

Practical Pedagogic Ideas

Teaching Communication Skill: Socializing (Making small talk)

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English in a real-life situation has become a milestone for the Nepali learners at different levels of their study. Making English contextual and communicative is an essential area to be worked on. This lesson focuses on socializing, where students work on making small talk in English in a new setting.

Proficiency Level: Upper-Intermediate

Age Group: Adults, Bachelor's Level

Class Time: 2 hours

Objectives: This lesson seeks to: (1) make students aware of communication skills in their personal as well as professional life, (2) introduce students to different aspects of developing a conversation with people, starting a conversation, showing interest, keeping a conversation going on, and ending a conversation, (3) understand the language variation in the art of small talk. In the classroom, students read the given hand-outs, work on the context relating it to their real-life experience, make conversation with their friends, and finally perform a role-play.

Resources: DVD clips/ audio, hand outs

Procedures

- 1) *Introduction* (10 minutes). Ask students to introduce themselves and the first person they talked to in the orientation program from the class. Share an interesting moment from the orientation program during their talk, with each student coming out from his/her seat.
- 2) *Class Discussion* (20 minutes). Lead the class, giving reference to their introduction and their talk to their mate in the program. Ask the students to recall how they initiated their conversation with their best friend in the orientation program of their college. The teacher allows them to think and prepare the dialogue they liked, considering how they initiated it, how it went on, and how they ended it. They are asked to present their dialogue in front of class. (They might have talked in Nepali, but now they present themselves in English). The teacher makes note of the language exponents they use on the board, while the sharing of each pair is going on.

3) *Key Expressions* (30 minutes) As the teacher has taken note of the students' language exponents used while having conversation in the orientation program, s/he, referring to those examples, adds some more exponents for starting the conversation: "I don't think we have met...," "I'm..." Gradually, the class prepares the possible list of language exponents for starting the conversation. Likewise, possible expressions of showing interest in the conversation – "Really?" "I see...." – are discussed. In the same manner, keeping the conversation going ("So.....," "I've heard," "Is that true?") and ending the conversation ("See you later....," "It's been nice talking to you") are discussed. Finally, the classroom discusses the difference in our culture for making a conversation successful.

4) *Activity:* (20 minutes) Teacher projects some audio from the DVD- ROM at the back of the text book or from www.oxfordlearn.com/login and students discuss in the following questions:

Conversation 1

What does Harry say to start the conversation?

What phrases does he use to end the conversation?

Conversation 2

What does Paolo say to start the conversation?

How does Sonia respond?

Conversation 3

What two phrases show that the speakers are interested in what the other person has said?

Conversation 4

What phrases do Adiraina and Adam use to greet each other?

How does Adiraina show that she is listening?

What does she say to end the conversation?

(Script Appendix 1)

Likewise teacher projects youtube videos for starting the conversation, keeping a conversation going and ending the conversation. Students analyze the video's conversation with classroom discussion.

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9h4tbY4pnrI>

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uG2bBWpeHPM>

5) *Activity:* (10-20 minutes): On the basis of discussion and videos, students prepare a role play on the script of the previous set of conversations that they prepared in the discussion session. Now, they design the role-play, making their draft polished with discussed key expressions. Students can modify their draft if it missed English language expressions for successful conversation. After the completion of draft, they get ready for role-play in their same pair. Finally, students perform the role-play.

6) *The Art of Small Talk.* (15 minutes) teacher provides a hand-out containing a few tips for making small talk.

Students read it individually and select the five most useful according to their perception. Then, the randomly selected students share what they understood, which five they selected and why they selected them. (Duckworth, M. & Turner, R. (2012). *Business result*. New York: OUP)

Conclusion (10 Minutes). Allow time for a short oral presentation by students. They will summarize the class and what they learnt with a promise to apply them in their regular classroom conversation. Conclude with summarizing terms of politeness and appropriate language expressions for successful small talk in English that they will use in their professional life.

Additional Information

This lesson is more practical than of the providing theoretical aspects of English language.

Contributor

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Appendix 1

Conversation 1

Harry : *Hello, I saw you sitting on my table at dinner but I didn't have a chance to speak to you. I'm Harry.*

Alessandro : *Hi. I'm Alessandro.*

Harry : *Who did you come with? Is this your first company event?*

Alessandro : *Yes.*

Harry : *Oh, well, it looks very entertaining. I think there are some left at the information desk. Are you um, here with colleagues?*

Alessandro : *No.*

Harry : *Well, you will soon get to know people. So, um would you like another drink?*

Alessandro : *No. I'm fine, thanks.*

Harry : *Well, it's been nice talking to you....erm....Alessandro. You don't mind if I go and get myself a coffee? See you later.*

Conversation 2

Paolo : *Hi, I don't think we have met. I'm Paolo from Napoli- I work for one of the company's suppliers.*

Sonia : *Hi, nice to meet you. I'm Soniafrom France*

Paolo : *Nice to meet you.*

Sonia : *So..... I've heard that Naples is becoming very popular for foreign investors- is that true?*

Paolo : *Well, Sonia, it's interesting that you say that because.....*

References

Duckworth, M. & Turner, R. (2012). *Business result: Upper- intermediate students' book*. New York: Oxford University Press.