**SOME IDEAS FOR CONVERSATION CLASS**

**SPEAKING FOR 1 MINUTE:**

For small groups. You have a list a subjects to talk about. e.g. Football, the sex life of the inside of a ping-pong ball, cooking. etc. You choose one person to start talking about the subject. If the person repeats a word, hesitates or makes a grammatical error, another person in the group can take over by saying error, hesitation or repetition. It is the teachers job to decide quickly if the interruption is valid. The person who interrupts them must continue. The winner is the person talking at the end of the minute.

**YES/NO GAME**

Everyone must have played the game in which one person must avoid saying yes or no when asked many questions by the others in the group. The winner is the person who can survive longest. Strangely it seems to be less difficult for a non-native speaker to avoid saying yes/no

**CALL MY BLUFF**

You need a big (bilingual) dictionary for this one. A student looks in the dictionary and finds a word which seems very obscure. That student gives a definition of the word to the others. The definition must be either 100% true or 100% false. When the student has finished the others must decide if the definition was bluff or true. The student receives a point for each person who is deceived.

**VARIATION:**

Instead of using definitions. The students must tell the others something about themselves which is 100% true or 100% false. E.G. I always tell them that my second cousin was the tallest ever woman to live in Britain and tell them some things about it. This happens to be true. This is an excellent game for compulsive liars.

**RANKING AND NEGOTIATING GAMES:**

If you look in almost any TEFL book you will find ranking games. A group of students have to decide what to take from a series of objects for a particular situation. E.G: To get to the north pole, or survive on a desert island. One variation which I thought of that works well is this: All your students are going on holiday or emigrating to another country in a small car. Each student has 2 objects that they want to take. E.G. A violin, a big dog, 20 bottles of whisky. Each person must argue in favour of their own choices. The student with the most inventive argument wins rather than the most sensible idea.

**BOARD GAMES:**

It is possible to modify a whole series of board games for TEFL. For example pictionary, taboo. Also you can get ideas from game shows that are on television.

**LATERAL THINKING QUESTIONS**

: You may have played this game before. You tell the students a story. They have to discover the explanation of the story by asking questions. You can only answer yes/no or not important. E.G. A man lives on the 10th floor of a block of flats. Every morning he gets in the lift, goes down to the ground floor gets in his car and goes to work. When he returns from work he gets into the lift goes to the 7th floor and then walks the rest of the way to his flat using the stairs. Why? Answer: He is a dwarf and can only reach the button for the 7th floor.

**WOMEN'S MAGAZINES**

Do the questionaires from womens magazines. The ones that find out if you are honest or not etc. Get the students to make their own questionaires in groups and then try them out on each other.

**SPEAK ABOUT CARDS**

Get some small cards and write a topic of conversation on each one. Give each group a pile of them. When a student turns over a card he must talk about that subject. This often leads to spontaneous conversations with the students forgetting about the game which in my opinion is excellent. Some ideas for topics are :- The happiest moment of my life, the pets I have had, what happened to me last weekend, my ambitions, my ideal day etc. You should change the topics according to the class. This is also a way of introducing polemic topics etc. legalisation of drugs, capital punishemnt etc.

**FAIRY STORIES**

Get the students to tell each other fairy stories or traditional children's stories from their countries. One variation is to choose a fairy story that everyone knows e.g. Little red riding hood and get small groups to tell the story. (going in a clockwise direction) Each person can only add one word.

**Soap Opera**

In this activity students create a profile for a group of people and imagine their relationships to each other. They then construct a soap opera based around the characters and write a scene from the soap opera. This activity can be completed in one lesson or divided across a number of lessons if you feel your students need more support and correction.

Preparation
Download copies of the photographs here or cut some of your own out of a magazine. You could give out magazines and scissors to students and ask them to cut out a number of people who they think look interesting.

