

## The Collaborative Scaffolding Model of Teaching Speaking

by KRISHNA PRASAD PARAJULI

**LEVEL:** Intermediate and above

**TIME REQUIRED:** 1 to 2 hours

**GOALS:** To develop speaking skills through collaborative activities; to develop awareness of appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and sociolinguistic aspects of communication; to build confidence in using English through scaffolding

**MATERIALS:** Whiteboard(s) and markers, smartphone or audio recorder, prepared model conversations or frames (all are optional)

### BACKGROUND

Developing students' speaking skills can be challenging in the context of teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Limited class time, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of vocabulary and communication strategies often hinder students' active participation. As a result, many students may not develop adequate speaking skills and are reluctant to speak English. Despite these challenges, teachers must find ways to create an environment that is conducive for students to practice speaking.

One model for engaging students in speaking activities is the Collaborative Scaffolding Model of Teaching Speaking (CSMTS). It was developed from experiences at a community college in Nepal, in a course that

focused on developing conversational skills. I taught a conversational module for undergraduate students and invited Madeline Denny to assist me in teaching when she visited the college for a week in 2023. I reflected on my teaching experiences and theorized the model. My role was structuring activities and ensuring that the students met the learning goals, whereas she helped students develop pronunciation and conversational skills. The students initially hesitated to engage in conversational activities; however, when they had opportunities to improve their communicative competence through scaffolding and collaborating with classmates, their confidence in using English gradually increased.

This model incorporates scaffolding and collaboration. It assumes that speaking activities should be designed to enable students to draw from their already learned linguistic resources. The main objective of the scaffolding strategy is to develop learners' autonomy through guided practices (Sari and Rozimela 2021). Meanwhile, collaborative learning is an instructional strategy where mixed-ability learners work together to achieve a common goal by sharing responsibility for learning (Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim et al. 2023). Thus, in this model, teachers create respectful, comfortable, and positive environments by having students engage in different language-learning activities.

---

## The basic content is generated by students and used throughout, allowing time to focus on speaking skills and language development.

---

The model begins with simple activities, and the difficulty increases in subsequent stages. Teachers provide more support at the beginning but gradually encourage more-autonomous learning. The basic content is generated by students and used throughout, allowing time to focus on speaking skills and language development.

### THREE STAGES OF THE CSMTS

The CSMTS has three stages: initiation, development, and extension. Stage 1, initiation, begins with simple speaking activities in which all students can participate. The tasks should be basic enough to create a safe and comfortable environment for learning. Students' errors in speaking are tolerated; at this stage, engaging students and increasing their confidence are more important than accuracy of the language.

Stage 2 focuses on developing the ideas and language that were produced in the first stage. The duration and the complexity of the tasks, along with the components of learning, are expanded. Teachers may provide constructive feedback; students can also learn from each other and use English for communication, making the class student-centered. Although some content from the initiation stage is carried over to this stage, the breadth and the depth are now expanded.

In Stage 3, extension, the content and the work from the development stage are used for further practice with the language, which can include vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar but could be extended to include writing, critical thinking, and acting. This stage might also allow students to move from collaborative work to independent practice.

The CSMTS is flexible and can be applied among students on different language levels. The model was developed with storytelling activities; however, it can be used with speaking genres such as speeches, debates, interviews, and drama. The teacher should consider the students' interests and needs, the goals of the course, and the difficulty of the tasks when selecting the principal speaking activity.

Below is an example of how this model can be applied in a lesson based on storytelling.

### PROCEDURE: COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING IN THE CSMTS

In collaborative storytelling, each participant contributes to the development of a story. The story unfolds as each of the participants adds a bit more to it. Following the CSMTS allows students to make the collaborative story engaging and productive.

While parts of Stage 1 may be familiar to some teachers, this model includes options and extensions that have the potential to increase benefits for learners. This activity is flexible and can be shortened or extended according to factors such as the amount of time available and the students' needs.

#### Stage 1: Initiation

##### ***Step 1: Introducing the activity***

The teacher begins by spending a few minutes on a warm-up and letting the class know that the lesson will focus on creating and telling a story, and that they will be working in groups for much of the class.

##### ***Step 2: Storytelling***

Divide the class into groups of five to seven students; then ask each group to select a leader and a secretary. Tell the groups that

---

## The model was developed with storytelling activities; however, it can be used with speaking genres such as speeches, debates, interviews, and drama.

---

they are going to create a story as a group and that each person in the group will continue the story, one by one. Encourage them to use their imaginations.

If you want to focus on language targets, you might suggest that students use the past tense to tell the stories and remind them to link events of the story with transition words and phrases such as *then*, *after that*, *one day*, and *finally*. (Note that this storytelling activity works well if students are already familiar with these terms and basic storytelling techniques.)

Tell the class that the leader will start the story and make sure each group member contributes. The secretary will note key phrases and chunks from each participant's contribution; these will be used for further work later in the activity. Students in the role of secretary also contribute to the story when it is their turn. Other participants can also keep their own notes and support the secretary's note-taking.

Give a prompt that leaders can use to start the story (see below for an example). Alternatively, instead of a prompt, you might suggest a topic or theme, especially if you would like students to use targeted vocabulary and include ideas they have recently studied. The leader begins with a sentence (or a bit more in advanced classes); other students continue the story one by one while the secretary writes key phrases and chunks.

Tell the class that this is just the first round of creating their story, so at this stage they should keep it short, without a lot of details.

*Variation:* In advanced classes, make the role of secretary optional and have students focus solely on oral communication. In this case,

students practice storytelling by remembering and sharing ideas presented by group members, using key phrases and terms but without repeating the exact original lines.

