

Conversation Strategies



Third Edition

*Pair and Group Activities
for Developing Communicative Competence*



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with illustrations by Andrew Toos

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Introduction

This book is a collection of activities for pair and small group conversation practice. It is designed to be used with a wide range of intermediate level students of English as a second or foreign language. The format of the activities puts the focus on the students, rather than the teacher. At the same time, the activities are designed to be nonthreatening to even the most reserved students. They are also enjoyable for both students and teachers, and they are easy for any teacher to implement.

A special feature of these activities is that they will develop strategic conversation skills. These are skills that go along with linguistic and sociolinguistic skills (grammar, vocabulary and usage). Strategic skills help the speaker/ listener keep a conversation going to its natural or desired conclusion. These skills include:

- ◆ beginning a conversation
- ◆ clarifying something
- ◆ interrupting someone
- ◆ rephrasing something
- ◆ correcting someone
- ◆ eliciting information
- ◆ soliciting attention
- ◆ repairing a conversation
- ◆ summarizing a conversation
- ◆ escaping from a conversation
- ◆ ending a conversation

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The format of this book is quite simple. Each activity has three parts: a teacher's introduction, a student's introductory exercise, and pair or small group practice.

- ◆ The teacher's introduction is very short. It is located in the Appendix.
- ◆ The student's introductory exercise focuses on the words and expressions students need to carry out the activity. The students can do this individually and then check it with a partner.
- ◆ The pair or small group practice makes use of information-gap and other interactive formats.

It is not necessary to follow the order of the activities in this book. Each activity is complete and does not depend on another activity. However, Activity 1, "Rejoinders," is a good place to begin, because the rejoinders can be used in virtually *all* of the other activities.



On Strategic Competence

The communicative approach seems to be well-established now in the profession of language teaching. It's a hard one to argue against since, after all, the purpose of language learning and language itself does seem to be communication. Language is the medium, not the message. At the same time, the notion of competence has become attached to the term "communication" to suggest that there are identifiable abilities and skills that communicators need to master. It's easy to see that linguistic competence is one area of competency: Learners need to pronounce well, follow grammatical rules, and learn a lot of words. We also know that as learners become proficient in the basic linguistic skills, they also need to develop competence in the socio-linguistic dimension of language use so that they communicate in culturally and socially appropriate ways. Contemporary teaching materials do try to help the learners develop these competencies.

In recent years, another dimension of communicative competence has become recognized and labeled-strategic competence. It is an area that still lacks the precise definition

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of a formal grammar or a functional syllabus or even a sociolinguistic description of social levels of language use. However, it does seem to be a competency area that needs to be learned and taught. There are words, phrases, and conventions that are used as two speakers engage in the active give-and-take of communicating through conversation. Some features of this competency area may be common from one language to another, but some may be different, and the difference can interfere with the success of a language user. For example, we all make mistakes or grope for a word as we use language, even our native language, but there are effective and ineffective ways of repairing a faulty utterance or paraphrasing a missing lexical item. Learners need awareness of and practice in these strategic competencies.

We at Pro Lingua Associates have not seen many materials that feature conversation practice and also bring strategic competencies to the learner's attention. So, when David and

Peggy Kehe sent us their manuscript, it caught our eye because that seemed to be what their conversation activities were doing. They had developed a series of pair and group activities for use in Japan to help students become better at conversational fluency. But more than that, their activities addressed the area of strategic competency in English.

We are pleased to have found this delightful and very useful book, and we think you will find that these activities will bring a new dimension into your language classes and programs.

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Strategies

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Activity One ♦ Rejoinders

♦ 1



♦ Rejoinders ♦

Happy

That's great!
Terrific!
Wonderful!

Sad

That's too bad.
I'm sorry to hear that.
Oh, no!

Interested

I see.
That's nice.
Oh, yeah?

Surprised

You're kidding!
I can't believe it!
Oh, really! / Oh, really?

See the teacher's introduction on page 129.

Introductory Exercise

Fill in the blanks with the phrases in **bold type**.

I see **That's great** **That's too bad**

1. A: Hi, how was the tennis match?
2. B: I won!
3. A: _____! Who did you play with?
4. B: My brother.
5. A: _____.
6. B: But after the game, he fell down and hurt his leg.
7. A: _____.

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Activity One ♦ Rejoinders

yeah **I see** **That's nice**

8. B: I just talked to my father on the phone.
9. A: Oh, _____?
10. B: He decided to go to Wisconsin instead of Florida for his vacation.
11. A: Oh, really? _____.
12. B: And he said he was going to make them dance.

