

# Teaching English as a Second Language



## UNIT TEN: TEACHING THE CONVERSATION CLASS



# Task

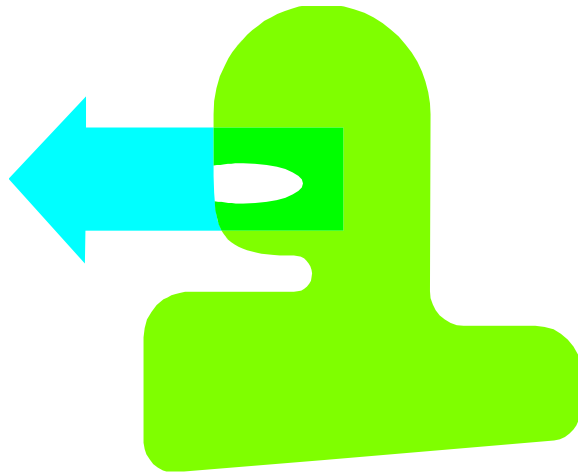


You are a student in a foreign language class. The teacher comes in and says “Today we’re going to discuss oil pollution.” How do you feel as a student? Why might you not feel like taking part in this discussion?

# Conversing in a Second Language



**GOALS**



# Maintaining Interaction & Meaning



## Transactional

- Focus of the conversation is primarily on the meaning of the message

## Interactional

- Focus is on maintaining social relations—greeting, complimenting, and chatting

# 'Talk' as Transaction

## Activities include

- Ranking activities
- Values clarification
- Brainstorming
- Simulations & role plays
- Group exchanges

## Examples

### Group Exchange

Students prepare a short list of controversial statements for others to think about. Groups exchange statements and discuss them.

### Role-play

1. Preparing: review vocabulary, real world knowledge related to the context and content of the role play (eg returning a broken item to a store)
2. Modeling and eliciting: demonstrate the stages that are typically involved in the transaction, eliciting suggestions for how each stage can be carried out, and teaching the functional language needed for each stage.
3. Practicing and review: students are assigned roles and practice a role play using cue cards or realia to provide language and other support..

# Brainstorming Activity: Step One (Label the picture)



# Brainstorming continued

## Step Two: Brainstorm

- Positives
- Negatives

## Step Three: Create short conversations

A: What do you think about \_\_\_\_\_?  
(going to a bar alone)

B: It can be dangerous  
It's a good way to make friends.

A: Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes, but \_\_\_\_\_?

---

Model the conversation.

Extend if necessary.

Let students practice with different partners.

## Trends, fashions & hobbies

eslfow.com



+ can make new friends  
- people might lie to you



1. Label the pictures with the following vocabulary.

make-up, cosmetics, bar, player, cosmetic surgery, drawing,  
pub, beverage, alcohol, artists, art, tattoo, slang, graffiti, fashion,  
hairstyle, chatting, contact lens, heading, lipstick, football,

2. Brainstorm positives and negatives of each picture.

3. Create short conversations about the above topics using the vocabulary and explain what you like or dislike about them.

A: What do you think about chatting online ?

B: It's a good hobby because you can make new friends.

A: Are there any dangers or problems?

B: Yes, you have to be careful because someone might lie to you.



# Group Exchanges/Discussions

<http://www.dailyesl.com/campground.htm>

- Work best if done in conjunction with another type of activity: vocabulary, listening, grammar, etc.

- Beginning by introducing the topic, perhaps through a listening
- Make sure students understand vocabulary and/or specific grammatical structures
- Open classroom discussion
- One on one discussions

# Websites



- <http://www.eslflow.com/>
- <http://iteslj.org/games/>
- [Http://www.eslgold.com/speaking/tasks\\_main.html](Http://www.eslgold.com/speaking/tasks_main.html)
- <http://www.dailyesl.com/>
- <http://www.tefl.net/esl-lesson-plans/index.htm>

# Talk as Interaction

- Difficult to teach
- Unspoken rules
- Culturally bound  
(i.e. the way we give a compliment, a greeting, apology is different between cultures)
- best taught by providing examples embedded in naturalistic dialogs that can serve to model features such as opening and closing conversations, making small talk, recounting personal incidents and experiences, and reacting to what others say.

# Talk as Interaction: Examples

reacting to what others say  
students can be given a dialog in which listener reactions such as 'really', 'is that right', 'wow', 'that's interesting' have been omitted. Students work in pairs to add them to the dialog, practice the dialog with the reactions, then practice a different dialog, this time adding their own reactions.

A: I got a new car yesterday.

B: Really! What color is it?

A: It's red and it's fast.

B: Wow! How much did it cost?

A: \$9,000.

B. Is that right? That's cheap.  
New cars usually cost a lot more than that.

# Talk as Interaction: Examples



## conversation starters and personal recounts

Students have to respond by asking one or two follow up questions.

For example:

“I didn’t sleep very well last night”.

“Look what I bought on Sunday. How do you like it?”

“Did that thunderstorm last night wake you?”

