LESSON FRAMEWORKS · SPEAKING

Task-Teach-Task - Speaking

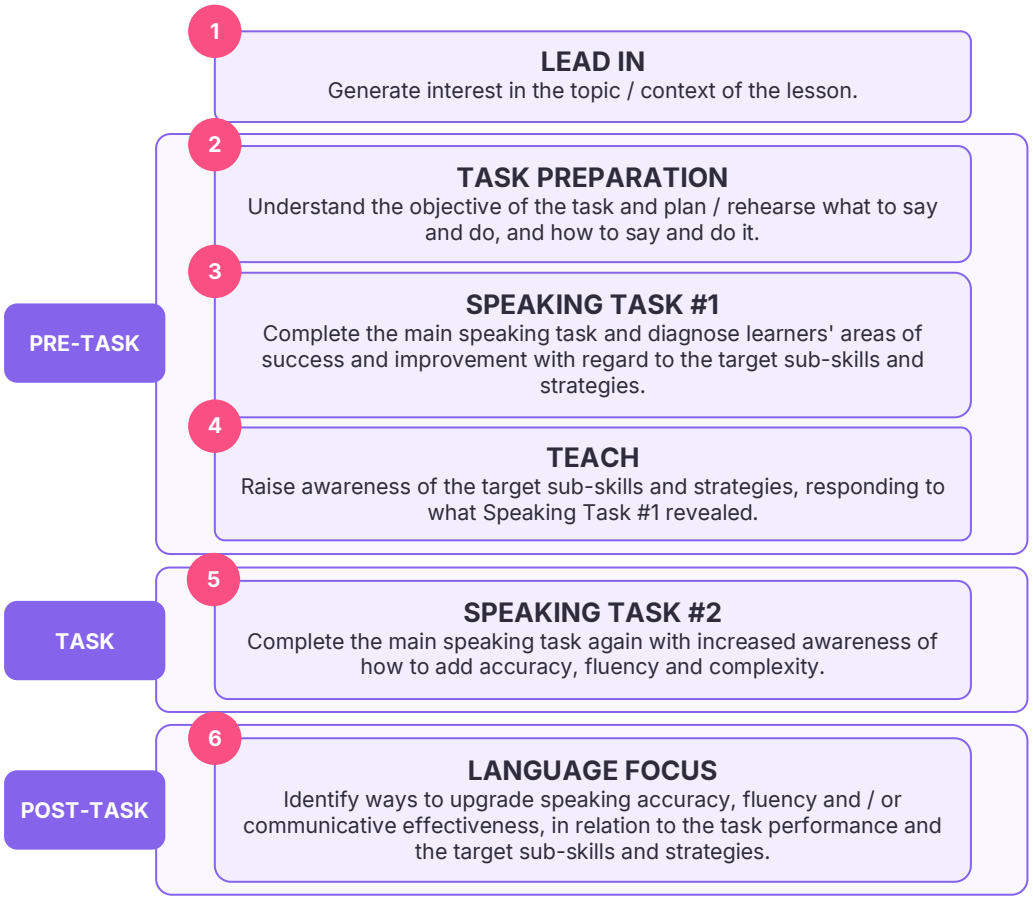
A framework for planning and teaching speaking lessons

Task-Teach-Task overview

Task-Teach-Task (TTT) is a variation of Task-Based Learning for speaking lessons. Learners do the speaking task first, without any language input, and the teacher uses their performance to decide what to teach.

It works best when learners can already do the task to some extent but would benefit from upgrading their sub-skills and strategies. After the Teach stage, learners do the task again and apply what they have learned.

The delivery sequence – the stages of your lesson



TEACHING TIP

In a Task-Teach-Task lesson, plan the Teach stage around the target sub-skills and strategies, but be ready to adapt it. If Speaking task #1 shows that learners already use some of them effectively, spend less time on those and focus on what they actually need.

The planning process – build it in reverse

Plan backwards from the outcome you want, then teach forwards. Start with your aims and the speaking tasks, so that every other stage is built to serve them, not the other way round.

PLAN IN THIS ORDER	STEP 1 Aims	STEP 2 Speaking tasks #1 and #2	STEP 3 Task preparation	STEP 4 Teach	STEP 5 Language focus	STEP 6 Lead-in

RUNNING EXAMPLE Throughout the steps below, we plan one lesson: booking a hotel room over the phone.

1 Aims

GUIDES EVERY STAGE

Main aim

Think of a communicative objective and the linguistic objectives that support it, both set in a relevant context. The communicative objective is what learners will achieve in the speaking tasks. The linguistic objectives are the target speaking sub-skills, communication strategies and the language that expresses them. Together, they help learners achieve the communicative outcome.

> EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING
>
> **Communicative objective:** make a booking over the phone
>
> **Context:** a hotel
>
> **Linguistic objectives:** asking and answering questions about personal and room details, spelling names, checking understanding and asking for repetition

Secondary aim

Think of an aim in a different skill or language area that supports the main task. It should complement the main aim, not repeat it.

> EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING
>
> Learners listen to a recording of a hotel booking during the Teach stage. The secondary aim is to help them identify specific information (e.g. names, dates and room details) and take notes.

