

## Lesson Plan 1: Week 1 Day 3

**Level:** Advanced

**Lesson theme:** Small Talk: Taboo Topics and Talking about Opinions

**Background:** The previous class session was a writing day where we discussed cover letters, resumes, and verb tenses.

**Materials:**

- cover letter and resume
- access to internet
- PowerPoint
- strips with taboo topics
- whiteboard/marker
- expressing opinion worksheet

**Objectives**

**Terminal:**

- Students will make small talk about culturally appropriate topics and avoiding culturally taboo topics
- Students will express their opinion and react to others' opinions using polite phrases.

**Enabling:**

- Students will identify strong and weak points of cover letters and resumes.
- Students will start and participate in a small talk conversation with classmates, discussing a culturally appropriate topic.
- Students will identify taboo topics of small talk and avoid them in conversation.
- Students will correctly use phrases to ask about opinions, express their opinion, and react to others' opinions.
- Students will identify the function of phrases in conversation - whether they're asking about opinions, expressing their opinion, or reacting to others' opinions.

**Lesson Sequence**

**4:00 - 4:10 (10 min) - Warm-up**

- Welcome students to class. Students 3 and 4 present their news article as in the normal routine. Classmates have the opportunity to ask follow-up questions if desired.

**4:10-4:20 (10 min) - Review**

- Remind students what we talked about yesterday: cover letters and resumes. Ask if they have any lingering questions.
- Pass out cover letter and resume. Instruct students to look for strong parts and weak parts of both based on what we talked about yesterday. Talk with a partner.
  - Would you hire this person? Why or why not?

- After a few minutes of discussion, bring the class together and have a few people share.  
Possible points of discussion:
  - education isn't listed with the most recent first on resume
  - contact information very small on resume
  - no dates listed on resume of when he worked at specific organizations
  - no references from previous jobs
  - good: bold headings, descriptive bullet points
  - letter started with first name
  - no reference to resume

#### **4:20-4:21 (1 min) - Overview**

- A big part of business is having good relationships with others. Today we'll focus how to make small talk with American people including what to do and what not to do. First, we will talk about things you should do.

#### **4:21-4:26 (5 min) - Present**

- Define small talk: polite conversation about unimportant things. People often make small talk at the beginning of an interaction.
- Share these small talk tips from the website:
  - Begin with a greeting, and respond to the greeting positively
  - Don't say anything negative
  - If you are not positive, you might seem unfriendly
  - Americans will invite nearly everyone to participate in small talk
  - Americans don't like silence
- Use the website <https://www.englishwithimpact.com/learn-american-small-talk/> to look as a class at some topics that are classified as small talk.

#### **4:26-4:33 (7 min) - Practice**

- Leave the list on the board. Have students practice talking with each other in partners about some of the topics on the board. Circle through the class to make sure that everyone is participating and understanding the task.

#### **4:33-4:48 (15 min) - Present**

- There are certain things we don't usually include in small talk, however. Ask the class: What have you noticed in your interactions with American businesspeople? What topics do people tend to avoid?
- We'll now go over some taboo topics that people usually avoid in small talk in business. These things are seen as invasions of privacy. Show the PowerPoint slide.
- Point out that some things are okay to ask if you're really close to a person, but some things you should never bring up regardless of how well you know a person. These are marked by (ever).
  - Don't ask about someone's:
    - salary (ever)
    - weight (ever)

- age
- political beliefs
- marriage status, especially if it's a woman. If they volunteer the info, you can ask a few polite questions
- Don't talk about:
  - negative feelings about coworkers/boss
  - promotion goals
  - family drama
  - medical issues
- Physical aspects:
  - greetings: no hugging or close personal contact (handshakes are ok)
  - maintain a respectful distance
  - maintain eye contact when talking to someone
  - don't point at people (ever)
- When someone brings up one of these taboo topics, we can still answer them. But usually people try to change the subject as quickly as possible in a polite way.

#### **4:48-4:58 (10 min) - Practice**

- Have the class break into pairs, each student with someone they haven't talked to that day. Give each pair a slip of paper with a couple of taboo topics/privacy violations. Have each pair create a short dialogue of small talk, making sure to bring up the taboo topic somewhere in their dialogue.
- Walk around the room to answer students' questions and give guidance if they are lost.

#### **4:58-5:05 (7 min) - Perform**

- Choose a few groups to present their dialogues to the class. The rest of the students (as a class) will identify the privacy violations that were made.

#### **5:05-5:10 (5 min) - Evaluate/Summary**

- Ask class to recall the taboo topics and write them on the board as they are said. Are there any further questions about other things that might be taboo?

#### **(5 min) - Contingency Plan**

Start a class discussion: Are there any differences between American taboo topics and the taboo topics of your culture?

