


1993

## An ESL Oral Communication Lesson: One Teacher's Techniques and Principles

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### Recommended Citation

Murphy, John M. (1993) "An ESL Oral Communication Lesson: One Teacher's Techniques and Principles," *Basic Communication Course Annual*: Vol. 5 , Article 11.  
Available at: <http://ecommons.udayton.edu/bcca/vol5/iss1/11>

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## **An ESL Oral Communication Lesson: One Teacher's Techniques and Principles\***

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*John M. Murphy*

**Labour well the Minute Particulars, . . .**

**He who would do good to another, must do it in Minute  
Particulars . . . General Forms have their vitality in  
Particulars . . .**

— From William Blake's *Jerusalem*. Chapters 3 & 4.  
(Plate 55: 51, 60 & Plate 91: 29). [Paley, W. (Ed.), (1991)].

William Blake's conception of the value of minute particulars reveals a seminal poetic vision vigorously explored by English language writers such as Poe, Whitman, Dickinson, and Williams, and that continues expanding through contemporary literary verse of the western world (Ginsberg, 1986). It is exciting to see that a similar conception appears to be emerging in the current literature on methods of classroom instruction (Carter, 1990). While the terms "method" or "approach" refer to ways of teaching which are based on systematic techniques and principles, there are many classroom instruction specialists who caution against the impact of globally defined methods on teachers' classroom behaviors (Pennycook, 1989 & 1991; Prabhu, 1990 & 1992; Richards, 1984; van Lier, 1991). In a recent discussion of alternatives to adopting either a global method or a broadly targeted curriculum design, Pennycook

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\*The author is indebted to Diane Larsen-Freeman, Patricia A. Richard-Amato, Theodore S. Rodgers, Leo van Lier, Roberta A. Davilla and several anonymous BCCA reviewers for their insightful comments upon earlier drafts of this article. Any remaining shortcomings, of course, are the author's.

(1989) calls for teachers and teacher educators to "strive to validate other, local forms of knowledge" about language, communication, and teaching (p. 613). Prabhu (1990) echoes a similar theme by directing attention to "teachers' subjective understanding of the teaching they do" (p. 172). These writers suggest mechanisms for developing increased awareness of one's own classroom behaviors which include documenting authentic classroom experiences, examining them for recurring patterns, reflecting critically upon them either alone or with others, and sharing insights with interested colleagues. Emerging from this tradition, the following discussion introduces a set of techniques and principles that one teacher finds useful for a specific student population with particular learning need.

## **THE CONTEXT AND SETTING**

At universities and colleges in the United States, Australia, and Canada there is a long tradition of teaching oral communication to second language speakers of English. Such efforts play a prominent role within intensive English as a second language (ESL) programs (Meloni & Thompson, 1980; Morley, 1991; Murphy, 1992). At the same time, growing numbers of ESL students are enrolling in courses made available through departments of communication (Pearson & Nelson, 1990; Yook & Seiler, 1990). More specifically, ESL students are entering the introductory communication course (ICC) in increasing numbers (Braithwaite & Braithwaite, 1991; Hill & Javidi, 1993; Schliessmann, 1985). Discussion of the following set of techniques and principles begins with a prose description of an authentic lesson in a course designed to prepare ESL learners as successful ICC participants. As well as depicting my own sense of possibilities when teaching in this area, the discussion may suggest alternative ICC classroom procedures, particularly for ICC instructors who find themselves working with

significant numbers of non-native speakers of English. The major investigative tools contributing to the lesson's description were: a video recording of the class, a separate audio recording (I carried a small audio recorder in my shirt pocket), my own retrospective account composed immediately following the class, and field notes provided by an experienced classroom observer. The lesson took place within a large ESL program at a metropolitan university in the United States. The students' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years. They were studying at a high-intermediate-level of English language proficiency. The class met for 75 minutes, twice a week, over a 14-week semester.

