Chatter Topics is a collaborative strategy involving both speaking and listening, where students experience a range of practical oral skills that will help them develop greater self-confidence.

**Learning Outcomes**

**Main:** OL1

**Supplementary:** OL2, OL4, OL5, OL7, OL11, OL12, OL13

**Key Skills**

- Communicating
- Working with Others
- Staying Well
- Being Creative
- Managing Myself

**Print Outs**

Chatter Topic prompt sheets

**Materials / Technology**

Lap-top to play clip for students to commentate on (optional)

**Print Outs**

Chatter Topic prompt sheets

**Student Friendly Learning Intentions: Students will...**

- Communicate with each other
- Speak with confidence
- Develop listening skills
- Use their imaginations
- Reflect on their own learning

**Preparation**

Prepare one Chatter Topic sheet per student (You may duplicate some of these as there are only three students in each group)

Organise students into triads (groups of three)

**Instructions**

1. Introduce the activity:
   ‘We’re going to use these interesting Chatter Topics to work on our speaking and listening skills. We’ll work in groups of three. Decide among yourselves who will be Student A, Student B and Student C. The first thing you’ll do is spend a full minute thinking about your Chatter Topic, then one person will speak about his/her topic for between 30 and 45 seconds. It’s very important that the other two students listen to the speaker; don’t zone out and just think about what you’re going to say when it’s your turn! To keep you listening, I’ll give each of you a job. While Student A speaks, Student B and Student C should listen carefully and then Student B should come up with a question to check how carefully Student C was listening!’

2. Hand out the Chatter Topics; give students 60 seconds to think about their topic.
   ‘You have 60 seconds to think about what you plan to say during your 45 seconds talking time. You may jot down some notes, but you cannot write more than five words.’

3. Ring a bell after 45 seconds. At this stage Student B should ask Student C a question.
   ‘Ask a challenging question. Check if he/she was really listening!’

4. Repeat the process two more times.
   - ‘Now we will do the whole process again. Student B will speak and Student C will ask a question to assess how carefully Student A was listening.’
   - ‘This time Student C will speak and Student A will ask a question to assess how carefully Student B was listening.’

5. Ask students to turn over their sheets to see which oral skill they were using.
   ‘Is that a skill that you’re already good at? Would you find someone else’s topic easier? We all have strengths and weaknesses and preferences when it comes to speaking style. The ones we tend to avoid are the ones we most need to work on!’

6. Reflection: In groups ask students to think about the following questions. Allow some silent thinking time, followed by a group discussion and then ask students to feed back to the entire class.
   - Did you enjoy being the speaker? Which speaking style am I best at / which could I improve?
   - What could you do to improve your performance as the speaker?
   - Was I a good listener? Why / why not?
   - When it was my turn, did I ask the best possible question?
   - What did you learn from doing that exercise?
   - What elements of the key skills did you use?

**Assessment**

Self-assessment, peer assessment, student reflection on their learning, teacher observation, teacher questioning

**Extension Activities**

This could easily be developed into writing activities with the following outcomes in mind: W3, W12

References: Oral Language and Vocabulary Development: Reading First National Conference 2008 / www.tes.co.uk
**Chatter Topics: Checklist for Observer**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A good interviewee...</th>
<th>A good interviewer...</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>uses appropriate eye-contact</td>
<td>uses appropriate eye-contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exhibits positive body language</td>
<td>exhibits positive body language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaks clearly and at an appropriate volume</td>
<td>speaks clearly and at an appropriate volume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has good listening skills</td>
<td>asks lots of open questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a good story-teller</td>
<td>is good listener</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speaks in an interesting and engaging manner</td>
<td>researches their topic in advance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knows their topic well</td>
<td>can think on their feet</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Explaining/Imagining
You can save only three things from your burning house. Excluding people or pets, what would you save and why?
Persuading
Your class may invite a celebrity to give a speech at your awards ceremony. Persuade your classmates to invite your favourite celebrity.
Speculating
Every household in your town has been given €1,000,000. How would it change life in your town?
Imagining / Informing / Speculating
You find a message in a bottle. What does the message say?
Arguing /
Stating an opinion
Look at this animal. Is it cruel to keep him locked up in a zoo?
Speculating / Imagining
You arrive in your classroom to discover it is the year 2099. What differences might there be?
Describe the process of frying an egg.
Narrating
Describe what happened on the day that you woke up and discovered that your cat / dog could speak.
Asking for information
You’ve ordered a dress online and it hasn’t arrived. Ring customer services to find out the status of your order.
Describing a Process
Describe the process of uploading a photograph onto a social network site.
Imagining
10 things you could do with one brick.
Commentating
Commentate on a fashion show
Commentate a GAA match – scoring a goal
Narrating / Speculating / Imagining
“Help!” squeaked the tiny voice. Who was it? Where did it come from? What was happening?
You’ve just spent €80 on a musical and you are not impressed with anything.
Criticising
You are a new presenter on ‘Top Gear’ and have been asked to review your favourite car.
Criticising
You’ve just gotten a new phone. Critique it.

Prompts: Usability

How it looks

Special features