

Reconceptualising Second Language Oracy Instruction: Metacognitive Engagement and Direct Teaching in Listening and Speaking

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Abstract: The value of listening and speaking (oracy) competence for English language learners is not limited to day-to-day communication. L2 oracy is essential for academic learning, creative and critical thinking, collaboration and innovation in our globalised world of the 21st century. At a more fundamental level, listening and speaking are essential to the process of language acquisition, as they strengthen language learners' overall development of the English language regardless of their age or learning circumstances. In this article, I suggest that we should review approaches to listening and speaking instruction and call for it to be reconceptualised so that language learners can be personally involved in understanding, enhancing and managing their learning processes in a holistic manner. I also propose including more direct teaching of L2 listening and speaking through well-structured lessons and metacognitive activities to enable learners to observe their learning processes and examine elements of language and discourse required for successful completion of oracy learning tasks. This enhanced conception of L2 oracy instruction will rely heavily on teachers' ability and commitment to make teaching explicit and scaffold processes of learning. Underpinning my discussion is the key role of metacognition in language learning.

Keywords: Listening and speaking, oracy instruction, metacognition, direct teaching

INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate orally is recognized to be a critical component of English language learners' communicative competence in the 21st century. In every country that is plugged into the global economy, there is a call for children and youths to acquire English proficiently so as to participate in local and transnational activities. 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, innovation, collaboration and cross-cultural communication are emphasized in school curricula, and the ability to use spoken English to demonstrate these competencies is highly valued in education and by potential employers. Although literacy skills are still important, the acquisition of spoken English competencies for global communication has become an imperative. No longer can language learners rely solely on the printed word, focusing only on improving their reading and writing skills. Proficiency in listening and speaking in English has become more important than ever as an enabler for an individual's personal and professional success in our globalised world where English is the language for international communication. The importance of listening and speaking is not limited to communication, however. These two skills have long been accorded prominence in influential second language acquisition theories that foreground the importance of linguistic input and output (Krashen, 1985; Gass & Madden, 1985; Swain, 1985). Frequent and repeated listening to the target language is

essential for providing learners with input through which they can process and internalize vocabulary and grammar (Zeeland & Schmitt, 2013) while speaking allows learners to use their vocabulary and grammar knowledge of the language to articulate their thoughts and meanings. More importantly, when learners have to engage with others in negotiating meaning that is not immediately apparent, they are pushed to use the target language as precisely as they can, thereby improving their accuracy (Swain, 1995).

Proficient listening and speaking skills also contribute to the academic success of language learners. The skills enable them to engage thoughtfully with academic content delivered in the target language in order to learn the discipline of the subject well. The term 'oracy' has been coined to refer to listening and speaking skills required in first language educational contexts (Wilkinson, 1965), capturing the combined importance of these two skills not only as communicative competence but also as a means of thinking and learning the subject matter (Barnes, 1988). This concept applies equally well in English as a Second Language (ESL) learning contexts in which effective oracy is the tool for language learners to participate in communicating and learning in situations where part or all of the instruction of disciplinary subjects is conducted in English. As much of academic knowledge is still imparted by teachers and co-constructed among learners through the spoken language, ESL oracy skills is critical to academic and personal success. In addition, much informal learning of academic content also takes place through the medium of spoken language because of the lasting influence of traditional media such as the radio and television, but more so as a result of the increasing dominance of new media through the internet and other ICT affordances.

In light of the importance of second language oracy, it is useful therefore to review the way listening and speaking are taught in our language classrooms and consider the extent to which current practices are effective. A survey of developments in teaching listening and speaking will show that there have been many advances since the dawn of the communicative language teaching (CLT) era. These CLT practices which are still popular today, although valuable and important, do not adequately enable language learners to take on an active role in their L2 oracy development. More importantly, it overlooks some important questions: What does it really mean to *teach* listening and speaking? How do learners learn listening and speaking? What does the practice of listening and speaking in communicative language tasks do for long term skills and language development of our learners? Are there ways in which listening and speaking skills can be taught directly and not left to chance to be 'caught' incidentally?