# Difficulties in Teaching Talk as Interaction

Culturally specific topics require different types of responses

**Culturally**  
Speaking

What do you say in each of the following situation:

1. A friend just had a new baby
2. A friend passed a difficult exam
3. It's your mother's birthday
4. Wishing someone good luck before something difficult
5. A toast

# What to Say When:

## Assorted Social Phrases

Match social phrases and situations by placing the situation letters in the blanks beside the social phrases.

### Social Phrases

1. How are you? How are you doing? How are things going? \_G\_
2. So long. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Good luck. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Same to you. \_\_\_\_\_
5. You, too. \_\_\_\_\_
6. May I help you? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Congratulations! \_\_\_\_\_
8. See you later. \_\_\_\_\_
9. Pleasant dreams. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Tough luck! \_\_\_\_\_
11. Please forgive me. \_\_\_\_\_
12. Excuse me. I beg your pardon. \_\_\_\_\_
13. Have fun. Have a good time. \_\_\_\_\_
14. Watch out! \_\_\_\_\_
15. How do you do? Nice to meet you. \_\_\_\_\_
16. May I use your telephone? \_\_\_\_\_
17. I'm sorry I'm late. \_\_\_\_\_
18. Have a good day. \_\_\_\_\_
19. Have a good trip. \_\_\_\_\_
20. Are you okay? \_\_\_\_\_

### Situations

- a. It is afternoon. You will see your friend in the evening.
- b. Your friend doesn't see a car coming.
- c. Your friend looks sick. You are worried.
- d. Your friend got a poor grade on the math test.
- e. Words said to a customer by a salesperson.
- f. Your friend is taking a vacation.
- g. You meet a friend in the hall.
- h. Your friend has been waiting for you for 20 min.
- i. Your mom is leaving for work in the morning.
- j. You accidently push someone on the bus.
- k. You are saying goodbye.
- l. Someone says, "Happy holidays."
- m. Your friend has a job interview.
- n. You are being introduced to someone.
- o. Your friend has been admitted to a good college.
- p. Someone says, "Have a good weekend."
- q. Your mom is going to sleep.
- r. You said something unkind to your friend.
- s. You are in a friend's home. You need to call home.
- t. Your friend is going to a dance.

# Characteristics of Language Fluency

1. The ability to handle unpredictable language
2. The ability to anticipate the direction a conversation will take.
3. The ability to make oneself understood and negotiate meaning (e.g. ask for clarification, paraphrase what was understood); use compensation strategies (point to something when you don't know the word for it, describe an object for which you don't know the name)
4. The ability to convey meaning and 'get things done' with the language, even with limited vocabulary or accuracy.
5. The ability to pick up on and use visual cues from the environment and other speakers/listeners



# Using Conversational Grammar

- Based upon how people talk
- Features small chunks, clauses, and single words
- Influenced by the fact that native speakers constantly make 'mistakes' when they speak. They hesitate and say the same thing in different ways and they often change the subject of what they are saying in mid sentence.

## *Example:*

Jack: Hi, what's up?

Jane: Not much.

Jack: Headed to the bookstore?

Jane: Yeah. Gotta buy art supplies.

Jack: Oh, good! Glad I ran into ya. Whatcha halfa buy?

Jane: Colored chalk, ah..  
sketch pad...  
hmm...charcoal sticks.

# Using Conversational Grammar in Activities



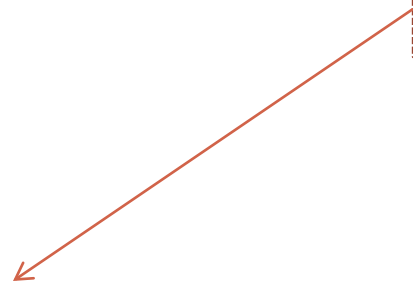
Hiya. What's ur name?

I'm \_\_\_\_\_.  
What's ur name and where  
ya from?