A central feature of the lesson is the decision to highlight dyadic interactions while attempting to work within a traditional content focus of the ICC [i.e., the public speaking approach as described by Gibson, Hanna, & Leichty, (1990), Gray, (1989), Makay & Bechler (1993), and Verderber (1991)]. By placing students in dyads, speakers have multiple opportunities to deliver oral presentations on self-selected topics that have been developed outside of classroom time. Using dyads also provides student listeners with numerous opportunities to take written notes and to interact with their peers. At regular intervals, everyone changes partners and begins to work with a different member of the class. The lesson's primary objectives are for students (1) to develop a more realistic sense of audience and (2) to realize that one's presentation of a topic to a peer encompasses a challenging process of discovery, change, and revision. The following events occurred during the twelfth class meeting.

### **THE EXPERIENCES: A DESCRIPTION OF 'MINUTE PARTICULARS'**

Upon entering the room, I place several folders and a stack of paper on the front desk. Two of the folders contain

samples of the students' writings from the previous day's class. In the stack are sheets of paper with the heading 'listener-notes' on each page. As students enter, I greet them and return written work collected during a previous class. At the same time, several students are placing photocopies of written outlines on the front desk. The students' outlines are to be used as a basis for oral presentations in today's class. They have kept original copies for themselves. As the outlines are handed in, I skim through them. Several are composed of lists of sentences, some resemble tentative work sheets, others are in essay form, only a few approximate the format of a conventional outline. From one of the folders, I take out several sheets of paper with the class roster listed in the left-hand margin. On one of these sheets, next to each name, I begin to jot down brief phrases culled from the outlines just submitted. While I am quickly jotting down notes, the students pick up two sheets of 'listener-notes' paper from the stack located at the front desk. There are 16 students in the room.

Addressing the whole class I say, "In a minute, I am going to ask everyone to arrange yourselves into pairs of two. As you know, no two speakers of the same native language should be working together. Since there are only six males in this class, no two men should be together either, at least not for now. But before you stand up, using your eyes, look around the room and try to find a partner. Remember, look for someone you have not worked with recently."<sup>1</sup> Students begin to glance around the room. Some are smiling in recognition that they want to work together. Others are indicating to each other where they would like to sit. A couple of students quietly check to see if they have worked together

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<sup>1</sup>Some of the teacher's and students' comments in this section of the article have been re-worded for the purposes of clarity and conciseness of expression, although the excerpts do accurately reflect the gist of what the speakers originally said.

**Figure 1****DIRECTIONS FOR BEING A SPEAKER**

- 1) As you introduce your presentation to different members of the class, the content you present should *change significantly as you go* from one listener to the next.
- 2) Use your *written outline only as a starting point*. As you become more aware of what your listeners do and do not know, make adjustments in the information you present.
- 3) Develop a more realistic *sense of audience* as you go from one partner to the next.
- 4) Pay attention to your different partners' concerns and *make adjustments* in your presentation so you are even clearer for the next listener.
- 5) *Experiment* with different ways of expressing similar ideas.
- 6) *Summarize yourself* from time to time. *Backtrack periodically* and go over major points that the listener may have missed the first time around.
- 7) *Look at the listener* as much as is possible while you are speaking. Look at the outline only when you really need it.
- 8) Learn to *accommodate* to the needs of your *different listeners*. If someone is having trouble understanding you, take their problems seriously while attempting to bring yourself to their level of language development.
- 9) Be *Polite!* Be friendly, but get the job done as well.
- 10) *Add new ideas* to your topic as you progress from one person to the next.
- 11) Sometimes *ask the listener some questions* just to see if she or he has understood you well.
- 12) Do not be overly concerned with the listeners' notes. That is not your responsibility. Do not spell words for them. *This is not a selling lesson.*
- 13) *Find out what the listener is suggesting* in his or her notes on your topic.

