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Introduction

Conversation partners are native speakers of a language who facilitate conversation practice sessions for learners of that language. For the Five College Mentored and Supervised Independent Language Programs, conversation partners may be undergraduate native speakers, graduate student tutors, visiting foreign language teaching assistants, or language lecturers. While each of these different types of conversation partners has a somewhat different role, the goal of all conversation sessions remains the facilitation of active use of the language through activities that mirror real life uses of the language as closely as possible.

This tutorial may be used by anyone interested in knowing more about the role of a conversation partner. Anyone hired to be a conversation partner with the program is required to complete this training tutorial either by attending a group training workshop or by working through the tutorial independently, submitting written answers, and then having an individual conference with a member of the FCCSWL staff. Five College students interested in applying to be a conversation partner, should visit our [Employment for Native Speakers](#) page for application instructions. Applications from first-year students are encouraged.

For information about the language courses offered through the Mentored and Supervised Independent Language Programs see the [Five College Center for the Study of World Languages](#) website.

Section 1: Conversation Sessions

Section 1: What is a Good Conversation Session?

1A: Conversation Partners

1A: What is a Conversation Session? What is a Conversation Partner?

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.

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;
- questions, problems, and corrections are dealt with in a constructive manner.

What is a Conversation Partner?

In this program, the term "conversation partner" is used to refer to the person who leads the conversation session. That person might be undergraduate conversation partner who has been formally educated in the language, a visiting foreign language teaching assistant, a graduate student tutor, or a language lecturer. 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.

Conversation partners do not present a lesson; instead they participate in conversation with the students studying the target language. Their role is in the guidance of the session in order to ensure that the students are having ample time to speak and practice speaking the target language with them. A conversation partner is meant to help students actively make use of linguistic functions that they would encounter when using the language in its authentic and native context. For example, a

conversation partner would not teach students about using the verb “to be” but would rather engage students in conversation by asking questions that utilize the verb such as “How are you?” “What time is it?” etc.

1B: Target Language

1B: Using the Target Language

Pronunciation

Even though students may only know a few words, such as “hello” “how are you?” “goodbye” and “my name is,” you can still keep the entire session in the target language. The key is to speak slowly, enunciate your words, and make sure your pronunciation is very clear. Before your first session you need to practice your pronunciation in order to make sure that you are pronouncing every letter and syllable when speaking.

Speaking in Simple Sentences

Even if students can’t understand everything you say they will pick out certain words they have heard before in order to understand the context. In the beginning, you will need to speak in simple sentences and use a lot of hand gestures and body language, sometimes even drawing on the blackboard, in order to make sure you are being understood. Again, this takes practice.

Before your first session you should write down a list of simple sentences and phrases you will use during your conversation session. Practice your pronunciation of these sentences and think about what kind of body language you can use to articulate your meaning. For example, when saying the word “hello” one can wave one’s hand to signify the action’s meaning. If the language learners have studied the phrase “my name is,” then during the session, when you say your name, you can point to yourself, say your name, and then say the entire phrase together.

Use emphatic gestures in order to help the students make connections between the words you are saying and their meaning. Expect to say phrases slowly about three to four times before the connection between what you are saying and what it means is made. Prepare a list of simple and useful words and phrases that can be referred to when someone wants to ask a question or if something was not understood. You may want to make sure that each person is able to say phrases such as: “Can you please repeat?” “I don’t know” “I didn’t understand.” You can also review these quickly during the first session.

Also remember to only use the vocabulary currently being studied based on the study materials. It is okay on the first day of the session to practice the phrase “my name is” or “how are you?” but other than those basic greetings and partings, it is extremely important that the conversation partner adheres to the vocabulary that the conversation participants are learning. You can always review the vocabulary everyone is learning by referring to the study materials or syllabus.

How Fast Do I Speak?

Speak slowly in the beginning. You can eventually quicken your speech, but not by much. You want those in the conversation session to gradually become adjusted to the normal speaking velocity in the target language, but this transition must not be rushed. You will need to gauge when you can start introducing a quicker speaking velocity based on how easily you are being understood. It is best, however, to keep it slow until they are more advanced.

