

3 Small talk: keeping the conversation going



1 Randy Hemp from the U.S. is visiting a customer in Taiwan. He is talking to the Production Manager of a manufacturing plant in Taipei. Listen to the recording of an extract of their conversation.

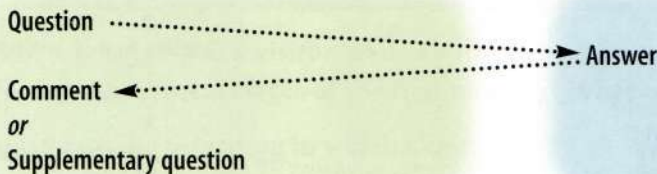
MANAGER: Is this your first visit here?

HEMP: No, in fact the first time I came was for a trade fair. We began our East Asian operations here at the 1999 Exhibition.

MANAGER: Shall we have a look around the plant before lunch?

a) What is wrong with what the production manager says?

The answer is, of course, that it breaks a “rule” of conversation. Generally, if you ask a question you should comment on the answer or ask a supplementary question.



b) Now suggest a better version of the same conversation. There is a recording of a model version.

2 Complete the following dialogue by writing appropriate sentences in the blanks.

PETER: Have you been to San Francisco before?

JANIS: No, it's my first visit.

PETER: a) _____

JANIS: I'm sure I will.

PETER: And ... er, is the hotel all right?

JANIS: Yes, it's very comfortable.

PETER: b) _____ So, do you have much time here in the U.S.? Are you staying long?

JANIS: No, I have to go back tomorrow afternoon.

PETER: c) _____. You'll have to come back again!

JANIS: d) _____.

PETER: So what time's your flight tomorrow?

JANIS: In the evening, 6:35.

PETER: Well, I can get you a taxi if you like, to get you there in good time.

JANIS: e) _____.

PETER: No problem at all. Was it a good flight today?

JANIS: No, it wasn't actually.

PETER: f) _____, g) _____?

JANIS: It was raining – quite hard. There was a lot of turbulence.

PETER: h) _____.



3 Listen to the recording of four conversation extracts.

a) Match each of them to one of the four photos below.



b) Listen to each one again. In each case, suggest how you think the conversation might develop.

c) Do you think any of the topics included would be unacceptable in a particular culture that you know about?

Practice 2

Look at the four pictures above and use each of them for two or three minutes of continual conversation with a partner.

Note:

- there should be no breaks of more than three seconds in your conversation
- listen carefully to what your partner says and pick up on specific points
- keep the conversation flowing.

Role play 1

Working in pairs. Student A should look at File card 1A and Student B should look at File card 1B.

Role play 2

Keep the same A and B. Student A should look at File card 2A. Student B should look at File card 2B.

TRANSFER

Look at the Skills Checklist and prepare ideas on these topics in relation to a country you know well either through work or pleasure. Discuss the country you choose with a colleague.

Language Checklist

Cultural diversity and socializing (1)

Welcoming visitors

Welcome to ...

My name's ...

Arriving

Hello. My name's ... from ...

I've got an appointment to see ...

Sorry – I'm a little late / early.

My plane was delayed ...

Introducing someone

This is ... He/she's my Personal Assistant.

Can I introduce you to ... He/she's our (Project Manager).

I'd like to introduce you to ...

Meeting someone and small talk

Pleased to meet you.

It's a pleasure.

How was your trip? Did you have a good flight / trip?

How are things in (London)?

How long are you staying in (New York)?

I hope you like it.

Is your hotel comfortable?

Is this your first visit to (the Big Apple)?

Offering assistance

Can I get you anything?

Do you need anything?

Would you like a drink?

If you need to use a phone or fax, please let me know.

Can we do anything for you?

Do you need a hotel / a taxi / any travel information / etc.?

Asking for assistance

There is one thing I need ...

Could you get me ...

Could you get me a car / taxi / hotel room / ... ?

Could you help me arrange a flight to ... ?

Can you recommend a good restaurant?

I'd like to book a room for tomorrow night. Can you recommend a hotel?

Skills Checklist

Socializing (1)

Before meeting business partners and fellow professionals from other countries, you could find out about their country:

- the actual political situation
- cultural and regional differences
- religion(s)
- the role of women in business and in society as a whole
- transportation and telecommunications systems
- the economy
- the main companies
- the main exports and imports
- the market for the business sector which interests you
- competitors.

You might also want to find out:

- which topics are safe for small talk
- which topics are best avoided.