**Figure 2**

**DIRECTIONS FOR BEING A LISTENER**

- 1) As well as being a speaker from time to time, you will be a listener for at least 3 *different speakers* during today's class.
- 2) As a way to begin taking notes, you are expected to *summarize* what the speaker has had to say during the presentation. Write down as much of what the speaker says as is possible during the time provided (10 minutes for each speaker).
- 3) However, it is not enough only to write down what the speaker says. *Include your own questions, suggestions, thoughts,* and additional pieces of information as they relate to the speaker's general topic.
- 4) Think of a speaker's presentation as a *starting point for you as a writer.*
- 5) When taking notes, place yourself into the position of the speaker. *What might you have included in the presentation* that the speaker has failed to mention? Write this type of information in your notes as well.
- 6) If you do not have enough time, *concentrate on your own questions, suggestions, and your own contributions.* You are given more credit for what you can contribute to the speaker's general topic.
- 7) Get your ideas down on paper as well as you can. *Do not worry too much about grammar and spelling.*
- 8) Try to *label the different sections* of your notes (e.g., 'speaker's ideas', 'my ideas', 'questions', etc.).
- 9) In your notes, react to the speaker's topic and to the information presented. Show that you are able to *analyze and synthesize* what the speaker has to say.
- 10) *Consult* with the speaker. Give him or her advice on how to improve the presentation for the next listener. Suggest some new questions to be covered with the next partner.

- 11) If the speaker's topic is terrible or unsatisfying, then include *some extra questions* in your notes that could help the speaker begin to plan new directions for the presentation.
- 12) Include many questions in your notes. *Invent and create* questions that you would like the speaker to answer for you, even if the speaker does not have enough time to answer them. Write these down in your notes.

worked together recently. I say, "Has everybody found someone? Paulo, would you want to work with Janice?" I suggest a partner to several other students. "OK, whenever you're ready, you can go ahead and sit with your partner. If you have any questions on what you're supposed to be doing as either a speaker or as a listener, please refer to the direction sheets in the back of the course syllabus."

The students begin to move around the room, re-arranging available seats before sitting down. There is noise from the movement of chairs and considerable chatting between students. *Teacher*: "Remember, try to get as much distance as you can between your group and the other dyads in the room. Try to be aware of where your neighbors are sitting, you shouldn't be too close."

After about a minute, most of the students have positioned themselves as directed. Some students seem relaxed, others nervous. Although most are facing their partners directly, a couple of students seem to be waiting for a cue. *Teacher*: "OK, who is going to be the first speaker in each of your groups?" After hesitating for a few moments, one student from each dyad begins to raise a hand. I write the number 'one' next to these eight names on my information sheet. At the same time, the listeners from each group write the names of their respective partners on the paper being used for listener-notes. *Teacher*: "It looks like we have some



interesting topics today. Alan, I see you're going to talk about escaping from a fire? Did that really happen to you?" *Alan*: "Yeah. It was six months ago. Very scary. My family OK, but some people lose a lot of things." *Teacher*: "I'm sorry to hear that, terrible! But it sounds like an important topic for all of us to know about. Are you going to tell us anything about safety precautions?" *Alan*: "First about what happened. Then something like that." *Teacher*: "And Lizzette, is this one about saving money? I can't believe how fast my money goes. Will you be giving us advice on shopping at department stores or something?" *Lizzette*: "No, just supermarket shopping. you know, show you how to save by compare prices on the same things, and different stores, like coupons." *Teacher*: "Didn't you discuss something similar last week?" *Lizzette*: "This is different. Last time was just one thing, how to buy radio. Now I talk about more things, more examples." *Teacher*: "OK, that sounds fine. Comparison shopping, I guess. Maybe I'll become a better shopper after today's class, and with Alan's topic I'll know how to keep my family safe from fires. Now to everyone, "Well, I know you're familiar with the procedure by now. Call me over if you're having trouble getting started. Speakers, you can begin with your presentations as soon as you're ready. Remember, try to adjust the content of your topic to your listener's interests and questions."

Gradually, the students identified as speakers begin to address their respective listeners. At first they speak softly, though the noise level in the room increases as more speakers start to join in. After about a minute, eight different speakers are presenting their topics to individual listeners simultaneously. Some speakers are referring to their prepared outlines occasionally, others more frequently. Most of the listeners are taking written notes. Periodically, a listener will interrupt a speaker in order to ask a question, make a suggestion, or offer a new piece of infor-

mation. While the students are working in dyads, I move around the room: eavesdropping, glancing at my copies of the students' written work, repositioning myself to hear more clearly, and taking notes whenever possible. In these notes I occasionally copy down a word, phrase, or sentence that I hear one of the students produce. I write some of these in broad phonetic transcription. Less frequently, I copy an overheard word or phrase onto the blackboard. After several minutes, one of the student speakers leans toward me and in a soft voice says, "Excuse me, how you say when a person leave your home and go to another country?" I move closer, lower myself to eye level and ask, "Do you mean immigration, or emigration?" *Student*: "I think immigra." *Teacher*: "Immigration. A person might immigrate to another country. A lot of Asians are immigrating to the U.S. this year. They are referred to as immigrants." The student whispers "immigrants, immigration" and then returns to the dyad.