Body Language and Gestures

In elementary conversation sessions body language and gestures are crucial in communicating what you are saying in the target language. When practicing greetings such as “hello,” use the appropriate gesture that corresponds to the word so the connection is made to the word “hello.” For example in English one would wave his/her hand. Point to objects and give their name in the target language, ask students to repeat by pointing to them. Students may not understand the first or second time, however if you are patient and keep repeating and using the appropriate gestures, students will eventually understand what you are asking or saying. Remember that repetition is very important in the first few sessions since those in the session are still getting used to hearing the language and understanding it.

1C: Examples & Assignment

1C: Video Examples and Section 1 Written Assignment

Preparation for Discussion

Watch the video examples below and think about these questions, write down your notes, be prepared to talk about them in group discussion. If you are doing this training individually, you will need to prepare written answers to each question.

1. Why do you think each of these videos was chosen as a good example of a conversation session activity? What attributes of a good conversation session are exhibited in each video?
2. Based on what you have read, observed in the videos, or gleaned from your own language learning experience, list five key ingredients for a good conversation session.

Video Examples

Watch the video examples. Even though you may not understand the language involved, you can still observe the way the conversation partner and students interact.

Offering Cake

Section 2: Activities

Section 2: Conversation Session Activities

2A: Types of Activities

2A: What Activities are Used in a Conversation Session?

Format of a Conversation Session

You will want to prepare ahead of time what activities you are going to use and when you are going to use them during the conversation session. You may have only one or two language learners in the session. Therefore prepare activities that you can use with one person and can adapt them to use with two or more. Dialogues and role-play are particularly useful in creating authentic conversations as well as vocabulary games and activities.

Warm-up Activities

Plan to have one or two activities that can be used at the beginning of the session. It may take some time for the language learner to adjust to speaking in the target language. Make sure these activities are not too challenging and are in keeping with the material the student is covering in his/her syllabus. Warm-up activities may include asking how someone is doing, a small vocabulary game, and maybe practicing different types of greetings (informal, formal). A vocabulary game can be as simple as bringing in a set of pictures that correspond to the vocabulary words and asking the student to tell you the correct vocabulary word for each picture.

Role-play and Dialogue Activities

Role-play and dialogue activities can include activities such as the examples below. In a conversation session with only one student the conversation partner will need to participate in the activity, whereas, in a situation with two or more students, the conversation partner can divide the students into pairs and work with one student if there is an odd number.

- You play the seller and the student is the customer. Role-play a scenario in which different customers come to you to buy different items that you have brought in.
- Role-play a dinner party situation in which everyone must introduce her/himself to the host (the conversation partner) and explain where s/he is from, what s/he does, and how happy s/he is to meet the host.
- Ask simple questions as a warm-up activity. These questions should require short and easy answers. Questions may include "Do you study at Smith?" "Where do you study?" "What is your major?" "Where are you from?"
- Using the present tense, ask the student to describe his/her daily routine.

- Practice numbers! Bring in pictures of different objects that show multiples of the specific objects. For example, a picture of five houses. Then, ask the student how many houses are in the picture.

Some activities may need additional props such as pictures from a magazine or the internet, a copy of a country's map etc. Some number games or vocabulary activities are more effective with visual images. These materials are helpful and reinforce a language learner's use of the target language. Use what you think will work in helping encourage conversation and speaking.

Be sure when you are reenacting a dialogue or role-play with a student that both you and the student are standing up, greeting each other, and using appropriate body language and gestures to recreate a more authentic context. Act out the dialogues rather than remain seated. Try to establish real conversations.

Identity Cards

Identity cards refer to a set of index cards (or sheets of paper) that have information related to different "identities" on the card. These cards are useful in letting language learners practice speaking to different people in different contexts. It builds upon their ability to address people of all ages and social stations. Here is an example of what may be included on an identity card. Keep in mind that, the more the student learns in the language, the more information you can start to add to identity cards.

Sample identity card for a complete beginner:

Name: Rose Thompson
Age: 45
Occupation: teacher

Sample of an identity card for a beginner with more grammar experience:

Name: Rose Thompson
Age: 45
Occupation: teacher
Favorite opera: La Traviata
Hobbies: singing, running, and cooking.

