- Focused role plays
- Running dictation (clarifying)
- Blindfold directions



Focused role play

‘Going shopping’ role play – topics and interactions:

- Talking to the cashier in the supermarket
- Asking where something is in a shop
- Asking if a shop sells a particular item
- Asking what items a particular shop sells
- Asking for more details about particular items in a shop
- Following the stages of a particular process in a shop (e.g. doing an eye exam in an opticians , trying on different shoes in a shoe shop, buying stamps in a post office)



Focused role play

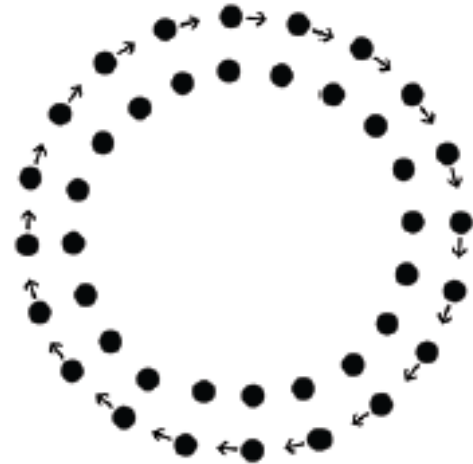
‘Going to the surgery’ role play – topics and interactions:

- In the doctor’s reception
- In the doctor’s surgery with a physical health issue (can do many different types of discussions)
- In the doctor’s surgery with a mental health issue
- Advocating for somebody else (e.g. a friend, a child) in a medical situation
- Calling 999 for emergency medical help



... and then repeat

*Iteration helps SS
understand the script
and learn from their
mistakes*



Running Dictation

1. Put a short, simple text on the wall (or place it on the ground).
2. Divide the class into 2-3 groups. In each group, one S is the 'runner'. When you say 'begin', runners should sprint to the texts, remember as much as they can, and then run back to their group. They dictate what they can remember. The 'writers' write it in down on paper or in their books. They should ask for clarification and repetition as necessary.
3. The runner then goes again, remembers more text, and returns. This process is repeated until the text is complete.
4. The winning team is the one which writes down all the text first. Finally, the runner should bring the text to their group. They then check to see how accurate the dictation was.

Blindfold directions

1. Place several (c. 5 or 6) non-dangerous objects on classroom floor in a random order – e.g. a ball, a box, clothing, a bag. One S should be blindfolded.
2. Give one S an envelope. Tell them that inside it is a task for the whole group. The piece of paper inside should read: “You must direct your friend through the maze. They should not touch any objects. They must wear the blindfold when they go through the maze. Your time starts now.”

It is then up to the group how they do this – they might decide to do together, just one person speak etc. The aim is that they work out the best way to give instructions

3. Discuss which are then discussed in the slides which follow after the activity.



In Summary ...

- Involve your students in the process of understand why – and what – TL is important;
- Encourage active reflection / discussion in class – link classroom practice to real world usage;
- Use well-disposed friends / locals to support learning – especially important in a seemingly hostile political environment



Any questions?

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