As speakers present their topics, most of their voices are animated. There are a few exceptions, however. At one point, I walk over to a dyad in which one student is speaking very softly. *Teacher*: "Could you move your desks a bit farther apart. I'd really like Joanna to speak louder. You look like you can't hear her very well. If you move apart, it might help her to speak up." On the other side of the room, one student is speaking loud enough to be disturbing the members of several dyads sitting near him. I walk over to this speaker and say, "You know, you're going to have to speak a bit softer. Paulo over there is having trouble hearing his partner."

After a few more minutes, I begin to clear my throat in an attempt to get everyone's attention. It takes a few moments for a majority of the students to notice. I repeat "excuse me" and "pardon me" several times. *Teacher*: "I'm sorry I have to interrupt you like this. I guess that's part of what teachers are paid to do. You'll get a chance to finish

your thoughts in a moment." Then, in a slightly louder voice, "Listeners, I am talking to you now. What I want you to do is see if you can summarize what your partner's topic has been about. Use your notes if you need them. You should try to explain to the speaker your understanding of what she or he has had to say up to this point. When listeners have finished doing this, the speaker can clarify any confusions and then continue with the topic wherever you just left off."

In response, most of the listeners begin to speak. About a minute later, there are five different listeners summarizing for their respective partners the content of the topics being presented. At this point, I approach one of the dyads, lower myself to eye level, look at the listener directly, and say, "I see from your partner's outline that the topic is 'Buying a Used Car.' Can you tell me what she has been saying about this topic?" *Listener*: "Well, she say that it's hard to find the right car for you. But is important. She have a cousin who bought a car last week. And she go with him to help buy the car. She say the salesman give them a lot of pressure, and he want too much money. I don't know what else, she didn't finish yet." I ask a few questions (e.g., "What kind of car did her cousin want to buy?"). The listener responds as well as he can. The interaction is directly between myself and the listener. The speaker in the dyad is not being addressed and is not overtly participating. After about 60 seconds of discussion, I excuse myself, move on to another dyad, and the original speaker resumes her 'Used Car' presentation.

From across the room, I am watching one of the speakers closely. After about 30 seconds, I walk over and begin to tug the speaker's outline out of his hands. The speaker seems surprised but relinquishes it right away. I turn the outline over, and place it on top of his desk while saying, "Now try to explain what you were just saying without looking at the page." The student responds, "But I can't remember. It's hard." *Teacher*: "Oh come on, you can do it. You've thought about it. You've planned what to say. Now just try the best

you can. It's OK to look at your outline every now and then, but try to be more interactive with your listener."

I move on. A bit later, from the center of the room I say, "OK, now, speakers, you'll have about two more minutes to finish with your presentations. Then we will shift roles."

I return to the front desk and begin to fill in several assessment forms. Upon hearing the two-minute warning, some of the speakers begin rushing through their topics before time runs out. Others seem completely unaffected by the announcement. A few speakers have already finished and are waiting for others to catch up. Several of the listeners are advising speakers on how to improve their topics. When just about every speaker has completed this first presentation of the day, I call for the class' attention but one listener says, "Wait a minute, I didn't finish writing this yet." I pause for about half a minute more, and then say, "OK, I think everyone is just about done with that one. Sorry, speakers, if you didn't get a chance to finish. Some of you may have to shorten your presentations a bit. Let's change roles now, and change topics too. Listeners, you are going to be the speakers for the next ten minutes or so, but now it's time to work with your own topic. Your partner will be taking notes on what *you* have to say."