In this article, I propose that it would be more beneficial to learners when metacognitive engagement and direct teaching are included in listening and speaking instruction. By this I mean the planning of activities, materials and lesson sequences where learners focus their attention directly on the processes, skills and outcomes of listening and speaking. Unlike pure communicative practice activities where learners may not even notice the skills they are using or the language that is used to support their listening and speaking, direct teaching makes skills, process and language explicit at appropriate points in a lesson. By enabling learners to consider what they learn, how they learn and why they learn, learning to listen and speak becomes visible and tangible experiences. Such concrete learning experiences are not only necessary

but critical to successful oracy learning. Underpinning my discussion is the concept of metacognition which can provide a theoretical rationale for explicit teaching and learner engagement in L2 oracy instruction. In what follows, I will first explain the concept of metacognition and review some research conducted in relation to L2 listening and speaking. Key principles for direct teaching and learner engagement arising from this discussion will be identified. Next, I will describe major approaches for teaching listening and speaking respectively. Within this discussion, I will also explain the constructs of listening and speaking and explain why it is important to consider theoretical perspectives that support engaging learners directly through metacognitive processes. Finally, I will suggest pedagogical processes for the oracy classroom where current practices can be enhanced.

METACOGNITION AND ORACY LEARNING

Metacognition is often defined simply but aptly as thinking about our own thinking. As a psychological construct, metacognition is “knowledge and cognition about cognitive phenomena” (Flavell, 1979, p. 906) which is recognised for its critical role in the success of many forms of learning. An individual’s metacognitive ability allows the person to exercise control over their own learning by reflecting on, planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning processes, and where problems arise, to adopt appropriate strategies that can address these issues, if not completely, at least in part. The construct of metacognition and its impact on academic performance has been discussed extensively in education (Hacker, Dunlosky, & Graesser, 2009; Hyde & Bizar 1989; Schmitt & Newby, 1986; Sternberg, 1998; Veenman, Van Hout-Wolters, & Afflerbach, 2006), examined in L1 and L2 reading (Schoonen, Hulstijn, & Bossers, 1998; Zhang, 2010), related to reading achievements in bilingual development (García, Jiménez, & Pearson, 1998; Koli-Vehovec & Bajšanski, 2007), applied to second language learning and learner autonomy (Oxford 1990, 2011; Victori & Lockhart, 1995; Wenden, 1987, 1991, 1998, 2002) and more specifically, to learning of L2 listening (Cross, 2011; Goh, 1997, 2008; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) and speaking (He, 2011; Glover, 2011; Goh & Burns, 2012).

The role of metacognition is particularly critical to L2 oracy development because many of learners’ mental processes during speech comprehension and production are hidden from teachers and quite often even from the learners themselves. Learners may have only a vague feeling of what they are learning to do or the problems they face, but they may not have the opportunities to articulate these experiences more precisely. Teachers therefore need to help them find ways of understanding and managing their cognitive processes and emotions through activities that raise their metacognitive awareness about listening and speaking. By engaging learners directly this way, teachers can also increase learners’ metacognitive knowledge about features of the spoken language they have to comprehend and produce, as well as developing a repertoire of strategies that enable them to participate effectively in oral interactions or listening.

These different dimensions of awareness are recognised in Flavell’s conception of metacognition, which comprises “one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive processes and ...active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which

they bear, usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective” (Flavell, 1976, p. 232) as well as “conscious cognitive and affective experiences... that accompany our thinking and learning” (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). Although metacognition as a psychological construct does not have a unitary or single definition in the vast literature it commands since the work of Flavell, experts agree that the components of knowledge and strategy use are essential to its conception. According to Flavell (1979), there are three types of metacognitive knowledge, namely person, task and strategy:

- Person knowledge – Knowledge about how factors such as age, aptitude, gender, and learning style can influence one’s own learning; personal beliefs about oneself as a learner, learning problems and challenges
- Task knowledge - Knowledge about the purpose, demands and nature or characteristics of learning tasks, and procedures and requirements involved in accomplishing these tasks.
- Strategy knowledge – Knowledge about strategies that are likely to be useful for achieving specific learning goals and those that may not be useful, and how strategies can be used appropriately or in an orchestrated manner to promote learning and thinking.

Listening and Metacognition

Research on L2 listening has consistently shown that learners across different age groups possess a fairly high level of metacognitive knowledge about L2 listening. Learners as young as 10 and 11 understood task factors (e.g. topics, types of questions) that affected their listening comprehension as well as strategies that they could use to improve their performance in future listening tasks (e.g. ignoring difficult words, making inferences/informed guesses) (Goh & Taib 2006; Goh & Kaur, 2013; Kaur 2014; Vandergrift 2002). Adolescent and adult learners also possessed rich metacognitive knowledge about listening but they had a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the strengths and limitations of strategies (Cross, 2009, 2010; Goh, 1999; Graham 2006, Zeng 2012, Zhang & Goh 2006). Overall, L2 listeners regardless of age seem aware of the challenges and factors that influence their listening. Commonly reported problems include not being able to hear important words, getting distracted by unfamiliar words, not being able to interpret meaning from words heard.