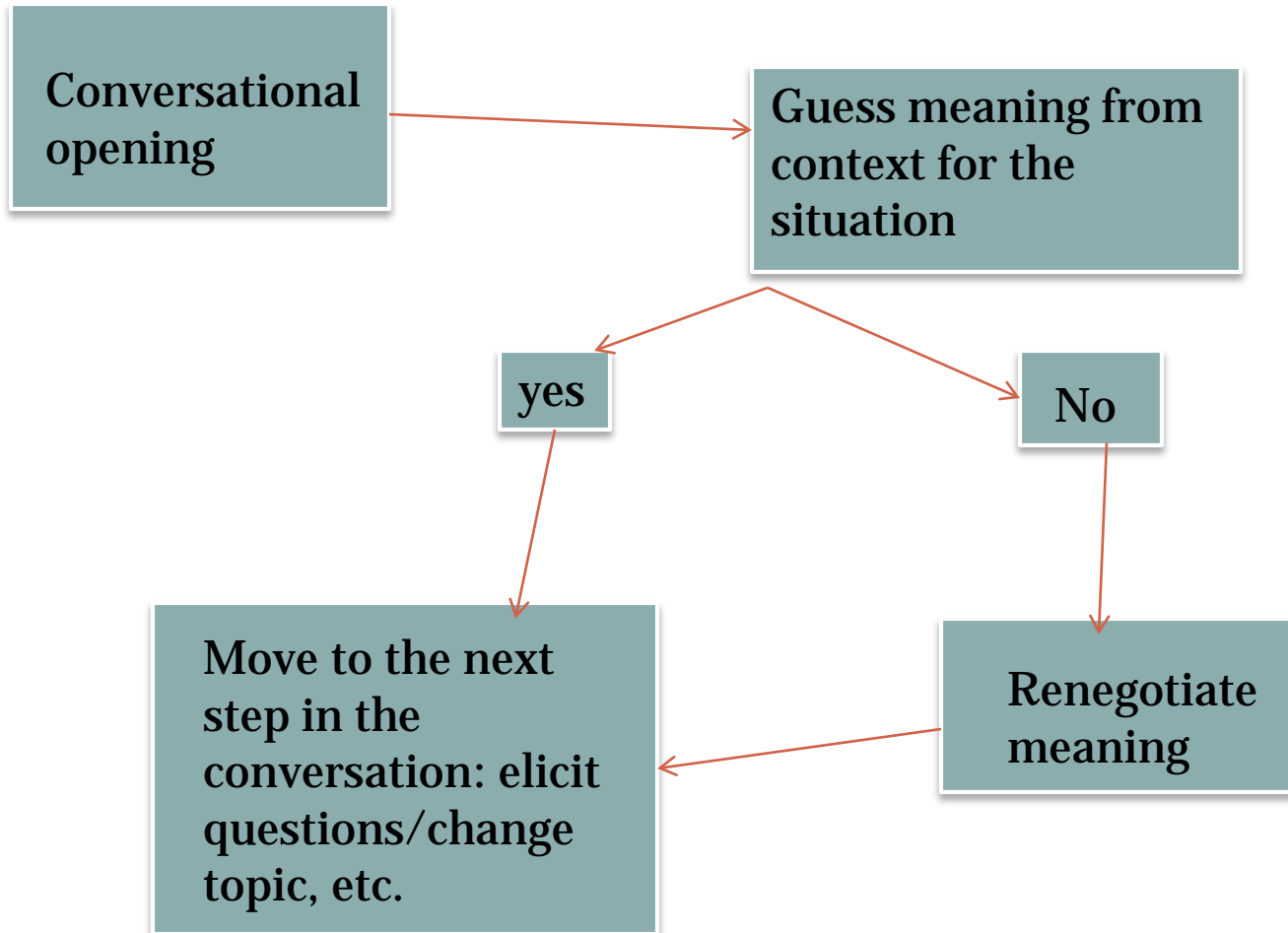
I'm \_\_\_\_\_ and  
I'm from \_\_\_\_\_.  
Whatcha doing?

Studying for a  
test..hmm...wanna grab a  
bit to eat?

Ahh...sure...



# Introducing, Developing & Changing Topics



## Topics of Discussion

Understanding appropriate levels of conversation is based upon context, culture, and the level of formality in the language

It is also based upon WHO we are talking to



# Taking Turns

- Cultural differences
- Students need to understand how to respond in an appropriate time-frame.

## What to do?

1. Explain the 2-4 second rule
2. Go around room asking students questions
3. After you've asked the question, hold up four fingers (and count down for each second that passes)

# Turn Taking: Maintaining Control

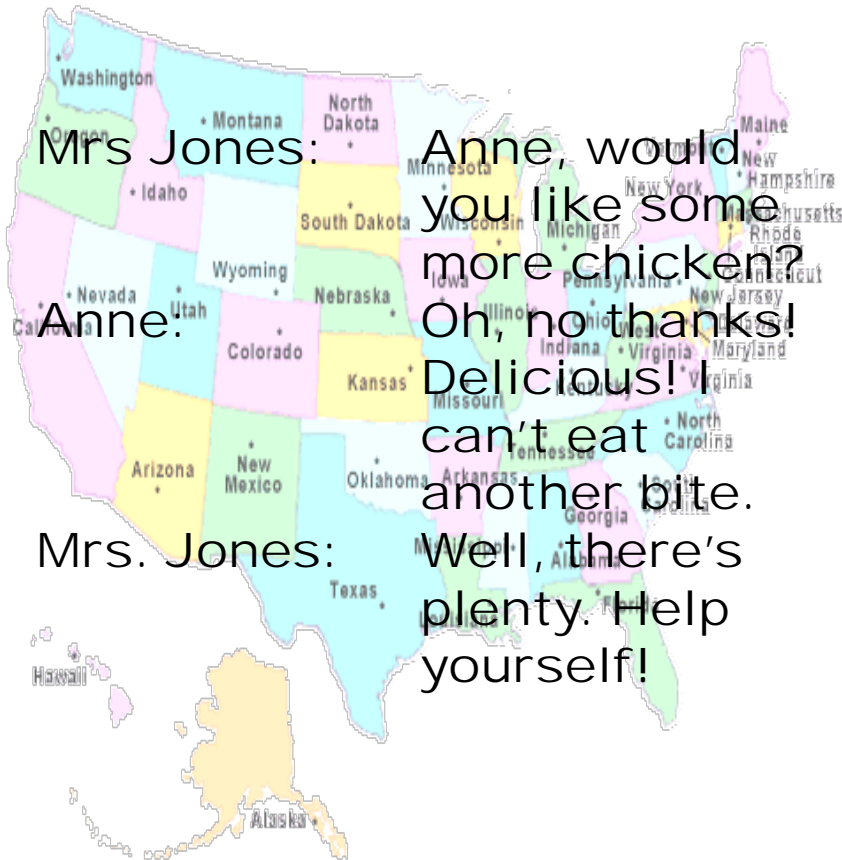
## Cultural differences for interrupting and turn taking



