Conversation Partners for Second Language Proficiency
Introduction

This packet includes advice on ways to find a language conversation partner, how to conduct a conversation partner session, and ways to start and maintain conversations.

Why use a conversation partner?
The best way to learn a language is to use it communicatively. In a nutshell, this means that if you want to learn a language you have to practice speaking it. A conversation partner is a great low-stress way to do this. By using this conversation partner curriculum you should be able to maximize your meeting time and help gain skills needed to meet your proficiency goals.

A conversation partner is more than someone to talk with in the second language. They are informal teachers of sorts, but you must be an active learner and take responsibility. Learning how to speak a language doesn't only mean saying things correctly. It means learning how to handle instances when you don't understand the other person. Learning techniques such as circumlocution, or finding another way to say something you don't know how to say, is very important. Your partner should also help you learn to be culturally appropriate when speaking. Are you saying things politely or with enough respect?

Remember, that a conversation partner is a two-way street. Your partner is not a tutor who is trying to explicitly teach you the language. Instead he/she is someone with whom you can have a conversation. To have a proper conversation you will both need to take turns speaking.

What should I look for in a conversation partner?

- Availability that complements yours.
- Self-discipline to stay in the target language.
- An ability to adjust speech for a non-native speaker by speaking slower, rephrasing, explaining new words.
- Willingness to correct your speech in subtle ways such as recasts or confirmation checks, so that you get feedback.
  
  Note: Don’t expect your conversation partner to be able to explain grammar.

Where can I find a conversation partner?

Anyone who speaks the language you are trying to learn (the target language) can be a conversation partner. Ideally, you would like your partner to speak the target language better than you do. However, if you are studying a second language that is not well represented in the community then classmates might be your only real option. It is possible to learn a language by practicing with other non-native speakers, but the best benefits will come from working with a native or expert speaker of the language.

CeLTA keeps a list of possible language partners on the Conversation Connection database at: http://celta.msu.edu/conversation/. If the people in the database do not work for you then you can always try to find conversation partner on your own. Some general suggestions on places to look would be:

- Ask your instructor if he/she knows anyone
- Search online
- Go to places where speakers of that language hang out (ex; church, restaurant, social club)
- Post an ad on facebook
- If you are willing to do “virtual” conversation partners using video Skype, try this website: http://www.language-exchanges.org/
How should I use this guide?

The material in this packet is a guide. It is designed to provide structure to your meetings and to push your conversations to a higher level so you can develop your proficiency. You do not need to follow every step or treat this like a tutoring session. The following materials are developed for 60-minute sessions.

1. Begin with a general warm-up. Talk casually about the events happening in your lives. Listen closely to what your partner is saying. Reply and try to extend each point into a conversation.

2. If you are using REFLECT, bring recordings from CeLTA's REFLECT program. Listen to them together and let your partner critique your responses. You may want to keep a notebook of what you learn from this (ie, words, new grammar, notes on your performance).

3. Look at the topic provided. Brainstorm related vocabulary.

4. Discuss the questions or situations. Although you want to try and push your level of conversation to a slightly higher level than what is comfortable, know when a question is beyond your abilities. Skip it.

Try to email questions to your partner in advance. This will allow your partner to know what you will be talking about and give him/her the chance to think it through. It might also help you avoid awkward situations, especially if a topic is not something your partner wants to talk about.

Some tips for conversation partners

- Learn how to say things like “Please repeat that”, “I don't understand”, “Can you speak more slowly”, and “Can you tell me what XXX means” in the language you are learning.
- Ask your conversation partner to not respond if you say something in English that he/she thinks you can express in your second language.
- Make a pact with your conversation partner to not speak in English. You can have a phrase like “Time Out” if you really get frustrated and have to move to English.
- Remember frustration and feeling silly are inherent to speaking a learning a second language. Try to relax about this and control your emotional reactions.
- Use a normal rate and volume of speaking.
- Make sure both of you are participating equally. Remember that the goal is to practice speaking the second language.
- Be aware of your use of slang words and idioms, and be ready to explain them.
- Don't try to correct every error.
- It is OK to go off-topic. Conversation partners should have a conversation and not just try to answer all the questions. However, stay away from the pitfall of spending the majority of each session discussing comfortable topics such as “What you did last weekend” every time you meet.
- Relax and enjoy your time together!
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Part I: Thematic Topics

Each conversation session, except the introductory “Getting to know you topic,” is thematically based. Within each topic, there are threads of questions that move from easier to harder, to ensure that you warm up with simple questions, and then you more and more challenged. If a question is beyond your capability, move on to the next thread.
Getting to know each other

Spend the first day getting to know each other. Look at the following topics and think of questions to ask about each one. Write in the final 5 questions. Try to think of ones that would help facilitate conversation.

Items to discuss
1. Where is your conversation partner from?
   • What part of the country?
   • Large city or rural area?
2. How long has he/she been in the USA?
3. Do you like living where you are living now? Why or why not?
4. What are you each studying? (Or are you also working?)
5. What do you each want to do once you graduate?
6. Why are you learning your target language?
7. What languages do you know?
8. __________________________________________
9. __________________________________________
10. __________________________________________
11. __________________________________________
12. __________________________________________

Reflect on your session
1. How well did your session go?
2. What would you like to change about the session?
3. Did either of you dominate the conversation? Did you talk as much as you would have liked?
4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
**Topic 1: Families**

**Before you begin:**
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

**Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions**

1. **Family history**
   1. Where is your family historically from?
   2. What do you know about your family history?
   3. In what ways does your ancestry affect your identity?

2. **Family size**
   1. How large is your family?
   2. Describe families now and in the past. How are they similar and how are they different?
   3. What advantages are there to having a large, extended family, and lots of children?
   4. Why do you think families are now smaller than they were in the past?

3. **Family members**
   1. Who do you consider to be in your family? And what roles (brother, sister) do each of these family members play?
   2. Name one family member and tell me as much as you can about him/her. What is he/she like?
   3. How is your family different from that of your conversation partner?

4. **Seeing family members**
   1. Who did you live with in your family growing up?
   2. How often do you usually see your family? What do you do when you visit them?
   3. Choose one member of your family. How is your life different from him/her? How would your life be different if you lived in the same city as your extended family and you saw them all the time?

5. **Chores**
   1. When you were a child, what chores did you have to do? What chores do you do now?
   2. What lessons did you learn from doing chores as a child?
   3. How should chores be divided up between family members. Should age, gender, or talent be considered?

6. **Moving**
   1. How many times have you moved? And where have you lived?
   2. Why did you relocate and how did you feel about it?
   3. The average American moves once every six years. Why do families move so often?
   4. How does moving so much affect a family, children, careers?