12. B: And he said he's really busy at work these days.

13. A: _____.

I'm sorry to hear that Wonderful kidding

14. A: Guess what the doctor told me. I'm going to have a baby!

15. B: You're _____!

16. A: And he said I'm in good health.

17. B: _____!

18. A: And he said you should start doing some of the housework.

19. B: Oh, _____.

Terrific Oh, no can't believe it

20. A: We're having problems with the car again

21. B: _____! What's the matter this time?

22. A: It won't start.

23. B: I _____! We just had it repaired last week.

24. A: I've got an idea. Let's get a new car.

25. B: _____!

Activity One ♦ Rejoinders

♦ 3

Student A

Step 1. Say these sentences to Student B. Student B will respond with a rejoinder.

1. My friend broke her leg while skiing.
2. I have one brother and one sister.
3. My sister lost her cell phone again.
4. My father is a famous movie star.
5. A friend of mine was taken to the hospital last night.

Step 2. Listen to Student B and choose a correct rejoinder.

6. That's nice.
Really?
7. That's great!
I'm sorry to hear that.
8. Terrific!
I can't believe it!
9. You're kidding!
Oh, yeah?
10. Oh, no!
I see.

Step 3. First fill in the blanks. Then say these sentences to Student B, who will respond with a rejoinder. Also, listen to Student B and respond with a rejoinder.

1. I don't feel well today.
2. I heard there will be two days off from school next week.
5. I like _____ cars.
7. I'm going to play basketball in the next Olympics.
9. My brother is _____.
11. We have a new teacher named Mr. Smith at our school.
13. I had a car accident, and the police took away my driver's license.
15. I have a date with _____ tonight.

17. Last night I drank five glasses of _____ in one hour.
19. Two days ago, I bought a pencil.

Step 4. Take turns with your partner. One person tells about a recent travel experience, and the other gives rejoinders.

Student B

Step 1. Listen to Student A and choose a correct rejoinder.

1. That's great!
That's too bad.
2. That's nice.
Oh, no!
3. I see.
I can't believe it!
4. Sorry to hear that.
Terrific!
5. Is that right?
Oh, no!

Step 2. Say these sentences to Student A. Student A will respond with a rejoinder.

6. My little brother likes fruit.
7. I'm going to Hawaii for two years.
8. My neighbor was arrested by the police this morning.
9. I think there was a ghost in my bedroom last night.
10. Somebody took my new jeans at the laundromat.

Step 3. First fill in the blanks. Then listen to Student A and respond with a rejoinder. Also, say these sentences to Student A, who will respond with a rejoinder.

2. In elementary school, I was the best student in my class.
4. I caught a terrible cold last weekend.
6. I'm taking a trip to _____ on my next vacation.
8. The radio said that it's going to snow in _____ tonight.
10. It takes me _____ minutes to get to school every day.
12. I have a pet dog and a pet _____.
14. I would like to work at a software company someday.
16. I drink _____ every day.
18. I am going to have a baby.
20. I'm going to buy a new notebook tomorrow.

Step 4. Take turns with your partner. One person tells about a recent travel experience, and the other gives rejoinders.



◆ Follow-Up Questions ◆

What _____ ? What kind of _____ ?
 Where _____ ? How long/far/late/big _____ ?
 When _____ ?

See the teacher's introduction on page 129.

Introductory Exercise One

Fill in the blanks with the words or phrases in **bold type**.

Where Oh, really see What

1. A: (*Question*) What time did you go to bed last night?
2. B: (*Answer*) At midnight.
3. A: (*Rejoinder & follow-up*) _____ ? That's late!
 _____ were you doing until midnight?
4. B: (*Answer*) I had a date.
5. A: (*Rejoinder & follow-up*) I _____ .
 _____ did you go?
6. B: (*Answer*) We went to a party at a friend's house.

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Activity Two ◆ Follow-Up Questions

kidding kind of very long
How many no 30 Really

7. A: We have a test tomorrow.
8. B: _____ ? What _____ test?
9. A: It's on some difficult vocabulary.
10. B: Oh, _____ ! How _____ are
 you going to study for it?
11. A: Four or five hours.
12. B: You're _____ ! _____ words
 are on the test?
13. A: About _____ words, and they are _____ hard.

Introductory Exercise Two

Think of answers, rejoinders, and follow-up questions, and write them in the following blanks.

14. A: (*Question*) What kind of job do you want in the future?
15. B: (*Answer*) _____
16. A: (*Rejoinder & follow-up*) _____
17. B: (*Answer*) _____
18. A: (*Rejoinder & follow-up*) _____
19. B: (*Answer*) _____
20. A: (*Question*) Do you have a roommate?
21. B: (*Answer*) _____
22. A: (*Rejoinder & follow-up*) _____
23. B: (*Answer*) _____

24. A: (*Rejoinder & follow-up*) _____

25. B: (*Answer*) _____

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