



TODAY'S THEME SPEAKING CARDS



SUGGESTED GENERAL APPROACH

- set the objectives
- preparation
- introduce topic
- go over vocabulary
- grammar option
- read passage
- students discuss in groups
- follow-up and feedback



The main idea is for the students to actively speak about a particular topic, using some recently learned vocabulary and possibly a suggested grammatical structure or two. The following is one way you can use the speaking theme cards that has worked well in the classroom but feel free to try out other approaches.

1	SETTING THE OBJECTIVES
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Before the class

This is wide open; any goal you would like your students to make progress towards is appropriate here. The way the activity is set up, there are a few objectives that might parallel yours:

- 1 – Students become accustomed to speaking about a variety of topics.
- 2 – Students become familiar with incorporating specific vocabulary and structures to increase their productive repertoire.
- 3 – Students work on their ability to communicate, defend and explore different opinions and ideas while speaking.

2	PREPARATION FOR THE CLASS
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Before the class

Once you've decided on the theme you'd like your students to explore, print out as many copies as needed. There are 4 cards to a sheet and if you like, you can print on lightly coloured paper for a change of pace.

On the off chance there is a word or expression that is unfamiliar or not clear to you, google it to have a better idea when students ask you about it. Think of how the meaning can be explained or communicated, because that is what you will be asking the students to do in the class. Besides the use of definitions, it can also be done by using examples, synonyms or opposites, providing a situation where the context will bring out the meaning, gestures, drawings or references of any kind (pointing to the student next to you or referring to what was mentioned earlier in the class).

Decide whether or not you want to use the grammar structure section or not. If so, consider the examples given on the webpage or if you want to supply your own.

3	LEAD-IN QUESTION
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In class: Pre-discussion

Orientate the students towards the theme by asking them a question or two. There are one or two suggestions on the lesson plan provided on the webpage. As with any of the suggestions presented here, you can change things as much as you like.

Get the students speaking a little about the theme with you, working in a little interest or curiosity about the topic.

4	VOCABULARY ON THE CARDS
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In class: Pre-discussion

Hand out the cards, one per student, and go over the vocabulary in the right hand column. Elicit the meaning as much as you can and go over the pronunciation as well. If there is a vocabulary item that is more than one word (ex: cross the line), think of this group of words as an expression and have the students say it as a single unit rather than a list of separate words.

If the students have an idea of the meaning, help guide and fine-tune their efforts by drawing attention to ambiguous interpretations or comparing the expressed idea to something else. Remind them to use synonyms, antonyms, examples, detailed explanations, a context or any other technique to get the idea across. Anything but translation, unless you're teaching a monolingual group and you think it is a good idea to do so.

5	GRAMMAR OPTION
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In class: Pre-discussion

If you decide to use the grammar option, elicit or provide a few important points that are part of the structure (issues of word order, verb tense or form, any other rules or guidelines that the students might benefit from being reminded about). If the students are ambitious, they can think of a different structure they'd also like to try to incorporate while speaking about the theme, or you could suggest one yourself, perhaps something you have recently covered in class and it seems appropriate to include it.

What also may be helpful is that after going over the passage, give them a few minutes to write out a sentence or two using those structures that could be worked into the coming conversation.

6	READ PASSAGE
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In class: Pre-discussion

Tell the students to read the text below the title and ask you for the meaning or pronunciation of any particular words. If you plan on having the students use one or more structures and want them to prepare a bit before the speaking (by thinking or writing out some sentences using the structure), now is the time to do it. You may want to have a look at what they are writing, to get a better idea of just how well they have a handle on those structures.

7	STUDENTS DISCUSS / TEACHER MONITORS
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In class: Discussion

Place the students into groups of 2, 3 or 4, remind them to use the vocabulary (and structures) while speaking, and to explore the theme as thoroughly as they can for the next 5 – 10 minutes. This includes listening and responding to other people's views and developing the ideas expressed.

Listen in on the groups, steer them in the right direction if needed and note any difficulties they might be having with the language or the way they are interacting. Give them a one-minute warning when you feel it's time for them to begin tying things up.

8	FOLLOW-UP & FEEDBACK
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In class: Post Discussion

End the group conversations by asking in a loud voice what they came up with during the discussion. There is a suggestion or two of possible questions to ask them in the lesson plan on the webpage. Have each group volunteer something and perhaps occasionally ask them a follow-up question or two.

When the topic has been put to rest, go over a few of the points you noted during the discussion. Here you could address any vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation difficulties as well as how well they carried out the task (turn-taking, fluency, developing ideas, etc). Bring to their attention what you thought they did well, and areas which they could work more on.

You could also ask them what they thought of the task and how they feel about their progress, but don't do this after every activity. Perhaps in the following class quiz the class or ask a specific student or two some of the vocabulary items which were on the card or arose during the discussion.