7. **Your future family**
   1. Do you want to have children? Why or why not?
   2. What is the “perfect” age to have children, why?
   3. In the U.S., 1970, 40% of households were married couples with children, but as of 2000 the number dropped to 24% according to the U.S. census. Why do you think this is changing?

8. **Divorce**
   1. How common is divorce in the USA and your partner’s country?
   2. Why is divorce so common?
   3. What effects does it have on children, families, and friends?

**Reflect on your session**

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4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
**Topic 2: Education**

**Before you begin:**

Reflect on your session

1. How well did your session go?
2. What would you like to change about the session?
3. Did either of you dominate the conversation? Did you talk as much as you would have liked?
4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?

Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

**Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions**

1. **Structure of school**
   1. What are the different “levels” of school (examples: kindergarten, elementary, middle school, etc.) in your country? What are the approximate ages of the student in each?
   2. On a scale of 1-10, how good was your schooling? Why would you rate it this way?
   3. What are some possible changes that you think should be made to the education system? How would these change things and why do you want to see them implemented?

2. **Qualities of schools**
   1. What type of school did you attend? Describe it. (Size, location, public or private, etc.)
   2. What types of schools are there in your culture? How are they different?
   3. In the United States, local property taxes provide a lot of revenue for public schools, so often better schools are in more expensive areas. What are advantages and disadvantages to this? How does this affect our society?

3. **Classes**
   1. Describe two classes from high school that you remember well.
   2. How much flexibility did you have in choosing your classes in high school?
   3. What kinds of classes did you take? Which ones did you enjoy most? Why? How have these affected your life?
   4. What kinds of classes do students in your culture not usually take? Why doesn't our education system value these types of classes?

4. **Assessment**
   1. Did you get good grades in school? Why or why not?
   2. What kinds of assessments are used at elementary, junior high, and high school? (Examples of assessments: projects, participation, citizenship marks, attendance, quizzes, exams, papers, standardized tests)
   3. Compare how high school students are assessed in your country with students in your conversation partner’s country. How is this different?

5. **Being social**
   1. Describe your friends in high school. Were they generally from one social group, or clique?
   2. Why do you think students in high school have social groups?
   3. How does one's social position in high school affect one's life?

6. **Weekends**
   1. What do high school students do on the weekends for entertainment in the U.S.? What about in your partner's country?
   2. What are some important school social events or extracurriculars? For example, what happens at prom? Homecoming? Football games? Describe these events.
   3. What do you do on weekends now? How is it similar/different from your time in high school

7. **Hollywood's image**
   1. What does your partner know about American high schools? Where did he/she learn about these schools?
   2. Do you think Hollywood movies do a good job describing American high schools? What are some similarities and differences between your high school and those portrayed in the movies?
   3. Why does Hollywood portray high schools this way?

8. **High school version 2.0**
   1. Which do you like better, high school or college? Why?
   2. Do you miss being in high school? What is one good memory and one bad one you have from this time?
   3. If you could do high school over again, what kinds of classes would you take this time?
Reflect on your session

5. How well did your session go?
6. What would you like to change about the session?
7. Did either of you dominate the conversation? Did you talk as much as you would have liked?
8. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
Topic 3: The news

Before you begin:
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions
1. The news media
   1. From where do you get your news and how often?
   2. What kinds of stories do you care about? Why?
   3. Why should people keep up with current events?
2. This year’s news makers
   1. What were a few of the biggest news items you heard about this past year? List a few.
   2. Choose one news event you remember, and describe it.
   3. Why do you remember this event, or why was it significant?
   4. Do you think other Americans cared about this event? Why or why not?
3. What's big now?
   1. What's happening in the news right now, both in the USA and abroad?
   2. Does the average American care about this story? Why or why not?
   3. Do you think these events will matter in 1 year? 5? 10? 100?
4. Is this really news?
   1. Do you think a politician's or a celebrity’s private life is newsworthy? Why or why not?
   2. Are there certain things journalists shouldn't report on? Why?
   3. If one of your professors was in the news (for a bad reason) would you give an interview?
5. The state of the news
   1. What percentage of the news do you trust to be true?
   2. Do you think that news reporting has gotten better, gotten worse, or stayed the same over your lifetime?
   3. Should opinion shows like Glen Beck or Rachel Maddow be on news networks?
   4. How has politicized news networks (Fox News, CNN, MSNBC) changed the way people get their news? Is this a good or a bad thing and why?
6. Censorship: Why the #@*$ do you care?
   1. How often do you think the news is censored? Who do you think censors it?
   2. How do you feel about censorship? What do you think should be censored: movies, news, internet websites, books?
   3. Are there times when the news should be censored? Give an example or support your opinion.
   4. A “scientist” is being interviewed about global warming. He is lying about facts and saying very derogatory things about certain ethnic groups. Should he be allowed to say these things?
7. Technology
   1. How has technology affected the way that we receive news?
   2. Have you (or anyone you know) ever been in the newspaper/on TV? If so, what for?
   3. What are the benefits/negatives of getting your news online?

Reflect on your session
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4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
Topic 4: Entertainment and Media

Before you begin:
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions

1. Movies
   1. Do you like to watch movies? What kinds (genre) of movies do you enjoy watching?
   2. When you watch movies with another person does it change the type of movie you watch?
   3. Do you prefer to watch a movie at the movies, or at home? Why?
   4. Would you like to be a movie critic? What are advantages/disadvantages of being one?

2. Print
   1. How often do you read newspapers or magazines? What kinds of magazines and why?
   2. Do you ever read newspapers or magazines in your second language? Why or why not?
   3. Why are magazines and newspapers going out of business? Do you care?

3. The classics
   1. Have you ever been to a play, opera, or musical? Do you like these kinds of entertainment?
   2. Why do Americans not typically watch this type of entertainment?
   3. Do you think operas, musicals, plays are better forms of entertainment compared to popular radio, action movies or TV?

4. Favorites
   1. What is your favorite movie or book of all time? When did you read it / see it?
   2. Explain the plot of this favorite to your partner.
   3. Why do you like this movie or book so much?
   4. How has this book or movie changed the way you see life or what did it teach you?

5. Reality TV
   1. Do you, or does anyone in your family, have a reality program you like to watch often? Which one, and when is it on?
   2. Choose a Reality TV show you are familiar with. Describe it in as much detail as possible.
   3. How real are reality television shows? Provide examples of when you think they are (more) real, and when they are NOT.
   4. Why do you think reality TV shows are popular? Do you think they will continue to be popular, or go away? Why?

6. Technology
   1. What technology do you use for entertainment? (smart phone, iPad, iPod, Nook, the Internet, satellite radio, etc.) How?
   2. How has technology affected the way in which you enjoy entertainment?
   3. How has technology changed entertainment since you were a child?