Listening strategies have been researched for nearly two decades now and several taxonomies have emerged from various studies (e.g. Goh, 1998, 2002a; O’Malley & Chamot, 1989; Vandergrift, 1997, 1998, 2003; Young, 1997). Many of these taxonomies have been guided by a cognitive-metacognitive-social and affective framework. Drawing on these commonalities, Vandergrift and Goh (2012, p. 277-284) proposed 12 groups of strategies that represent mental processes and learning behaviours. Seven of these strategies directly facilitate cognitive processing during listening and are often used in an orchestrated manner: *focusing attention, monitoring, evaluation, inferencing, elaboration, contextualisation* and *reorganizing*. Two help learners prepare for listening: *planning* and *prediction*. The strategy of *using linguistic and learning resources* assist learners in overall listening development especially in self-study for long-term listening development. The strategies of *cooperation* and *managing emotions* enable learners to cope with

stressful face-to-face interactional listening or high stakes one-way listening situations.

An in-depth review of research on listening strategies by Macaro, Graham and Vanderplank (2007) show that learners found top-down strategies, such as making inferences and elaboration with the help of prior knowledge to be particularly useful, but the authors cautioned that prior knowledge can also easily be misused. In spite of this, learners can still benefit from awareness of how listening strategies can facilitate comprehension as it will give them better control of their listening and create greater confidence and motivation (e.g. Goh & Taib, 2006;Graham, Santos, &Vanderplank, 2011; Zeng,2012). When learners receive explicit strategy instruction and are able to increase their overall metacognitive knowledge of listening, the results are often very encouraging. French L2 learners in an experimental group who were guided through a sequence of prediction/ planning, monitoring, evaluating, and problem solving during their listening task performed significantly better in listening comprehension than their counterparts in the control group (Vandergrift & Tafaghodtari, 2010). At the same time they also demonstrated increased metacognitive awareness as measured by the Metacognitive Awareness Listening Questionnaire (MALQ) (Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal, & Tafaghodtari, 2006). A structured sequence of listening and metacognitive activities was used in weekly listening lessons in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programme (Elk, 2014). The researcher reported that by examining errors they made in both bottom-up/decoding and top-down processing, the students developed greater awareness about their own listening processes, and had a better understanding of the reasons for those errors and the strategies they could use in the future to cope with similar problems.

Speaking and Metacognition

Compared with listening, research on the role of metacognition in L2 speaking took a slightly different route. Historically, learners' use of strategies during speaking was examined as communication strategies (CS) in the field of interlanguage studies. CSs were recognised as a set of competencies in Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence. They are plans for solving communication problems arising mainly from inadequate mastery of the target language (Faerch & Kasper, 1983, 1984). Learners used CSs to prevent communication breakdown and prolong opportunities for face-to-face communication (e.g. Bialystok 1983; Poulisse & Schils 1989). Such strategies included paraphrase and circumlocution to make up for words they did not know, as well as borrowing words from their L1 (Tarone, 1978). Learners' use of cognitive strategies (also referred to as psycholinguistics strategies) for compensating lexical gaps continues to draw interest today (e.g. Rossiter,2003). Researchers were also spurred by interest in second language acquisition with respect to the role of meaning negotiation and examined the kinds of strategies that learners in face-to-face interactions (Long 1983; Rost & Ross 1991;Varonis & Gass, 1985). More recently, communication strategies have also been studied in the context of facilitating and enhancing communication (Jamshidnejad, 2011; Nakatani, 2005, 2006; Williams, Insoe, & Tasker, 1997). For an in-depth review of research into both kinds of communication strategies, see Nakatani & Goh (2007).

While a significant body of research over the last 40 years has demonstrated that language learners make use of strategies to facilitate speech, less work has been

done into learners' metacognitive knowledge about their L2 speaking processes and development. One such study examined the knowledge of secondary school students in a bilingual education system concerning strategies for learning English oral communication skills (Zhang & Goh, 2006). The researchers found that students' belief in the usefulness of listening and speaking strategies correlated fairly strongly with their reported use of the strategies. Almost two-thirds of the 278 students surveyed said they found six communication strategies to be useful for face-to-face interactions: asking for repetition, asking for explanation, confirming comprehension, using words with similar meaning, rephrasing their intentions and using examples. Another study showed that language learners' metacognitive awareness about L2 speaking can be strengthened if they have guidance from instruments or descriptors which highlight important processes of language learning and language use (Glover, 2011). The language learners' understanding of their speaking developments improved considerably with the help of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) level descriptors for speaking. These explicit statements from the level descriptors enabled the students to reflect on and evaluate their speaking abilities more effectively and over time they wrote longer, more relevant, and more detailed and critical descriptions of their speaking skills.

