

**Conversation task:**  
**Keeping the Conversation going**

**At a glance**

**Level:** ISE II

**Task:** Collaborative task

**Focus:** Matching appropriate comments to statements, choosing follow-up questions and replacing comments with alternatives

**Aims:** To encourage interaction and conversation development by making comments and using follow-up questions

**Objectives:** To learn and practise using appropriate comments, understand the function of comments, practise turn-taking and use questions to provoke further conversation

**Lexis:** Various - Showing interest (sympathy, disbelief, surprise) news, work, politics, medicine and economics

**Topic:** Social English - extending the conversation

**Language Functions:** Responding appropriately to interactions, eliciting further information and speculating.

**Materials needed:** One student worksheet per student

**Timing:** 45 minutes

**Procedure**

**Preparation**

Photocopy one student worksheet per student.

**Procedure**

1. Ask students to say how we can make a conversation interactive (e.g. making comments, asking questions and checking they heard correctly). Write these techniques on the board. Tell the students that they need to engage and interact with the examiner in the ISE II Speaking & Listening exam and they can do this by using these techniques. Elicit the three parts of the speaking exam from the students (Topic task, Collaborative task, Conversation task) and write these on the board next to the techniques. Ask the students in which part or parts can they use the techniques (the collaborative and conversation parts). Tell them that today in class they are going to

learn and practise ways to keep a conversation going and make it more interactive and engaging.

2. Give out the student worksheet and ask the students to look at the table in Task 1. Tell the students that they are going to link the comments and follow-up questions to the statements made ('you hear this') individually. Tell the students that there may be more than one answer but to choose the most natural one. Do one together as a class to show the students how it is done. Point to number 1 'I've decided not to vote any political elections ever' and ask them to choose an appropriate comment. Allow them one minute to read through all the comments. Accept all suggestions but say that 'I'm not surprised' is the most natural one. Then ask them to choose a follow up question. Again allow them a minute to do this. Accept their suggestions but tell them 'Can we really ever trust politicians' is the most natural one. Allow them 5 minutes to do this exercise and then when they have finished ask them to check their answers in pairs. Then check this as a class.
3. Tell the students that the comments all have different purposes. Write 'Really' on the board and elicit what the listener is trying to express with this comment (answer = interest/surprise). Ask the students what the effect on the speaker is when they hear the listener making a comment like this. (They will be encouraged to continue to speak) Now ask the students to look at Task 2 which requires the students to find and write the correct function in the column. (Faster students can check in pairs if they have finished). Check as a class that the students understand the meaning of each comment and have matched it to the right function.
4. Tell the students they are going to look at some alternatives for the comments they have already seen. Ask the students to focus on Task 3 where they have to decide in pairs which of the comments they could use to replace the ones in the table. They should choose the most appropriate comment for the statement e.g. 'That's terrible' with 'How awful'. Encourage them to discuss possibilities with their partners using the language of speculation e.g. 'This could be the right answer.' 'Do you think this one might be right?'. Do feedback as a class.
5. Ask the students to think of any other comments to go into the function boxes (Task 4). Give them an example and write on the board next to 'Really', 'That's fascinating'. Put them in groups of three and allow them five minutes to do this.
6. Put students in pairs and label them Student A and Student B. Ask the students in pairs to read their statements in Task 5 to each other.

Their partner should respond with an appropriate comment and follow up question. Give an example and ask the students to comment and give a follow up answer. Say aloud 'I just heard that we might have to reduce our school summer holidays' and accept students' comments and follow up questions.

**Further support activity**

Lower level students in pairs practise reading the statements to each other without looking at the responses and follow-up questions. They should remember the ones which were used.

**Extended activity**

Ask the higher level students to prepare three statements each that are relevant to their lives right now. Their partner will respond appropriately with comments and follow-up questions.

**Student worksheet:**

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**Task 1**

Choose the best comments and follow up questions for the statements below in the first column. Your teacher will do the first one together with you as an example. There may be more than one possible answer.

<b>You hear this</b>	<b>Your comment</b>	<b>Your Follow-Up question</b>
1. I've decided not to vote in any political elections ever.	a. Mmmm. That's unlikely.	i) Don't you think you'd feel isolated?
2. I've heard that a huge amount of oil has just been found in my country	b. I'm not surprised	ii) But what could be the reason behind that?
3. My perfect house would be high in the mountains.	c. That's always good to hear.	iii) Could this have an impact on the price of petrol for car drivers?
4. Many celebrities like to get involved in charity work.	d. Really?	iv) What proof is there to support that?
5. I heard that constant texting can cause brain disorders.	e. How awful	v) How long have you had yours?
6. The government in my country has extended the school day by one hour each day.	f. That's good news	vi) Can you ever really trust politicians?
7. About 85% of the world's population now own a mobile phone.	g. Sorry I didn't catch that.	vii) Do you mean it's worth working for nothing?
8. The benefits of doing unpaid work experience outweigh the drawbacks.	h. That's incredible.	viii) How have the students reacted?

## Task 2

**Now match the following functions to the comments in the middle column above.**

Sympathy, surprise, bad news, good news, giving an opinion, showing doubt, disbelief, checking understanding

Comment	Function
Mmmm. That's unlikely.	showing doubt
I'm not surprised	
That's always good to hear.	
Really?	
How awful	
That's good news	
Sorry I didn't catch that.	
That's incredible.	

## Task 3

**Which of these comments could you use instead of the ones above?**

**Add them to the table.**

That's amazing. That's terrible. Poor you. That's a shame. That's great. I doubt it.

That's annoying. Lucky you. No way. I didn't follow that.

**Task 4**

**Now add some of your own comments to the table.** E.g. *Showing doubt – I'm not sure about that.* Work in groups of three.

**Task 5**

**Student A read the following statements and Student B makes comments and follow up questions to form a natural conversation.**

- a. Our teachers are planning to takes up on a weeklong boat trip to explore the sea bed.
- b. The funding for our local youth club has been cut.
- c. My parents say that our next holiday will be a city break of visiting museums and art galleries.

**Student B reads the following. Student B makes comments and follow up questions.**

- a. My local sports stadium has just closed down for refurbishment.
- b. NASA has just discovered eight earth-like planets outside our solar system.
- c. The internet in the computer room is down yet again.

**Answers:**

**Task 2**

1, b, vi), 2, f, iii 3, d, I 4, c, ii, 5 d, iv, 6, e, viii, 7, h, v 8, g vii.

**Task 3**

- a. showing doubt
- b. giving an opinion
- c. surprise
- d. checking understanding/disbelief
- e. sympathy
- f. good news
- g. checking understanding
- h. surprise

**Task 4**

That's amazing. – surprise

That's awful. – sympathy

Poor you – sympathy

That's great. - good news

That can't be true - doubt

That's annoying – sympathy

No way – disbelief

I didn't follow that – checking understanding