7. Celebrities
   1. Do you like to follow any celebrities on social media? Which ones and why?
   2. What is one celebrity you admire and why?
   3. What do people find so interesting about the lives of celebrities?
   4. Would you ever want to be famous? What kinds of things about your life would change?

8. Celebrity hookup
   1. If you could date any single movie star, who would it be and why?
   2. What would be some advantages and disadvantages of dating a celebrity?
   3. Why do celebrities never stay married?

Reflect on your session

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**Topic 5: Vacations**

**Before you begin:**
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

**Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions**

1. **Vacation preferences**
   1. Do you like beach vacations, city vacations, vacations in nature, or vacations at home most? Why?
   2. At what time of year do you prefer to take a long vacation? Why?
   3. Do you prefer to spend a long time in one location on vacation, or spend less time in more destinations? Why?
   4. Some prefer luxury resorts and some prefer vacations where one spends time with the people of the culture, living as they do. What are the benefits of each? Which do you prefer?

2. **Your travels**
   1. What are four of your favorite counties or cities that you have visited. Which of the four is your favorite?
   2. Where did you spend your last vacation? What did you do?
   3. What was your best vacation ever? Describe where you went, the weather, the activities, and the people.
   4. What was your worst vacation ever? Describe where you went, the weather, the activities, and the people.

3. **Going global**
   1. How many countries have you been to? Why did you travel to each one?
   2. Which country would you live in for a year if you had the chance?
   3. Would you like to live in another country for the rest of your life? What would be some benefits to pertinently living in a new country? What are some drawbacks?

4. **Places to see**
   1. What three places should visitors to the United States or your partner's country visit? Why do you think this?
   2. Would you rather visit a natural place (Yellowstone, Mt Kilimanjaro), a city (New York, Seoul), or a man made place (Disney Land, cruise)?
   3. Should people spend a lot of money on a vacation or go as cheaply as possible? What are some benefits/negatives to each?

5. **Growing up traveling**
   1. When you were a child, did your family take trips? Would you always go to the same place or different places?
   2. How is traveling with your friends different/similar to traveling with your family?
   3. What was one place you traveled to as a child? How would visiting that place be different as an adult? What activities would you do differently?

**Reflect on your session**

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Topic 6: Holidays

Before you begin:
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions
1. Comparing countries
   1. What are the most popular holidays in your country and your conversation partner’s?
   2. What do you know about holidays in your partner's country? Discuss the traditions and customs that you know about. Are they accurate?
   3. Choose a holiday in your country and that has some similarities to a holiday in your conversation partner’s country. Compare and contrast them.
2. Traditions
   1. What are some of your holiday traditions? What are the sources of your traditions?
   2. Do you celebrate holidays differently than your parents or (great) grandparents?
   3. Do you have any holidays that you celebrate a little differently than most people in your country? If so, how?
   4. Why do people resist changing holiday traditions?
3. Less popular holidays
   1. What are some less popular holidays in your country and your conversation partner’s? Why are these holidays celebrated? How do people celebrate these holidays?
   2. Which holiday in your country do you think deserves more attention? Why?
   3. What is one thing that is not celebrated in your country that you wish was? Create a holiday for it. How would people celebrate it? Be creative.
4. Traveling
   1. Do you ever travel during the holidays? If so, how do you travel?
   2. Why do you go to these places? What do you do?
   3. Is there anywhere else you would like to go during your vacation?
5. Holiday vacation
   1. When you get a 3 or 4 day weekend, how do you like to spend it?
   2. Have you ever taken a road trip over a holiday weekend? Describe the trip to your partner.
   3. Have you ever flown during a holiday? Describe what it was like to do so.
   4. If you were in another country/culture during your favorite holiday, how would you celebrate it?
6. Changes
   1. Are there any holidays that you don't like? Why?
   2. Do you consider yourself to be a traditional person when it comes to holidays? Why/why not?
   3. If you could change one thing about one holiday, what would it be and why?
7. Sad times
   1. Have you ever had to celebrate a holiday alone? Tell your partner the story.
   2. What are the benefits/negatives of spending the holiday alone?
   3. Describe a time when you were in an awkward situation during a holiday.

Reflect on your session
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4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
Topic 7: Future goals

Before you begin:
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions
1. Careers preparation before college
   1. When you were a child, what kind of career did you want? Why did you change your mind?
   2. Did you receive any guidance as a child or young adult on what career choices best fit your aptitude and desires? Describe it.
   3. Do you think K-12 schools should place children into different tracks depending on their future goals? (vocational, university, diploma) Why or why not?
2. College goals
   1. What is your major? What careers are possible with that type of degree?
   2. What do you want to be when you finish college? Do you want to work (if so where)? Do you want to take a semester abroad? Do you want to continue on and do graduate work?
   3. Do you think college makes graduates ready to deal with the “real world?” Why or why not?
   4. What outside factors can influence students when they choose a major?
3. Career goals
   1. What is the most important aspect of a career (salary, benefits, intellectual interest, others)?
   2. Are most people happy in their careers? Why or why not?
   3. Imagine that your partner is not happy with his/her career choice. Give him/her advice on how to make her/his life better.
4. Future goals
   1. What are 3 goals you want to achieve before you die?
   2. Do you think you will be more successful than your high school friends? Does that matter to you at all?
   3. How do you define success? How will you know when you are successful?
   4. Do you think your definition of success is the same as how our society defines success? Why or why not?
5. Life after school
   1. Where would you like to live after you graduate?
   2. Do you want to return to your hometown or live somewhere else?
   3. What are the benefits of living in your hometown? What are some negatives?
6. Skills
   1. For your future career, what kinds of skills will you need to develop?
   2. What, if any, value is there for students in science, math, or engineering to study the humanities?
   3. What should adults do if they do not have the required skills to get a new job?
   4. What sorts of skills do you think will be important in the future job market?

Reflect on your session
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4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
Topic 8: Technology

Before you begin:
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions
1. Tech knowledge
   1. Which of the following things can you do on a computer? How well can you do it?
      - Computer programing
      - Surf the internet
      - Playing games
      - Generating documents (text, spreadsheets, presentations)
      - Design websites
      - Alter images (photoshop)
      - Others
   2. What does it mean to be tech savvy?
   3. What advantages and disadvantages are there to being tech savvy?
2. Technology in the classroom
   1. What kinds of technology do you use in your normal classrooms?
   2. When you are in class do you ever check your cell phone? Do you think having a cell phone in class changes the way you learn?
   3. Do you buy physical textbooks or do you purchase digital ones? What are some advantages and disadvantages of using either physical or digital textbooks?
3. Online classrooms
   1. Have you ever taken a class that is completely online? Why did you take it?
   2. Do students in online courses learn as much as those who go to traditional classes?
   3. What are some advantages and disadvantages of taking online courses.
4. Changes in your life
   1. How has technology changed during your lifetime? How will it be different in the future?
   2. How has technological negatively affected our lives?
   3. Why do older people have so many issues with technology? Do you think you will have the same issues when you get older?
5. Money
   1. Is technology more or less expensive in your partner's home country? Why might that be?
   2. Has technology become more or less expensive over the past decade?
   3. How often do you buy new technology? Do you feel compelled to buy the latest and greatest technology?
6. Future tech
   1. If you had a time machine, where would you travel? Why would you go to that time? What would you do there?
   2. Would you buy a flying car? What would you do with one?
   3. If you could have any item from a science fiction movie what would it be? Why would you want to have that item? Do you think that item will exist sometime in the future?
7. Extra questions
   1. What is one old technology (one not used that often today) that you still like to use?
   2. How often are you online each day? What do you do while you are online?
   3. How well can your parents use technology? How are their skills different from yours?