If you are going to visit another country, find out about:

- the conventions regarding socializing
- attitudes towards foreigners
- attitudes towards gifts
- the extent to which public, business and private lives are mixed or are kept separate
- conventions regarding food and drink.

You might also like to find out about:

- the weather at the relevant time of the year
- public holidays
- the conventions regarding working hours
- leisure interests
- tourism
- dress
- body language
- language.

Quick Communication Check

1 Welcoming visitors

Complete the dialogue with words from the box.

- A: Hello, (a) _____ to meet you.
 B: Thank you for (b) _____ me.
 A: How long are you (c) _____ here?
 B: Just two days.
 A: Oh, not long, then. Let me (d) _____ you to my colleague Paul.
 B: Paul, (e) _____ is Angela Fox.

this staying nice introduce inviting

2 Making small talk

Match the phrases 1–5 to the correct responses a–e to make a conversation.

- 1 Did you have a good trip?
 2 Was the flight on time?
 3 That's good. And how was the weather in London?
 4 Really? Well it's much better here.
 5 Can I get you a drink or something?
- a) Very wet and cold, I'm afraid.
 b) Yes, it was.
 c) Thank you. Coffee would be great.
 d) Very good, thank you.
 e) Yes, it's very warm.

3 Asking for and giving help

Classify the sentences below into offering something (O), declining an offer (D), asking for help (H), accepting an offer (A).

- a) Can I get you anything?
 b) No, I'm fine thanks.
 c) Just a question, is there a drug store near here?
 d) Would you like something to drink, tea or coffee?
 e) Yes, maybe ... a cold drink, if I may.
 f) Can I use your phone?
 g) I'd like to print something from this disk, if possible.
 h) Would you like a lift to your hotel?

Key
 1 (a) nice, (b) inviting, (c) staying, (d) introduce, (e) this
 2 1d, 2b, 3a, 4e, 5c
 3 a) (O), b) (D), c) (H), d) (O), e) (A), f) (H), g) (H), h) (O)

2 Culture and entertainment

AIMS

- Cross-cultural understanding (2)
- Eating out
- Inviting, and accepting or declining

1 Cross-cultural understanding (2)

- 1 The following text is about cultural diversity. Read it through once and decide which of the three statements (A, B or C) given below the extract offers the most accurate summary.

The impact of culture on business

Take a look at the new breed of international managers, educated according to the most modern management philosophies. They all know that in the SBU, TQM should reign, with products delivered JIT, where CFTs distribute products while subject to MBO. (SBU = strategic business unit, TQM = total quality management, JIT = just-in-time, CFT = customer first team, MBO = management by objectives.)

But just how universal are these management solutions? Are these “truths” about what effective management really is – truths that can be applied anywhere, under any circumstances?

Even with experienced international companies, many well-intended universal applications of management theory have turned out badly. For example, pay-for-performance has in many instances been a failure on the African continent because there are particular, though unspoken, rules about the sequence and timing of reward and promotions.

Similarly, management-by-objectives schemes have generally failed within subsidiaries of multinationals in southern Europe, because managers have not wanted to conform to the abstract nature of preconceived policy guidelines.

Even the notion of human resource management is difficult to translate to other cultures, coming as it does from a typically Anglo-Saxon doctrine. It borrows from economics the idea that human beings are resources like physical and monetary resources. It tends to assume almost unlimited capacities for individual development. In countries without these beliefs, this concept is hard to grasp and unpopular once it is understood.

International managers have it tough. They must operate on a number of different premises at any one time. These premises arise from their culture of origin, the culture in which they are working, and the culture of the organisation which employs them.

In every culture in the world such phenomena as authority, bureaucracy, creativity, good fellowship, verification and accountability are experienced in different ways. That we use the same words to describe them tends to make us unaware that our cultural biases and our accustomed conduct may not be appropriate, or shared.

From Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business by Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner. Published by Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, 1997.

- A There are certain popular universal truths about management which can successfully be applied in various cultural contexts.
- B Cultures are so varied and so different throughout the world that management has to take into account differences rather than simply assume similarities.
- C Effective management of human resources is the key to everyone achieving their full potential.

2 Read the text again. Identify the following:

- the problem with universal management solutions
- an example of the failure of pay-for-performance
- an example of the failure of management-by-objectives schemes
- the problem with human resource management
- three cultures affecting international managers
- six areas in which different cultural interpretations apply.

2 Inviting, and accepting or declining



What kinds of social activities in your town could be appropriate ways of entertaining visitors from other countries?