Two other studies examined the effects of metacognitive instruction on speaking performance. In the first study on secondary school students, the effects of an intervention programme using metacognitive reflections and scaffolding that leveraged on the affordances of audio blogs were examined among Chinese language learners (Tan & Tan, 2010). A significant improvement in the mean scores from pre- to post-test oral performance was found, indicating efficacy of the metacognitive approach adopted in which the students evaluated, monitored and planned their speaking performance. The students' reflections, however, focused substantially more on task knowledge and almost to the exclusion of person and strategy knowledge. The efficacy of metacognitive instruction was also examined in the context of EFL pronunciation learning (He, 2011). Dynamic changes in the learners' metacognitive knowledge about EFL pronunciation learning were traced from the learners' weekly journals. Increased pronunciation proficiency was also reported following the intervention and learning. In this study, a questionnaire instrument was also developed and validated and it holds potential for a better understanding of the relationship between metacognition and EFL pronunciation learning in future research.

Metacognition and Direct Teaching

First of all, it is important to clarify that the call for including more direct teaching is not to be mistaken for a return to the direct method that was developed as a response to the Grammar-Translation method in foreign language teaching. Neither is this a part of the Direct Instruction movement that has been credited with success in improving literacy and numeracy skills among low performing students. Nevertheless, the form of direct teaching of L2 oracy that I suggest here shares some general principles with direct instruction such as the need for lessons to be structured, activities to be teacher-directed and learners' attention to be focused on the language or skills that they have to learn. I do not suggest that the teacher should stand in front of the class to present information on how to listen and speak well or that pair or

group work be abandoned. On the contrary, this is a call to reconsider how the current practice of learners talking in pairs or groups can be further enhanced through greater teacher scaffolding and explicit teaching. It is also a call to take a critical look at listening lessons where learners do little more than listen to or watch a recording and then attempt comprehension tasks or questions.

Teachers also need to avoid thinking that giving learners opportunities to practise speaking with one another and completing listening comprehension exercises are adequate for oracy development in the classroom. Instead of limiting learners' development to only such practice (and more practice), teachers should plan additional activities in which they can guide learners to understand and acquire enablers of proficient listening and speaking, such as language knowledge, discourse skills and strategies. Importantly, teachers should harness the power of learners' metacognition which can work in great synergy with their carefully planned lessons. Such lessons should engage learners through a variety of learning processes that serve different instructional objectives that can make oracy learning not only enjoyable but also meaningful and visible.

Teacher-directed learning can combine well with learners' self-directed learning efforts. In fact it is completely possible, as I will show later in this article, for students to co-construct their knowledge and co-develop their oracy skills in a lesson that the teacher has carefully structured, making it possible for listening and speaking abilities to be explicitly taught and not merely 'caught' through practice and drills. Such an approach sets a high premium on metacognitive engagement and direct teaching, and is guided by the principles below.

- a) Learners will develop their metacognitive knowledge individually and with others about the following:
 - their self-concepts as L2 listeners and speakers – problems, strengths, goals
 - cognitive and social processes involved in listening and speaking
 - demands of different types of listening and speaking tasks
 - specific skills that enable successful listening and speaking
 - features of spoken texts (as different from written texts) in regard to listening comprehension and speech production
 - language knowledge needed to support successful completion of a listening and/or speaking task
 - strategies for planning, monitoring and evaluating their performance
 - strategies for compensating for a lack of language knowledge or enhancing performance

- b) Teachers will plan lessons to teach students the following explicitly and systematically:
 - cognitive processes involved in listening and speaking that would otherwise remain hidden in fluency practice
 - social processes that not only facilitate interaction but also contribute to language learning
 - features of speech including discourse or text types, grammar and pronunciation

- strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate their listening and speaking performance
 - techniques for reflecting on their own learning and commenting on other people's reflections
- c) Learning activities will allow learners to
- engage in listening and oral communication tasks that have a high degree of authenticity
 - examine processes, strategies language and skills required for successful task completion
 - notice or attend to language
 - receive input and feedback
 - learn from one another in collaborative settings that value student voices

To explain further this need for including more direct teaching and learner engagement in oracy classrooms, I will now review some key approaches to teaching listening and speaking.