Reflect on your session
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4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
**Topic 9: Questions that make you think. Well, maybe…**

**Before you begin:**
Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

**NOTE:** These touch on some personal beliefs. Just skip any questions that make you uncomfortable.

**Questions list – Discuss several of the following questions**

1. **The afterlife**
   1. Is there life after death? In your thoughts, what is it like?
   2. How many different descriptions of an afterlife do you know? Describe them.
   3. How are they similar/different?

2. **Aliens**
   1. Do you think there is life on another planet? Why or why not?
   2. Do you think that aliens on earth are real? Is there any proof that aliens are real?
   3. If aliens came to Earth, would they be friendly or evil?
   4. Will humans ever go to another planet and find human life? How do you think we will treat them?

3. **Love of my life**
   1. How do people normally find someone to date?
   2. Do we really find soulmates? Do you think you will find yours?
   3. Why do so many relationships fail?

4. **Life and happiness**
   1. What makes you happy?
   2. How do you know if you have a happy life?
   3. What is the purpose of life?

5. **Good and bad**
   1. What makes a person a “good person”?
   2. Do most people care if they are a good person or not?
   3. How will you know if you are a good person or not?

6. **Americans**
   1. What does it mean to be an American? Are both of you Americans?
   2. Why would anyone want to be an American?
   3. Are you always proud to be an American? What events have transpired to change your opinion?

7. **The future looks good**
   1. Do like tattoos? Do you have any? How many is too many?
   2. Do you have pierced ears? Is this different from having a tattoo?
   3. Will people with tattoos look odd when they get older?
   4. What is the strangest form of “body art” that you have heard of or seen?
   5. Would you hire someone who had tattoos all over their body?

8. **Peace, love, and government**
   1. Do you think world peace is an achievable dream?
   2. Can people live peacefully without a government?
   3. Would our lives be better or worse if we didn't pay any taxes?

**Reflect on your session**

1. How well did your session go?
2. What would you like to change about the session?
3. Did either of you dominate the conversation? Did you talk as much as you would have liked?
4. Were there any awkward silent pauses? How could you make those smaller?
Part II: Role-plays and Functional Language

The following activities are organized by functional language topics, such as persuading, complaining, describing, etc. In many of these activities, cultural ideas of politeness are very important, so be sure to ask your conversation partner to help you perform these functions in a culturally polite way.
**Speaking with tact**

**Before you begin:**
Think about apologizing in English. Notice that you are not just saying “I'm sorry.” Many times you also add in an explanation of how you are sorry “I am sorry, I didn't mean to drop your phone.” Also, you might try to fix the issue “I'm sorry, I didn't mean to drop your phone. You can use mine until we can fix yours.” Discuss with your partner different and appropriate ways to apologize in the foreign language.

**Practice apologizing.** Read the following situations. Try to apologize and verbally fix the situation. After you finish each situation have your partner critique your response. Make sure you are being culturally polite, sensitive, and grammatically correct. Remember that just saying “I'm sorry,” is usually not enough to fix the situation.

**Situations**
1. You walk in late to class. The teacher has already handed out a reading activity, and the students are busy engaged in reading it. Apologize to the teacher.
2. You missed an appointment with your academic adviser because your alarm clock did not go off and you overslept. It is later that day, and you have stopped by your advisor’s office. Explain what happened and apologize.
3. You had promised your good friend you would go to his/her child’s birthday party, but then some friends from out of town had unexpectedly come over for the weekend. Call your good friend and explain why you can’t attend the party.
4. You accidentally bump into an elderly woman in a crowd, and she drops her purse/wallet, and coins scatter on the ground. How do you fix the situation?
5. Your friend told you a very private secret last week. You accidentally told this secret to a mutual friend. Apologize.

**Create your own examples**
Working with your, create several more situations to apologize for. Try to focus on situations that are different in the different countries. For example, should you apologize for being 5 minutes late?
Giving directions

Before you begin:

Brainstorm a list of words you know how to say related to the topic. Also make a list of words you don’t know how to say but want to learn. Show the list to your conversation partner and work together to fill out any words you did not know and check the ones you did to make sure they were correct.

Find a map of MSU print it out and bring it to your meeting.

1. Discuss how directions are given: Do people in the target language and culture use more landmarks, or do they use street names and directions more? What else may be culturally different about how directions are given?

2. Using a map of MSU, have your partner select different starting and stopping points on campus. Give him or her directions on how to get to these places, and write them down.
   - You could also write down or record your directions and try them out by actually walking to the different places. How accurate were your directions? What sorts of things did you miss? While you two are walking look at different things you see. Try to have a casual conversation about the campus. What sorts of things do you see?

3. Repeat step 2 with other maps you can find, preferably with maps that are from the target language and culture.

Ideas for expansion

- Use a map and tokens or coins. Have your partner move the tokens around as you give directions. See if you can accurately guide him/her to the proper place.
- You can also try to give direction for accomplishing a task such as putting on shoes, making a paper airplane, or how to sit in a chair. This uses the same verb forms but adds variety.
**Persuasion**

**Directions:** Use the pictures to help you persuade your conversation partner into doing various things.

1. Your conversation partner wants to buy a car. Try to persuade him/her into buying the car in the picture.

![Car Image]

2. Imagine that your conversation partner has never eaten Chinese food. He/she is not very adventurous with food. Try to persuade him/her into eating at a Chinese restaurant.

![Chinese Food Image]

3. Imagine that you and your conversation partner are poor. You both house-sitting for a rich old lady. She is very rude with you and does not pay you well. Persuade your conversation partner into helping you steal her jewelry.

![Jewelry Image]
4. Think about your favorite book of all time. Try to persuade your conversation partner to read it.

5. Imagine that your conversation partner is a very boring person and likes to go to bed early like the chickens. Try to persuade him/her into going to a club.

