

Nice Talking with YOU 1



Teacher's Manual

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Introduction

Why we wrote this textbook

Like many teachers of English as a foreign language, we were frustrated with the way our students responded to traditional conversation textbooks. By watching and listening to our students, several challenges became apparent:

- We found that students lacked the basic language for reacting to their partners, dealing with their communication problems, and for beginning, continuing, and ending their conversations.
- They seemed to forget language they learned before as soon as new material was introduced.
- Often the language that they were practicing wasn't the kind that they needed for real conversation anyway. (It was largely transactional language, rather than interactional.)
- During oral practice, they slipped into their first language easily.
- Often they left their language lessons with no way to gauge how they were performing and nothing to show for their practice.
- While most of them seemed to want to speak English, they did not see their classroom practice as much of a challenge or as contributing to the development of any kind of goal.

Below are some of the ideas that we came up with to address these problems.

1. To fix our students' lack of basic, useful language, we made the practice and internalization of selected conversation strategies the focus of our course. We believe that the conversation strategies in this book represent basic lexical phrases that false beginners need to master: the things they need to say to fix communication problems, give feedback, and maintain conversations. Additionally, so students will remember the conversation strategies they learned in previous units, they are recycled throughout the text.
2. To help our students practice real conversation (rather than role-play dialogues or information-gap activities, which seem to be the culminating oral activity of most conversation textbooks), we designed a framework in which our students could have basic spontaneous conversations on simple topics. Within timed conversations, students can practice more freely the conversation strategies they are learning. They also stay in "English only" more. We have found that timed conversations provide the ideal stage upon which learners work to outperform their competence.
3. To show our students that their conversation practice is valuable for improving their speaking ability, between timed conversations we encourage them to actively reflect on the language they hear and use in their conversations. By noticing language in their input and output, students learn that their conversation practice is a time for learning things from their partners, checking to see if they are using target language items, and testing their ideas about English.
4. To give our students a sense of how everything they do in the classroom contributes to our overall vision for their language learning, we give them a short-term goal: by the end of the year, they will be able to speak English only in a four-minute, fluent conversation. (By fluent we mean that (1) they will be speaking faster than they could before, and (2) they will have no unfilled silences.) For most of our students, this is a formidable goal as, at the beginning of the semester, they are clearly unable to perform such a feat. We have found that students become more motivated when challenged with an explicit goal for their practice.

In developing *Nice Talking with You's* unique design, we started with a question: What do we want our students to be able to say and do by the time they are finished with our class? We believe our primary responsibility should be to focus on a goal for our students' learning and then to give them a clear process by which they can achieve it. In this way, the focus on goal and process creates a synergy – the benefit is greater than just the sum of its parts. In so doing, we view our role as helping people as learners of a language, rather than simply engaging students in a classroom. Only if learners also share this vision can they then begin to take responsibility for their future language learning. Of this especially we are convinced.

Conversation strategies

What are conversation strategies?

The term “conversation strategies” is often used but usually not well-defined. We define conversation strategies broadly as techniques learners use to maintain their conversations, solve communication problems, and give feedback to their partners. Each technique is exemplified through one or more lexical phrases or expressions. We further define conversation strategies by describing what they are not: they are not vocabulary items or idioms; they are not topic questions; indeed, they are not even topic-specific. They are relatively limited in number, and mastery of them and the related phrases goes a long, long way.

Conversation strategies form the focal point of *Nice Talking with You*. We have provided controlled and free practice activities for each, and we support this with listening and noticing activities. We do this in order to maximize the opportunity for learners to turn input into intake and use their newly incorporated conversation strategies as the foundation of their improvement in fluency.

Is there any special arrangement to the conversation strategies in the text?

The majority of conversation strategies in the first few units focus on increasing student interaction in conversation. The later units focus more on strategies for problem solving and conversational maintenance. Throughout the text, conversation strategies are recycled. For these reasons, we strongly recommend that the units be done in the presented order.