In the second example some more attributes about Ms. Thompson were added because the student is now able to utilize this information correctly in a conversation.

2B: Menu of Activities

2B: A Menu of Speaking Activities

Speaking Activities for Conversation Partners

Here you will find a variety of different speaking activities you may use during your conversation sessions. They are divided according to different communicative skills.

Each activity can be used with one person or with more than one person. For those activities that are dialogues, the conversation partner will need to act out the role-play and dialogue with the other person in the session. When doing so, make sure that the roles in the dialogue are switched so that the student has the opportunity to practice both roles. This is to ensure that the person in the conversation session learning the language has the opportunity to practice a variety of different identities as well as both formal and informal registers.

Group 1

Student Skills Group 1: Basic greetings, alphabet, pronouncing words

1. Role play a situation in which two people meet for the first time and introduce themselves using the basic greetings. They are expected to greet each other using simple vocabulary associated with basic greetings. These include "hello" "my name is" "how are you?" "I am fine" "what is your name" and "goodbye." If the book does not offer the expressions/vocabulary for "my name is" and "what is your name" you may write these on the board and ask students to repeat your pronunciation of them.
2. Role play a situation in which a professor and student meet for the first time. In this greet each other using simple vocabulary associated with basic greetings within a formal context.
3. Bring in pictures of different famous people you may have found on the internet or in the magazine. Include famous people with whom one would use formal address such as a president or famous writer. Also choose images of people who would be considered a student's peers such as teenage pop stars or images of young children. Ask student(s) to address each image deciding whether to use a formal or informal address. This is used to practice formal vs. informal context.
4. Create a set of imaginary identities using flashcards. On each flashcard simply write the name of the person along with their profession or age. Ask student(s) to role-play using their identities and greet each other for the first time. Student(s) will need to decide whether to use informal or formal language.
5. Bring in a set of flashcards containing the letters of the alphabet. Practice the pronunciation of each letter with the group. After you have practiced the alphabet together, show one letter at a time and ask for its pronunciation.
6. Create a list of vocabulary words that reflect the different sounds the student(s) has/have studied. You can choose words that may be illustrated by a picture, for example a picture of an apple to emphasize the pronunciation of the word "apple." You can use these pictures by first showing the student(s) the picture and writing out the word on the blackboard. Ask for the pronunciation of the word after you have pronounced it. Follow-up this activity with a quick drill in which you show each image and ask for the word in order to practice pronunciation.
7. Bring in very simple and basic advertisements in your language. Ask for a simple pronunciation of the letter combinations and words seen. It is not important that the student(s) understand

what is being read, but rather it is important that they are able to handle the pronunciation of different sounds. It also lets the student(s) see what an advertisement or basic ad looks like in the target language.

8. Reenact a dinner party in which you each take turn playing the host and each person needs to address the host and introduce him/herself. This activity can be done with two people who need to role-play different identities simultaneously.

Group 2

Student Skills Group 2: Numbers 1-9, 10-20, colors, days of the week, months of the year

1. Choose an object in the room. Ask for the number of objects in the room to be counted. For example you may choose a pencil and there are three pencils in the classroom.
2. Role-play a scenario in which two students meet for the first time. They introduce themselves using the basic greetings they have already studied and exchange phone numbers. Each student must write down the phone number s/he hears and then repeat it back to their role-playing partner to verify it is correct.
3. Role-play a scenario in which a student runs into a friend's parent and asks for his/her friend's cell phone number from the parent. This requires the use of both the formal and informal depending on which role is being recited. Be sure that each person role-playing has the opportunity to switch his/her role.
4. Bring in dried beans or an object that easily comes in multiples. Place the maximum number student(s) have learned of the object (for example if they studied 1-20 then place 20) on a table. Ask how many there are. After they answer, start to take away a 2-4 at a time and continue to ask how many there are until there is only 1 left. You can also use to practice simple arithmetic with numbers.
5. Bring in a series of pictures of the different seasons. Be sure one can easily recognize which season is which. Ask which months belong to each season.
6. Bring in a series of sports and activities done in all four of the different seasons. For example images of people skiing in the winter or at the beach in the summer. Ask in which month can one do these activities. Which season?
7. Role-play two students meeting for the first time. They introduce themselves using basic greetings and ask for the following information: (1) telephone numbers and (2) addresses.
8. Create a sample page of a planner (agenda book/calendar) for the current week. Place the month, the year, and the numbers but not the days of the week. Point to each slot and ask for the correct day of the week. If dates have been studied, then you can also ask for the full date for each day.
9. As a group, ask for the names of the different colors seen in the room.

