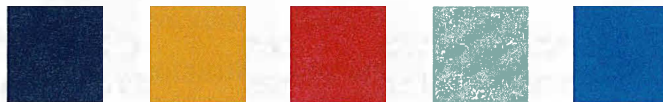


English 620: Classroom Communication for International Teaching
Assistants | Student Course Reader and Handbook

SECTION 3

INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION (IC)



IC: GOALS FOR INTERACTIVE CONVERSATION (IC) IN ENGLISH

Skills and practices for informal, spontaneous conversations, discussions, and other informal, face-to-face verbal interactions of a primarily social nature (i.e., not specific to your academic field). ***IC Assessment evaluation criteria correspond to these goals.***

INTERACTIVE UNDERSTANDING (CORE INTERACTIVE SKILLS)

Understand what your conversation partner says, or reach an understanding. Be understood by your conversation partner. Communicate to your partner your understanding or lack thereof. Observe your partner's apparent comprehension or lack of comprehension, and respond appropriately.

- **Indicating Comprehension:** Give verbal and/or nonverbal indications of having understood or not understood what was said to you, and do so in a timely fashion (i.e., immediately or very soon).

- **Seeking Clarification:** When you do not understand, or are not sure, or need more information in order to understand fully, ask for what you need in order to reach a better understanding, e.g., by asking for repetition, spelling, explanation, or definition.
- **Providing Clarification:** If your speaking partner does not understand you or needs more information, provide her with what she needs to help her better understand you.

ACTIVE LISTENING

Give appropriate, sufficient, and varied verbal and nonverbal feedback to what your conversation partner says, to show your ongoing attention, interest, understanding, point of view, and feelings.

- **Eye Contact and Body Language:** Sit upright facing your conversation partner. Maintain appropriate eye contact throughout the conversation. (e.g., Look at you partner most of the time while she is talking and at least half the time while you are talking.) Keep arms/hands visible (not hidden under the table). Lean slightly towards your partner from time to time.
- **Feedback:** While your partner holds the speaking turn, give non-verbal feedback (facial expressions, movements such as nodding or shaking your head back and forth, shrugging shoulders), and varied verbal feedback (such as noises and interjections, small-words, indications of agreement or disagreement).

CONVERSATION MANAGEMENT

Effectively initiate, sustain, and end a face-to-face conversation.

- **Initiating, Transitioning, and Closing:** Effectively and idiomatically begin an informal conversation or discussion (e.g., by using formulaic expressions and sequences of exchanges). Make successful transitions between topics and parts of the conversation. Appropriately and idiomatically end a conversation or discussion, without being too abrupt (e.g., by using close-initiating strategies before ending), or leaving confusion as to whether the conversation is over.
- **Sustaining and Turn-Taking:** Participate actively in and keep a conversation or discussion going by asking and answering questions, providing and asking for information and opinions, following up on information your partner provides. Take turns speaking. Ask your partner what they think, rather than only talking yourself. (Avoid long periods of silence between turns, don't monopolize the conversation by not allowing your partner sufficient turns to speak, don't remain silent while your partner does all the talking.)

IC ASSESSMENT EVALUATION SCALES AND RUBRICS

Table 5. Interactive understanding. (Level 3 = advanced, level 2 = intermediate, 1 = novice)

Level	Demonstrating Comprehension	Seeking Clarification	Providing Clarification
3	Consistently acknowledges receipt of and level of understanding of partner's turn by use of smallwords and echoing. Answers questions immediately and appropriately.	Consistently asks questions or uses other means to clarify the meaning of partner's terms, concepts or intent. Checks understanding of partner's turn with paraphrasing or summarizing questions or statements. Helps partner when needed. Comes to an understanding with partner.	When partner asks, always provides appropriate and successful clarification. Consistently notices when partner has not understood and makes unsolicited clarification when needed. Helps partner understand.
2	Sometimes acknowledges receipt and level of understanding of partner's turn by use of smallwords and echoing. Answers questions but not always immediately or appropriately.	Occasionally asks questions or uses other means to clarify partner's meaning. Checks understanding with paraphrasing or summarizing questions or statements. Occasionally appears not to realize that clarification is needed. Some lack of understanding between partners.	Attempts to provide clarification when partner asks, but is not always successful. Sometimes notices when partner does not understand. Sometimes provides unsolicited clarification when needed by partner.
1	Rarely or never acknowledges receipt or understanding of partner's turn by use of smallwords and echoing. Often does not answer questions immediately or appropriately.	Rarely or never asks for clarification when needed. Rarely or never checks understanding with paraphrasing or summarizing questions or statements. Often appears not to realize that clarification is needed. Misunderstanding is evident more than once.	Often or always unable to provide successful clarification when asked by partner. Rarely or never appears to notice partner's lack of understanding or rarely or never addresses it. Does not provide partner with unsolicited clarification.