The students remain in the same dyads but switch roles. Papers are shuffled and the new interactions proceed. I intervene at two to three minute intervals with several structuring prompts that are addressed to the whole class (e.g., (a) "OK, listeners, could you begin to summarize the topic being developed so far?" (b) "Listeners, try to ask your partners one or two questions about their topic." (c) "Speakers, I am talking to you now. Could you back up a bit and try to summarize what you have had to say so far? Try to paraphrase yourself." (d) "Speakers, ask your listener a few questions just to check on his or her understanding.") On several occasions I use similar prompts while addressing individual students within the dyads.

During the first 25 minutes of the lesson, both the teacher and the student-listeners are busy taking written notes. At one point, I interrupt everyone and say, "OK. Let's take a break for about a minute. Listeners, this will give you some extra time to work on your notes. Speakers, you can plan how you might like to change some aspects of your presentations." In response, the room becomes silent except for the sounds of students writing and shuffling papers. Though intended as "a minute" of silent reflection, it actually lasts more than twice that long. Afterwards, the speakers continue presenting their topics.

For the sake of brevity, the narrative account will now shift ahead to the final 25 minutes of the lesson. At this point, the students have already finished working with their second set of partners, and I have just asked them to rearrange themselves into their third dyadic groupings of the day. Once the students comply, those acting as speakers are ready to present their topics to new partners, from the beginning, for a third time. It is the last time I ask them to work in a new dyad for today's lesson. About seven minutes later, while the initial speakers are still in the midst of presenting their topics, I interrupt everyone and say directly to one student who is not sitting near me, "Mario, would you make a shortened version of your topic for everyone to hear? See if you can work with Alice as your designated listener. Alice, try to be as encouraging and supportive as you can." After some initial hesitation, Mario looks across the room to Alice, acknowledges her with a nervous smile, and starts to present his topic directly to her. His topic is "Tips on Making New Friends in College." As he speaks, he remains seated. Since Alice is sitting on the opposite side of the room, they have to lean to their sides a bit, in order to maintain eye contact. Alice does not say very much but she expresses interest with her eyes and nods her head frequently. There are three instances in which she asks Mario to rephrase what he is trying to say. After about three

minutes, and well before Mario has finished, I say, "I'm sorry to have to interrupt you, Mario. That was great! And thank you, too, Alice. We don't have much time left, so let's go back to the speakers' presentations. Speakers, you will have about two more minutes to finish up." Then, everyone returns to their work that had been in progress prior to the Mario-to-Alice exchange.

By the end of this 75 minute class, each student has participated in three different dyads, affording three separate opportunities to present a prepared topic to a listener. Also, while acting as a listener, each student has practiced taking notes on three different students' presentations. When the class is over I collect all of the notes that students have written as listeners and remind them of a reading assignment from their course text (Dale & Wolf, 1988) planned for the next class. Before the next class I will examine the students' outlines, write comments on them, and attach a completed assessment form to each. I will also examine and assess the quality of the notes that the students have written as listeners.

**Figure 3**  
**FEEDBACK/ASSESSMENT FORM:**  
**THE LISTENERS' NOTES**

(Teachers circle the number(s) corresponding to their impression of the student's work.)

Grade: 5 4 3 2 1

- 1) These are *excellent notes*. They are interesting and I learned something new while reading them.
- 2) Your notes are *too brief*. Try to include more information in them next time.
- 3) The many *original questions* you included in your notes are very helpful.

- 4) Try to *label the different sections* of your notes, for example: speaker's ideas, my ideas, my questions, my own information, etc.
- 5) The *organization* of your notes is very clear. It's easy to follow and I appreciate that.
- 6) The notes you have written are too *chaotic*. Please try to organize them better.
- 7) I have discovered a *good mix* of the speaker's ideas, your own ideas, your questions, and your suggestions for change while reading these notes.
- 8) Try to suggest to the speaker, and in your notes, *new directions* s/he might try to explore in the presentation.
- 9) It is extremely *difficult to make sense* out of the material you have written here.
- 10) In these notes you have effectively told me what the speaker was talking about. But that is only *1/2 of your target assignment*. You have been less successful at including your own ideas and your own examples of questions, outside information, and creative suggestions as they relate to the speaker's topic.
- 11) Your work is *too sloppy*, and I can not read it.
- 12) Please spend more time being creative by *writing down more of your own thoughts*, questions, and new directions.
- 13) Show me that you are *analyzing*, synthesizing, and carefully thinking over the speaker's topic while you are taking notes.
- 14) As a speaker, your notes would help me out *enormously* if I were trying to improve my presentation. Thank you!

