

Socialising (5): From contact to partner

Topic: Socialising and moving from contact to partner

Aims:

- To discuss techniques and potential problems connected with moving from superficial relationships towards friendship and partnership;
- To introduce a range of functions and exponents for inviting, insisting, accepting, refusing, etc.
- To practise the language and skills in a series of controlled and freer role-plays.

Level: Intermediate (B2) and above

Introduction

While it is natural to focus on the challenge of starting conversations with strangers and keeping these conversations going, the real purpose of socialising is to turn these contacts into partners or even friends. Even a simple task like inviting a person out to a restaurant can cause embarrassment and stress. For this reason, this lesson includes discussions of why such situations are difficult, as well as plenty of practice.

1. Lead-in

Write the following questions on the board.

- a. What can you do to turn a new acquaintance (e.g. someone you have met at a conference) into a long-term business contact or even a friend?
- b. Why is this important?
- c. Why can it be difficult?
- d. How can you overcome these problems?

Students discuss the three questions in pairs or groups of three. After a few minutes, open up the discussion to include the whole class. Note that Suggested answers to these questions are given in the Reading text.

2. Reading

Distribute copies of the reading text so that each student has a copy. Students read the text to find suggested answers to the questions from the board. They discuss their answers in pairs before feeding back to the class. Encourage plenty of discussion on the issues raised in the text.

Suggested answers

- a. Follow up your meeting with an email; connect on a social networking site; invite the other person for a meal; offer them a lift (or share a walk back to the hotel); helping them in some way (e.g. buy them a coffee).
- b. We need to do something different, to give the other person a better chance of remembering who we are.
- c. It may feel like flirting; it can be unpleasant if they turn down your invitation; you may force the other person to do something they don't want to do.
- d. Invite several people at the same time, or make it clear that the person you are inviting may bring a friend; phrase your invitation in such a way that you can

pretend later that it wasn't really an invitation; signal that the other person can say no without being embarrassed.

3. Conversations

Make enough copies of the three conversations for students to work in pairs. Cut the worksheets along the dotted lines to make sets of slips, which you can hold together with a paper clip. You should have three sets of slips per pair.

Give each pair the first set of slips (a–j) and tell them to put the conversation in order. Point out that the first line is marked (1). You could make this a race. As soon as the first pair has finished, give them the second set, again pointing out that the first line is marked (11). Do the same with the third set of slips, where the first line is marked (19). The pair which successfully sorts all three conversations first is the winner.

While early finishers are waiting for other pairs to finish, you could ask them to underline useful phrases from the conversations which they could use in real life.

When you check the answers, elicit some useful phrases from the conversations (see next worksheets for examples).

Answers

1e 2j 3c 4h 5f 6a 7d 8i 9g 10b 11q 12m 13p 14k 15r 16n 17l 18o 19y
20v 21u 22t 23w 24x 25s

4. Functions and phrases

Distribute the two worksheets to students, so that they have a copy each. Students then work in pairs to complete the phrases from memory, and then look back at the slips of paper to check their answers. When you go through the answers with the class, elicit some more examples of exponents (= useful phrases) for each function.

Answers

- Asking about plans: do you have any plans; about you; are you doing
- Talking about your tentative plans: I was thinking of; thought I might;
- Inviting: don't suppose; be very welcome
- Testing whether an offer / invitation is serious: don't know; are you sure
- Suggesting: supposed to be; Shall we say
- Allowing the other person to say 'no': up to you
- Politely refusing: dream of it; fine, thanks
- Accepting: know what; fair enough
- Offering help/ kindness: can call me; allow me to; offer you a lift
- Explaining why your kindness is 'no 'big deal': put it on my; kind enough to; a problem; my pleasure
- Insisting: must allow me to; I insist
- Thanking: very kind of you; for inviting
- Making an excuse: I need some
- Dealing with a refusal: was just going to suggest

5. Conversations – practice

Students work in pairs to role-play the three conversations from exercise 3. They should try to remember what was said without simply reading from the slips, although they may check the slips to help themselves to remember. They then choose ten slips of paper to turn face down, and try to repeat the role-plays using only the 15 slips that are still face-up. Finally, they choose another ten slips to turn over, and try to repeat the role-play using only five face-up slips.

If you have an odd number of students, you will need to have one group of three, where students swap roles (A, B and observer) after each conversation.

6. Role-play map

Print and distribute enough copies of the worksheet for students to have one per pair or group of three.

Students take turns to start conversations, using the prompts to guide them. Point out that students will need to expand on the prompts: a simple yes or no, for example, is not acceptable. Instead, they should use as many phrases from the Functions and phrases worksheet as possible. Encourage them to repeat each conversation several times so they have a chance to explore all the different routes on the map.

As a follow-up, students repeat the role-plays without looking at the maps or the list of functions and phrases. Monitor carefully, and be ready to give and elicit feedback on students' performance.