6. Imagine that you have an older computer. Try to persuade your conversation partner into buying it from you.

7. Imagine that you have two tickets to a football game. Try to persuade your conversation partner into going to the game with you. Assume he/she does not like football.
Complaining

**Directions:** look at the following situations. Imagine that they happened to you. Complain about them to your conversation partner.

1. Imagine that you were in a car accident today when you were driving your mom’s mini van. It wasn't your fault and you are unharmed. Complain to your conversation partner.

2. Imagine that you are staying in a hotel. The room is not up to your standards. Complain to the front desk clerk (your conversation partner).

3. Your conversation partner was 15 minutes late to your meeting and just arrived. Complain to him/her about it.
**Describing Shape, Size, and Location**

Directions: Describe the following pictures to your conversation partner. Do not show your partner the picture.

Describe the following shapes to your conversation partner. Have him/her draw what you describe. You may not use gestures or touch his or her paper. After you are finished, compare the drawing to the picture.

#1

![Shape 1](image1.png)

#2

![Shape 2](image2.png)

#3

![Shape 3](image3.png)
Describing Scenes

1. You are staying a nice hotel. Describe to your partner what you see outside of your window.

2. You visited a family friend last night. Describe what you saw while you waited for your train.
Speculating
What could these be? Use language of speculation (it could be, it might be, it is possible that, etc.)
More speculating

Speculate about the following pictures. What could they be? What could they be used for?

#1  

#2

#3

#4
Comparing and contrasting

Look at the sets of pictures. Compare each set. How are they similar and how are they different? Try to expand your discussion and talk about your opinions on each of the pictures (which do you prefer).

#1

#2

#3

STAR TREK

STAR WARS
**Agree or disagree**

**Directions:** Read each statement and decide if you agree or disagree. Discuss your positions with your conversation partner.

**Easier prompts**
1. Living on campus is a better choice than living off of campus. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
2. College should be free for everyone. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
3. Exercise is better than dieting if you want to lose weight. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
4. Families with children should not have televisions. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
5. Italy has the best food in the world. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
6. Universities should not have any classes that start as early as 8:00am. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
7. Cellphones should not be allowed in classrooms. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
8. Study abroad should be required for ALL foreign language learners. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
9. Instructors and students should be NOT be allowed to be friends on Facebook or Twitter. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
10. Local restaurants are better than national chains (McDonalds or Red Lobster). Use specific reasons to support your answer.

**More challenging prompts:** (From TOEFL’s website)
11. People are never satisfied with what they have; they always want something more or something different. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
12. People should read only those books that are about real events, real people, and established facts. Use specific reasons and details to support your opinion.
13. It is more important for students to study history and literature than it is for them to study science and mathematics. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.
14. All students should be required to study art and music in secondary school. Use specific reasons to support your answer.
15. Reading fiction (such as novels and short stories) is more enjoyable than watching movies. Use specific reasons and examples to explain your position.
16. Only people who earn a lot of money are successful. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
17. Children should be required to help with household tasks as soon as they are able to do so. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
18. Playing a game is fun only when you win. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer.
19. High schools should allow students to study the courses that students want to study. Use specific reasons and examples to support your opinion.
20. People behave differently when they wear different clothes. Do you agree that different clothes influence the way people behave? Use specific examples to support your answer.
**Making a request and being thankful**

Directions: look at the following pictures. Ask your conversation partner if he will
1. pass you the object
2. buy the object for you
3. give you his/her object.

Be sure you are being polite when you ask for the object. You should also thank your conversation partner for passing/buying/giving you the object.
Complimenting

Respond to the following situations. Ask your conversation partner to judge if your compliment was culturally appropriate or not. In some cases, it may NOT be OK to give a compliment in the situation. In those instances, discuss the cultural differences.

Situation 1:
You are on the elevator with someone (who is the same gender as you) who you have frequently seen in your building at work. You really like his/her scarf.

Note: Ask your partner if this scenario is still appropriate if it involves people of opposing genders.

Situation 2:
Someone you work with (but have not seen in a month) has lost a lot of weight. Compliment he or she.

Note: Is it appropriate to compliment this person? Does it matter what gender he or she is? Does it matter how well you know him or her?

Situation 3:
You are at a dinner party your boss’s house and she introduces you to a famous person in your field of study. You have read a lot of that person’s work and think very highly of it.
Making suggestions

Directions: You and your conversation partner are looking for things to do on your day off. Look at the following pictures and try to suggest doing each of the activities. Think of positive and negative aspects of each activity.
**Invitations**

Directions: look at the following social functions. Invite your conversation partner to each place. Next have your conversation partner invite you, but refuse (politely).

*Notes:* For the refusal, discuss if it is appropriate to give a reason why you are refusing. If it is culturally appropriate to provide a reason or excuse, should you make one up (ie, lie) if you just didn’t want to go?
Picture Description

Directions: Have one person describe the pictures to the other. Once you are finished, show the picture to your conversation partner. Compare your description to the picture. How well did you do?
Spot-the-difference

Directions: Each person should either have version A or version B. Discuss the pictures together (without looking at the other version). See if you can find all of the differences between the two versions of this picture.

Version A.

Version B.
Telling a story

Directions: Use the following four storyboards to create your own stories. Take turns with your conversation partner telling the stories. When you are not telling the story, try to ask questions that prompt the other person to tell a richer, more detailed story.

Story 1.

Story 2.
Part III: Situations

The scenarios below link several role-plays, each with different language functions, into a unified story. Briefly look over the main title and role-play subtitles and brainstorm any expressions and vocabulary you may need. We recommend you take some notes on language you will need, but that you don’t script out your responses, since this is a speaking exercise and not a writing or reading-out-loud exercise.

For each situation, one partner will be the main character (Person 1), who remains the same throughout the scenario. The other partner (Person 2) will need to play any role necessary in the various role-plays, and may end up “being” several different people. Many of the role-plays will require that you talk about specific places. Use your imagination and create scenes that work for each situation.
The weekend

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

**Functions used in this series of role-plays:**
Persuasion, asking for help, negotiating a plan, narrating a personal story in the past.

#1 Setting up a night out (by phone)
**PERSON 1:** It is finally the weekend and you are ready for: a fun night on the town in (country). Your car is not working so you need to convince your friend (who lives across town) to come out with you.
**PERSON 2:** You don't have anything to do tonight but you do not like to go partying. Your friend (person 1) is going to try and convince you to go out tonight. Try to persuade him/her to stay home instead.

#2 The bus
**PERSON 1:** Somehow you convinced your friend to go out tonight. Since your car isn't working, you now you have to take the bus across town, which is something you have never done before. You need help trying to figure out the bus system, and see someone waiting at the bus stop, and decide to ask for help.
**PERSON 2:** You are not in the best mood, waiting at the bus stop. Some impatient jerk on the street asks you for help. It is up to you if you want to help. No one else is around to help this person.

