



Five College Center for World Languages

Published on LangMedia (<https://langmedia.fivecolleges.edu>)

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The Conversation Partner

What is a Conversation Partner?

While the mentor must be able to address complex grammatical issues, the conversation partner need be only an educated native speaker. The conversation partner's main charge is to speak his/her target language using the authentic speech of everyday life and to help the students with their conversational abilities in the language. The hour long conversation sessions give small groups of students at the same level of language study the opportunity to practice speaking among themselves guided by a native speaker.

Use of the Target Language

The conversation partner should speak entirely (or as close to entirely as possible) in the target language. Grammatical questions should be saved for the mentor, and conversation partners need to maintain target language use in a conversational atmosphere. The best conversation sessions are those in which all participants speak for equal amounts of time.

Preparation for Sessions

The conversation partner's preparation for the session is crucial to its success. The conversation partner must be careful to use the structures and vocabulary that the students have learned and not to add words outside of the students' knowledge base. Many of the study guides found on this site have Conversation Partner Guides that accompany the weekly Study Guides and are designed to reinforce the lesson. Conversation partners working with languages that do not have pre-designed, accompanying guides can nonetheless benefit from close scrutiny of the Conversation Partner Guides on this site because they give a precise idea of what sorts of activities can be used successfully in a conversation session.

Weekly Reports

Conversation partners file weekly reports with the program staff.

[Best Practices and Tips for Conversation Partners Leading Conversation Sessions](#)

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