

Improving Speaking

Performing an effective speech in a foreign language requires that the speaker make an appropriate and necessary use of the components of language and make sure the message is conveyed in a coherent and orderly manner. The combination of those requirements put extra load on the speaker's cognitive/mental resources, making the task of speaking more difficult.

Using a foreign language accurately and appropriately requires a long time and a great deal of effort which may be difficult to attain within the limits of a course but *delivering a clear and neat message using systematic outlines or structures** can easily be learned and adjusted to the speech prepared and this, at least, may help a speaker fulfil the first requirement.

To work on the outlines/structures to use while speaking, one needs to examine the different speaking tasks he/she may be asked to perform. Although one speaks mostly for the purpose of conveying information and expressing his/her opinion on a topic/subject matter, the speaker may need to include other sections in his/her speech such as paraphrasing, reporting others' opinions, examining charts or infographics.

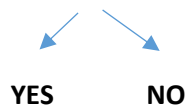
Below are the examples of different speaking tasks and the outlines that can be used to perform those tasks. **Please refer to the course material for extra structures and expressions to be used while speaking.*

Speaking task 1: Talking about a personal experience

In some speaking tasks, you may be asked to talk about a personal experience you have had. While it seems to be a relatively easy task, it is important that you include the necessary information and details to make your response strong and solid when you are addressing the task.

Sample task and planning your response:

Have you ever read a book that changed your viewpoint about life/something?



(Questions to answer while planning speaking)

What is the name of the book?

Saying "no" and cutting the speech off is not an alternative.

What is the book about? What are the major points to discuss in the book?

If you want to say "no", you should clearly explain why books haven't changed your opinion about something or mention something else that has been influential in your life, a movie for example.

How has it changed your viewpoint?

Sample speech:

Let me think... Well... When I was a late teenager, a friend of mine recommended a book called *In Praise of Shadows* by Junichiro Tanizaki. It examines darkness and shadows in Japanese culture at the turn of the early 20th century. It's a very simple book – a fiction where a traveler experiences numerous cultural encounters, all of which are informed and narrated through his experience with light, or the lack of it. It uses incredibly simple language but is a very intellectually provocative book. The book inspired me in several ways. First, it changed my thoughts on physical beauty in the world – forcing me to question and look at it in a way I had never done before. Second, it has had a direct impact on the way I think about architecture – how I understood and perceived space. My friend never knew what an impact this book had on me – perhaps now she will.

Lun

Now Your Turn!

Speaking task 1: Talking about a personal experience

Task A: Describe a class you would like to take and explain why you want to take it. Include specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Task B: Please describe an interesting journey you have been on. Include specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Task C: Can you describe a happy event of your life? Include specific reasons and examples to support your answer.

Choose ONE task and plan your response:

Speaking task 2: Taking a stand in a paired choice

A paired choice task is designed to make you think of a topic on debate. The two sides of the conflict are given and you need to take your stand.

Sample task and planning your response:

Some people believe that doing research on the Internet is more productive than relying on printed books for research. Which idea do you agree with? Support your explanation with details and examples.

Step 1: Restatement of the prompt and showing your standpoint

Step 2: Key Point 1 to support your standpoint

Details: Relevant examples and information

Step 3: Key Point 2 to support your standpoint

Details: Relevant examples and information

Step 4: Conclude your speech restating your viewpoint (optional)

Sample speech:

While some people may think differently, I believe it is definitely more effective to do research on the Internet rather than using books for research purposes. One reason is that the Internet provides fast access to information. Even when I need to find information in a short period of time, I can do so using the Internet. It takes much longer to locate the book, and search through it to find the piece of information I am looking for. Second, the Internet is more up-to-date. Libraries are full of books that are tens or hundreds of years old. This is, for sure, priceless for societies or people but we also need to be informed about current information and practices. The Internet is updated almost every second and thus makes it easier for me to keep track of recent happenings and information.

Teo

Now Your Turn!

Speaking task 2: Taking a stand in a paired choice

Task A: Many people believe that women make better parents than men and that this is why they have the greater role in raising children in most societies. Others claim that men are just as good as women at parenting. Which one you agree with? Include details and examples in your explanation.

Task B: Some people think that wildlife does not belong outside of its natural habitat. They do not think that zoos should exist. Others believe that zoos serve an educational purpose that is more important than the rights of the wild animals. Which side of this argument do you support and why? Include details and examples in your explanation.

Task C: Some students think it is better to have a gap year upon graduation before finding a job. Others would rather embark on their career straightaway. Which do you prefer? Include details and examples in your explanation.

Choose ONE task and plan your response:

Speaking task 3: Generating a counter-argument

Similar to the paired choice task, in speaking task 3, you read the idea of one of the parties in a debate or discussion. You need to understand what the other party claims, think about the possible arguments they may put forth to support their claim and try to come up with relevant and convincing counter-arguments to refute the other party's argument.

