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The *SpeakTeach* method

**Towards self-regulated learning of speaking skills in foreign languages in
secondary schools: an adaptive and practical approach**

Esther de Vrind

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Titel: De SpeakTeach didactiek, Naar zelfregulerend leren bij spreek- en gespreksvaardigheid in moderne vreemde talen in het voortgezet onderwijs: een adaptieve en praktische aanpak

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Preface

Speaking skills in foreign languages have always been a special interest of mine. How much fun it is to be able to communicate in other languages, get to know new people and discover different worlds.

As a teacher of French and teacher educator for about 20 years, I have found that, in general, secondary school students also enjoy learning to speak a foreign language. They enter the first class enthusiastically, but this motivation seems to diminish over time and often after five or six years of foreign language learning students complain that they have done so little to improve their speaking skills and still cannot speak the language. Both beginning and experienced teachers indicate that it is so difficult to teach speaking skills due to shortage of time and large classes. Speaking lessons can quickly lead to noisy classrooms, getting a grip on the students' learning process is difficult, feedback seems to be ad hoc without the opportunity or need for the learner to repeat the speaking activity in an improved way and there is often no consciously designed structure in sequences of speaking assignments and supporting exercises leading to the achievement of speaking goals. A teaching approach leading to a coherent learning progression in speaking skills which allows teachers to guide students to become more competent in speaking a foreign language is needed.

Five years ago, when the opportunity was offered to do research into teaching methodology in the humanities relevant to academia and also practically relevant to teaching practice, I did not have to think for a second. I was eager to develop a teaching method for speaking skills that is adaptive for students and practical for teachers in their regular teaching practice. I am very grateful to Dudoc-Alfa and to ICLON Graduate School of Teaching, Leiden University, for giving me this opportunity. With this dissertation I hope to make a contribution to the academic world of research-based knowledge in the domain of teaching and learning foreign languages, but I think it is just as important to make a contribution to improving the teaching of speaking skills in foreign languages in secondary schools so that many students learn to speak with pleasure and success and can discover other worlds.

Dudoc-alfa program

The Dudoc-alfa program is a joint initiative of Dutch universities funded by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, that offers teachers and teacher educators the opportunity, alongside their jobs in education, to carry out PhD research in the field of teaching methodology in the humanities for a period of four years. The program aims to boost research into teaching methodologies of humanities subjects. Its aims include strengthening the domain-specific component in the education of university-trained teachers; improving the quality of education in the alpha subjects in secondary education; contributing to the innovation of education in the alpha subjects; and strengthening the link between teachers' teaching practice and academic research. With this thesis I hope to contribute to these important goals.