1 Listen to the first example on the recording. You will hear a conversation in which someone invites a business associate to a social event. Identify:

- what is being suggested
- the response
- what will happen next.



2 Listen to the second example, where someone else invites a different business associate to a social event. Identify:

- what is being suggested
- the response
- what will happen next.



3 Listen to the recording of three short extracts, where hosts invite their visitors to take part in a social activity. The invitations are rejected.

- a) Identify each suggested activity.
- b) Give the reasons for each rejection.
- c) Do you think each rejection is appropriate? Explain your answer.

Activity	Reason for rejection	Comments
1		
2		
3		

4 Work in pairs. Invite your partner to a social activity. He/she should respond by accepting or rejecting the invitation. Use the prompts below.

- a) tomorrow night / see a show or go for a drive
- b) this evening / a meal in a restaurant with some colleagues
- c) when you come / what would you like to do?



Listen to the model versions.

Practice 1

Work in pairs. Look at the entertainments listings below. Choose one or two events to suggest an evening out with your partner.

City Museum & Art Gallery

Drawings from the Italian Renaissance
The Stenwald Collection of drawings by masters of the Renaissance including Bernini, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Tiepolo, Titian, Vasari.

April 3rd – July 24th
Admission 10 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Museum Square Tel 0467 987 785

Art House Cinema

20–24 Copper Street

Screen One: The Enigma of Kaspar Hauser
Director Werner Herzog starring Bruno S., Eva Mattes, Clemens Scheitz.

Screen Two: Once Upon a Time in the West
Director Sergio Leone starring Henry Fonda, Charles Bronson, Claudia Cardinale.

All this week: 9.00.
Booking 020 7857 8211

Guido Fornaro Concert Hall

City University Orchestra

Kohei Yamamoto (Conductor)
Franz Stefenberg (Piano)

Stravinsky *Firebird Suite* (1945)
Bartók *Piano Concerto No 3*
Kurtág *Stele, Op.33 Four Capriccios Op.9*

Wednesday and Thursday 7.30 p.m.
Box Office 020 7834 2288
www.cc.ac.org/univ/concert/ (no booking fee)

Studio Theatre, Sheep Street

The Cherry Orchard

Anton Chekhov

Directed by Anatole Pier Martinov

Every night at 8.30 p.m.

All prices available.

Student nights Mondays and Tuesdays.

'Marvellous, timeless theatre' City Gazette

'Russian drama at its best' Time In Reviews

'Brilliant' The Stage



PAVILION MUSIC HOUSE

88 Lime St

Night Music & Lights

The best in contemporary dance music

plus top local live bands

House DJ Mixer Mo

Admission includes two drinks (see website for details)

