



Five College Center for World Languages

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Conversation Sessions

What is a conversation session?

Conversation Sessions

Conversation sessions provide a chance for learners to practice using the language. The session is conducted entirely in the language students are learning with an opportunity to ask questions in English at the very end of every session. Conversation sessions focus on using the language in the types of situations one might encounter in everyday life. Students commonly engage in role plays, question and answer activities, description, narration, and problem-solving exercises. In beginning level courses, typical topics are greetings, introductions, getting acquainted conversations, telephone calls, asking for directions, shopping and bargaining, and talking about schedules and events in the past, present or future. More advanced students will practice more complex speech activities that involve expressing opinions, giving reasons in arguments, and discussing current events and cultural issues.

Conversation Partners

In this program, the term "conversation partner" is used to refer to the person who leads the conversation session. That person might be one of the language mentors or it might be an undergraduate conversation partner who has been formally educated in the language. The role of the conversation partner is to facilitate activities that make active use of the language. In a successful conversation session, the students will be the ones doing most of the talking for at least 90% of the time. The conversation partner may engage students in dialogue or may have students work in pairs with one another. The conversation partner will use the language being learned throughout the session. At the end of the session, the conversation partner will give students a chance to ask questions in English.

What makes a good conversation session?

Here are some characteristics of a good conversation session:

- students are actively speaking throughout the session
 - activities encourage students to create language rather than read from a book or piece of paper
 - every student gets an equal chance to participate
 - the interactions are almost completely in the target language, English is used sparingly
 - every student in the session arrives well-prepared
 - the conversation partner arrives well-prepared
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- questions, problems, and corrections are dealt with in a constructive manner

Questions and Answers Between Students (Swahili)
Role Playing Informal Greetings (Pashto)
Role Playing Meeting a New Friend for Lunch (Persian)
Discussing What a Student Did Last Week (Persian)
Discussing a Reading (Swahili)
Drilling a Student on Sentence Structure (Persian)
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