#3 Hitting the town
**PERSON 1:** The nightmare of the bus is over and you arrive at your friend’s place. Now you and your friend (person 2) need to decide what you are going to do tonight.
**PERSON 2:** After convincing you to go out, your friend (person 1) has no idea what to do tonight. Together you need to decide on a plan of action for the night. Remember you did not want to go out originally.

#4 Getting that phone number
**PERSON 1:** You have been dancing with a cute man (or woman) all night. The person has left the club and you forgot to get his/her number. The friend of that cute person you like is still at the club, though. Try and convince that cute person’s friend to give you the number.
**PERSON 2:** Some possibly drunk guy (or girl) wants to get the phone number of your friend with whom he/she was dancing all night. Your friend is single but you are not sure if you should give the number to this stranger. Try to avoid giving the number without lying.

#5 The next morning
**PERSON 1:** It is 11am and the phone wakes you up. You decide to answer it because it is one of your good friends. Answer the phone and tell your friend about last night.
**PERSON 2:** It is 11am and you decide to call a friend of yours to chat and see what he or she has been up to lately. Call your friend and ask them what they did yesterday.
The out-of-town friend

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
Persuasion, getting information, describing an event, complaining, contrasting.

#1 Inviting your friend
PERSON 1: It is spring break in a couple of weeks. You have no plans right now and your school workload is pretty light this semester. Your friend’s university will also be on break then. Call your friend and convince him/her to come see you on break.
PERSON 2: A friend of yours from another university calls you. He/she wants you to come and see him/her on break.

#2 Your town is boring
PERSON 1: While it has been fun hanging out with your friend, you have run out of things to do in town. You two decide to catch the train/bus/airplane to Chicago. Call the local ticket office and order tickets.
PERSON 2: You work at a ticket office for a train/bus/airline and receive a call from a student wanting to go to Chicago.

#3 The weird person sitting next to you
PERSON 1: While traveling to Chicago, you and your friend are separated. You end up sitting next to a businessman (or woman). She/he has been talking about his/her entire life for the last two hours. She/he now wants to know what you did last week with your friend. Tell him/her about all the activities you two did in the last week. Try to be brief and not give a lot of personal information, because this person next to you is…weird.
PERSON 2: You are an unsuccessful businessman (or woman). While traveling to Chicago, you sit next to a student. You just told the student all about your life, and you want to know a bit about the student. Ask him or her about what he/she has been doing so far on spring break. The student seems interesting but is not a big talker, so try and get him or her to talk more and give you more details about what he or she tells you.

#4 Where did our luggage go?
PERSON 1: You have finally freed yourself of the weird person and are talking to your friend (who sat next to a very attractive girl/guy and got a phone number) by the luggage pick up. It turns out that your luggage, which had your wallet, clothes, and laptop is not here. Find an attendant and tell him/her about your problem and complain about losing your luggage.
PERSON 2: You are an attendant and a student is complaining about lost luggage. The student lost all his/her money. Calm him or her down and offer to set up a hotel, paid for by the travel company, until the luggage is found.

#5 No money, no problem
PERSON 1: The attendant was able to set you up at a hotel (paid by the company). Now your friend wants to call the girl or guy (the one he was sitting next to on the trip) and have the three of you explore the city. However, you want to explore the city with only your friend. Compare and contrast the differences between hanging out with only your friend and hanging out with your friend and this unknown guy or girl.
PERSON 2: You want to call the guy or girl whose phone number you got on the way to Chicago, so that you have a tour guide to explore the city. Your friend doesn’t seem to want this.
The date

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
Making suggestions, giving directions, apologizing, describing a scene, complaining

#1 The restaurant
PERSON 1: You at studying and the library and your roommate is on a date and just called you. The restaurant he/she wanted to eat at is full and he/she did not think to make reservations. Give some suggestions of places they can eat in town.
PERSON 2: You are on a date but the restaurant you chose is full and you have no reservation. Call your roommate for ideas on where else you can go.

#2 The trip
PERSON 1: Your roommate took your restaurant idea but is not sure how to get there. Give directions from the restaurant he or she is at to the restaurant you suggested.
PERSON 2: You have a good idea from your roommate for another restaurant, but can’t remember how to get there. Ask him or her for directions.

#3 The call—How rude!
PERSON 1: You have been talking with your roommate for about 5 minutes. The people around you in the library are very mad at you. Apologize to the person who seems the angriest at you for on the phone.
PERSON 2: Some inconsiderate jerk is talking on their phone at the library in a section that is supposed to be quiet and reserved for studying. Complain to him or her.

#4 The crime
PERSON 1: It doesn't look like your apology worked well, so you decide to go to the bathroom and then leave to study at home. When you get back to your study table from the bathroom, you see that the angry person is gone, but someone has taken your backpack, your wallet, and left you a nasty note telling you to be more considerate. You call campus security and they want to know what happened and want a description of who you suspect did this.
PERSON 2: You work for campus security and are investigating a situation where a student thinks another student stole his or her backpack in retaliation, and left a note. Ask the victim for details on what happened and a description of who they think stole it.

#5 The complaining
PERSON 1: What a night! It is late, you have a headache, you never finished studying, and you are finally arriving home. The date your roommate went on went so well that it is still going on. Your roommate and her date are being very loud (talking in the living room… get your head out of the gutter!). Complain to your roommate and try to get them to be quiet.
PERSON 2: You are in your living room with your date, talking and laughing. Your roommate comes in to complain about the noise.
Halloween

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
Persuasion, asking for help, (dis)agreeing, describing

#1 The decision
Every year your friend, Bill, has a big party for Halloween. People dress up, get really loud, and have a group costume contest. You and your friends need to decide what you are going to wear to the contest. Your options are: 18th century zombie presidents, comic book characters, or (create your own idea).

PERSON 1: Decide which option you like and try to convince your friends to go as that theme.
PERSON 2: Pick one of the other options and try to convince your friends to go as that theme.

#2 Needing supplies
After deciding on your group's costume theme, you need to find supplies in order to make them. You and your friend are at the local fabric store but are not sure what you should buy.

PERSON 1: Tell the clerk what you are going to be making, and ask for her opinion on what you should buy. Make sure you are polite and say thank you.
PERSON 2: Listen to person 1’s request. Offer various options for what he/she should do.

#3 Your other friend Wendy
It turns out that you need five people to enter into the costume contest and you only have 4 right now. You think that your friend Wendy would like to join. She has just arrived at your house to return a borrowed book.

PERSON 1: Introduce Wendy to your 4 friends (make up names for them) and ask her to join you group.
PERSON 2: You are Wendy (or Wendel). Greet each of Person 1’s friends and say something nice to them.