Why “Noticing”?

In each of the units, we have included noticing activities. We feel that training students to notice is an important role of a language-learning class. The following is a very basic and simplified explanation of why we train our students to notice features in language. We have kept our terms and concepts intentionally simple. Please refer to the bibliography if you would like to learn more about this essential issue in second-language acquisition.

Krashen’s Input Hypothesis was for many years the predominant framework for explaining how learners learn a language. The basic premise of the hypothesis is that learners acquire language unconsciously by listening to language just beyond their ability. If they receive enough language at the right level and in the right environment, then they are on the route to becoming successful speakers. Language learning researchers, however, are finding evidence contrary to Krashen’s theory. They feel, as do the authors, that consciousness plays a much larger role in learning a language than was previously thought. In order to learn a language, we must notice features in the language. What we don’t notice, we cannot learn. This is true for pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, as well as cultural aspects of the language.

Although higher frequency occurrence of a language item can increase our chances of noticing something, frequency doesn’t always dictate what we come to be able to say. What we are able to notice has more significance. Here are two findings that have contributed to the conclusion that learning is a conscious process and thus that training in noticing is an important skill that students need in order to be successful speakers:

- In a comprehensive study of a beginner learner of conversational Portuguese, researchers found that the learner, an adult male, used what he was taught if he heard it and noticed it. It wasn’t enough for the form to be taught and drilled in class. Unless the form was consciously noticed in the input, the learner was unable to use it in his output.
- Native English speakers in French Immersion schools start taking their classes in French from as early as kindergarten. The students are able to understand their teachers, gain knowledge in individual subjects in French, but they do not reach native-like production competency despite 12 years in an ideal acquisition environment. Researchers have pointed out that one reason for their failure to do so is because the learners are not conscious of language to the point of noticing forms in the language. Getting the gist of what someone says will allow learners to retrieve meaning but not many other important features of the language such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. They can understand something by putting vocabulary together and guessing, but this level of understanding is not enough to be able to speak.

Until quite recently, the concept of noticing had been confined to research dealing with native input. Although it is very important to provide students with a large amount of native-speaker “correct” input, research now shows that noticing one’s own output also has benefits. When students produce language, it can help them notice what they can say and what they can’t say. They notice the gaps in their language, and this leads them to work on removing these gaps by learning new words and testing their hypotheses about forms that are beyond their present level of ability. An additional benefit that comes from focusing on production is that structures become more automatic and easily produced.

As we learn more about the active role speaking has in learning a language, we have become convinced that students have much to benefit from even when they speak with their non-native-speaking classmates. These findings have resulted in the introduction of at least three unit activities in *Nice Talking with You*.

Do it! Timed conversations

We must provide students with opportunities to produce language. In this way, they can test their hypotheses about language. With no opportunities to produce, students will not know what they can say and what they cannot say.

Do it! Noticing my partner’s English

We need to design activities that encourage students to notice their own language and the language of their partners. This noticing provides immediate benefits for their interactions with partners in the classroom. Students can learn many things about language from their classmates. Also since their classmates are near-peer role models, their language often provides the optimal level of input.

Conversation listening: Noticing the conversation strategies

After we present a conversation strategy, students engage in a listening activity that has them notice the use of the strategy. They then practice conversations with the goal of using the strategy in their conversation. This leads to noticing practice, where they use the conversation strategies and notice the use of the strategy in their partners’ language or their own.

The most important point of all these activities is to provide students with consciousness-raising activities. We believe that explaining the importance of noticing and training students to perform this skill will allow them to heighten their learning in the classroom and learn more from any input.

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Music

Conversation strategies

Asking for examples / Tripling your reaction

Likes and dislikes

Page 39

You can do this in class as a warm-up or assign it for homework and have students review it in pairs at the beginning of the lesson.