SECOND LANGUAGE LISTENING

Listening comprehension is a complex process which includes recognising or perceiving words in streams of speech, interpreting the meaning of words and utterances by using knowledge of the grammar of the language, constructing interpretations using words perceived and stored background knowledge, responding appropriately through speaking, and writing down or storing the information or message effectively for subsequent retrieval. Listening comprehension manifests itself as an interaction of mental processes in language decoding and constructing meaning (Field, 2008), an application of specific enabling skills that are appropriate for the purpose of listening (Rost, 1990; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012), as well as the production of responses to complete the communication process (Rost, 2011). In her classic work on L2 listening comprehension, Brown (1990) observes that active listeners construct reasonable interpretations based on what they hear and recognises when more information is needed. Listening comprehension is a continuous process of mental and social engagement with the input even after it has stopped, and active listeners bring a great deal to this listening process. In one-way listening non-participatory listening, active listeners may begin with some understanding of what they hear but will strive to construct a more complete interpretation by listening to the rest of the text as it unfolds. Additionally, active listeners will deliberately listen out for a repeat of information they might have missed partially or find ways to make up for its incompleteness through top-down processes that exploit their own prior knowledge of the topic of the context of interaction. In two-way or interactional listening, active listeners will initiate cooperative processes with speakers by asking for repetition or clarification and paraphrasing to confirm comprehension.

L2 Listening Instruction: Advances and Constraints

The past three decades have seen definite shifts in approaches taken to teach listening that have been influenced by changes in language teaching approaches and methodology in general. Reviews by various scholars generally agree that listening

instruction has moved from a heavily text comprehension approach to an increasingly learner-centred one (Brown, 1987; Field, 2008; Flowerdew & Miller, 2005; Lynch, 2009; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012; White, 2006). In general, it has been noted that listening instruction shifted from an emphasis on drills and dialogues to testing and checking comprehension before becoming more communicative in nature and increasingly learner-centred. One of the earliest approaches required learners to answer comprehension questions based on a similar approach to reading comprehension, but L2 listening instruction in many classrooms now are leaning more towards listening for communication where authentic materials are an important source of input and outcome for listening is driven by purpose. It is common to see activities where students talk to one another to complete information gap activities and practising their listening and speaking. In some classrooms, learners are also being taught using the strategy approach (Mendelsohn, 1994, 2006). This innovative pedagogy helps learners to listen more effectively by employing strategies to overcome comprehension challenges.

Although there are discernable changes in pedagogical approaches, the tendency to test rather than teach listening is still present in many classrooms today. In many countries, listening lessons still centre around students listening to CDs or lately podcast recordings (when previously cassettes were used), and answering listening comprehension questions in different formats, such as filling in blanks or sequencing pictures. In some cases, the listening passages are lexically dense and contain syntactical features of written texts for reading comprehension instead of features of spoken grammar (McCarthy & Carter, 2001) that are more appropriate for listening. In such situations students are doubly disadvantaged. Their listening experience is inauthentic and not meaningful. In addition, the heavy cognitive load exerted by grammatical and lexical demands makes processing very difficult.

In classrooms that take a communicative and collaborative orientation, the situation is better and students also have a chance to become more engaged in their listening. They have to listen to what their peers are saying and also respond in appropriate or correct ways. Once put into pairs or groups, however, the students are often left to complete the oral communication activity on their own. Teachers may assume that once their students have completed an activity, they have also practised their listening and speaking. If feedback is given, it may focus more on speaking and how the activity has been completed. As listening is not a visible or audible process, teachers are not able to give students feedback on the way they listen. Comments such as 'You should pay close attention to your classmates' or 'You should ask more questions next time if you don't understand' are well-meaning but not always helpful. Students are probably doing their best to focus their attention and seek cooperation from their peers, but they still face many listening problems. For discussions of listener problems see Goh (2000) and Zhang & Zhang (2011).

The strategy approach, on the other hand, helps learners control their listening processes better. Learners engage in similar listening tasks as they would in communication activities or with recorded listening input, but they also now have to plan and use strategies to solve listening problems. This form of learner-oriented instruction continues to hold great promise for empowering learners to self-direct their language use and language learning. The scope of such an approach is narrow, however. I suggest that instead of focusing only on listening strategies, learner-

oriented lessons should adopt a broader metacognitive approach that develops both strategy use and metacognitive knowledge (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). I also suggest that these learning processes be worked into a carefully structured lesson sequence to create tangible learning experiences for students.

SECOND LANGUAGE SPEAKING

According to Levelt (1989) speech production consists of conceptualisation, formulation and articulation, three processes that occur mainly in an interactive manner. Conceptualisation is the process by which speakers select information to be conveyed. To convey their ideas, speakers have to formulate or structure utterances with their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary that is stored in long term memory. They also have to articulate their message by encoding it phonologically through the activation and control of specific muscle groups of the articulatory system. Bygate (1998, 2005) further highlights the important metacognitive process of self-monitoring and evaluation and the importance of knowledge about discourse routines in L2 speaking. For a detailed discussion of cognitive processes in speech production see Segalowitz (2010) which draws on Levelt's model of monolingual speakers and De Bot's (1992) model of a bilingual speaker.

L2 Speaking Instruction: Advances and Constraints

Speaking has always been an important component of second/ foreign language learning even when it was done in the service of grammar learning through oral drills. Its prominence as a tool for communication, however, was often overlooked until the CLT movement foregrounded the importance of learning English for communication. This is reflected in language curricula and course books in the last few decades where activities for practising speaking fluency are prominently included. In her survey of speaking instruction, Burns (1998) identified the direct/controlled and the indirect/transfer approaches. The direct/controlled approach focuses on accurate production by helping learners acquire accurate grammar and sound patterns through drills and repetitions. As learning focused on the forms of the language, meaning expression is not always prioritised. Learners who were taught using the direct/controlled approach were not well prepared for the challenges of real world communication. They had knowledge of the grammar of the language and how words should be pronounced, but were often unable to communicate fluently and confidently. Some authors nevertheless have taken the direct/controlled approach to a higher level of relevance. Burns, Joyce and Gollin (1996) show how teachers can use a text-based method to help learners learn the structure of different kinds of spoken text through analysis and discussion, thereby contributing to the development of more effective discourse skills.

The indirect/transfer approach focuses on fluency practice and the production of speech during communicative activities. Like listening instruction, its advancement was the result of the sociolinguistic movement which helped underscore the communicative purpose for which languages were taught. The influential CLT methodology principles focused on the importance of speaking for authentic communicative purposes where learners had to carry out myriad functions, such as describe, explain, decline, disagree, etc. Learners practise speaking through role play

activities, group discussions, information gap tasks and talking circles. The advancements of task-based learning (Skehan, 1996; Willis, 1996) further strengthened the use of specially planned activities which ensured that the target language was used for a purpose and served a communication goal or outcome. Spontaneous talk in an indirect teaching approach prioritised fluency over the need to be accurate (Bygate, 2001), thereby enabling learners to develop greater confidence and motivation to continue speaking. But therein also lies a problem. Many teachers in fact observe that their students who have been taught using the indirect/transfer approach are less accurate in their speech, grammatically and phonologically. Their limitations notwithstanding, both approaches are still found in speaking classrooms today (McCarthy & O'Keefe, 2004), and a survey of course books will show the indirect/transfer approach to be hugely popular.

One of the biggest constraints of the indirect approach is that the process for learning to speak (and listen) is largely invisible and unconscious to learners. As a result, some learners do not see speaking being taught but merely practised or done. In addition, their progress is seen to rely solely on practice and more practice. If teachers or teacher educators are concerned that this may not be the only way to develop listening and speaking, then perhaps a return to some form of direct teaching would seem a logical consideration. Instead of an either-or situation, teaching of speaking can in fact combine some of the best features of the direct and indirect approaches. There can be explicit teaching of speaking skills, strategies and relevant vocabulary in a lesson sequence or unit of work where opportunities for learners to practise their skills in communication tasks are also available (Goh, 2007; Goh & Burns, 2012). Such an approach would also exploit recent research findings on how speaking processes and metacognitive development can be scaffolded to create cognitive and affective engagement in their learning process.

An Enhanced Conception of L2 Oracy Instruction

Learning to listen and speak in another language is like many other forms of learning, which are active, strategic and constructive (Bauer, 1998). It requires learner engagement at the cognitive, social and affective levels, and arises out of strong interactions between learners and their social and linguistic environments. In this process, learners need to be guided by their teachers through relevant scaffolding to achieve learning goals which they would otherwise find difficult to attain on their own. Learners also have to develop awareness and control of their own learning processes individually and through collaborative efforts with others.