10. Bring in different colored images, such as those in a magazine, and ask for the names of the colors seen in the images.
11. Conversation starter question: What is your favorite color? This can be a question you ask towards the beginning of a conversation as a warm-up to the next activity.

Group 3

Student Skills Group 3: The verb “to be,” present tense, present progressive, adjectives, possessive pronouns, family members

1. Role-play: Two college roommates meet for the first time in their dorm room. They greet each other, exchange phone numbers, email addresses, and discuss what classes they are taking each day of the week.
2. Reenact a conversation between a university student and his/her advisor. The advisor will ask the student which classes s/he is taking and on which days + any extra activities/organizations s/he is participating in. This allows for practice of formal and informal registers.
3. Role-play a phone conversation between two friends. One friend is studying abroad and the other friend is still at home. The friend at home is interested to know about what the other friend is doing in the new country. What is his/her class schedule like, where does s/he go everyday? What does s/he eat everyday? etc.
4. Role-play a phone conversation between two students discussing what they are doing in that current moment.
5. Using identity cards role-play a conversation between guests at a dinner party. Each person will be asked to introduce him/herself, what s/he does for a living, where s/he is from, how many language s/he speaks what are his/her hobbies etc.
6. Discuss family trees and describe the different family members of the tree using different descriptive adjectives.
7. Ask for each person in the session to describe him/herself using descriptive adjectives.
8. Bring the family tree of a famous family in popular culture and ask for the familial relationships between the members of the family. You can choose a famous family in American popular culture or a famous family in the target language’s popular culture. Be sure to create the family tree so that the different relationships are easily understood.
9. Ask how each person normally celebrates his/her birthday (this requires use of the present tense).
10. Ask each person to describe one of his/her good friends. What is his/her name? What does s/he

look like? What is his/her personality like? What does s/he study?

11. An interview between two people:

- a. Where are you from?
- b. What languages do you speak?
- c. What are you studying?
- d. Where do you attend school?

If you have more than one participant in the session, ask for each participant to present the person s/he interviewed.

12. Role-play a conversation between two students deciding on where to go for lunch, when to meet and where they will meet.

13. Bring in pictures of different celebrities and ask for them to be described using descriptive adjectives.

Group 4

Student Skills Group 4: Transportation, doctor visits, grocery shopping, shopping, ordering food/restaurants, hotels, housing

1. Bring in a series of pictures of different modes of transportation such as a picture of a train, airplane, bicycle etc. Ask for the name of each object that is in the picture. Afterwards, ask which mode of transportation one uses to get to different places. For example, to get to India do you take a bus or a plane? Etc.
2. Role-play a phone conversation between an airline representative and a student purchasing his/her airline ticket to his study abroad destination.
3. Role-play a dialogue between a ticket cashier and a someone looking to purchase a train ticket at the train station. The person should explain where s/he wants to go, ask how much it will cost, and how long is the trip.
4. Role-play the following scenario if you have more than 1 person: two students are studying abroad together and have decided to rent a car to travel around. They call the car rental company and inquire about the car rental specifics: how much does it cost per day, where are they not allowed to drive to? Etc. Be sure each student has the opportunity to play the part of the car rental company's representative.
5. Role-play the following situation: While studying abroad a student decides to take a taxi to visit a friend who visits a bit outside of the city. Role-play the conversation between the taxi driver and student.
6. Role-play a typical conversation one encounters going through customs in the target language's

country/countries.