A prompt or topic I have used is "Sunita's Job Interview." Below is a sample of how this story could be created in the initiation stage; of course, it's possible for the plot to be much different than this.

1. Sunita's job interview went terribly wrong.
2. Sunita went to an office to search for a job.
3. She was hungry.
4. Sunita was worried about her job.
5. She had to wait a long time for her boss.
6. Sunita went to the canteen.
7. She met her old friend there.
8. She returned to the office.
9. The boss said Sunita did not have the right qualifications.
10. Sunita left the office being sad.
11. But she won the lottery on her way home.
12. Finally, she did not need any job.

Note that some students may be reluctant to contribute; they may worry about making mistakes or feel that their idea for continuing the story might not be good enough. Teachers can provide support by reviewing useful

vocabulary, modeling the activity, and/or writing language structures on the board. Teachers can also emphasize that there is nothing correct or incorrect in creating the story; all students can continue the story as they wish. Students in the group can also support each other constructively and positively.

### **Step 3: Sharing the outline**

One member shares the story orally and asks each member to confirm that their contribution is properly included. As students provide feedback, the secretary revises the outline. If time allows, the other group members can also tell the story; they can use the outline as a guide or try to remember the story on their own.

This approach provides each student with an opportunity to speak. Members might present somewhat different versions, although they have the same outline. The purposes of this task are to ensure that students understand the plot of the story and to give them a chance to tell it according to their ability.

### **Step 4: Retelling the story**

A representative from each group tells the story to the class. If the class is large, groups might pair up and tell each other their stories. Or members of each group can go off individually and share stories with members from other groups. The teacher can determine which is the best approach, depending on class size and students' confidence and ability.

*Variation:* This is an option that can increase student participation and engagement. When each group tells their story to the class (or to another group, if the class is large), the listening students think of questions about the story. At the end of the story, they ask those questions to the group that is telling the story. The teacher can require that listening students ask at least five questions about each story. This will provide ample opportunities for speaking. The group members do not have to answer those questions immediately, but they can use their classmates' questions to expand

their story in the next stage. Asking questions about other groups' stories may also help them develop their own story.

If students do not know what questions to ask about other groups' stories, the teacher can provide examples, such as these (based on the prompt given above):

- Was this her first job search?
- Was she hopeful?
- What kind of clothes was she wearing?
- What was the name of the town/building/company?
- What did she say when she heard that she did not get the job?
- What was her lottery number?

## **Stage 2: Development**

### **Step 1: Adding details**

Students develop the story by filling in gaps and making it more interesting. They might describe the characters, the setting, and the events in more detail and add steps to the plot. If other students asked questions during the previous stage, groups can use those questions to guide the story's development.

### **Step 2: Inserting dialogue**

Students add dialogue to bring the situation to life. The story provides a context for conversation and communication; students can imagine what the characters might say and how they would say it (formally, informally, or in a neutral register). As in Stage 1, students in the group should take turns suggesting parts of the dialogue.

If necessary, teachers can facilitate by providing short conversations and/or language frames as models.

### **Step 3: Reviewing**

Students discuss the vocabulary, grammar, and appropriateness of the language used in the

---

## The model gradually builds on the students' speaking skills in an unobtrusive environment, with an approach that can promote collaborative learning.

---

story. They can review the tenses and transitions to make sure the story has cohesion.

### **Step 4: Finalizing the collaborative story**

Students agree on a final version of the story. They can also decide on a title. If there are disagreements about finalizing certain details, students can practice compromising in their groups as they make decisions.

### **Stage 3: Extension**

#### **Step 1: Integrating with other language skills**

Language skills are integrated into real-life situations. Students can read their stories to other groups and/or make recordings, either audio or video, of their stories. They can also dramatize the story and act it out. Alternatively, students might want to convert it to a picture story or draw a key scene. If possible and appropriate, groups can post their stories to a class or school website. There are many options; activities can be selected depending on time, resources, and interest.

#### **Step 2: Reflecting**

Students reflect on their experience of working in the group and creating the story. They can describe the challenges and explain how they overcame those challenges. They can also mention the tasks they enjoyed most and which parts of the project they think helped their language skills develop. They can share what speaking skills they learned.

### **CONCLUSION**

The CSMTS provides an extended framework for engaging students in speaking activities in intermediate- to advanced-level EFL classes. The example here uses storytelling, but the model can be applied to other types of speaking as well.

The model gradually builds on the students' speaking skills in an unobtrusive environment, with an approach that can promote collaborative learning. Students are empowered to become autonomous language learners by completing a variety of tasks. Overall, the model can make speaking enjoyable for students while developing their communicative competence.

### **REFERENCES**

- Ahmed Abdel-Al Ibrahim, K., N. C. Carbajal, M. E. C. Zuta, and S. Bayat. 2023. Collaborative learning, scaffolding-based instruction, and self-assessment: Impacts on intermediate EFL learners' reading comprehension, motivation, and anxiety. *Language Testing in Asia* 13 (1): Article 16.
- Sari, D. K., and Y. Rozimela. 2021. "The Implementation of Scaffolding Strategies at Speaking English Course in Kampung Inggris Pare East Java." Paper presented at the Ninth International Conference on Language and Arts (ICLA 2020), January.

**Krishna Prasad Parajuli** is an Associate Professor of English at Drabya Shah Multiple Campus in Gorkha, Nepal. He has completed his MPhil in English Education from the Nepal Open University and is a PhD candidate at Tribhuvan University. He has been teaching English in Nepal for 25 years. He is a teacher educator, author, editor, and researcher active in the field of English language teaching. His areas of research interest include mobile technology in education, medium of instruction, and applied linguistics and literature for language development. He would like to thank Madeline Denny for teaching a conversational module while implementing the CSMTS at his campus.