L2 learners, especially beginning and intermediate learners, experience many problems with listening and speaking. These problems are not confined to common cognitive challenges such as an inability to process the sounds or streams of utterances they hear, understand the overall message, or find the right words to articulate their thoughts. Arising from these problems may also be feelings of stress, anxiety and discouragement as well as, for some, a loss of direction on how they can improve their listening and speaking proficiency. As much as cognitive problems need to be addressed, these affective issues also deserve close attention. Owing to these multi-faceted personal influences on oracy learning, oracy instruction needs to take a holistic view of the learner and the learning process, providing opportunities for

each learner to develop their cognitive processing, self-regulation and self-direction abilities.

Listening and speaking, like reading and writing, are generally referred to as language skills. In discussing instructional approaches, however, it would be useful to consider a narrower definition of the concept of 'skills' as referring to abilities that are demonstrated through little or no effort and attentional control. In regard to reading, for example, skills are automatized processes of an accomplished reader (Afflerbach, Pearson & Paris, 2008). As language skill learning typically follows a trajectory spread over time (Johnson, 1996), learning to listen and speak in an L2 will develop gradually from mainly deliberate, controlled and effortful processes which the literature refers to as 'strategies' (Macaro & Cohen, 2007) before less effort is required as the processes become increasingly proceduralised (Johnson, 1996). Following Afflerbach and colleagues, we may describe an accomplished L2 listener and speaker as someone who can balance both automatic use of listening and speaking skills with intentional employment of listening and oral communication strategies. To develop such kinds of accomplished listeners and speakers should be the goal of L2 oracy instruction.

To this end, I propose that an enhanced conceptualisation of L2 oracy instruction would need to recognise the role of metacognition in helping learners attend to cognitive, social and affective processes, and features of language and discourse, as well as in employing strategies for using and learning a second language (Cohen, 1998). It will require that teachers, material developers and teacher educators address all three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge in relation to oracy development: person knowledge, task knowledge and strategy knowledge. It will also require an understanding of how learners' metacognition is enhanced through some direct and explicit teaching of language and discourse skills. Direct teaching framed within a metacognitive approach would need teachers to plan learning activities and structure lesson sequences carefully so that learners can experience the active, strategic and constructive processes of oracy development through the scaffolding provided.

In listening instruction where learners listen to a spoken text without the need to respond orally to the speaker, the teacher can integrate metacognitive learning into the listening lesson so as to teach learners explicitly how to listen. Such an approach is best demonstrated in the pedagogical sequence modelled by Vandergrift (2004; Vandergrift & Goh, 2012) in which learners listen to a text not once but three times. With each listen, the teacher guides them in using and evaluating appropriate listening strategies. The teacher also works into the sequence opportunities for students to discuss with each other and the teacher the problem they face in terms of its language and content. Opportunities for examining linguistic features of the spoken text can also be included. In addition, the listening lesson does not end with the listening activity as in most classrooms. Instead, learners have to record their learning reflections and plan for better listening for the next task. Such an approach makes listening processes visible so that learners develop ways of managing the processes more effectively for themselves. Elsewhere I have also suggested extending the scope of pre-listening and post-listening stages in a listening lesson to include pre-task strategic planning and listening process-based discussions (Goh, 2002b) as well as

including a language-focused activity that can improve perception and decoding skills following the listening stage (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012).

In regard to teaching speaking, the indirect/transfer method is still relevant as it gives learners the opportunities to speak in the target language while practising their listening. Nevertheless, communicative tasks such as information-gap activities and group discussions should be complemented by some form of direct teaching so as to increase learners' metacognitive knowledge about speaking and the spoken language. I have suggested before the need to extend the traditional pre-speaking, speaking and post-speaking stages in CLT-based lessons to include a fourth stage of language-focused learning where grammar and pronunciation are taught and learnt in context (Goh, 2007). This stage can help learners notice language and acquire greater accuracy eventually in their speech. Where a longer unit of work is planned, a more extended cycle for teaching speaking should include metacognitive activities that can direct learners' attention to the nature and demands of a speaking task before any planning and fluency practice and guide them to reflect on their learning and receive feedback after they have completed the tasks (Goh & Burns, 2012).