- Encourage students to visit the Web site www.nicetalkingwithyou.com, where they can share opinions with people around the world.

Words and phrases

Page 39

You can do this in class or assign it for homework. Have students work on their own or in small groups.

- Tell the students that this is a list of key words and phrases for the unit topic.
- Have students focus on the vocabulary items and check any they do not know.
- Encourage students to compare and guess meanings if they are not sure.

Option

Ask students to group the lexical items into nouns, adjectives, verbs, etc. They can mark these *v.* (verb), *adj.* (adjective), etc.

Teaching tip

Students often ask about the difference between *pay* and *salary*. This is one way to explain:

Salary is a fixed amount of money from a full-time job; *pay* is money from a part-time job.

Match it / Fill it in / Put it together

Page 40  Track 14

These three sections provide controlled practice of the words and phrases on the previous page.

You can do these in class or assign them for homework.

- Have students complete the exercises and compare answers with a partner.
- Review the answers either by giving them to the class or eliciting them from individual students or groups of students.
- For **Put it together**, you can also play the recording and have students check their answers.

Conversation questions

Page 41

- Chorus the sentences. Listen for correct pronunciation.
- Make sure students understand the meaning of each sentence. Remind students to ask their partners when they don't understand.
- Give students 1 minute to memorize the three questions. Use a timer with a beeper if possible.
- When students are finished, pick a student to model the activity with. Let the student be A, while you are B. Then switch roles.
- Have students ask their partners the questions. Remind them to close their books.
- If class time allows, ask students to find a partner from outside their group to practice with.

Watch out!

Page 41

- Have students read the incorrect and correct versions. Encourage students to examine the sentences with their partners, then chorus the correct version.

Option

- With books closed, write the incorrect sentences or clauses on the board. Try to elicit what is wrong from the students. Then open the books and have students check their answers.

Language point

Page 41

- Read the examples aloud. If necessary, write the key words on the board.

PRACTICE

- Have students complete the chart on their own.
- Ask students to compare their answers with a partner. Walk around the class, listening for correct use of *him, her, them, and it*.

Conversation strategies

Pages 42 and 43

Asking for examples

Learning how to ask for and give examples are among the most important conversation strategies that false beginners can learn. They are essential for maintaining conversation and also useful for solving problems when they arise.

- Chorus the conversation strategies as many times as you are comfortable with.
- Read the dialogue to the class. Then pick a student to model it with you. Switch roles.

PRACTICE

- Tell the students to choose and check (✓) six statements from the chart on page 42 and then write a personal example for each statement.
- When students are finished, pick a student to model the activity with. You will be A while the student is B. Read your examples and have the student respond to each with one of the other expressions. Then switch roles.
- Direct students to practice with their partners as in the model.

Tripling your reaction

- Chorus the expressions *Yeah! Me too! Sure!* and *Of course!* as many times as you are comfortable with. Then pick a student to model the examples with you. Switch roles.
- Direct students to practice with their partners as in the example, progressively encouraging them to use the new expressions from memory, rather than looking at them in the book.

PRACTICE

- Have students choose from the list of expressions and write their own triples on the lines. Note that not all combinations of the expressions may occur in natural speech. You may want to move around the class and check the triples students write.

- Pick a student to model a conversation in which you use a new set of triples from page 43. Switch roles and direct the student to use his or her triples.
- Direct students to practice with their partners as in the model.

Conversation listening (A, B, and C)

Page 44  Track 15

- Have students read along silently while you read the instructions. Check that students understand.
- Play the conversations and let students perform the task.
- Ask students to compare their answers with a partner before giving them the correct answers.

Get ready!

Page 45

Tell students this is the time to plan for their timed conversations. Encourage them to review the unit and to write words, questions, and notes in the spaces. Students can refer to their **Get ready!** boxes for the initial conversations, but they should practice with their books closed as soon as they are able.

Do it!