## THINKING ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES

The preceding has been a detailed prose description of my own instructional practices during a high-intermediate-level, ESL oral communication lesson. A consistent theme revealed during the lesson is that traditional public-speaking activities (i.e., individual students taking turns speaking to the whole class) are de-emphasized in order to provide increased opportunities for dyadic interactions which are focused upon oral presentation, listening for note taking, and interpersonal communication. The next section presents in chronological order a series of retrospective observations about the lesson just described. Specific observations are listed in the left hand column, and from them a series of corresponding principles are drawn. The principles that appear to be underpinning for the lesson appear in the right hand column.

Observations	Teacher's Principles
1. Assessment forms are returned to students at the start of class.	Frequent on-going assessment is central to the learning process. Students need to know how well they are doing in the course.
2. Students place photocopies of written outlines on the front desk and keep a copy for themselves.	Because speaking and writing are closely related language processes, students base their oral presentations upon written work.
3. As the students submit their outlines, I skim through them and takes notes.	I attempt to keep in touch with what students are doing by gathering information on their self-selected topics.



4. Different students write outlines in very different ways. I try to be open to a wide range of outlining styles. Written outlines are a means to an end, not a primary end-product.
5. Students work in dyads with partners who do not speak their native languages. More than an object of study, the target language is also the students' primary medium of communication. I try to structure classroom interactions accordingly.
6. While remaining seated, students look for a partner without speaking. Non-verbal communication matters, and its role is highlighted during class.
7. After reminding students that they should try to work with new and different members of the class, I help some of them find a partner. Students can make decisions on many aspects of classroom interactions for themselves. If problems arise, however, I am ready to offer assistance.
8. I refer to written directions that have been designed to introduce and explain the procedures used in the course. Students need to be well-informed concerning teacher expectations and the rationale behind classroom activities. To this aim, I try to use written directions to reinforce oral explanations.
9. As students re-arrange available seats, they are reminded to make use of the entire classroom space. An awareness of classroom space, and proxemics in general, is important for effective interpersonal communication.
10. Once arranged in dyads, the students wait for a cue from the teacher. I assume primary responsibility for structuring and guiding classroom events.

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| 11. I ask, "Who is going to be the first speaker in each of your groups?" I take notes on students' turns as speakers and listeners.   | I try to develop personal strategies for keeping track of student-to-student interactions. Taking written notes is an example of one such strategy.  |
| 12. I introduce some of the students' topics to the whole class.   | I try to demonstrate that I am interested in and responding to, the students' current work.  |
| 13. Speakers are encouraged to improvise, to incorporate changes, and to adapt the content of their topics.  | A topic presented in class is a work in process. While written outlines serve to center a speaker's thoughts, they are envisioned as a starting point for genuine interpersonal communication. |
| 14. In addition to taking notes, listeners sometimes interrupt a speaker in order to question, request clarifications, suggest changes, and offer new points of information. | Collaboration is a necessary component of learning. Students who learn to become actively involved and creative listeners are better prepared to improve as speakers, too.                     |
| 15. During dyadic interactions, I move around the room, observing, eavesdropping, and taking notes.  | I attempt to monitor classroom interactions as closely as I can while gathering first-hand information on student performance.   |
| 16. Occasionally, I write an overheard word, phrase, or sentence on the blackboard.  | Samples of students' utterances collected during fluency activities are incorporated into subsequent accuracy activities.  |
| 17. The teacher answers questions from individual students.  | I try to act as a resource person who remains available to students.   |

