Do I sound okay? – Speaking Part 2

Teacher’s notes

Aim: Raise awareness of importance of speech rate (Assessment Criteria – Fluency and Coherence) and intonation (Assessment Criteria – Pronunciation) during speaking test.

Instructions

1. Write the task below on the board. Put Ss into pairs and give them 2 mins each to tell their partner. Their partner should ask a follow up question at the end.

Tell your partner about a journey you make regularly. You should say:
- why you make the journey
- how often you make the journey
- how long the journey takes
and explain why you like / dislike the journey

2. Hand out worksheet 2. Put Ss in pairs to discuss the three Ss’ questions. Don’t give any feedback at this stage.

3. Tell Ss you’re going to demonstrate the problems that the three Ss have. They should listen and check if their suggestions (from stage 2) were correct.

Demonstrate answering the task from stage 1 as if you are Aman, then Anna, then Fabio (30 seconds for each should be plenty). You may need to practice beforehand. Use the script from the answer key if needed, but ensure that it doesn’t sound like you’re reading from a script.

- **Aman** – speak with very flat intonation
- **Anna** – speak slowly, hesitate in unnatural places, or say err/ mmm between each word
- **Fabio** – speak quickly without pausing for breath so it becomes one incomprehensible stream of speech

4. Elicit feedback about what problems the students have. Ask pairs to decide what advice they would give the students (see worksheet 1), but don’t get any feedback at this stage.

5. Hand out worksheet 2. Ss match the advice to the students’ problems. Feed back and elicit any other suggestions that the class have. Have a general discussion about whether your Ss have similar problems and to what extent (they may not be aware that they have problems – the next stage should help with this).

6. Put Ss in pairs to practice Speaking part 2. You could use the task at stage 1 but change it to a memorable journey you made. Ss take it in turns to play the role of examiner / candidate. ‘Examiner’ gives feedback about intonation and speed of speech.
ANSWER KEY - Do I sound okay? – Speaking Part 2

Stage 3 – suggested script

I’m going to tell you about my journey to work. I can’t drive so sometimes I take a taxi or get a lift from a colleague, but usually I walk to work. I reckon I benefit in two ways from this walk – firstly I save the taxi fare – taxis are fairly cheap here but I’m pretty sure the money I save mounts up over the weeks. And also, I get some exercise – walking has got to be healthier than going by car. It takes about 40 minutes at a face pace...and I can walk pretty quickly. Unfortunately, it’s not a very attractive walk but I do see some interesting things along the way, for example, when I was passing a building site last week I noticed some beautiful parrots sitting on the top of a crane. I just stood and watched them for ages...

Worksheet 1

1. Aman’s problem = flat intonation
2. Anna’s problem = hesitation, speaking too slowly
3. Fabio’s problem = speaking too quickly

Worksheet 2

Flat Intonation
A – students sometimes ‘forget’ to use intonation because they’re focusing so hard on what they’re saying. Encourage them to vary their voice according to the thoughts and feelings they’re expressing.
D and I – both these activities encourage Ss to vary their intonation.

Hesitation, speaking too slowly
C – in the IELTS speaking test, credit is given for the ability to paraphrase. Rather than pausing for a long time to try to remember an isolated word, encourage Ss to explain the word in a different way to avoid interrupting the flow of speech
F – rather than silence, Ss should try to use a filler to maintain the flow of speech. However, warn them against overusing the same filler.
H – Chunking language will help maintain coherence, e.g. *I can walk pretty*... sounds strange if you have to wait for the next word (quickly). Encourage Ss to try express a complete ‘chunk’ of language before a pause.

Speaking too quickly
B – Natural speech contains pauses. Encourage rapid speakers to do this to give themselves (and the listener) short breaks.
*E – If rapid speech is a result of nerves, it makes sense to try to keep yourself as calm as possible.
G – Content words are the words which carry the main meaning. You might want to give your Ss some examples and practice stressing the content words, e.g. (stressed words in bold)
‘...walking has got to be healthier than going by car...’

*E could be equally useful in all cases as this will help candidates control nerves in the speaking test.
Worksheet 1 – Do I sound okay? – Speaking Part 2

Some IELTS students have just practiced Speaking Part 2. Their classmates listened and gave some feedback.

Read what the students say. Can you suggest answers to their questions?

Aman

*I saw my classmate yawning while I was talking. When she gave me feedback she said I sounded really boring. My story was great, so why was she bored?*

Anna

*I felt very nervous. I don’t think I made many mistakes but I had problems remembering words. My classmate told me that I didn’t say very much. Why did I say so little?*

Fabio

*I had loads to say and I was worried I wouldn’t be able to say it all. Actually, in the end I ran out of things to say and my classmate looked a bit confused. Why did he look confused?*

Listen to your teacher and check if you were right.

- Aman’s problem ______________________
- Anna’s problem ______________________
- Fabio’s problem ______________________

What advice would you give to the students?
Worksheet 2 – Do I sound okay? – Speaking Part 2

1. Aman’s problem = flat intonation
2. Anna’s problem = hesitation, speaking too slowly
3. Fabio’s problem = speaking too quickly

Look at the advice below and match it to a student’s problem.

A  Don’t forget to vary your voice. Practice using your voice to express how you feel about what you are saying. **Example:** 1 – flat intonation

B Force yourself to pause between ‘chunks’ of language e.g. ‘I can’t drive...(pause)...so sometimes ...(pause)...I take a taxi ...(pause)...or get a lift from a colleague...(pause)...’

C If you can’t think of a word, paraphrase (= say it in another way), e.g. 1 noticed some beautiful...???...tropical birds’ (= parrots).

D Record and listen to yourself practicing a Speaking part 2 task. Could people get an idea of how you’re feeling without listening to the words?

E Take a deep breath before you start speaking and try to relax.

F Give yourself time to think by using ‘fillers’, e.g. ‘Let me see...,’ ‘What I mean is...’, ‘What’s the word?...’

G Don’t forget to put stress on ‘content’ words when you’re speaking. This makes it easier to follow your message.

H Try to pause at natural places. For example, instead of ‘I can walk pretty...quickly when I’m in a...rush’, group ‘chunks’ of language together: ‘I can walk...pretty quickly...when I’m in a rush.’

I Listen to recordings of native English speakers and try to copy their intonation.