[Pictures of people 339k zip](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/people.zip)

**Procedure**

* Put your students into groups of about 4 people, then give each group a copy of the pictures.
* Ask the students to try to imagine who the people are and what they are like. This might be easier for some students if you stick the pictures onto a sheet of paper and then write the headings for the information you want at the side (e.g. Name, age, occupation, habits, hobbies, character etc)
* Once they have done this ask them if they know what a soap opera is. Try to get some examples of ones that they watch.
* Next ask them if they can think of things that most soap operas have in common (e.g. heroes, heroines, villains, drama – usually based around some kind of setting / workplace, etc.)
* Next tell the students that all of the pictures they are holding are of characters from the same soap opera. Ask them to decide what the relationships between the people are and what role each of them has within the soap opera. Try to get them to decide what kind of setting the soap opera takes place in (e.g. in an office, on a ranch, in a hotel etc.)
* Next tell the groups that they should write a short scene involving as many of their characters as possible. You may well need to help out and input language for this, so be sure to monitor closely.
* Lastly, if your students are confident enough, ask them to choose characters and act out the scene from their soap opera. You could video this and let them watch their performance or you could just take in the scripts and help to correct them.

**Fortune teller**

Preparation
You will need some strips of paper.

Procedure

* Draw a simple picture of a fortune teller. Elicit/pre-teach the following vocabulary: crystal ball, earring, fog/cloud, fortune teller etc. Ask students what she does. What other things can she use to tell the future (cards, palm reading, tea leaves etc)? Have you ever been to a fortune teller?
* Elicit what kind of topics you might ask about at the fortune teller (e.g. work, school, love, family, money, health etc) and write the on the board.
* Elicit some specific questions that might be asked e.g. Will I go to university? Where will I meet my future partner? How many children will I have? etc
TIP: At this level students will tend to ask yes/no questions (e.g. will I ..... ?). It is important to elicit open questions where, what, when, who which will provide more opportunity for freer speaking.
* Give each student 3 strips of paper. On each paper get students to write 1 question to ask the fortune teller. Monitor to check that they are writing open questions and using the ‘will' form.
* Elicit ideas of what fortune tellers say to customers when they arrive. Then pre-teach and drill rhyme ‘cross my palm with silver and I'll tell you your future'.
* Demonstrate the activity with a strong student. Ensure that you give extended answers as the fortune teller or ask follow-up questions as the customer.
* Split the class in 2. Half are fortune tellers and half are customers. Fortune tellers sit around the room. Customers sit opposite a fortune teller and after the fortune teller says the rhyme ask the 3 questions. Set a time limit of 2 or 3 minutes.
* After 2 minutes customers rotate to a new fortune teller. After customers have spoken to all fortune tellers, feedback on what futures people were told and ask ‘Who was the best fortune teller?'. Customers and fortune tellers swap roles and repeat. Feedback again.

**Interview the Experts**

Three students sit in a line at the front of the class. They are the experts, but they don't know what they are experts about. The rest of the class choose the area of expertise - e.g. cooking, car maintenance, trees. Ignore students who shout out 'sex' or 'kissing' or other unworkable topics.

The other students then ask the experts questions and the experts answer them. Each expert uses only one word at a time.

Example:
They are experts about fashion.
Question: What colour will be fashionable next year?

Expert 1: I
Expert 2: think
Expert 3: that
Expert 1: blue
Expert 2: will
Expert 3: not (Expert 3 trying to hijack the answer - this is good!)
Expert 1: be
Expert: 2: unfashionable (Expert 2 trying to hijack the answer back)

A very simple and effective speaking activity which the rest of the class enjoys listening to. An important consideration.

Once they have finished getting to know each other, they may write a short paragraph about what they learned about their pals as a homework task.

**Story in a bag**

This oral story-creating and relating activity works best with intermediate level and above learners. (I don't recall the origins of this activity. I picked it up from some book or workshop at least ten years ago!)

Preparation
Before class, the teacher fills paper bags with 5-6 random objects. You'll need one bag per group of four students. To make this activity interesting, the objects should be diverse and unrelated to each other. Go for a combination of the unusual and the mundane.

