

How to Improve your Speaking

1. *Bruce Warburton gives presentations at BC advising learners on how to improve their spoken English. Bruce, in your experience, do you think that speaking presents the biggest challenge to our learners?*

Yes, I think without doubt this is true for most of them.

2. *Why is that?*

For all sorts of reasons. Insecurity, not enough opportunities for practice, but I think the biggest challenge is trying to do everything at the same time. When you think about it, speaking in any language is a really complex process. You have to understand what other people are saying, think of what you are going to say, put the ideas into words then physically convert them into sounds and sequences of sounds. All of this needs to be done in real time. You don't have time to think.

3. *What do you think is most important when speaking, grammar vocabulary or pronunciation?*

They are all important but the best grammar and vocabulary in the world is useless if the pronunciation isn't clear.

4. *So how do you help your students to practise speaking during a lesson?*

By giving them as much chance as possible to practise. We need to recognise that just because students have learnt to understand some words or structures when they hear or read them, it doesn't mean that they can produce these words or structures spontaneously, on demand. So, we need to train learners to speak in blocks of speech

like mother tongue speakers do. This is similar to the way babies learn to speak their own language.

5. *We also encourage our students to be autonomous. What can they do when they are not in the classroom?*

I know it's not easy to find opportunities to practise speaking English but there are several things that people can do. Make sure that you are absolutely certain of your pronunciation, this builds self-confidence. Practise speaking out-loud. Don't forget that speaking is a physical activity. Every language has its own music. I could add many more. At the British Council we run a Speaking Club for our people enrolled on our courses. We also do workshops which are open to anyone. Check out the website and come along.