7. Role-play a conversation between a study-abroad student and a university student in the host country. The university student is selling his/her bicycle and the study abroad student is interested in buying it.
8. Bring in either the actual objects or photographs of different produce such as fruits vegetables etc. Things one would normally find at an outdoor grocer or in a grocery shop. Role-play a conversation between a seller and a buyer. If bargaining is done in the target language's country than incorporate it into the conversation.
9. Bring in photographs of different foods and items typically found for sale at open markets. Have one person act as the seller while the other acts as the buyer. Be sure they have the chance to switch roles.
10. Role-play the following situation: two students are preparing a birthday dinner for a common friend. They talk about what they want to make and create a list of items they need to buy at the grocery store.
11. Role-play a situation in which a foreign exchange student walks into a grocery store but is unable to find the following items: toothpaste, soap, shampoo, laundry detergent, and band aids. S/he asks one of the workers at the store for help.
12. Act out the following: a study abroad student has just arrived in the country of his/her destination but his/her luggage cannot be found! Role-play a conversation between the student and his/her study abroad director explaining the situation.
13. Act out a situation in which a foreign exchange student has fallen ill. S/he has had a stomach ache for three days accompanied by a headache. S/he goes to the doctor and describes his/her symptoms to the doctor.
14. Role-play a conversation between a hotel guest and a hotel receptionist. The guest complains about the following problems:
 - a. The lights in the room don't work.
 - b. There is no hot water.
 - c. The air conditioning does not work
 - d. The phone does not work.

Be sure students switch roles and if possible partners.

15. Role-play a phone conversation between a hotel receptionist and a guest making a hotel reservation.
16. Bring in a newspaper listing of apartments for rent in the target language. Read the listing and then role-play a conversation between a prospective renter and the owner based on what has been read in the listing.
17. Bring in a sample of a menu in the target language. Using the menu, role-play a restaurant outing. One person can play the part of the waiter/waitress while the other(s) will act as the diners.

Group 5

Student Skills Group 5: Simple past tense, habitual past tense, future tense, vocabulary associated with vacation, education, and work

1. Ask each person to describe what s/he did last summer.
2. Create a set of identity cards and hand them out. Role-play a dinner party where everyone is trying to get to know everyone else. Each person talks about his/her job, where they went for vacation last year, and when their next vacation will be. This can be done with just 2 people or with more.
3. Create a set of new horoscopes for each person in the room using the future tense or create a new horoscope for each sign.
4. Ask the students individually to share how they imagine their life in 10 years using the future tense.
5. Role-play the following scenario: a study abroad student meets with his/her advisor at the university s/he is studying at abroad. The advisor asks the student to bring him/her up to date with the student's current educational history for example:
 - a. What does s/he study?
 - b. What other languages does s/he study?
 - c. What other subjects has s/he taken?
 - d. How many courses did s/he take last semester
6. Bring in an example of a job classifieds that list different employment opportunities. Read through the different employment opportunities and discuss which jobs interest the student(s) and why.
7. Reenact a job interview between a recent college graduate and a prospective employer. The student(s) may choose the type of work field.
8. Ask each person to describe his/her daily routine last semester using the habitual tense.
9. Role-play the following scenario: A student recently comes back from a study abroad experience and tells his/her grandparent all about what s/he did during the study abroad.
10. Bring in pictures of different destination areas from the target culture's country/countries. Ask for an itinerary to be planned for one of the destinations and using the future tense, share what they will do once they arrive there.
11. Ask each person to describe his/her dream job. What kind of tasks does this job require? What does someone with this job do everyday?
12. Create a story: create your own character for a story and have each person add sentences to

the story.

2C: Examples & Assignment

2C: Video Examples and Section 2 Written Assignment

Section 2 Written Assignment

First watch the video examples below. Even though you may not understand the language involved, you can still observe the way the conversation partner and students interact.

Think about these questions, write down your notes, be prepared to talk about them in group discussion. If you are doing this training individually, you will need to prepare written answers to each question and e-mail your written work to the FCCSWL office before scheduling your individual conference.

1. Study the examples of speaking activities and watch the sample videos. Get a sense of the wide range of speaking activities that can be used in a conversation session. What makes each of the videos a good example of a speaking session activity?
2. Carefully look over the very first unit in the textbook used for your language. Make a list of the types of vocabulary and language usage your students learn in the first lesson. Go through the Menu of Speaking Activities and choose three activities that could be used with students studying the first unit. Describe how you would introduce each of these three activities in the conversation session. In other words, how would you give the students instructions for the activity? How will you communicate what you want them to do?
3. Chose any unit in the second half of the textbook used for your language. Go through the menu of speaking activities and select at least three activities that are appropriate for practicing what is covered in that unit. Describe which three activities you have chosen, why you chose those activities, and how you will adapt the generic instructions to make an activity that is representative of your language and culture.