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| 18. Most students seem successful in ignoring the considerable amount of communication in the room.                                  | I try to structure classroom interactions to help learners tune out distractions and non-relevant communications.  |
| 19. I sometimes interrupt the dyadic interactions while prefacing the interruptions with an apology.                                 | I step in and guide student interactions at regular intervals. This role eventually becomes less prominent as students learn to manage their collaborative work on their own.      |
| 20. Following a whole-class interruption, I address one of a variety of structuring prompts to either the speakers or the listeners. | I try to avoid asking students to do too many things at once by directing structuring prompts to a specific audience, while focusing them on a single, manageable task.            |
| 21. I approach a dyad and ask a listener to summarize his partner's topic while deliberately ignoring the speaker.                   | Listeners are expected to keep track of what speakers say to them. Asking for oral summaries is one way of reminding listeners to be full participants during dyadic interactions. |
| 22. I remove a copy of a speaker's outline and turn it over on the student's desk. <sup>2</sup>                                      | Since oral communication is an interactive process, I remind students to avoid merely reading aloud from a prepared script.  |

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<sup>2</sup>There is a danger that such a direct intervention on the part of the teacher may be resented by a student. A private discussion concerning the problem of reading aloud from a written script is one alternative instructional strategy.

23. I announce that the speakers allotted time will be over in about two minutes. Transitions between activities are introduced in stages. Students feel more secure then they have a sense of what will be happening in the classroom and the approximate amount of time available.
24. In class, I begin to complete several speaker-assessment forms. Since one's memory of classroom events can be highly unreliable, I feel that the assessment of students' performances as speakers need to begin during classroom time.
25. After working in a dyad for about ten minutes, students switch roles. A speaker becomes a listener and vice versa. Cooperative learning is reciprocal. Speaking development and listening development go hand in hand.
26. Several times, I interrupt everyone and ask for a minute of silent reflection. The use of silence can serve to heighten a student's alertness and concentration. It also provides listeners with extra time to work on their written notes.
27. I ask one student to present his topic for the whole class to hear. I try to challenge students beyond their current levels of speaking ability. Some students want (and need) opportunities to address themselves to a larger group.
28. I ask a student from the opposite side of the room to act as a "designated listener." When speaking for the whole class, some students appreciate the chance to focus their attention upon one person. Also, I select a "designated listener" from across the room in order to encourage voice projection.

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| 29. By the end of class, each student has had an opportunity to work both as a speaker and as a listener in three different dyadic groupings. | Providing speakers with multiple opportunities to discuss their topics helps cultivate a studio-workshop atmosphere in the classroom that is focused upon revision, change, and the elaboration of meanings. |
| 30. When the class is over, I collect all of the notes that the students have written as listeners.   | Listeners are held accountable for producing a tangible record of the speakers' topics and of their own contributions.   |

## CONCLUSION

This article illustrates one way of meeting the oral communication needs of ESL learners who are preparing for successful participation in the ICC. While the illustration may be useful, it is important to acknowledge that many teachers are likely to prefer contrastive instructional styles and procedures. There is a wide range of instructional alternatives and resources already available to ESL classroom teachers (e.g., Bassanoh Christison, 1987; Klippel, 1987; Ladousse, 1989; Nolasco & Arthur, 1989; Golebiowska, 1990) and to teachers of the ICC (e.g., Hugenberg (Ed.), 1991; Hugenberg, Gray, & Trank (Eds.), 1993). In addition, most of the instructional techniques implemented during this particular lesson highlighted fluency issues. In ESL oral communication classrooms, accuracy activities may need to be integrated along with the types of fluency activities described above (see, for example, Firth, 1992; Morley, 1991; Murphy, 1991; and Wong, 1988 for more on this topic).

The classroom lesson that centers the article took place as part of a semester-length course designed to prepare ESL

learners as ICC participants. Although a few original techniques were introduced, most of them reveal a blending of ideas from well know sources including the literatures on: cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1987), ICC instruction (Hugenberg, et al, 1993; Gray, 1989), and the teaching of oral communication across the curriculum (Davilla, West, & Yoder, 1993; Cronin & Glenn, 1991). In addition to these general influences, I benefitted greatly from being able to discuss the teaching of oral communication with both ESL and native-English-speaking ICC students, teacher-colleagues, and supervisors over a ten-year period while working at a large metropolitan university in the United States. During this period over 1,600 ESL learners participated in a course designed around versions of this particular set of techniques and principles that were gradually developing over time. As an extension of these experiences, the present discussion represents an attempt to clarify my own ideas (to the possible benefit of future students), build rationale, share information, and participate in continuing discussions.

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