### **General Strategies:**

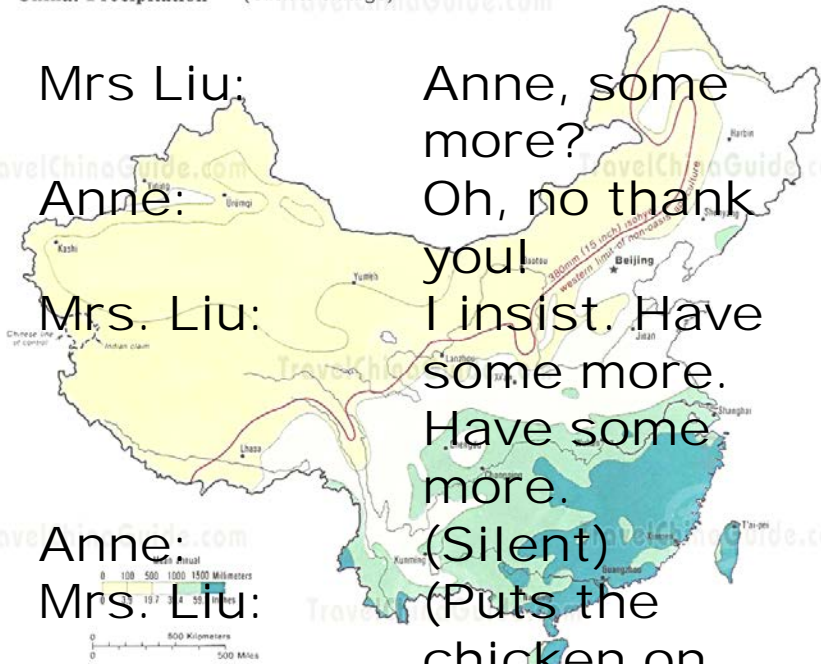
- Speaker controls the conversation
- Can stop someone from interrupting by avoiding eye contact
- Don't drop the volume of your voice
- If someone interrupts and you haven't finished, tell them using phrases like "Let me finish/May I finish" etc.
- When someone won't stop talking & you're not interested in what they're saying, avoid eye contact, turn away or look at something else
- Do not use conversational fillers

# Conversational Routines



Mrs Jones: Anne, would you like some more chicken?  
Anne: Oh, no thanks! Delicious! I can't eat another bite.  
Mrs. Jones: Well, there's plenty. Help yourself!

China: Precipitation (Click to enlarge) [TravelChinaGuide.com](#)



Mrs Liu: Anne, some more?  
Anne: Oh, no thank you!  
Mrs. Liu: I insist. Have some more. Have some more.  
Anne: (Silent)  
Mrs. Liu: (Puts the chicken on Anne's plate)

# Adapting Style

- Conversing also includes the selection of conversational style to match the formality of the situation

“Got time?”

vs.

“What’s the time?”

vs.

“Do you have the time?”

vs.

“Would you know what time it is?”

vs.

“Could I trouble you for the time?”



# Developing Pragmatic Competency in Conversation



“PRAGMATICS IS THE STUDY OF HOW THE TRANSMISSION OF MEANING DEPENDS UPON NOT ONLY LINGUISTIC KNOWLEDGE (E.G. GRAMMAR, VOCABULARY, ETC), BUT ALSO ON THE CONTEXT OF THE UTTERANCE, KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE STATUS OF THOSE INVOLVED, THE INFERRED INTENT OF THE SPEAKER, ETC. “

# Understanding Structural Ambiguity

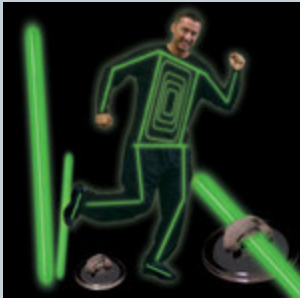


**“You have a green light.”**



**You are driving and the light has turned green.**

**You possess a light that is green.**



**Your body has a green glow.**



**You’ve been given permission to do something.**

**You possess an energy efficient light bulb.**



# Pragmatic Competency in Conversations

**A:** Good morning, Auntie Elizabeth!

**B:** Good morning, John!

**A:** How are you?

**B:** Well, I'm not too well. I've been struggling with backaches recently... and you know my salary is quite low. We can hardly make ends meet at the end of the month.