Statement of aims

Combine both into a clear statement of what learners will be able to do by the end of the lesson.

> EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING
>
> **Main aim:** By the end of the lesson, learners will be better able to book a hotel room over the phone, giving and collecting accurate personal and room details, spelling names, checking understanding and asking for repetition.
>
> **Secondary aim:** By the end of the lesson, learners will be better able to listen for specific information and take notes.

2 Speaking tasks #1 and #2

TAUGHT AT STAGES 3 AND 5

Think about the communicative objective, context and target sub-skills from your aims.

Speaking tasks #1 and #2 should be the same or very similar, so that learners can compare their performance and apply what they learn in the Teach stage. Vary the details to keep the repetition meaningful.

Design or choose a speaking task that:

- ☐ has a clear communicative outcome
- ☐ focuses on the outcome rather than on pre-selected language, while creating a real need to produce language
- ☐ reflects the spontaneous, unpredictable nature of real communication (problems, conflicts, unexpected events)
- ☐ is interactive
- ☐ is authentic and relates to real-life situations
- ☐ is flexible enough to be repeated
- ☐ offers a suitable cognitive and linguistic challenge

> **EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING**
> Learners role-play a phone booking using role cards with new identities and specific details. The guest books a particular room type for set dates; the receptionist records all the required details correctly. The phone format creates natural communication breakdowns. For Speaking task #2, learners swap roles and receive new role cards.

Typical tasks: discussions, debates, information, knowledge or opinion gaps, problem solving, ordering, ranking, comparing, role-plays, interviews

Ways to vary Speaking task #2: change partners or swap roles; use new role cards with different details; shorten the time limit; add a complication or unexpected event

3 Task preparation

TAUGHT AT STAGE 2

Think about the speaking task you have just designed or chosen.

Design or choose a preparation activity that helps learners:

- ☐ understand the objective of the task and their roles and responsibilities
- ☐ brainstorm the information and ideas they will need
- ☐ rehearse what to say and do, often mentally or through note-taking

> **EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING**
> Learners receive their role cards, read their roles and objectives individually, anticipate possible communication breakdowns, and note down key words or ideas (not full sentences) to use as prompts during the task.

Typical tasks: brainstorming ideas, noting key words, mental or spoken rehearsal

> **TEACHING TIP**
> Keep the preparation light. Speaking task #1 shows you what learners need, so don't pre-teach the target sub-skills and strategies at this stage.

4 Teach

TAUGHT AT STAGE 4

Think about the target sub-skills and strategies from your main aim, and what Speaking task #1 is likely to reveal.

Plan a Teach stage that:

- ☐ responds to learners' performance in Speaking task #1
- ☐ uses the language you collect while monitoring the task (effective and less effective language, communication breakdowns, pronunciation) as the starting point
- ☐ optionally uses a spoken or written model (a dialogue or monologue) of the same or a similar task, so learners can compare the model's sub-skills and strategies with their own

> **EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING**
> Write examples of learners' language from Speaking task #1 on the board. Learners then listen to a recording of a guest booking a hotel room and compare it with their own performance: Which questions, spelling strategies and expressions for checking understanding or asking for repetition did the speakers use that you didn't? Learners choose the expressions they want to use in Speaking task #2.

Typical tasks: comparing learners' language with a model, gap-fills, identifying and underlining expressions, error correction, discussion questions

> **TEACHING TIP**
> Start the Teach stage as part of the feedback on Speaking task #1. Put examples of learners' own language on the board, deal with errors and gaps there and then, and show better alternatives. Plan a thorough Teach stage, but be ready to skip anything learners already handle well.

5 Language focus

TAUGHT AT STAGE 6

Think about the speaking tasks and the target sub-skills and strategies from your main aim.

This is a reactive stage: what you focus on depends on how learners perform in Speaking task #2, so you can't plan it in full. You can, however, plan its shape.

Plan feedback that includes:

- ☐ positive reinforcement of the sub-skills and strategies covered in the lesson
- ☐ delayed error correction, including pronunciation
- ☐ reflection: what learners are now more aware of, what improved between the two tasks, and what they can still improve

> **EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING**
> While learners do Speaking task #2, note down language related to the linguistic objectives. In feedback, write up two effective expressions and two that need work, and ask learners to improve the latter. Wrap up by asking: What do you think you improved most today? What would you like to improve further? Which expressions from today will be most useful outside the classroom?

Typical tasks: positive feedback on language use, delayed error correction, reflection questions

6 Lead-in

TAUGHT AT STAGE 1

Think about the communicative objective and context from your aims.

Design or choose a lead-in activity that:

- ☐ stimulates interest in the topic
- ☐ activates relevant knowledge
- ☐ gets learners talking about the topic

> **EXAMPLE · HOTEL BOOKING**
> Learners look at a picture of guests at a hotel reception and discuss: Have you ever booked a hotel in English? What information does a receptionist usually need? Is it easier to book in person or over the phone? Why?

Typical tasks: brainstorming, predictions, questionnaires, discussions, mingling activities, visuals, games

> **TEACHING TIP**
> As long as you start planning with your main aim and the speaking tasks, you can plan the other stages in any order. What matters is keeping the context, objectives and outcomes in sight, so that every activity purposefully supports the others.