learners wish to disagree, they may use *I see your point, but . . .* or *I'm afraid I only partially agree with you*.

One important factor to consider is the appropriateness of speech functions in different cultural contexts in which English is used. In many Asian societies, for example, it is considered impolite for younger speakers or those in subordinate positions to disagree openly with those in positions of power and seniority. Even when disagreement occurs, the speakers usually have to include a preamble to the voicing of disagreement. This may include acknowledging explicitly the value and experience of the senior participant in the interaction so that he or she can save face. In other words, the normal politeness markers or language for hedging used in some Western English-speaking societies may be insufficient. While this added attention to seniority may appear to be unnecessary, or even bewildering, to speakers outside of the cultures concerned, it is, nevertheless, an essential aspect of appropriate and successful communication. Thus, in this regard, language learners should develop speech-function skills that are not only appropriate for communicating with native-speakers of English, but also other speakers of English from cultures they are likely to encounter.

Interaction-management skills

As communication is a two-way process, it is not enough for learners merely to know how to express their basic wants and intentions. They also need to develop speech skills that enable them to manage interactions and, in the process, learn to influence the direction these interactions take. For example, when learners are no longer interested in continuing with a particular topic during a conversation, do they know what they can do to steer the conversation away from this topic? In some sense, the skills listed under Interaction management in Table 3.1 can be considered speech-function skills, but they have been categorized separately because they have a specific regulatory purpose. To use interaction-management skills effectively, learners will also need to recognize what the speaker is trying to achieve through his or her words, as well as understand non-verbal cues such as body language. Learners also need to recognize signs that they do not understand each other and that some negotiation of meaning is in order. Bygate (1987) noted that learners need skills to help them initiate and sustain face-to-face interactions and negotiate control of a conversation, and these skills include agenda or topic management and turn-taking skills. Such skills enable language learners to choose topics that they are familiar with, which, in turn, maximizes opportunities for using the target language, as

well as enabling them to handle turn-taking (both theirs and other speakers') effectively and in culturally appropriate ways.

Discourse-organization skills

Effective speaking is also dependent on the ability of speakers to organize extended discourse in accordance with accepted linguistic and sociocultural conventions. Learners, therefore, must develop skills for structuring talk and for responding appropriately as listeners. This requires knowledge of discourse routines, i.e., how a specific speech genre is structured (Bygate 1998), as well as lexico-grammatical knowledge for establishing coherence and cohesion (Burns et al. 1996). Linguists use the term "coherence" to refer to a quality in spoken texts that enables listeners to follow the thread of the message easily. Learners can learn to establish coherence by using devices such as pronouns for referencing and words for reiterations. Cohesion in a spoken text means that various parts "hang together" clearly, giving listeners a sense of its overall structure. This can be achieved by using words or phrases to highlight different parts in the text. Speakers can also use expressions to signpost additions or changes as the message unfolds. Some common discourse markers are *on top of that, on the other hand, to summarize*, and *to conclude*. To apply discourse-organizing skills, learners need to draw on their linguistic knowledge about the structure of spoken discourse.

When planning speaking activities or lessons, teachers need to ask themselves, "What *exactly* are the skills that I want my learners to learn from participating in this activity?" Let's take the objective, "Learners will practice their story-telling skills" as an example. If our overall aim is to improve our students' narrative abilities, we should consider which narrative skills the activities are aiming to develop: a) Do we want the students to learn to structure a story appropriately? b) Do we want them to develop skill in describing events and people? c) Do we want them to tell the story using appropriate stress, rhythm, and intonation so that the meaning is conveyed appropriately and in an interesting manner? Trying to do all three simultaneously would be unrealistic. Teachers should identify one category of core-speaking skills, such as pronunciation or interaction management, and spell out the relevant objectives. So if our aim is a), rather than just asking learners to work in pairs and practice telling or retelling stories to each other, we can make sure that our lesson includes activities that will teach learners how to structure a narrative. We could also include activities that help learners focus on the language that is needed to signpost transitions in the narrative. In other words, when we spell out specific speaking skills

as clear learning objectives, we will plan lessons that really *teach* speaking and not just *do* speaking.

Discuss it

Refer to a language syllabus or a language textbook. Which of the four categories of core speaking skills have been identified for teaching and learning? Is there a balanced coverage of all skills? Do some skills appear to be more important than others in the language program? What implications might this have for the students' speaking development?

Communication strategies

Clearly, speaking in a second language is a demanding process for language learners. Learners in face-to-face interactions do not have the benefit of preparing everything they want to say in advance. How do they cope with the cognitive constraints in speech processing and attend to meaning and language form at the same time? How do they respond quickly to prevent the conversation from flagging? What happens when language learners have trouble expressing themselves? Learners who are easily embarrassed and risk-averse might immediately stop communicating, withdraw, or give up. So, for example, in a hypothetical language class, we may have Student A who suffers from language anxiety and avoids participation. In contrast, we may also have Student B who, in spite of limited linguistic abilities, tries to cope with the problem and hold on to his or her turn to speak. We can say that both A and B are using communication strategies to manage their oral interaction with others, but clearly the strategy that B uses is more beneficial to his or her language development. The ability to use strategies appropriately to keep an interaction going is a reflection of language learners' strategic competence.

Broadly speaking, communication strategies are used for two purposes. Firstly, they are used by learners, such as Student A, to avoid having to speak too much. Strategies used for this purpose are referred to as reduction strategies, partly because the scope of communication is reduced. These strategies may be useful as face-saving devices, but they limit the users' opportunities to speak in the target language. The second purpose for using communication strategies is to enable speakers to convey their messages by using whatever resources they have access to. This is the case for Student B. Such strategies are called achievement strategies. They help learners maximize opportunities for speaking in the target language and to achieve