Video Examples

Offering Cake

Questions and Answers

Turkish Bingo

Instructions for a Role Play

Section 3: Planning

Section 3: Planning for Sessions

3A: Preparing Lessons

3A: Preparing for the First Session

Step One: Study the Assignment

Before your conversation session, go through the material assigned for the session. Make a list of the types of language usage and vocabulary that are covered. Based on this list, what speaking skills do you need to practice with the students? Also, consider what speaking skills covered in earlier sessions should be reviewed?

Step Two: Make a Plan

You should always go to your sessions with a written session plan. You may find you need to adjust your plans during the session, but you need to start with a written plan. Your plan should include practice of new language skills and also include some review activities.

Your plan should also include notes about certain vocabulary, expressions, or usages you will target for special attention during the session. For example, if your students are learning the names for foods, you should have a list of the specific food names they are learning so that you can make sure that those food names are used repeatedly during the session. Having a list will also help you avoid introducing food names different from the ones the students are officially learning.

Your First Session with Absolute Beginners

If you are working with absolute beginners, your preparations should include a list of expressions you expect to use during the sessions. These expressions will help you stick to the expressions and phrases the student is learning on his/her own. Include expressions for greetings, partings, and words or expressions you have noticed in the study materials that the student has been using. By creating a list of “target” expressions for each session, you will have a list of phrases/sentences/words that you want to make sure you use and have the student or students use during the session.

Practice Speaking Slowly for Beginning Students

Remember to practice speaking slowly before your first sessions. Practice speaking slowly with a few words and phrases you expect to use during your first few sessions. Work on a clear pronunciation of syllables and letters. It helps if students can clearly see how your lips and mouth move to form the sounds. You may want to practice in front of a mirror. This will take some time getting used to, so be sure to practice. As your students become more accustomed to the sounds of the language, you can gradually speed up your speech.

3B: Sample Plan

3B: Sample Lesson Plan - First Week of Greek I

Language and level: Greek I

Date of session: September 14

Chapter or material covered: Lesson 1 "Essential Expressions"

WARM-UP

Exchange greetings and "How are you?" questions using the language.

SESSION ACTIVITIES

Topic: Greetings and introductions

Description of activity: Build on the warm-up by exchanging more greetings, asking "How are you?", and exchanging names.

Time: 5 minutes

Topic: Greetings and introductions

Description of activity: We will role play different scenarios to practice greeting different people and at different times of day. I will bring cards with different identities on them, such as friend, professor, boss, young child, friend's grandmother, etc. The role plays will include greetings, exchanging names, inquiring about well-being ("How are you?"), and goodbyes. I will explain to the students about appropriate body language in different situations (double-cheek kisses, handshakes, etc.).

Time: 25 minutes

Topic: Alphabet

Description of activity: Using flashcards, I will have the students name different letters. Then I will ask the students to spell some of the vocabulary words out loud.

Time: 15 minutes

Topic: Useful expressions for conversation sessions

Description of activity: Using the expressions from the textbook, I will have the students practice asking someone what they said and saying that they don't understand. I will also make sure they know how to say "More slowly please", "What does ... mean?", and "How do you say ...?" so that they can use the Greek expressions in conversation sessions instead of asking in English.

Time: 10 minutes

QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH

Give students a chance to ask questions in English.

5 minutes

3C: Sample Expressions

3C: Sample List of Expressions to Use in Sessions

These are expressions and instructions that might be commonly used in a conversation session in which students are learning English. Conversation partners can use this sample for English as a starting point for creating a list appropriate for the language students are learning.

Yes

No

Okay

Words for praise: great, super, bravo, excellent

Please try again.

Please repeat.

Please speak, say, talk, etc.

Please stand up.

Listen carefully.

Ask [fill in name of person].

What does _____ mean?