#4 Friction in the group
Wendy loved the idea but now she has some new ideas of her own. She thinks you should add three more people because it will increase your chances of winning, allow you to split costs, and help her introduce some of her friends to some of yours. However, one of your other friends thinks that having 7 people will be too many and that it will too difficult to get it organized.

PERSON 1: Agree with either your friend or Wendy. Make sure you support your decision in a diplomatic way.
PERSON 2: You should be either Wendy or the friend (whomever Person 1 disagrees with) and try to further argue your point.

#5 Time to party
It is the night of the party. You and your friends are all dressed up and have arrived at the party. Your mother (who usually helps you sew all the costumes) is calling you. She wants to know how your group looks.

PERSON 1: Describe your costumes to your mother.
PERSON 2: Be Person 1’s mother. Ask questions about the costumes and try to keep the phone conversation going for as long as possible (like most mothers do).

#6 The award
It was a tough night. Everybody liked your costumes but you lost the costume contest.

PERSON 1: Congratulate the winners, who were dressed like teenage vampire characters from a trendy series (lame!), and try not to sound too disappointed.
PERSON 2: You are one of the winners from the other team. Be as much of a jerk as you can.
Group project

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
Complaining, making invitations, agreeing/disagreeing, giving compliments

The set up

It is your first day of Marketing 101. It turns out that 80% of your grade this semester will come from a four-person group project. Your task is to create a fake business and do several assignments related to it. You were assigned into groups and you do not like any of the people. Look at the following three people (your group mates) and describe each of their personalities. (do this together)

Rhonda
Brent
Chloe

#1 The first meeting
During your first meeting, Brent was 20 minutes late, Chloe was on her cell phone the whole time, and Rhonda was being a control freak. You were not able to get anything accomplished.
PERSON 1: Try to complain about their behavior, but remember that you will have to work together.
PERSON 2: Be one of the other group members. Be very offended by Person 1's accusations.

#2 The second meeting
It seems like your complaining might have helped. The group is ready to meet for a second time.
PERSON 1: Schedule a second meeting and invite all the group members to your home for the second meeting.
PERSON 2: Be one of the group members. Make it very difficult to schedule the meeting.

#3 The debate
Brent has a friend who took this same class last semester. He has brought his friend's old project and thinks that you all should just copy their work, since they got a 3.5 and that professor retired last year. It would help since you are all so busy but it is not very ethical. Do you agree or disagree with Brent's idea? Why? (do this together)

#4 Prologue
You have finished your group project and have received a good grade.
PERSON 1: Compliment each group member for being so helpful.
PERSON 2: Be one of the other group members and also compliment everyone. Try to get them to be your facebook friends.
The protest

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions used in this series of role-plays:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreeing/disagreeing, giving directions, describing, rejecting</td>
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#1 The issue
It turns out that your city is thinking of passing a new law that increases taxes on rental properties. This will increase most people's rent by 10% per month. This extra revenue will be used to fund public art for the city and 2 new parks. You are having a discussion with your friend on the topic.

**PERSON 1:** Agree with the law and explain why you like it.
**PERSON 2:** Disagree with the law and explain why it is a bad idea.

#2 Finding the protest
You and your friend want to voice your opinions on this topic. You decided to go down to a local protest at city hall, where both sides are protesting.

**PERSON 1:** Look up directions to city hall and tell your friend how to get there from his dorm room.
**PERSON 2:** Listen to person 1 giving you directions. Write them down.

#3 Describing the scene
A mutual friend of yours, who is also a local radio reporter, wants to interview you about the protest by phone. She wants you to describe the scene of the protest.

**PERSON 1:** Tell the reporter what you see.
**PERSON 2:** Be the reporter. Ask person 1 several questions about what he/she is seeing.

#4 Uh oh
Your friend is a little worried about the protest becoming violent. He/she wants to know what he/she should do if it does.

**PERSON 1:** Tell person 2 what he or she should do in case of an emergency at the protest.
**PERSON 1:** Ask person 1 several questions about safety at protests.
The road trip

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
- persuasion
- making introductions
- complaining
- describing
- thanking

#1 The idea
It is winter break, with 6 days left until classes resume, and you and your two friends have run out of shows to watch on your DVR. Your friend, Pete, suggests that you go on a road trip to the beach, a trip that will take at least 2 days of driving. Your other friend Frank thinks this is an awful plan.

PERSON 1: Convince Frank to come along with you on this trip.
PERSON 2: You are Frank. Try to explain to your friends why the beach is an awful idea.

#2 The gamble
After doing a small budget and figuring out how much you can spend each night, you realize that the trip is going to be too expensive for the three of you. You decided to invite your female friend, Beth, to come along.

PERSON 1: Introduce her to your other two friends.
PERSON 2: You are Beth. Greet each of the members of the road trip.

#3 The game changer
It has been 12 stinky hours in a car and you have finally stopped at a hotel, but Beth is hungry because there were no vegan dishes at lunch at Beef-a-Roo restaurant. You have noticed that Pete has been looking at Beth all day.

PERSON 1: Try to suggest to Pete that he should go get dinner with Beth alone.
PERSON 2: You are Pete, try to get out of going on a date with Beth (who you find annoying).

#4 What have you done!
Well, things at dinner must have worked out since Pete and Beth have been snuggling together and acting annoyingly affectionate with each other all day now.

PERSON 1: Complain to Pete about his behavior. Remember you have to spend the next several days with these people, so be nice.
PERSON 2: You are Pete, Your friend is now complaining about you and Beth hanging out. Try to point out his hypocrisy and show that you are mad at him.

#5 Finally, the beach
You have finally arrived at the beach. Your mother is calling you and wants to know what the beach and your hotel looks like.

PERSON 1: Describe the hotel and beach to her.
PERSON 2: Ask person 1 several questions about the beach. Try to keep the conversation going for as long as you can.

#6 Going home
The road trip is over. Pete and Beth's epic romance lasted all of 13 hours, and the ride home was awkward and silent, but, overall, you had an awesome trip.

PERSON 1: Thank your friends for such a great time.
PERSON 2: Accept your friend's complement and try to begin to plan a trip for next year.
The storm

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
giving directions, thanking, accepting invitations, introducing yourself, complimenting, inviting

#1 Preface
It was a dark and stormy night. You have just come home from work and decide that you want to go for a quick jog. You put your running clothes on and head out the door. After you have been running for a couple of minutes, a stranger comes up to you and says that there is a tornado warning and that you should go inside.

PERSON 1: You see a stranger running in the rain. Tell them that there is a dangerous storm coming and that he/she should head to shelter.
PERSON 2: Thank the stranger and head for cover.