Table 6. Active listening. (Level 3 = advanced, level 2 = intermediate, 1 = novice)

Level	Eye Contact and Body Language	Providing Feedback
3	Sits upright, facing partner. Leans slightly forward towards partner from time to time. Arms/hands visible most of the time (not hidden under the table). While speaking, looks at partner about half of the time. Looks directly at partner most of the time while partner is speaking.	While partner has the speaking turn, consistently provides partner with varied feedback including facial expressions, body movements, and verbal expressions that may include lexical and non-lexical utterances. Feedback is meaningful in the context of the conversation and provides partner with information and encouragement.
2	Sits upright but does not always face partner directly. May lean back slightly away from partner. Arms/hands are not visible much of the time. Eye contact with partner may be somewhat lacking.	Provides feedback that is somewhat limited either in quantity or in type. (For example, nods but does not give verbal feedback, or does not have any facial expression.) Provides feedback that is not meaningful or sincere (does so in a rote manner that does not provide partner with meaningful information or sincere encouragement).
1	Posture is not upright or is leaning backwards as if to avoid partner. Avoids looking at partner.	Provides feedback that is very limited in quantity and meaning, or does not provide feedback.

Table 7. Conversation management. (Level 3 = advanced, level 2 = intermediate, 1 = novice)

Level	Initiating, Transitioning, Closing	Sustaining and Turn-taking
3	Begins conversation with idiomatic small talk. Consistently transitions to new parts or topics using small words or other effective means. Uses pre-closing signals such as small words with higher pitch or formulaic expressions. Ends conversation unambiguously and idiomatically.	Shares speaking turns equitably with partner. Leaves no silent gaps between speaking turns. Consistently provides unsolicited new information. Asks questions and answers questions. Follows up on what partner says with responses, comments, and questions.
2	Opens conversation with some small talk, but may be insufficient amount, or language used is not idiomatic. Uses some transition signals but not consistently or signals may be unidiomatic or awkward. Pre-closing signals or statements used, but language is not idiomatic or signals are awkward.	Some inequality of speaking turns: either talks a little too much or not quite enough. May be responsible for some silence between turns. Sometimes does not respond sufficiently to what partner says. Provides some unsolicited information. May treat the situation like an interview rather than an informal conversation.
1	Little or no small talk to begin conversation before introducing topic. Abrupt transitions between parts and topics. Lack of pre-closing signals. Characterized by unidiomatic language used to open and close conversation and abrupt transitions.	Dominates conversation, not allowing partner to speak sufficiently, or does not speak enough, leaving partner to carry the burden of keeping the conversation going. Provides little unsolicited information (waits for partner to ask a question before speaking, for example.) Doesn't comment on or ask questions about what partner says. Does not always respond to partner's questions. Responsible for awkward silences.

ASKING FOR AND PROVIDING CLARIFICATION; INDICATING COMPREHENSION

Table 8.

Asking for Clarification	Providing Clarification	Indicating Comprehension
Are you asking ...?	Yes, that's right. No, I was asking/I want to know ...	OK, I get it. OK, I understand.
Do you mean ...?	Yes, ... For example ... No, what I mean is/what I meant was ...	OK, I think I understand what you mean.
I want to know (if) ...	OK, let me answer that.	So you want to know (if) ...
Are you saying (that) ...?	Yes, I'm saying (that) ... No, what I'm saying is ...	OK, now I understand. You're saying that ...
So you think that ...?	Yes, that's right. No, what I think is ...	OK, now I understand. You think ...

Table 9. Smallwords and their functions.

Function	Small Words and Phrases That Can Be Used
Change the topic	Say,/Hey,/So,/By the way,
Introduce new info	Did you know ... /Here's something I learned ...
Continue a topic	Another thing is,
Begin a response	Well,/You know,/Actually,/In fact
Indicate comprehension	Okay,/I see,/Uh huh
Indicate agreement	Right/I know/No kidding/Yeah
Indicate attention	Okay/Oh/Ah/Yeah/Uh huh
Express an opinion	I think/I mean/In my opinion
Hedge, minimize	Just/sort of/kind of/a bit/,or something
Maximize	Really/_____/very_____/super_____
Indicate surprise	Really!/You're kidding!/For heaven's sake!
Indicate disagreement	Actually,/But,/In fact,/Not really
Pre-closing	Anyway,/Oh well,/OK (higher tone and pitch)/That's all for now

Table 10. Indicating comprehension of questions during conversation.

Question	Response
What time does the second performance begin?	The second performance? It begins at 8:00.
What did you do last summer?	Last summer? I worked in a restaurant.
How will I know if my application has been received?	How will know that your application has been received? You will have to call or stop by the office and ask the office manager.
Where is the party?	Where? It's at the ...
When did you arrive in the United States?	When did I arrive? Yesterday