#### **5:10-5:15 (5 min) - Break**

**5:15-5:20 (5 min) - Idiom of the Day:** "Back to square one" Explain to the students that "back to square one" means that you have to start working on a plan from the beginning because your previous attempt failed completely.

- Give the following example sentences:
  - "The local authorities had repaired the roads a few month ago, but heavy rains damaged them again, so we are back to square one."
  - "The opposing parties had been trying to come to a compromise, but when the negotiations broke down, they were back to square one."

- “If they do not accept our proposal, we will be back to square one.”
- Have students write a sentence using the idiom and have them share it with a partner. Choose a few students to share their or their partner’s sentence with the class.

### **5:20-5:22 (2 min) Present**

- In small talk interactions people often ask about your opinion. Today we’ll go over some ways to agree and disagree in a polite way.
- Pass out the handout with all the phrases on it. Help students realize that different phrases are used for different speaking functions. Point out that some carry a stronger connotation than others, such as “I completely agree...” vs. “I agree...”

### **5:22-5:32 (10 min) Practice**

- Read example dialogue as a class and determine if the function of those sentences is asking for an opinion, giving an opinion, agreeing, disagreeing, or supporting an opinion.

### **5:32-5:50 (18 min) - Perform**

- Break up class into groups of 4. Give each group a topic and let two people choose to agree and two to disagree. Have each group practice discussing their opinion for 5 minutes.
- Topics:
  - Employees should get raises yearly.
  - Employees should get paid time off for paternity leave.
  - Employees should get two months of paid maternity leave.
  - Promotions should be based on time with the company not based on skill.
  - Employees should have the option of working 10-hour days 4 days a week instead of having to work 8-hour days 5 days a week.
- After 5 minutes, have students change topics, after another five minutes change again.

### **5:50-6:00 (10 min) - Evaluate/Summary**

- Class discussion: What went well with the activity? What didn’t?
- Remind students of what we practiced today: small talk, taboo topics, and agreeing/disagreeing politely.
- Reflection - what was the most important thing you learned today? What are you still confused about? How was the practice debate beneficial to your learning? Collect their reflection.
- Next time we will be talking about networking, so bring any questions you have about that.

### **(5-10 min) - Contingency Plan**

- If there is time, have a class debate on one of the topics assigned in the previous activity. The students can choose which topic. Remind the students to use the polite skills they learned in class today.

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*Certified Public Accountant with 5+ years of experience of ledger processes, account reconciliations and streamlining accounts. Possess an MBA with a focus in accounting. Seeking to leverage accounting expertise and experience into a managerial role as a corporate banker.*

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

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### **LANGFORD PARTNERSHIP**

**Sacramento, CA**

*Financial Analyst*

- Created financial reports and supported all areas of responsibility within a 5 person finance team
- Managed a \$350,000 budget, with a reduction of costs totaling 15% over two years
- Analyzed, examined, and interpreted account records, compiled financial information, and reconciled reports and financial data
- Performed process analysis, and communicated recommendations to management
- Process journal entries and perform accounting corrections to ensure accurate records

### **BRINGHAM & SONS**

**Bakersfield, CA**

*Financial Advisor*

- Conducted thorough reviews of potential business partnerships and strategies, and performed risk analysis using FRAP (Facilitated Risk Analysis Process)
- Trained and supervised 2 new employees, ensuring they maintain fastidious attention to detail
- Forecasted losses and earnings using quantitative/qualitative analyses to a high degree of accuracy, allowing the company to intelligently manage and invest resources
- Adhered to departmental controls and regulations maintain ethical conduct at all times

## **EDUCATION**

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### **GROVER COLLEGE**

**Alamosa, CO**

*B.A. Accounting, June 2006*

- Magna Cum Laude

### **POLOMA COLLEGE**

**Bloomfield, NJ**

*MBA with Accounting Concentration, June 2008*

## **ADDITIONAL SKILLS**

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- Knowledge of Oracle, SAGE and all Microsoft Office Applications
- Excellent communication skills, and ability to present complex information in an easy to understand format

## **CERTIFICATIONS**

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- Certified Public Accountant

December 7, 2018

Jeff Roberts

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Dear Jeff,

With great willingness, I am applying for the position of Accounting manager which was advertised on the Banks and Co. website. I believe that my education, skill-set, and experience make me a suitable candidate for this vacancy.

I am a highly organized and self-driven individual, passionate about developing my career in the field of Accounting as a Corporate Banker. My commitment can be gauged from the fact that I am an accredited holder of a MBA degree with Accounts as specialization from Poloma College.