Sample task and planning your response:

Imagine that you are in a debate discussing whether terminally ill people should be given the right to end their own lives or not. The sentence below expresses *the other party's* opinion. Think of counter-arguments that are logically sound to win the debate.

"Terminally ill patients should have the right to make the decision to end their lives."

Step 1: Start with a sentence that introduces the other party's opinion

Step 2: (Ask a question to make a transition before refuting their opinion) - optional

State firmly that you think just the opposite

Step 3: Think of an argument that the counter party may use to support their opinion

Step 4: Refute that argument and add details (relevant examples and information)

Step 5: Think of a second argument that the counter party may use to support their opinion

Step 6: Refute that argument and add details (relevant examples and information)

Step 7: Conclude your speech restating your viewpoint

Sample speech:

Obviously, there are a lot of people who believe that patients with no hope of recovery from serious illnesses should be given the right to end their own lives or get assisted doing it. Am I the only one who thinks that it is easier said than done? I think we should never consider death as a solution. The supporters of euthanasia argue that we should allow people to die with dignity. What I understand from dignity is never giving up on life and never accepting failure and surrender. People may have differing endurance to pain and suffering, how can we decide who is off limits and who is not? Another point they make to promote their idea is that everyone should need to have the autonomy to make the decision concerning their lives. Patients suffering from serious diseases may develop mental or psychological problems, too. So, how can we ensure the person is making the right decision? What I want to say is that we have no control over how we arrive in this world and how we leave it is not in our hands, either.

Beria

Now Your Turn!

Speaking task 3: Generating a counter-argument

Below are the propositions the other party in the debate puts forward:

Task A: "People should consume only organic foods or drinks."

Task B: "Getting a divorce should be harder for parents."

Task C: "Technology is nothing but a distraction for students at school."

Choose ONE arguments above and generate counter-arguments to plan your response:

Speaking task 4: Reporting other people's opinion

In some speaking tasks, you will be asked to report what other people say in the texts you read, audio tracks you listen to or videos you watch. To fulfil such a task, you need to convey the person's message (to your audience) thoroughly in an objective manner, paying extra attention to include the main points he/she makes. Then, you may agree or disagree with the person, telling the reasons why you think so.

Sample task and planning your response:

"Words are the source of misunderstandings." Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*

Report Saint-Exupéry's words by paraphrasing the original statement and state if you agree or disagree. Support your explanation with details and examples.

Step 1: Report in your own words the quote by the protagonist in the book *The Little Prince* paraphrasing the main point he makes in the quote.

Step 2: Explain what the statement means or what you understand from the statement.

Step 3: Tell whether you agree or disagree with the idea

Step 4: Present your own reason (first reason) why (you agree or disagree)

Details (relevant examples and information)

Step 5: Present your own reason (second reason) why (you agree or disagree)

Details (relevant examples and information)

Step 6: Conclude your speech restating your own point of view (optional)

Speaking task 5: Expressing personal opinion

This is the most commonly used speaking task and the one which you are probably most familiar with. You can still better your performance if you follow an outline.

Sample task and planning your response:

Do you think attendance should be compulsory for courses at university? Support your answer with details and examples.

Step 1: Restate the prompt, converting it into an affirmative sentence and putting forward your opinion

Step 2: Handle the topic dividing it into a number of reasons, effects, advantages, disadvantages (depending on the nature of the prompt given)

Step 3: Key Point 1 (effect 1, advantage 1, etc.)

Details: Relevant examples and information

Step 4: Key Point 2 (effect 2, advantage 2, etc.)

Details: Relevant examples and information

Step 5: Conclude your speech restating your own point of view (optional)

Sample speech:

Actually, mandatory attendance is really a debatable topic. Of course, attending classes regularly is beneficial in every way but I am of the opinion that it absolutely shouldn't be made compulsory. A certain degree of freedom must be provided to college students to pursue their own interests as well as make their own personal decision about how to plan their own time in a beneficial way. For one thing, students at tertiary level usually have several duties and responsibilities. Having classes every day and compulsory attendance for those courses make it impossible for them to fulfil their duties because they do not have time for anything else. What's more, college students at or above the age of 19 should have the right to plan and make decisions for their life and act autonomously. They are fully aware of what to do and what not to do for their own good. If attending classes regularly is not a choice for them, they will face the consequences. Having a grown-up do something by force does not really work, we should let them make their own decisions in life.

Can

Now Your Turn!

Speaking task 5: Expressing personal opinion

Task A: Do you think the amount of money that an individual makes is the most important part of his or her job? Please support your response with examples and reasons.

Task B: Do you think there should be free public Wi-Fi? Please support your response with examples and reasons.

Task C: Do you think online education can be an alternative for traditional classrooms? Please support your response with examples and reasons.

Choose ONE task and plan your response:
