A Conversation Group in 5 Acts

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Getting Started

What should I do first?
Ready, set, go!

- Poll interested patrons to determine availability
- Contact local ESL providers to let them know about your group
- Just start!
Activities

- Have diverse activities ready to keep the group moving, especially when you don’t know who will be attending each day
- Keep activities consistent so students will know what to expect and can prepare for the group
- Assign a conversation topic to prepare students for the group or ask them to each share a short presentation
New Skills

- Introduce vocabulary or sentence structure that can be used during that day’s conversation
- Review skills each week to reinforce learning
Opening Act:

Grammar

Can we make it fun?
How about less painful?
Grammar

- Keep resources in sight that students can quickly refer to when speaking
Share Experiences

- As students arrive ask them about something that will help them practice a grammar skill
- Tell students to pay special attention to that skill
- Correct during this time
Share Experiences

**Past Tense**
- What did you do last weekend?
- Yesterday?
- Before you came to class?

**Future Tense**
- What will you do next weekend?
- Tomorrow?
- After class?

**Past Tense**
- Before coming to the U.S., I had never...
- Before getting on the bus today, I had already...
Act II: Vocabulary

Words are important!
Words of the Week

Commonly Confused Words

- hear-listen
- do-due-dew
- cent-sent-scent
- hole-whole
Idiom of the Week

- To pull through
- Kick the bucket
- Under the table
- To tighten one’s belt
- Run down
- To chip in
Repetition

- Keep the vocabulary in the common space, adding to it each week
- Only remove a word when everyone in the group knows it well
- Ask students who have learned the vocabulary to give the definitions
- Add related words and idioms when the conversation warrants
Repetition

nightmare  error-mistake
intelligent
smart
sharp
bright
clever

To chip in
To pull through

or did she
his hand are now
Can could
will would
his have had

when someone thought so

upright
suit
Act III: Dyad Activities
Dyad Activities

- Give students a chance to develop relationships through simple interaction with one class member at a time
- Give more speaking time for students in large groups
- Be prepared to be a participant because you will often have an odd number of students
Dyad Activities

Describe the Picture
- Compare and contrast with descriptions or questions
  *new vocabulary
- Describe the entire picture
  *place prepositions
Dyad Activities

**Improvisation and Skits**
- Gives students a chance to add emotion they wouldn’t normally be comfortable with in general conversation
- Gives the instructor a chance to introduce language to help students politely deal with annoying situations
Dyad Activities

Pronunciation
- Focus on problem sounds for selected students each week

englishspeaklikenative.com/resources/common-pronunciation-problems
englishconfidenceunlocked.com/english-pronunciation-problems-for-languages
Act IV:
Small Group Activities
Small Group Activities

- Allow you to create groups with similar skill levels, or…
- Mix skill level groups where higher level speakers can support lower level speakers
- Let timid students share in a small group
Small Group Activities

Advice Column
- Introduces language for giving advice
  - I think he should...
  - If I were him I would...
  - He could try...
- Allows a way to introduce topics that may be otherwise difficult to bring up in class
- Is a safe way for students to share
Act V:

Whole Group Activities
Whole Group Activities

- Develop commitment to the group
- Give students a chance to show their strengths
- Use techniques that facilitate fair group interaction
Whole Group Activities

Word Association
- Prepare a list of common words and read them aloud, one at a time, asking students to say the first word that comes to mind. You can also give students the list of words and go over them as a group.
- Answers can introduce new vocabulary or different definitions for words that students are not aware of.
- Focus the discussion on how meanings and associations stem from life experiences.
Whole Group Activities

Write the first thing each word brings to mind. Share your answers with the class.

Tree _____________________________________________
Table _____________________________________________
Train _____________________________________________
Country ___________________________________________
Stop _____________________________________________
Catch Phrase

Catch Phrase®/Taboo®/Just-a-Minute® by Elizabeth Claire

- These are games that challenge ELL’s to stretch their language by coming up with alternative definitions for common words. The learning is actually for the definer, not the guesser.

- For a lower level class, use picture/word cards so those who struggle with reading can participate equally.
Resources
Resources

Listen and Draw: Easy Drawing Activities for the EFL/ESL Classroom
by Stephen Mark Silvers
Paperback: 160 pages
Publisher: University Book Store (May 26, 2015)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 193735864X

Drawing Out: Creative, Personalized, Whole Language Activities
by Sharron Bassano, Mary Ann Christison
Paperback: 144 pages
Publisher: Alta English Publishers (November 7, 2017)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1882483324

Look Who's Talking! Activities for Group Interaction
by Mary Ann Christison, Sharron Bassano
Publisher: Alta English Publishers (January 1, 1995)
ISBN-10: 1882483332
Resources

Back & Forth: Pair Activities for Language Development
by Adrian S. Palmer, Theodore S. Rodgers, Judy Winn-Bell Olsen
Softcover
Publisher: Alta English Publishers (October 27, 2017)
ISBN-10: 1882483731

Talk-A-Tivities: Problem Solving and Puzzles for Pairs
by Richard Yorkey
Paperback: 128 pages
Publisher: ALTA English Online (November 1, 2017)
Language: English
ISBN-10: 1882483855

Pronunciation Games and Activities
by Kathy Corbett
Paperback: 119 pages
Published: 2000
ISBN-10: 0-9686858-4-6
Resources

Over 1,000 Conversation Starters

by Sue Fenton

Spiral-bound: 152 pages

Publisher: Madame Fifi Publications (2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0966741811

Daily Warm-Ups: Commonly Confused Words, Level I

Format Description: Reproducible Teacher Book

Grade Level: 5 - 8

Pages: 192

SKU: 046305-906

Daily Warm-Ups: Common English Idioms, Level I

Format Description: Reproducible Teacher Book

Grade Level: 5 - 8

Pages: 192

SKU: 05104X-906