**A:** Oh, well... I think this is all the government's fault. The such and such party would do a much better job.

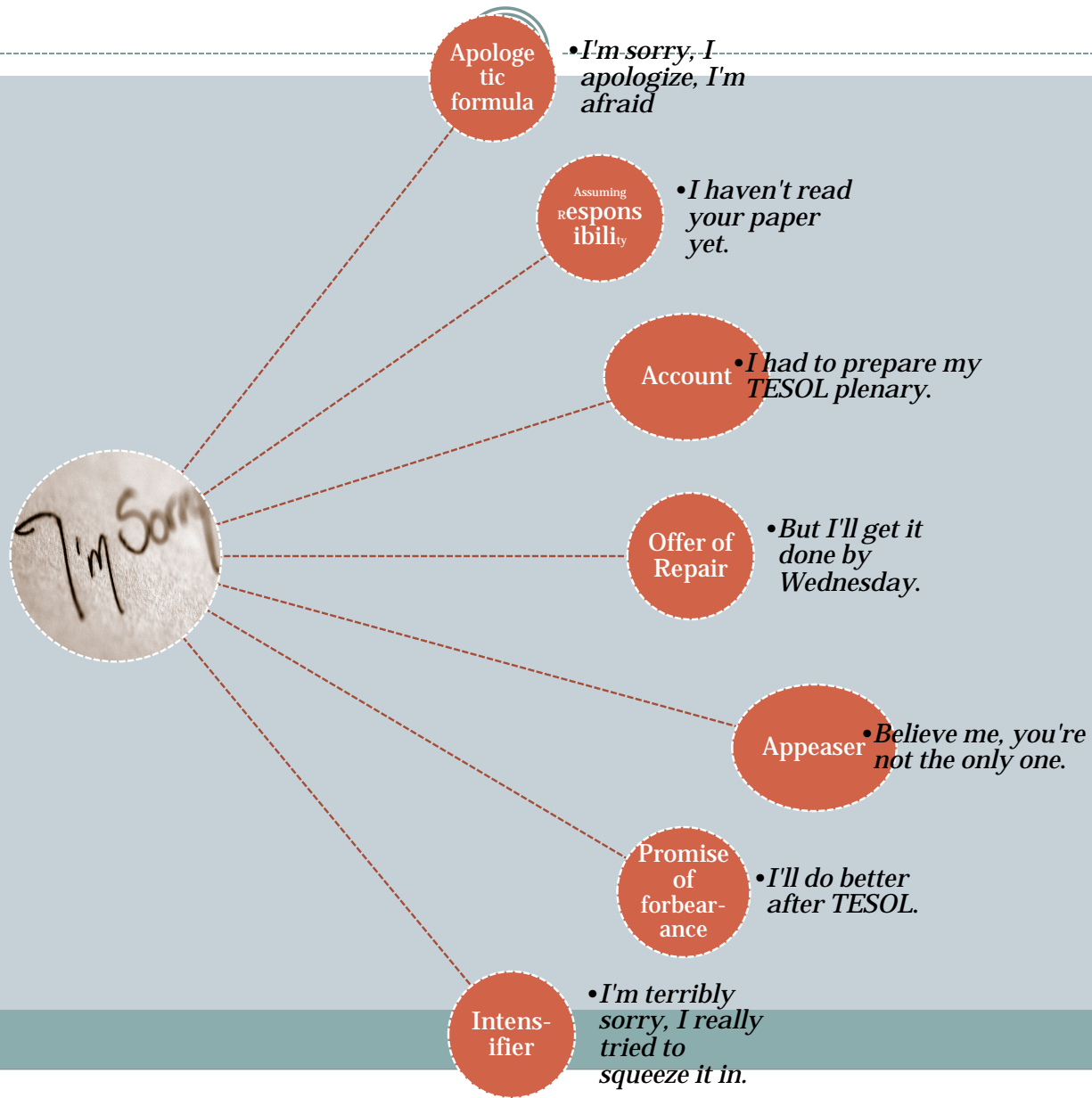
**B:** Hmm, maybe. Well, here is my bus. I have to go. Bye.

**A:** Hello.



Adult English Speakers do not usually address someone as Auntie or Uncle unless there is a genuine familial relationship. However, in Hungarian, the phrase *Hogy van?* (How are you?) is similar to the phrase *Hogy van?* (How are you?) in English. However, it is used for both men and women, and it is used to address older adults outside of their family. Because English does not distinguish between formal and informal forms of politeness, but often has to be expressed by other means. Hungarian, for instance, *hello*, in addition to being a greeting, is a leave-taking. Therefore, while it is perfectly acceptable in Hungarian to convey *goodbye* by saying *hello*, a native English speaker hearing *hello* is likely to be astonished by such a leave-taking.