Direct teaching of second language oracy would also entail the use of learner-friendly instruments that can facilitate reflections and self-or peer-assessment. The MALQ instrument (Vandergrift et al., 2006) and CEFR level descriptors such as the ones used in Glover's (2011) study can serve the purpose well for many learners. Younger learners may need slightly simplified checklists (Kaur, 2014, Vandergrift, 2002). For more examples of metacognitive prompts and checklists, see also Goh (2010) and Goh & Burns (2012). Transcripts of spoken texts are important learning aid and when used in the lessons after listening can help students notice the language they hear (or mishear) in a listening text and examine the language that is used by competent speakers in similar speaking tasks (Willis, 1996). Attention will also need to be drawn to how different types of texts are structured; hence, improving learners' metacognitive knowledge about discourse organization for both listening and speaking (Burns & Joyce, 1997). Explicit teaching would also involve learners in identifying specific enabling skills that are needed for listening or speaking tasks and the language that supports the demonstration of these skills. For example, the use of discourse markers in talks or formulaic expressions that facilitate various speech functions, such as disagreeing or paying a compliment. Last but not least, teaching of oracy skills is incomplete without a focus on listening and communication strategies. Some curriculum time should therefore be spent on showing learners how to use strategies in the context of a lesson sequence, as is the case with Vandergrift's (2004) pedagogical sequence for listening, or as a post-speaking activity before an activity is repeated (Goh & Burns, 2012).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AHEAD

Listening and speaking instruction has traditionally faced many challenges, not least at the level of curriculum enactment. In many language classrooms, priority is still given to reading and writing, and oral language activities are sometimes sacrificed because of the relative weightings of the different language skills in high-stakes examinations. Many teachers also find that they have better pedagogical knowledge for teaching reading and writing, vocabulary and grammar, and feel less

certain about techniques for teaching listening and speaking. This could be the result of teacher training programmes where methods for teaching the spoken language receive less attention than those for teaching the written word. Group work for oral activities is also often hard to manage, especially with classes where some problem with discipline exists. Some teachers may also prefer not to carry out speaking activities because it is hard to monitor a large number of groups in big classes. Others may hold the belief that students do not need to learn to listen and speak because they will 'pick up' these skills if they are exposed to the language for long enough, especially if English is also a medium of instruction for some school subjects. Students may also not appreciate speaking and listening activities in English lessons. Some may find such activities a waste of time because they seem to be sitting around talking to one another and not doing any 'proper' language learning. Sadly, the use of oral activities is also sometimes misunderstood by students as teachers being too lazy to do any real teaching. In mainstream primary and secondary education, this perception may also be shared by some parents who expect to see evidence of their children's learning, such as compositions with teachers' corrections.

These challenges taken together may explain why speaking and listening skills are not always taught systematically and consistently in many language learning environments. They could also account for some of the neglect we see in L2 oracy development. Fortunately, many teachers do believe strongly in developing good oracy skills for their students. They make use of available materials in course books or from other sources such as the internet to support their teaching. They are also able to engage their students through interesting activities that allow them to practise their listening and speaking. The reconceptualised view of L2 oracy instruction I have proposed in this article would suggest that teachers need to do even more. They will need to do more than plan listen-and-do activities where students' comprehension is checked at the end of each activity or conduct communicative activities where students practise talking to develop their fluency in the target language. Teachers will need to go beyond selecting relevant authentic materials as listening input and finding age-appropriate topics that would engage learners in group discussions, all of which is valuable. A reconceptualisation of L2 oracy instruction would call for radical change to the way listening and speaking lessons are planned and carried out. It would require a systematic approach to structuring listening and speaking lessons, where lessons are mainly teacher-directed and teacher-scaffolded. At the heart of this call is for teachers' acceptance of the important role that metacognition plays in language learning, particularly in the learning of listening and speaking where the processes, even though active and strategic, are not always visible. Teachers would also need to learn new techniques and develop new tools for helping learners to reflect, plan, monitor and evaluate their oracy learning. It would also require commitment on the part of teacher educators and teacher education institutions to devote time and resources to preparing teachers for the job of teaching listening and speaking well. On a broader level, it may even require a review of syllabuses and curricula and the emphases given to oracy in public examinations. Research would also need to be conducted as new strategies are adopted for teaching to provide feedback on the efficacy of the process. Given the fact that successful listening and speaking development can contribute greatly to L2 learners' communication, learning and personal success, this commitment of teachers, teacher educators, researchers and policy makers can help pave the way for a brighter future for our children and youths growing up in an increasingly competitive globalised world where a command of

spoken English through proficient comprehension and production will almost certainly give them that edge to succeed.

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