Possessing more than 5 years of experience of working in diverse financial positions with multiple companies, I have gained an extensive insight within this field. My key accounting and financial competencies include, but are not limited to, maintaining financial records, managing budgets, risk assessments and business strategy reviews.

In my current position with Langford Partnership where I work in the capacity of Financial Analyst, I am accountable for leading a team of 5 and carrying out a wide range of commercial processes. During the course of my career, I have gained a specialist's understanding of financial instruments and accounting software and have also been effective in explaining complex information in a comprehensible manner

As a Certified Public Accountant, I am an accomplished communicator, with excellent organizational, decision making, and time management skills and have a proven track record of consistently meeting and regularly surpassing demanding performance goals.

Proactive, innovative and highly influential, I am seeking a challenging but rewarding position, which is why I was naturally drawn to this exciting opportunity.

Sincerely,

Andrew Langley

## TABOO SKITS ACTIVITY

Asking about salary

Asking about salary

Asking about weight

Asking about weight

Asking about age

Asking about age

Asking about political beliefs

Asking about political beliefs

Asking a woman about marriage status

Asking a woman about marriage status

Expressing negative feelings about a  
coworker or boss

Expressing negative feelings about a  
coworker or boss

Expressing promotion goals

Expressing promotion goals

Talking about family drama

Talking about family drama

Talking about medical issues

Talking about medical issues

Hugging or close personal contact

Hugging or close personal contact

Not maintaining a respectful distance

Not maintaining a respectful distance

Not maintaining eye contact

Not maintaining eye contact

Pointing at people

Pointing at people

## Talking about Opinions

### Asking for an opinion

What do you think?  
Do you agree?  
What are your thoughts on this?

### Giving an opinion

In my (personal) opinion...  
I personally believe...  
I personally think...  
I personally feel...  
The way I see it...  
As far as I'm concerned...

### Supporting opinions

For example...  
For instance...  
Take the way (he/she/it)...  
Take for example...  
For one thing...  
To give you an idea...  
By way of illustration (formal)...

### Agreeing

I completely agree (Strong)  
You're absolutely right (Strong)  
I couldn't agree more (Strong)  
Exactly  
You're right  
That's true/that's very true  
Yes, I know exactly what you mean.  
I agree with you there.  
I guess so (weak)  
You could be right (weak)  
You may have a point there (weak)

### Disagreeing

I disagree  
That's not always true  
That's not always the case  
I'm not so sure about that (weak)  
I don't know if I agree with you (weak)  
Yes, but don't you think...  
I agree with you, but...  
Yes, but on the other hand...  
That may be true, but  
I see your point, but  
I guess so, but  
That's not necessarily true because  
I don't see it quite like that.  
But...  
But why?  
But if..., then...  
But what about

### Example Sentences

**John:** What are your thoughts on the new policy of training new employees for two weeks instead of one?

**Liz:** I personally believe it takes too much time and that it's unnecessary.

**Tim:** I agree. The way I see it, employees should be trained for one week on some important policies and learn everything else on the job.

**Liz:** Exactly. The sooner employees start working their job, the better.

**John:** Why?

**Liz:** Well, the way I see it, most people learn better by doing a job rather than by listening to someone explain the job. Take for example Carol. Even after being trained for two weeks, she didn't understand how to answer the phone. She only understood how to answer it after doing her job.

**John:** I see your point, but don't you think it's helpful to hear about everything you should do before you start a job? I feel that training for two weeks helps employees feel more comfortable here.

**Tim:** Hmmm, you could be right.

**Liz:** I guess so.

## PowerPoint

# Small Talk

1

## Topics for small talk

- ▶ <https://www.englishwithimpact.com/learn-american-small-talk/>

2

## Taboo topics

- ▶ Don't ask about someone's:
  - ▶ salary (ever)
  - ▶ weight (ever)
  - ▶ age
  - ▶ political beliefs
  - ▶ marriage status, especially if it's a woman. If they volunteer the info, you can ask a few polite questions.
- ▶ Don't talk about:
  - ▶ negative feelings about coworkers/boss
  - ▶ promotion goals
  - ▶ family drama
  - ▶ medical issues
- ▶ Physical aspects:
  - ▶ greetings: no hugging or close personal contact (handshakes are ok)
  - ▶ maintain a respectful distance
  - ▶ maintain eye contact when talking to someone
  - ▶ don't point at people (ever)

3

## Idiom of the day: "Back to square one"

Meaning: you have to start working on a plan from the beginning because your previous attempt failed completely.

"The local authorities had repaired the roads a few months ago, but heavy rains damaged them again, so we are back to square one."

"The opposing parties tried to come to a compromise, but when the negotiations broke down, they were back to square one."

"If they do not accept our proposal, we will be back to square one."

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