# Pragmatic Differences in Speech Acts

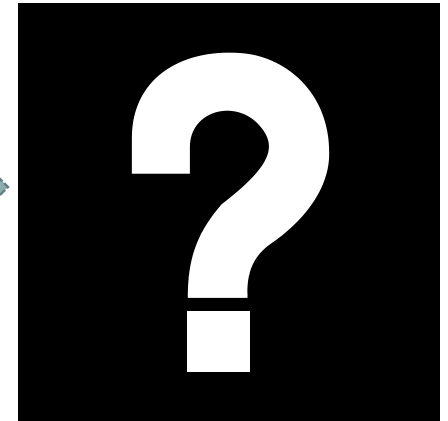
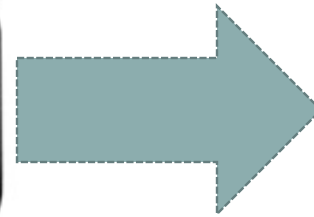


# How do ESL Teachers Teach Conversation to Beginners



**CONTROL THE TYPE OF QUESTIONS**  
**LIMIT THE SCOPE OF THE CONVERSATION**

# Questions



# Questions for Beginners



## **Yes-no Questions**

**Is Sara's sweater blue?**  
**Do Nigerians like to play soccer?**  
**Did you get up early?**  
**Can you speak Thai?**

## **Either-Or Questions**

**Is Sara's sweater blue or green?**  
**Do Nigerians like to play or watch soccer?**  
**Did you get up early or late?**  
**Which can you speak better, Thai or English?**

## **Identify Questions**

**What color is Sara's sweater?**  
**Which sport do Nigerians like to play most?**  
**What time did you get up?**  
**What languages can you speak?**

# Quasi-communicative Activities

- “...for students to practice using English with reasonable fluency, but without having to be overly concerned with communicating meaning effectively.”

- Charts
- Schedules
- Dialogue practices



# What Kinds of Activities Do ESL Conversation Teachers Use With Post-Beginners



**DIALOGUE WRITING**  
**SKITS**  
**ROLE-PLAYS**  
**IMPROVISATIONS**  
**BUZZ GROUPS**  
**GAMES**  
**COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATIONS**



Look at these examples of some of the most common teaching techniques for getting students to practice speaking in class.

# Role-plays



**Role-plays: Ss are given a specific role and have to make a conversation.**

**A: You're a tourist in Lima downtown. You need to find your way to the nearest ATM. Ask a pedestrian for directions.**

**B: You live in Lima. You're stopped by a tourist. Give him/her directions**

**For more ideas visit:**

<http://www.eslpartyland.com/teachers>

# Drills



## **Drills: Ss imitate and repeat words, phrases and even whole utterances.**

<p><b>(Teacher or recorder)</b> <b>Excuse me, is there an ATM near here?</b></p>	
	<p>(Chorus) Yes, there's one behind the cathedral. (S1) Yes, there's one behind the cathedral. (S2) Yes, there's one behind the cathedral.</p>

**For more ideas visit:**

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/chantsraps.htm>

# Chants



**Chants: Students ‘sing’ rhythmically specific target forms.**

## **Giving directions**

### **(Prepositions, Commands, and Classroom Vocabulary)**

Turn to the left and then to the right there you'll find the place  
you want

Go straight on

Don't cross the street

There's a bank in the front

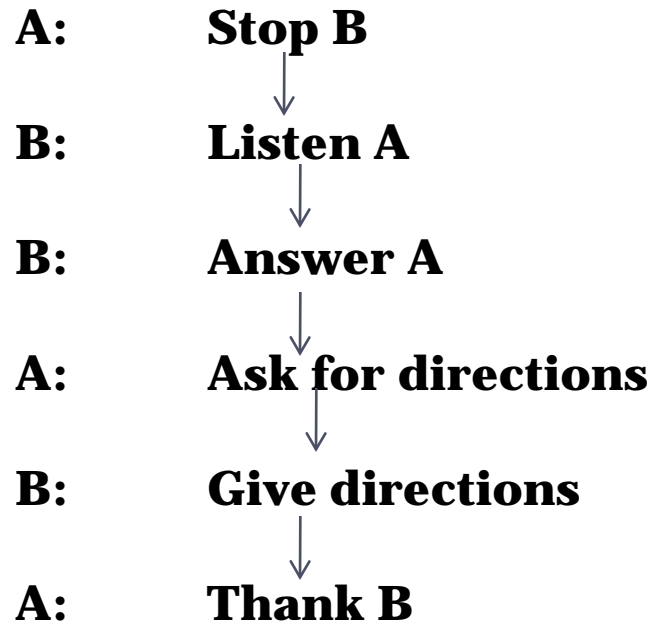
**For more ideas visit:**

<http://www.songsforteaching.com/chantsraps.htm>

# Flow-diagram conversations



**Flow-diagram conversations: Students perform the dialogue, following the arrows.**



**For more ideas**

**visit:<http://english.unitecology.ac.nz/resources/units/titanic/flow.html>**

# Picture and Word Cues



## What happened?



**For more ideas visit:**

<http://www.eslhq.com/forums/worksheets/esl-worksheets/>

# Disappearing Dialogue



**Disappearing Dialogue: Students repeat the whole dialogue and then teacher erases one sentence at a time.**

**Tourist: Excuse me**

**Pedestrian: Yes?**

**Tourist: Is there a movie theater near here?.**

**Pedestrian: Yes. There's one on the corner of BloorStreet  
West and Albany Avenue.**

**Tourist: Thanks a lot!**

**For more ideas**

**visit:[http://esl.about.com/library/speaking/bldialogues\\_restaurant.htm](http://esl.about.com/library/speaking/bldialogues_restaurant.htm)**



# Teacher roles during a speaking lesson



- Organizer:** Get Ss engaged and set the activity.
- Prompter:** Provide Ss with chunks not words.
- Observer:** Analyze what causes communication breakdowns.
- Participant:** Do not monopolize or initiate the conversation.
- Assessor:** Record mental or written samples of language produced by Ss.
- Feedback provider:** Tell Ss how proficient their performance was.
- Resource:** Provide Ss with tools to improve their oral performance.