Page 45

- Put students in appropriate groups or direct students to move about the classroom to talk with partners outside their groups.
- Chorus the target expressions for the practice.
- Tell students to begin the conversation at your signal and start the stopwatch.
- Move around the room, listening for conversation strategies and other language items. During the conversation, allow students to refer to their **Get ready!** notes occasionally.
- Signal the end of the conversation (beeper sound, bell, etc.) and let students say *Nice talking with you*.
- Encourage students to reflect on the language used during the conversation and to make a note of it in the text. Elicit answers from one or two students.
- Get students to find a new partner in their group and begin the cycle again.

Unit 5 Track 15

Conversation 1

- Man:** What are you listening to?
Woman: Huh? What?
Man: What are you listening to?
Woman: Oh, this? This is Chill Baby Bro.
Man: I don't know him.
Woman: I love his slow funky ballads. They're really relaxing.
Man: Oh yeah?
Woman: But I don't like all that really hard rap stuff.
Man: Like what?
Woman: The songs with all the bad words and, the "Hey, look at me, how much money I have" kind of thing.
Man: I know what you mean.

Conversation 2

- Woman 1:** There are lots of new dance moves I want to try.
Woman 2: For example?
Woman 1: Have you . . . wait come here, you haven't seen this song yet, have you?
Woman 2: Which one?
Woman 1: This one, the new dance video from the Mini Monkeys.
Woman 2: Yeah, sure, yeah . . . I know about them, I just haven't seen the video yet.
Woman 1: Look, look, here it comes. That dance move.
Woman 2: Woah! That's great. Play it back, I want to see it again.
Woman 1: Yes! And I love that sound!
Woman 2: Me too. It really cheers you up if you're down.

Conversation 3

- Woman:** And here's the microphone! Your song is up next, right?
Man: I entered "Bang it on my head."
Woman: Is that all you listen to? Punk and metal music?
Man: Why not? It's the best! Listening to that music gets me going! Gives me energy. But I do listen to other stuff – for example, classic rock.
Woman: As long as it's loud, you listen to it?
Man: Ha, ha, ha. What do you like?
Women: I play piano, so I like classical music. It's soft. For adults.

Conversation 4

- Man:** You've been practicing piano for, like, three years. Dude, you're going to be famous.
Woman: Well, that's the idea.

- Man:** How did you learn to write pop music?
Woman: There are plenty of online Web sites that help you compose music.
Man: For example?
Woman: This one here is my favorite one. Look at that.
Man: Yeah. Very cool.
Woman: Pop music lets me be creative. I couldn't write anything else.

Unit 6 Track 18

Conversation 1

- Man:** I think you're probably busier than I am. Maybe I've got more free time than you!
Woman: You're right, I am busy. What do you do in your free time?
Man: Um, I like staying at home, you know. My room is great. There's lots of video games, and I can kill time watching TV, reading comics, and stuff like that.
Woman: Comic books? Me too. How long have you been doing that?
Man: Ah, since I was in elementary school. I've got a pretty big collection now.

Conversation 2

- Woman 1:** How about you? Do you have a hobby?
Woman 2: Except for playing with my dog? Umm . . . I didn't until just a couple of months ago. My sister was volunteering or something and she seemed to like it – helping older people who have trouble getting around.
Woman 1: So, you decided to do that too?
Woman 2: Yeah, volunteer. Like I said, I just started recently, so I haven't decided how much I like it yet. I think it makes them happy.
Woman 1: It sounds interesting. Tell me more about it.
Woman 2: OK, I, uh, go every . . .

Conversation 3

- Woman:** What about you in your free time?
Man: Banging on the drums, dude, after school. We're trying to start a band.
Woman: A band? Woah, that sounds interesting. Since when?
Man: We only started two weeks ago!
Woman: Two weeks. Why the drums?
Man: I tried the trumpet at first, but I wasn't very good. Now I'm playing the drums – I like that a lot better.
Woman: And you say you meet after school?