Do you understand?

3D: External Materials

3D: On Using External Materials

Common Question: Can I use outside materials not included in the student's study materials?

If external materials (such as multimedia or authentic materials) correspond to what the student is currently studying in his/her study materials and as dictated in the syllabus then, yes, you may use external materials. At the end of the semester students will have an oral evaluation scheduled with a professional evaluator. This evaluator is testing the student based on what the student has covered in his/her study materials and syllabus and how s/he communicates. Therefore, your priority in planning the conversation speaking activities should be emphasizing the study materials students are using to teach themselves the language. If you find multimedia examples, such as online videos or songs that exemplify the material and complement the material without introducing too many new vocabulary

words or advanced linguistic structures, then feel free to use them. Examples of appropriate and inappropriate external materials are illustrated below:

Appropriate: Student is learning the vocabulary for vacations and holidays. In the vocabulary for vacation, the student does not learn about vacationing in the mountains, only at the seaside or in a city. The conversation partner brings in a very short commercial in the target language about seaside vacationing.

Inappropriate: Student is learning the vocabulary for vacations and holidays. In the vocabulary for vacation, the student does not learn about vacationing in the mountains, only at the seaside or in a city. The conversation partner brings in a short advertisement about camping in the mountains.

Example of appropriate use of an external resource:

Students Discussing Song

Here students are listening to a song and discussing it. This is a listening exercise at the same time that it is a cultural exercise because they are discussing the song and its role in the target culture.

Section 3E: Assignment

Section 3E: Section 3 Written Assignment

Create the lesson plan and expression list described below. If you are doing this training individually, you will need to e-mail your written work to the FCCSWL office before scheduling your individual conference.

1. Create a written plan for your first/next session. Your plan should be similar in format to the sample plan for Greek I (3B: Sample Plan). You should write the plan in a way that you can easily refer to it with quick glances during your session. You do not want your head buried in your session plan, but it is fine to refer to it throughout the session so that you keep yourself and the student on track. If you do not yet have the textbook and syllabus for the course you will work with, you may need to wait to do this step.
2. Using the list of commonly used expressions and instructions for conversation sessions for learners of English, create a similar list for your language that you can teach your students and use regularly in your sessions.

Section 4: Special Issues

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4A: Correcting Mistakes

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Self-correction

Usually, when a language learner corrects him/herself s/he does not repeat the same mistake as often. If you hear someone make a mistake, instead of pointing out that it is a mistake, just repeat what the student said but as a question. For example if the student learning English says,

“I go to the store now.”

Then the conversation partner says,

“I go to the store now?”

The student may realize s/he made a mistake and will either ask what the mistake is or correct it him or herself,

“I am going to the store now.”

Indirect correction

Sometimes you don't want to interrupt someone when s/he is really trying to communicate and any interruption might discourage him/her. Therefore, you can indirectly correct the student by perhaps asking a question with the corrected form of the student's mistake after s/he has finished speaking. For example, if the student learning English says,

“Yesterday I bought a book.”

Then the conversation partner says,

“I bought a book two days ago. It is a book of poetry. What kind of book did you buy?”

Notice in the conversation partner's reply s/he uses the correct form of the simple past for the verb “to buy” with the subject pronoun “I” and then asks a question that will encourage the student to respond also using the correct form of the verb “to buy.”

Direct Correction

It's ok to say "no" it just depends on how you do it. Make sure your tone is polite and helpful, not authoritative and condescending. Particularly for the beginner you can say "no" and make a "no" motion with your hand and then give the correct form of what you were looking for. Avoid using grammar terminology since the goal is to focus on conversation and speaking, not teaching and a grammar lesson.

4B: Different Learning Paces

4B: Students Learning at Different Paces

Common Question: I have more than one student in the session. Even though all have prepared the same lesson, some students learn the material more quickly than others. What should I do to accommodate all the students?

Even if one person is advancing further along than another, it is important that you stick to the activities you have prepared and allow everyone equal time to participate and speak during the session. Think of ways to adapt activities that will let all members in the group participate regardless of how quick they are picking up the language. Here is an example below in which the Conversation Partner planned an activity to practice demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those):

Conversation Partner: What is that on the table?