#2 Chapter 1
It turns out that the man wasn't telling a lie. The weather is getting worse and worse by the second. A man in a house sees you desperately trying to run home and says that you can wait out the storm in his house.

PERSON 1: Invite the jogger into your house.
PERSON 2: Accept his invitation, introduce yourself, and try to stay dry.

#3 Chapter 2
The man says that his name is Brian. He shows you around his house. He shows you his prized baseball card collection, his Native American artwork collection, a wonderful collection of exotic coffees and teas, among many other things.

PERSON 1: Compliment Brian for having such an interesting and clean house. Add other things that you might compliment someone on.
PERSON 2: You are Brian. Accept person 1’s compliment.

#4 Chapter 3
While Brian was showing you around, the storm has gotten worse. The power is out, and a tree has fallen through Brian’s house and cold air and rain are coming in through the roof.

PERSON 1: You are the jogger’s roommate. Call the jogger, tell him/her that you and your apartment are fine and the power is on.
PERSON 2: Invite Brian over to your house so he can stay safe and dry while he calls his insurance company.

#5 Chapter 4
PERSON 1: You are the roommate. You were asleep during the storm. Ask the jogger to describe the storm to you.
PERSON 2: Describe the storm to your roommate.
The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

**Functions used in this series of role-plays:**
- Persuasion, making suggestions, giving orders, getting directions, asking for help,
- comparing, describing a scene, agreeing/disagreeing

#1 Heading to the woods
It is a lovely, humid, 90-degree day. You want to go hiking but do not want to go by yourself.

**PERSON 1:** Try to persuade your friend into going hiking with you.
**PERSON 2:** Try to get out of going hiking.

#2 Getting packed
Your hike is going to take several hours and happen over lunch. Your friend wants to know what things he is going to need to pack.

**PERSON 1:** Tell your friend what you are packing for this hike, and give him suggestions for what he should bring.
**PERSON 2:** Make a list of items that you need to bring. Ask Person 1 where you can buy any of the items that you don't own.

#3 Finding the place
You haven't been hiking in several years so are not sure exactly where to go.

**PERSON 1:** Call your cousin and ask for directions to his/her favorite hiking place.
**PERSON 2:** You are the cousin. You cannot remember where your favorite spot is. Try to describe the spot to person 1.

#4 Get lost
You are on your hike. Your friend is already really bored. He has been asking you a bunch of questions about college. He just spent the past few years working, and recently decided that now he wants to go to college after all. He wants you to compare your high school experience to your university experience.

**PERSON 1:** Compare and contrast high school and college.
**PERSON 2:** Ask your friend about his high school and college experiences.

#5 The waterfall
After several hours of walking you have finally arrived at the waterfall you were looking for. Somehow you have cell phone reception here (full bars, go figure).

**PERSON 1:** Call your father and describe the scene to him.
**PERSON 2:** You are the father. Ask person 1 as many questions about the waterfall as possible.

#6 The way back
On the way back your friend gets hungry and eats some trailmix. After he finishes the mix he tosses the bag on the ground, asking out loud why the heck they don’t have garbage cans anywhere. Do you agree or disagree with what your friend did? Use reasons either way. (**do together**)
The restaurant

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
Suggestions, giving directions, persuasion, complaining, introducing, invitation, agree/disagree, thanking

#1 The date
You are about to go out on a date but are not sure which restaurant you should go to.
PERSON 1: Ask your friend for some suggestions.
PERSON 2: Tell Person 1 about your favorite restaurants.

#2 Getting there
You have decided on one of the options that your friend gave you. Your date is running late and will just meet you at the restaurant but doesn't know how to get there.
PERSON 1: Make up directions for the restaurant.
PERSON 2: Write down the directions that person 1 gave you.

#3 Not sure
You have been at this restaurant several times, but your date has not. (look for a menu online)
PERSON 1: Give her several suggestions on things you like but try to persuade him/her into getting your favorite dish.
PERSON 2: Ask person 1 several questions about the dishes available.

#4 Not up to standards
The food was ok but the service was terrible tonight.
PERSON 1: Complain to the manager about the bad service you received. Remember you are trying to make a good impression on your date so don't act like too much of a jerk.
PERSON 2: You are the manager. Take the criticism and offer solutions to the problem.

#5 The park
After supper, you decide to go on a walk through a local park. You run into a coworker.
PERSON 1: Introduce your date to your coworker.
PERSON 2: You are the coworker. Try to make small talk with person 1 and his/her date.

#6 The cold night
The night was colder than you thought it would be.
PERSON 1: Invite your date to go back to your house for some coffee.
PERSON 2: Accept the invitation of person 1
You and your date are having a very nice discussion on local politics. Your date thinks that the city should raise taxes in order to open up a new art museum. Do you agree or disagree with your date? Provide reasons to support your argument. (do together)

#8 Ending it with class
The night has been very nice overall.

PERSON 1: Thank your date for being so much fun and try to set up a follow up date.
PERSON 2: Decide if you want to go on another date. Act accordingly.
The computer

The next several role-plays are connected. Person 1 is the “main” character, who is the same person throughout the story. Person 2 plays a few different roles.

Functions used in this series of role-plays:
Asking for help, agree/disagree, thanking, refusing, making suggestions,

#1 The night before your paper is due
It is 2 am and you have been writing your final paper for the last 6 hours. You have been dutifully saving your file every 20 minutes and you are almost finished. Your computer just made this sound: buzzzzwhompwhomppupputput. It turns out that your computer is dead and your paper is stuck on it.

PERSON 1: Call your friend, who is good with computers, and ask him to come help you fix your computer.
PERSON 2: You are apparently the only person on the planet who can help. Offer some suggestions to your friend and then agree to come over and help.

#2 The plan
Your friend comes over and takes one look at your computer and decides that it is broken beyond repair.

PERSON 1: You are the computer guy. You think that person 2 should just rewrite the paper. He/she does have 8 hours before it is due. Try to convince person 2 to rewrite the paper.
PERSON 1: Do you agree or disagree with person 1. Provide support.

#3 Be gracious
Your friend has done all he can for tonight.

PERSON 1: Thank the computer guy for coming over and being so nice at such a late (early) hour.
PERSON 2: Try to set up a fun night out with person 1 for after she/he has turned in his/her paper.

#4 The next day
You have just turned your paper in and you have not slept in over 24 hours. Your friend (the one who came to fix your computer) still wants to know if you want to go out and celebrate the end of the semester.

PERSON 1: Refuse his invitation, provide a reason.
PERSON 2: Offer alternative plans for the next night.

#5 After some sleep
After some much needed sleep it is the next night, and time to go out with your friend.

PERSON 1: Make some suggestions on different places you can go and try to come up with a fun night with your friend.
PERSON 2: Make some suggestions on different places you can go and try to come up with a fun night with your friend.