www.pavilion.com

City Opera House

SOUTH PARADE

NORTHERN TOURING OPERA

Bizet's Carmen

New production directed by Colin Makepiece

'A new force in opera' Classical Review

'Superb design and passionate performances' The Guide

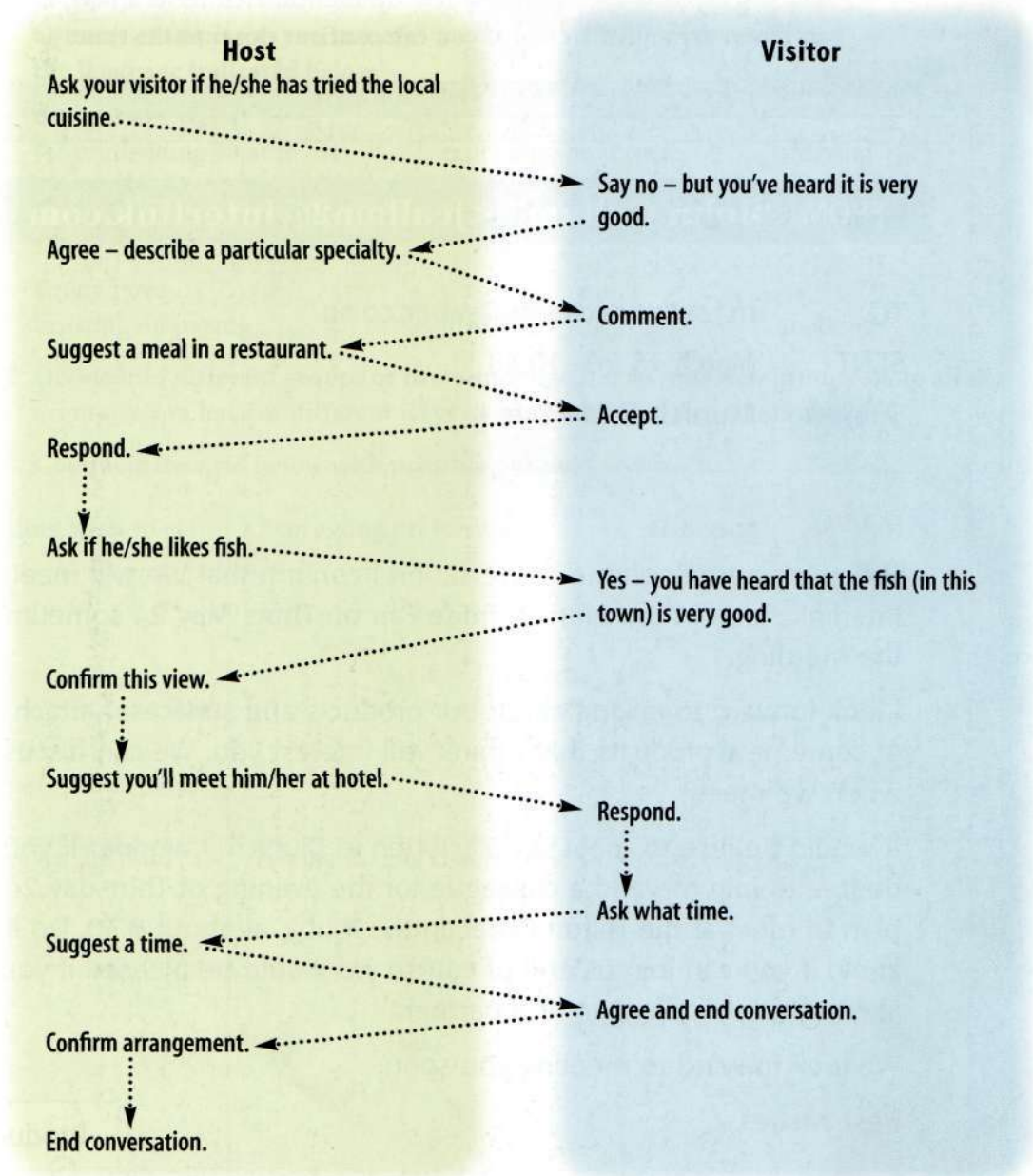


Now listen to the recording of model answers.

Practice 2

Use the following flow chart to construct a dialogue.

The situation is a semi-formal business meeting in your country.



Now listen to the recording of a model answer.

Practice 3

You receive the email below from a business partner confirming a meeting with you at a Trade Fair in Munich. Unfortunately you have to leave Munich after your meeting, but you expect to be in San Francisco a month later. Write a reply suggesting a different arrangement which you can confirm closer to the time.

The image shows a screenshot of an email client window titled "Main identity". The email header is as follows:

FROM "John Callam" <jcallam2@interlink.com>
TO m.j.saans.accounts@saboc.co.au
SENT March 15 20–10.38
Subject **Munich Trade Fair**

The body of the email contains the following text:

Maria,

Following our telephone conversation I confirm that we will meet at Interlink stand at the Munich Trade Fair on Thurs May 24 sometime during the morning.

I look forward to talking about our products and services. I attach details of some new products that I think will interest you. We can discuss these when we meet.

It would be nice to meet socially when in Munich. I wonder if you would be free to join me and a colleague for the evening of Thursday 24? We plan to meet at the Hilton Hotel, in the lobby, at about 8.30. Do let me know if you can join us and of course we would be pleased if you would like to bring a colleague or a partner.

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Best wishes,

John Callam
 Product Development

There is an attachment icon (a paperclip) next to the text "Products and services".

The email client interface includes a ruler at the top (0 to 200), a vertical scrollbar on the left, and a status bar at the bottom showing "100% Page: 1".

Role play 1

Work in pairs. Student A should look at File card 3A. Student B should look at File card 3B.

3 Eating out



1 Imagine you are in a restaurant with a business colleague. Work in groups of three. Brainstorm as many examples as you can of the language indicated below.

Group one

recommending what to eat

expressing preference

ordering

Group two

commenting on the food

asking for the check

offering to pay

Group three

insisting on paying

inviting

thanking

2 Divide into different groups of three and together in your new groups share all the examples you have of different ways of saying the nine functions above.

Complete the grid below with possible phrases:

Recommending what to eat	Expressing preference	Ordering
Commenting on the food	Asking for the check	Offering to pay
Insisting on paying	Inviting	Thanking