# The Place of Pronunciation in ESL Instruction



**PRONUNCIATION IN YOUR CURRICULUM**

# Factors Affecting Pronunciation



First language	How phonetically different are the 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>nd</sup> language? Learners whose 1 <sup>st</sup> language is more phonetically similar to English will not necessarily have the most ease in acquiring the sounds of the new language.
Age	Generally speaking, learners exposed to English before puberty are more likely to achieve a native-like accent in a 2 <sup>nd</sup> language.
Motivation	Why do the learners want to study English? Motivation that derives from negative reactions from family members or employers may be a cause for frustration rather than a positive motivator.
Expectations	Along with motivation comes expectations about how one wants to sound in a 2 <sup>nd</sup> language. Few adults ever attain a native-like accent in a 2 <sup>nd</sup> language, but some hold this as a goal of instruction.
Exposure to English	How often is the student exposed to English in the current environment? The more exposure a student has to the language, the better their chances are at increasing their pronunciation skills.
Attitude & Identity	Accent has a strong impact on our identity, as 1 <sup>st</sup> language speakers or 2 <sup>nd</sup> . Learners may have a strong desire to sound like peers rather than a native speaker; this can result in a resistance to work on English pronunciation.
Innate phonetic ability	Some learners may be better than others at discriminating sounds or mimicking sounds.

# Pronunciation



## Production

- Able to understand discrete sounds, stress, intonation, rhythm patterns

## Performance

- Refers to overall intelligibility (the ability to make oneself understood)
- Communicability (the ability to meet communicative demands)

# Two Areas of Pronunciation



## Segmentals

- The phonemes of the languages (smallest units)  
/b/ /v/

## Suprasegmentals

- stress
- Rhythm
- Intonation patterns

# Common Segmental Difficulties



- ❑ if the two sounds are not phonemic in the learners 1<sup>st</sup> language , they may have difficulty in differentiating between the two sounds in English.
- ❑ Deletion and insertion of sounds
  - consonant clusters may not exist in the L1
  - Japanese speakers commonly insert a vowel between consonants
  - final '-s' omissions

# Common Suprasegmental Difficulties

“I have ‘lice’ with all my meals”

or

“This shirt ‘feets’ me well”

“What did you think of the comedy?”

or

What did you think of the committee?

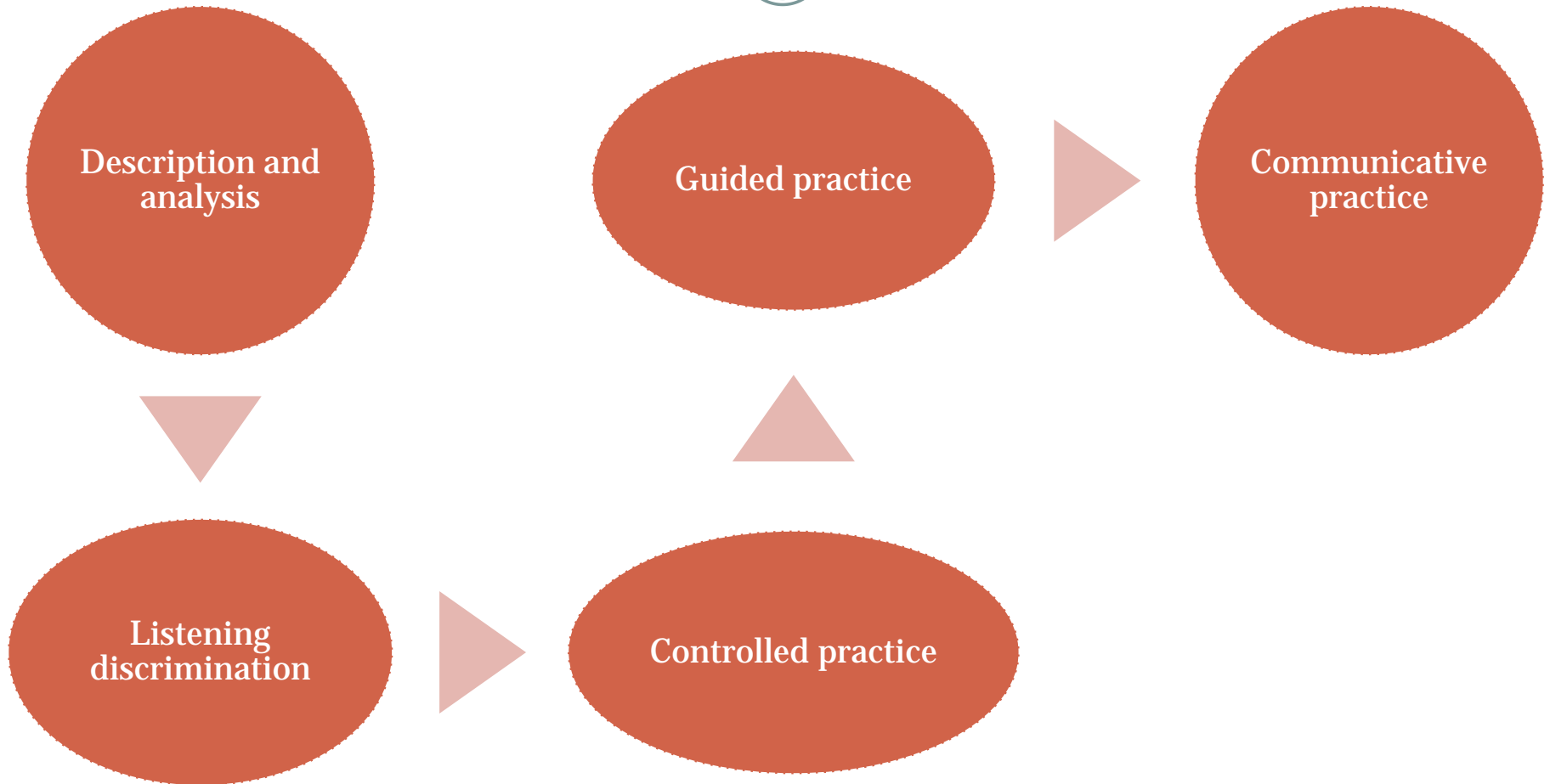
“Now you need to add cold **cream**.”