* An example of a diverse content bag from my class is:
	+ a postcard
	+ a can-opener
	+ a candle
	+ a surgical mask
	+ a theatre playbill
	+ a teddy bear

**Procedure**

* At a signal, each group of students opens its bag, removes its objects and invents an oral story incorporating all the objects found in the bag. The stories become very complex and creative in order to make each object a step in the plot.
* It's important that the story be oral and not written and then read. This allows spontaneous changes, and for group members to jump in and correct each other or add details in the final telling.
* When the groups have finished, each group shares its story with the whole class. Each student in the group should tell one part and hold up the related object when it is mentioned in the story.
* Some group members may tell two parts, or tell one part that uses two objects - it doesn't matter. Most of the talking is done in the creation of the story within the group.

Watch out for those clever souls who would say "Shelley packed her suitcase for Singapore. In it she put a candle, a can opener, a teddy bear…etc."

**Variation**

* The teacher makes up a crime that has been committed, for example; 'Professor Whatsit found dead under a picnic table, Lady Wigglebiggle's diamonds stolen from her bedroom drawer'.
* The groups are then told that the items in their bags are clues to the crime collected by a detective. The story that the groups come up with then are the details of the crime. Here is an example.

**Getting the whole class talking**

The following activities are designed to get everyone talking. They can be used with all levels because the language required to communicate is determined by the students. Remember to set up and demonstrate these activities carefully before letting the class go ahead.

**Jigsaw puzzle challenge**

Take 3-4 large pictures/photos and stick them on card. Pictures can come from Sunday supplements, travel brochures, calendars, magazine adverts etc. Pictures specific to students’ interests will motivate them e.g. film stills, cartoons, news stories, famous paintings, famous people.

* Draw puzzle shapes on the back of each picture (4-5 shapes) and cut out the picture pieces.
* Give each student in the class a jigsaw piece. They must not show their piece to anyone.
* Students then mingle and question each other about what is on their puzzle piece to try and find people with pieces of the same jigsaw.
* The object of the game is to find all pieces and put together the jigsaw. The first complete picture puzzle wins.

**Something in common or «дай пять »**

* Explain that we can all find something in common with those around us. The object of this game is to discover as many things you have in common with fellow students. You can limit this to 5 things in common.
* Brainstorm examples with the whole class, noting suggestions, e.g.
	+ We both have long-haired cats
	+ they both went to see Robbie Williams in concert
	+ We all like Harry Potter
	+ We both have a younger sister called Georgia
	+ Our favorite color is green
	+ Our families go to the same supermarket, church, club, holiday place
	+ We both believe in love at first sight, ghosts, god.
* Give students a time limit to mingle and find out as many things they have in common. The one who finds the most is the winner.
* Alternatively ask them to find five things and the first person to shout 'five' is the winner.

**Create a biography**

* Take a biography of a famous person and write each detail on strips of paper.
* Keep the identity secret so they have to guess, if appropriate.
* Draw a table on the board for students to copy and make notes e.g. place of birth, early years, famous for..
* Give out the strips (split the class in two if large and give out 2 sets).
* Students mingle and ask each other questions until they have as many details as possible about the person.
* Take away the strips and put students in pairs or small groups to use their table of notes to write the biography.

**Life-line** – students draw their life-line that would show the most important moments/ periods in their life. Doesn’t have to be true – if they wish! Then they show the picture to class and explain what’s in it.

**Great warm-up activity** for beginners/ intermediates: write a question on the board - how many things can you think of that are (bigger than you/ round/ delicious/ etc.)? Students take turns to give their answers. The person that gives up last wins ☺ you can divide them in teams, which would make it more ocompetitive.

**How to** - cut instructions – for anything! Think of smth funny - and make students put them in order;

**Half and Half** (with boring dialogues - cut sentences in halves, make students find the other half and then arrange themselves in the front of the class in order);

**Family tree** – students draw a family tree for a real or imaginary family, exchange and then tell about each other’s drawings; OR: teams – make very complicated family trees, exchange, then ask each other questions… + other variations! Like – one person is telling about a family, the other – drawing a family tree (they could be a royal family member and a historian who was ordered to write about this family).

**Metaphor picture** - drawing a picture that reveals their interests/ views/ work/ origin... then guessing.