Student 1: That is a book.

Conversation Partner: What color is this book and what color is that one?

Student 1: That book is red and this book is blue.

Conversation Partner: Which book is bigger?

Student 1 (pointing): That one.

Conversation Partner (pointing): What is that?

Student 2: a book.

Conversation Partner: This? (picking up a notebook)

Student 2: No, that is a book. (pointing to book).

Conversation Partner: Ok. What is this? (holding notebook).

Student 2: That is a notebook.

In the above examples the Conversation Partner is using the same activity but frames the question differently depending on what the student is able to communicate. In the first example, the conversation partner has asked a question that is a little more complicated (s/he included the use of a preposition and the location of the object). The question is lengthier. The student answers with the correct demonstrative pronoun and the conversation partner asks an even lengthier and challenging question that s/he knows the student is capable of answering.

In the second example the conversation partner asks a simpler question. The student does not respond with a demonstrative pronoun, thereby showing his/her difficulty with the concept. As a

result, the conversation partner asks the student a question that requires an answer with a demonstrative pronoun. The goal here is to simply have the student use the structure whereas in the first example the conversation partner is giving the student the opportunity to use description and more complicated sentences.

Although the two students are learning at a different pace, they are still practicing speaking in the same conversation session and therefore practicing the same concept: demonstrative pronouns. The activity was not really changed, but rather the conversation partner simply adapted it through his/her question and knowing what the student is capable of doing.

4C: Student Preparation

4C: Students Unprepared for Sessions

Common Question: What if the student is not prepared?

This can happen sometimes. Perhaps the student didn't understand an assignment or had a lot of difficulty with it when doing the work on his/her own. Either way, the session must go on. A student is responsible for the material s/he is meant to cover in order to prepare for the conversation session with the conversation partner. Therefore, you still will need to use what you prepared for that conversation session. You may be able to make the activities slightly more simple so the student can still participate. It may also be a good idea to have in mind one or two activities that review what was done in last week's conversation session.

If you have more than one person in your group, you may encounter a situation in which one student has prepared and the other has not. If this is the case you need to make sure that you are still covering the speaking activities you have prepared for the current week. Complete the activities you have prepared. It may be that the student who has not prepared may not be able to participate as fully; however, it will then be that student's responsibility to review the material not completed and to be prepared for conversation practice in the next session.

It is important that you make note of a student's level preparedness in your weekly reports. If a student is chronically unprepared, program staff will follow up with the student to see how the problem can be remedied. Reporting that a student is unprepared will never hurt the student's grade. Rather it gives the program staff a chance to work with the student so that the student has the best chance of having a successful semester.

4D: Video Examples & Assignment

4D: Video Examples and Section 4 Written Assignment

Section 4 Written Assignment

Think about these questions, write down your notes, be prepared to talk about them in group discussion. If you are doing this training individually, you will need to fill out the Section 4 Written Assignment on the next page before scheduling your individual conference.

1. In order to learn, students need to feel they can risk speaking out loud and making some mistakes. How can you help students feel comfortable speaking and feeling okay about taking the risk of making mistakes in the conversation session?
2. How do you feel about correcting mistakes? In your past language learning experience, what forms of correction did you find most constructive? What strategies of correction and encouragement do you think you will feel most comfortable using with your students?
3. Imagine that you have two students in the same conversation session. One is learning very fast and the other is having trouble keeping up with the material. How should you handle this situation?

Video Examples

Watch the video examples. Even though you may not understand the language involved, you can still observe the way the conversation partner and students interact.

Conversation Partner Correcting Pronunciation

Students are reading dialogues from the text with the conversation partner correcting their pronunciation as they read.

Self-Correcting Student

Here is an example of self-correcting. The student makes the utterance and then corrects himself and goes on.

Students Repeating Phrase

Note how the conversation partner has the students repeat and repeat until they get it right:

Conversation Partner Urging Student to Keep Speaking

Watch how the conversation partner encourages the student to keep speaking. He continues to press the student to give more information.

Conversation Partner Encouraging Students to Speak

Notice how the conversation partner encourages the students to speak.

Section 4 Written Assignment

Your name *

Your email address *

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Submit

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