

# Introduction

For much of the history of English language teaching, speaking English was not the goal. Language was taught as an academic pursuit, and the focus was on reading and writing. Because of the prominence of English in the world today and changing needs of learners, language students enrolled in your classes will think you are not teaching the course well if you do not include or emphasize speaking and listening.

## What Is Speaking?

How would you explain speaking? Is it simply making sounds, or does an utterance need to be understood to be considered speaking? Take a moment to write down your own definition of speaking.

### REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Speaking is \_\_\_\_\_.

In your Reflective Break answer, maybe you included communicating out loud about your opinions, ideas, or thoughts. Or maybe you mentioned that speaking is meaningful interaction between people using words.

## With Whom Do People Speak?

With ever-increasing globalization, international communication is the focus for many English language learners. This has led to questions about what variety of English is “correct.”

## REFLECTIVE BREAK

- Who should decide what type of English is spoken?
- How can you encourage students to accept varieties of English from around the world?

Authentic, or “real,” English is not only the English spoken in inner-circle countries such as Canada, New Zealand, England, and the United States (Kachru, 1986) but is also the English spoken in countries such as Chad, Chile, and China. Teachers of English are encouraged to draw on the rich and diverse varieties of the language used around the world today (Alsagoff, McKay, Hu, & Renandya, 2012; Jenkins, 2006).

## In This Book

To meet the needs of students, teachers of oral English have three main tasks: find out all they can about how speaking works, look for ways to introduce their classes to the language of conversation, and provide students with opportunities to practice speaking English. This book aims to prepare teachers for these three tasks.

Chapters 2 and 3 examine learning what it means to be a communicatively competent speaker of a second language (L2). Chapter 2 focuses on linguistic and discourse competence and specifically covers language forms and how to put those together into conversational contexts. Chapter 3 views sociocultural and strategic competence, looking at how to carry on a conversation appropriately and successfully despite cultural differences and language barriers.

The final three chapters move from theory to classroom application, exploring different approaches to designing speaking activities and lesson plans (Chapter 4), ways teachers can enhance students’ learning outside of class and how to assess speaking (Chapter 5), and some of the challenges inherent in the teaching of speaking in different contexts (Chapter 6).