



Five College Center for World Languages

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Quick Reference for Conducting Conversation Sessions

Language Use

Language of interchange is the target language. Tell the students they may ask questions in English during the last 5 minutes of the session if necessary. Then stick to the target language during the session.

Using Correct Body Language

The ability to use correct body language is as important as the ability to speak. Make sure your students know and practice the body language that accompanies their speech production. Personal space, gestures or body postures that indicate respect, and understanding of approved gender interactions are all intertwined with the appropriate vocal utterance. Make students get out of their chairs and act out their role plays.

Use the Vocabulary from the Textbook

Confine your speech to the vocabulary the students are learning and have learned in the past. You need to carefully pay attention to what words they have learned and are assigned for the week. You need to practice ahead of time conforming your own speech to the limitations of their vocabulary. You may be tempted to add new words or use slang. Resist the temptation.

A good conversation session follows the following format:

- Begin with a warmup session. Greet each student as s/he enters the room and make small talk around the group to put everyone at ease and to get the students focused on speaking the target language.
- Begin the actual session with a quick review of material covered during the last session.
- Go next to the material that the students were assigned to prepare for their conversation sessions. They have been told to prepare dialogues or questions or material along those lines.
- Then transition into the material you have prepared to focus on specific structures or vocabulary in the lesson.
- Finally do a cool down exchange so that the students leave the session feeling confident.

If you finish the material you have prepared and the session is not over:

- Use role plays as an extra activity. Students can never do too many of them and they are

always different because they are spontaneous.

- Use the dialogues in their textbooks as a point of departure for practicing pronunciation, summarizing, or developing the ebbs and flows of natural speech.
- Begin a group narrative. You make up the first sentence, which can be as simple as “Melissa lives in Casablanca,” and go around the group adding to the story.
- You go around the group giving each student a word that s/he must use in a sentence.

Do not introduce new material or vocabulary.

Do not let the students go early.

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