Improving Speaking Through Movies

Speakers Notes - Presentation Script

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Spoken explanations for each slide, written for delivery by Halis Bereket. Pause for participant responses where the script invites discussion.

Slide 1 Improving Speaking Through Movies

Welcome to Improving Speaking Through Movies. In my Listening and Speaking classes, I have used films such as The Miracle Worker, Matilda and The Ron Clark Story. I prepared different exercises so that students could work with the story and use English themselves. Today I will share that approach. We will look at speaking before viewing, tasks during viewing and activities after viewing. The Miracle Worker is our main example, and the other films will help us consider different applications.

Slide 2 What learners will do

Before we begin, think about your own classes. What do your students usually do after watching a film? Do they answer questions, retell the story or discuss the characters? Please share one example with a partner. In this seminar, we will consider how to give those activities a clear speaking purpose. Learners will predict, explain events using evidence and respond to other people. By the end, you will plan a short viewing activity for your own learners.

Slide 3 The classroom preparation

Preparation is an important part of my movie lessons. I watch the film carefully, decide where to divide it and prepare activities for each section. In my planning materials, I use approximately ten parts, but the number can change. The story and the class should guide our decisions. For each section, I consider the language, the context and the follow-up task. For a short lesson, we can choose one scene with a clear interaction and prepare a small set of questions.

Slide 4 Before viewing

Before viewing, pictures give students an opportunity to speak. I ask questions such as: What can you see? What might happen? What makes you think so? Notice the difference between describing something visible and making a prediction. Both are useful, but students should understand which they are doing. Give them a little thinking time, then let them compare their ideas in pairs. If a few words are essential for understanding the situation, introduce them here. We do not need to explain every unfamiliar word.

Slide 5 The first viewing

For the first viewing, I give students a broad purpose. Who is involved, and what is the main situation? These questions help them follow the scene without trying to write everything they hear. After viewing, each student can give a one-sentence summary to a partner. The partners compare their understanding. They may agree, or they may notice different things. If the situation is still unclear, we can replay the scene. Our first aim is to establish enough understanding for the next task.

Slide 6 The second viewing

For the second viewing, we can focus on a small number of details. Students check their predictions and look for evidence. A clue may be an action, an expression or something a character says. I ask them to explain their answers to a partner. What did you notice that supports your answer? Short notes are enough. We want students to use the information in conversation, so they need time to watch and listen as well as write. Two or three focused questions can provide enough material.

Slide 7 Picture and sentence matching

One exercise in my materials is picture and sentence matching. Students connect a picture with a sentence describing an event. We can add a speaking stage by asking them to explain their choice. What clue helped you make that match? Could another description fit? Partners compare their answers before we check them together. This gives the matching exercise a further purpose. Students practise describing what they see and explaining why they think a particular answer is suitable.

Slide 8 Who said it and why

Another exercise asks who said something. In my Miracle Worker materials, this appears in several sections. Identifying the speaker checks understanding, but we can continue with questions about meaning. What does the person want? Why do they say it at that moment? How does the other person respond? Students can explain the idea in their own words. They do not have to repeat the dialogue exactly. This helps us connect listening with interpretation and gives students more to discuss.

Slide 9 Missing information

We can also create an information gap. This is an additional activity we can use with the same approach. Partner A receives some clues, and Partner B receives different clues. They ask questions without showing their cards. Together, they reconstruct the event. The handout includes an original classroom scenario for trying this activity. One partner knows the initial difficulty, while the other knows more about the response. When they combine the information, they prepare a short joint retelling. Each person has a reason to listen and speak.

Slide 10 The Miracle Worker

The Miracle Worker gives us a context for discussing communication and how meaning becomes clear. My materials divide the film into sections with questions and follow-up activities. For speaking, we can ask: How do the characters communicate? What helps understanding? What support would you suggest? We should discuss Helen respectfully and consider her perspective. The film is a dramatisation, and some actions need critical discussion. We can ask students to propose supportive alternatives rather than imitate forceful behaviour. Different answers are possible when students give reasons.

Slide 11 Matilda

With Matilda, we can move from understanding an event to discussing a character's needs. My worksheet includes many questions, so I select those that suit the section and the class. Then we can ask: Which action supports the child? What could a kind adult say? Pairs can prepare a short original conversation that offers help or responds fairly. When the film shows unfair treatment, we discuss it critically. The follow-up task gives students an opportunity to imagine a more respectful response and explain their choices.

Slide 12 The Ron Clark Story

The Ron Clark Story offers situations that teachers and students can discuss from different viewpoints. First, we establish what problem appears in the selected scene and how the teacher responds. Then we ask what students would adapt. I want them to give reasons rather than simply say that they like or dislike an action. A dramatised film does not provide an answer for every classroom. Students may suggest different responses. What matters in the discussion is that they explain how their choice would respect learners and support participation.

Slide 13 Different viewpoints

Students may understand the same situation differently. We can give them language that helps them discuss those differences. For example: I think this because... I noticed... Could another explanation be possible? I would first model an observation and then an interpretation. The observation describes a clue. The interpretation explains what we think it means. At A2 level, sentence starters can help students contribute. At B1 level, they can consider another explanation. Encourage them to discuss ideas respectfully and listen before responding.

Slide 14 Picture summary

My picture summary materials help students reconstruct the story. For a shorter task, we can work with four events from one section. Students arrange the events and retell them using expressions such as first, then, after that and finally. Each learner speaks for about thirty seconds while a partner listens. The listener can add a missing detail or ask a question. If they disagree about the order, we return to the evidence. This makes retelling a shared activity in which both partners have a role.

Slide 15 A new conversation

After discussing the scene, students can create a new conversation. They keep the situation but write their own responses. Ask pairs to prepare six to eight lines showing how someone could respond helpfully. This is an original alternative, so they do not need to reproduce the film script. Give them time to rehearse, then invite them to perform. Other students listen for an expression they could use themselves. Afterwards, the pair explains one choice: why did they use those words or give that response?

Slide 16 Support and extension

The same activity may need different support for different learners. At A2 level, I can provide pictures, a small word bank and sentence starters. Students can make notes and rehearse with a partner before speaking to the whole class. At B1 level, we can ask for evidence or another viewpoint. If the spoken language is difficult, a replay with English subtitles may help after the first attempt. The speaking purpose remains clear, but the amount of support changes according to what the learners need.

Slide 17 Teachers design a task

Now it is your turn to design a task. Use the planning sheet in the participant handout. Choose a scene and identify a clear purpose. Write a question for the first viewing and two focused questions for a replay. Then decide what students will say to each other afterwards. Please work in small groups for five minutes. When you share your plan, explain the spoken outcome and one question. Another group will check whether students have information or ideas to exchange and whether the task suits the chosen level.

Slide 18 What to listen for

When students speak, what should we listen for? I suggest beginning with a clear message, relevant evidence from the scene and a response to a partner. We can also note how they use suitable language. We do not need to interrupt every error. During the activity, record one successful expression and one useful improvement. Give brief feedback afterwards, then let students repeat the task with a new partner. This gives them a chance to use the feedback rather than simply hear it.

Slide 19 The next classroom step

To finish, think of one scene you could use and one speaking activity you would try. Please share your choice with a partner. We can begin with a small, manageable lesson and develop a longer film project later. Careful preparation gives students something specific to understand and discuss. Their conversation then becomes a central part of the lesson. You can explore our seminar materials at bereketeltarchive.com. Thank you for joining me. I hope these examples help you adapt your own movie lessons.