What would happen to the meaning of the sentence if you said ‘**cold** cream?’

She’s my sister, Marcia. (Marcia is your sister.)

She’s my sister, Marcia.  
(You’re identifying your sister for someone else named Marcia)

# Approaches to Teaching Pronunciation





# Description and analysis



**The goal of these steps is to raise learner's awareness of segmental and suprasegmental features through the use of visual charts, drawings, hand gestures—whatever means are within your learners' language abilities.**

# Listening Discrimination



**Learners need to take part in these types of activities to allow them to demonstrate their ability to perceive sounds or patterns of the language.**

# Controlled Practice



**Once your learners begin to perceive patterns, your instruction can turn to activities that provide opportunity to say the target sounds repeatedly, but in a meaningful context.**

# Guided Practice



Finally, it is important that learners practice pronunciation patterns in unplanned, extended speech (much like ‘authentic use’). The activities will not be completely spontaneous because you will guide the students to use particular pronunciation patterns.

# Self Improvement



# Teaching Students Strategies for Self-Improvement in Pronunciation



<b>Strong, vigorous practice</b>	<b>Use vigorous practice with strong muscular movements. Use exaggerated mouth movements, overly articulating words.</b>
<b>Self-monitored practice</b>	<b>Listen closely to and monitor yourself on both the sounds and the rate, rhythm and vocal qualities. Pay attention to stress points, pitch tones and rhythmic patterns.</b>
<b>Slow-motion practice: Half-speed practice</b>	<b>Try slow motion practice for a strong sense of kinesthetic touch-and-movement feedback and for the feeling of articulation</b>
<b>Lope Practice</b>	<b>Use an endless loop practice of 20 or more strong and vigorous repetitions of a word/phrase.</b>
<b>Whisper practice</b>	<b>Use whispered or silent practice to focus on articulation</b>
<b>Mirror practice, video practice</b>	<b>Use mirrors to view the articulation of specific sounds. IF possible, zoom in on a close-up of your face as you articulate words.</b>

# The Importance of Speaking Exercises



# Why are Speaking Exercises Important in ESL?



- Conversation exercises are meant to introduce a specific communicative function (ordering food, making a phone call, asking for prices, etc)
- They present new grammar structures in a situational and communicative context.
- They introduce new vocabulary in context.
- They make good pronunciation models.



# How to teach students to speak in English



**For an effective speaking lesson, teachers need to be aware of, knowledgeable about, and familiarized with the teaching stages of a speaking activity as well as the teaching techniques used for fostering speaking in class. Also, the teacher role is crucial to the effectiveness of the activity.**

# Teaching Stages for a Speaking Activity



**a) Pre-communicative stage**

**b) Practice Stage**

**c) Communicative interaction or production stage**

# During the pre-communicative stage,



**Introduce the communicative function ✓**

**Highlight the fixed expressions ✓**

**Point out the target structure ✓**

**Provide Ss with the necessary vocabulary ✓**

**Provide Ss with the language of interaction ✓**

During the practice stage,



- Correct Ss if necessary ✓
- Prompt Ss if necessary (do it lexically) ✓
- Ban (monolingual) dictionaries ✓
- Aim for intelligibility ✓

During the communicative interaction,



Encourage language negotiation ✓

Take note of any aspects that may hinder communication (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar) ✓

Respect Ss 'wait'time ✓

# Feedback



**Give Ss feedback on their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and ask Ss to repeat the task if necessary**

# Homework



**Prepare a 30 minute conversation lesson for an intermediate ESL class. Be sure to include aspects of pronunciation and vocabulary.**

# References



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