Creative conversations in class:

Helping students get more from speaking activities

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Problems with conversation

- Don’t sound natural
- L1 interference
- New language not used
- Students don’t really listen to each other
- Passengers?
- Hard to monitor and ‘capture’ what happens
- Students don’t value them as learning activities
Classroom interrogation

Question overload ...

Self-reveal ...

Overdone ...

One-way ...
A: Do you want to come to my party?
B: Yes, thanks. When is it?
A: Next Saturday.
B: Right – and where is it?
A: At my place.
B: Is Graham going?
A: Probably...
B: Well, I think I might be busy, actually.

Invite your partner to something
OR
Offer your partner something
OR
Ask your partner to do you a favour
The misfit

‘It seems that traditional classroom environments do not lend themselves very well to conversation: by definition the classroom is a formal, institutional, and asymmetric setting.’

‘... paradoxically, in this setting, the informal, unpredictable, spontaneous ‘conversational’ interactions which should lead to communicative competence have to be accommodated.’

However

‘...implicit instruction combined with ample practice opportunities results in the greatest gains’

Specifically ...

Research indicates that explicit instruction (and exposure and practice) can help:

- Limit negative L1 transfer
- Sociolinguistic appropriacy (e.g. politeness strategies)
- Confidence
- Conversational routines
- Lexical phrases
- Techniques (e.g. fillers and vague language)
Picture prompt

BEFORE

Possibly

Probably

AFTER

Unlikely

ETAS September 2016
Triads

Role of the listener

1 timekeeper
2 police officer
3 counter
4 evaluator
5 helper
6 informant
Triads

Work in threes

A: Tell B and C about a recent situation you were in when you talked to someone.

B and C: Act it out. One of you is A, one the person A was talking with.
Venn diagram triad
That’s all

Thanks for coming

Feel free to link to me on LinkedIn

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