Building Conversation Strategies

Overview

• What are Conversation Strategies?
• Why are they important?
• How can we teach them to our students?
Building Conversation Strategies

Who is this loser?

1988

1997

2000
Building Conversation Strategies
Examples of Conversation Strategies

- Keeping a conversation going
- Starting and ending a conversation
- Reacting to news
- Being polite
- Showing interest
- Confirming details, Asking for clarification...

Plus...
Building Conversation Strategies
Importance of Conversation Strategies

L1 natural, instinctive

L2 students need help!
Building Conversation Strategies
Teaching Conversation Strategies

Vocabulary-driven phrases/expressions
Using models context/practice
Structured approach present-practice-review
Strategy: Reacting to news

a Complete each conversation with an expression.

Congratulations   Good for him   How exciting
It’s OK   That sounds interesting   That’s too bad

1 “I’ve just gotten a new job.” “That’s great news._________!”
2 “Sorry I forgot your birthday last week.” “_________ . I don’t mind.”
3 “Lucy and Brad have broken up.” “_________ . What a shame.”
4 “Ian has decided to give up smoking.” “_________ . It’s about time.”
5 “Jack has started doing karate.” “_________ . I’d like to try that, too.”
6 “Tim and I have decided to go traveling.” “_________ ! I bet it’ll be fantastic.”

b Listen and check. Then practice the conversations with a partner.
**Strategy: Responding with That’s …**

**a Complete each conversation with an exclamation.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>That’s cheap</th>
<th>That’s crazy</th>
<th>That’s fantastic</th>
<th>That’s slow</th>
<th>That’s strange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

1. “Guess what? I’ve finally passed my driving test!”
   “_________! Congratulations.”
2. “John’s left his briefcase here.”
   “_________. He usually takes it home with him.”
3. “I bought this cell phone for $60, you know.”
   “_________! Mine’s the same and it cost nearly $90.”
4. “Unfortunately, they said I wasn’t a good candidate for the job.”
   “_________! You have all the qualifications and experience they need.”
5. “This computer takes nearly a minute to download one song.”
   “_________. Maybe you should check your internet connection.”

**b Listen and check. Then practice the conversations with a partner.**
Present functional language in context
Practice using models
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Speaking strategy: Asking for permission

1. You can use the expressions in bold to ask for permission.
   - Is it OK if I watch TV?
   - Do you think I could make a cup of coffee?
   - Would you mind if I invite a friend for dinner?

Speak up!

2. Use the table below to make sentences asking for permission.
   Example: Do you think I could make a cup of tea?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is it OK if I ...</th>
<th>turn up</th>
<th>a bath?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think I could ...</td>
<td>go out</td>
<td>the washing machine?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you mind if I ...</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>the heating?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>use</td>
<td>with some friends tonight?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>make</td>
<td>a cup of tea?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Imagine you are staying with a family. You want to do these things. Ask for permission politely.
   Example: a
   You say: Is it OK if I use the washing machine?
   a say: Is it OK if I use the washing machine?
   b say: Is it OK if I go out?
   c say: Is it OK if I make a cup of tea?
Building Conversation Strategies
Teaching Conversation Strategies

Present functional language in context

Practice using models
  - controlled
  - less controlled
  - free / personalization
Eliciting from a text

Eliciting from a text

Speaking – Reacting to what you hear

Speaking strategy:
Responding to information

1. Look at the expressions you can use to respond with interest. Listen again to the conversation between Teresa and Ang and tick the expressions you hear.
   
   Oh yes. Oh, really? That’s interesting. I didn’t know that. That’s good. How amazing!

Speak up!

2. Listen to each statement and respond using one of the expressions above. If possible, ask a question, too.

   Example:
   
   You hear: a
   I’m from Manchester.
   You say: Really? What’s it like?

   practice +
Strategy: Maintaining a conversation

A: My brother likes traveling.
B: Does he?

a Respond to each of these statements with a short question.

1. I went to Africa last year on vacation. Did you?
2. These books were written by my uncle.
3. Most things are manufactured in China these days.
4. I think that movie was directed by Steven Spielberg.
5. The soccer World Cup is held every four years.

b Listen and check. Then practice the conversations with a partner.
B Listening – Making small talk

1 Kerri, from Ireland, is at a party in a friend’s home. Listen to two conversations (A and B) she has with people she meets. Circle the correct answer.

Who …

a talks about himself? Tim / Nick
b responds to information? Tim / Nick
c doesn’t ask questions? Tim / Nick
d shows interest? Tim / Nick
e asks lots of questions? Tim / Nick

2 Which conversation is more successful? Why? Listen again and note your ideas.

Deduce

✓ Asking follow-up questions
✓ Using question tags
✓ Reply questions
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Teaching Conversation Strategies

**Present** functional language in context

**Practice** using models
- controlled
- less controlled
- free / personalization

**Elicit**

**Contrast**

**Deduce**
Building Conversation Strategies

*Plus... conversation fillers*

**a 2.08 Listen and read.**

Jo: **Hey, Kevin. Can I have these CDs, please?**
Kevin: **Sure, Jo. Hey, what’s this? You don’t like jazz!**
Jo: **I know. It’s my brother’s birthday tomorrow, so they’re a present for him. Anyway, are you enjoying your new job?**
Kevin: **It’s OK, I guess. I need the money.**
Jo: **You don’t sound very happy about it. Are you sure you’re OK?**
Kevin: **Well, it’s my boss.**
Jo: **Oh, no. What’s he like?**
Kevin: **He’s not very friendly. And I work hard all day, but he doesn’t do anything. He’s terrible!**
Jo: **Oh. That’s too bad. Er, what does he look like?**
Kevin: **He’s fairly tall and he has glasses. Why?**
Jo: **Because I think he’s standing behind you.**
Kevin: **What? No way. You’re kidding, right?**

**Showcase fillers & idiomatic language**

**b Practice the conversation with a partner.**
Building Conversation Strategies

A varied approach

Important!

- Students must use strategies
- Students need to personalize
- Frequent review (conscious >> sub-conscious)

Can students be tested on their ability to use conversation strategies?
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Miles is author or co-author of several best-selling courses for adults and young adults, including Get Real!, Reading Keys, English Grammar in Use Extra, Cambridge English Skills, Listening Extra, Quizzes, Questionnaires and Puzzles, Breakthrough Plus and Q. He has written many articles and online materials, and regularly presents at conferences and workshops. He also acts as an advisor for Executive Education programs at The Møller Centre for Continuing Education Ltd., Churchill College, University of Cambridge, specializing in the design and delivery of management training programs for aspiring business leaders.

His research focuses on developing skills and strategies to help learners become more confident communicators, as well as improve their exam performance.
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