

## The importance of activities to fill information gaps in developing listening and speaking skills at level C1

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**Annotation.** *This article examines the role of information-gap activities in fostering listening and speaking skills for students at the C1 level of language proficiency. Information-gap tasks require learners to exchange missing pieces of information to complete a task, simulating real-world communication. These activities promote active listening, critical thinking, and spontaneous speech, which are essential for C1 learners striving for fluency and precision. This article explores various methods for designing and implementing information-gap activities and discusses their impact on improving language fluency, comprehension, and confidence.*

**Keywords:** *Information-Gap Activities, Listening Skills, Speaking Skills, C1 Level, Fluency Development, Language Communication, Task-Based Learning*

At the C1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), learners are expected to use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic, and professional purposes. Mastering speaking and listening at this level involves more than grammatical accuracy; students must develop fluency, coherence, and the ability to respond spontaneously in diverse situations. However, one challenge for many learners is the ability to sustain natural, interactive conversations.

Information-gap activities provide a practical solution to this challenge by creating opportunities for authentic communication. These activities simulate real-life scenarios where participants hold different pieces of information and must exchange them to complete a task. This process encourages meaningful interaction, promotes active listening, and fosters the development of spontaneous speaking skills. This article examines how information-gap activities can support learners at the C1 level by enhancing their ability to comprehend, respond, and engage in complex conversations<sup>32</sup>.

### Methods

#### 1. Designing Effective Information-Gap Activities for C1 Learners

For C1 students, information-gap activities must go beyond simple exchanges and encourage deeper conversations. The tasks should involve higher-order thinking, such as problem-solving, negotiation, or collaborative decision-making, which mirrors real-world situations.

- **Role-Plays with Missing Information:** Students adopt specific roles (e.g., journalist and interviewee) where each participant has access to different information. They must ask and answer questions to gather all necessary details.
- **Story Completion:** Each student has part of a story, and they must collaboratively piece together the entire narrative by asking each other for missing sections.
- **Map-Based Activities:** Partners receive partial maps with missing landmarks and must communicate clearly to complete the entire map. This activity focuses on giving and following complex instructions<sup>33</sup>.

#### 2. Developing Listening and Speaking Skills through Interaction

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<sup>32</sup> Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing. *Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 1-47.

<sup>33</sup> Long, M. H. (1985). A Role for Instruction in Second Language Acquisition: Task-Based Language Teaching. In K. Hyltenstam & M. Pienemann (Eds.), *Modelling and Assessing Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 77-99). *Multilingual Matters*.

Information-gap activities enhance both listening and speaking skills by requiring students to focus on meaning, respond to new information, and clarify misunderstandings.

- **Active Listening Practice:** In these tasks, students must listen attentively to their partner's input to extract essential information. This encourages learners to engage with the speaker rather than passively listening.
- **Clarification and Paraphrasing Skills:** Students practice asking follow-up questions and paraphrasing their partner's statements to ensure understanding, which is crucial at the C1 level for nuanced conversations.
- **Fluency Development:** Since information-gap activities rely on spontaneous interaction, learners build their ability to express ideas without prior preparation, improving their fluency and self-confidence in speech.

### 3. Examples of Information-Gap Activities for C1 Learners

Below are sample activities designed for C1-level students:

- **Travel Planning Task:** Each student holds different pieces of a travel itinerary (e.g., flight schedules, accommodation options, sightseeing locations). They must collaborate to create a complete travel plan.
- **Problem-Solving Scenarios:** Partners receive conflicting pieces of information about a fictional event (e.g., a product launch) and must come to a consensus about what happened. This type of activity mimics real-life decision-making and negotiation<sup>34</sup>.
- **Job Interview Simulation:** One student plays the role of an employer with a list of job requirements, while the other plays a candidate with a CV. Both participants ask questions to determine whether the candidate is suitable for the role.

### 4. Incorporating Task-Based Learning (TBL) for Greater Engagement

The communicative nature of information-gap activities aligns well with task-based learning (TBL) principles, which emphasize language use in meaningful contexts.

- **Pre-Task Stage:** Teachers introduce the activity, providing vocabulary and phrases relevant to the task (e.g., phrases for negotiation or clarification).
- **Task Stage:** Students work in pairs or groups to complete the task, using target language structures and practicing spontaneous conversation.
- **Post-Task Stage:** After the activity, students reflect on their performance and receive feedback, focusing on fluency, vocabulary use, and areas for improvement.

### 5. Overcoming Challenges in Implementing Information-Gap Activities

While information-gap activities are highly effective, they can present some challenges:

- **Anxiety and Lack of Confidence:** Some students may feel nervous about speaking spontaneously. Teachers can reduce anxiety by pairing students strategically and offering supportive feedback.
- **Uneven Participation:** Dominant students may monopolize conversations. Teachers should monitor groups to ensure equal participation and assign specific roles to promote balance.
- **Preparation and Task Complexity:** Complex tasks may require more time to prepare and explain. Teachers should provide clear instructions and model the activity beforehand to avoid confusion<sup>35</sup>.

### Conclusion

Information-gap activities play a critical role in developing listening and speaking skills for C1 learners by fostering meaningful communication, active listening, and fluency. These tasks simulate real-life situations, requiring students to collaborate, exchange information, and respond to their partners' input, which strengthens both their language proficiency and confidence.

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<sup>34</sup> Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

<sup>35</sup> Willis, D., & Willis, J. (2007). *Doing Task-Based Teaching*. Oxford University Press.

By integrating task-based learning principles, teachers can design engaging activities that enhance higher-order thinking and practical language use. Although challenges such as anxiety or uneven participation may arise, careful planning and supportive feedback can mitigate these issues. Ultimately, information-gap activities offer C1 learners valuable opportunities to practice authentic communication, preparing them for complex conversations in academic, professional, and social contexts.

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