

Turn-taking & Active Listening TASKS

Academic Speaking – Seminar Participation

Academic discussions take place in a specific community which expects a certain way of speaking, and letting others speak. Being able to do this effectively can bring you closer to the academic community, your lecturer, and help stimulate more productive academic discussions.



Tasks 1

Why is active listening so important? Brainstorm ways which show you are listening actively and respectfully. Include verbal and non-verbal cues.

maintaining eye-contact (without staring!)

Task 2

Read what [this ASK document](#) says about paraphrasing and the use of synonyms and antonyms, also the language examples given. Paraphrasing what a speaker has said clarifies understanding, enables the speaker to know they have been understood and shows intent listening. An open-ended question encourages a speaker to provide more information and shows you are engaged with the speaker. Think about the following statements. In a group, or with your ASK Tutor, Speaker 1 begins, speaker 2 paraphrases and adds something new, speaker 1 paraphrases again and adds and so on (obviously doing this every time would be weird, except for the purposes of the exercise).

- a) *A university education is a necessity.*
- b) *The university system in my country*
- c) *The situation regarding potential water conflicts in my country*
- d) *Types of sustainable tourism in my country*
- e) *The type of 'authentic' holiday experience I'd like*
- f) *A reading for the essay I particularly found interesting.*

Reflection – how did this work? Did you speak more or less than usual? Did you feel the discussion was focused? Did it feel natural?

Turn-taking

Which of the following best defines you as a speaker in a discussion (a) in your language (b) in English. Tick as many as you like! If none, please write your own

- a) *I never shut up!*
- b) *I tend to decide what I'm saying as I speak*
- c) *By the time I've thought of what to say, the conversation has moved on*

- d) *I speak because I have to, not because I want to*
- e) *I tend to interrupt people because I have so much to say*
- f) *I can see people nodding off a little when I speak*
- g) *I never know when to interrupt and when to allow a speaker to finish*

Task 3

Watch this short video clip – it’s a discussion from ‘Newsnight’ on how people watch the news (whether they accept it as fact or watch with a critical stance).

Watch the Newsnight programme from the beginning and notice how the discussion unfolds. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZOdl7fPMjCo>

Do not worry too much about language content. Watch to notice interruptions – how are they made? Turn-taking – how does another speaker ‘take the floor’? Turn-keeping – how do they ensure they finish what they want to say? Is it similar/different in your language/culture? Take notes and share with your ASK Tutor.

Is there much silence in this discussion? Does a ‘messy’ discussion like this suggest the speakers are/aren’t engaged?

Turn taking Strategies

Look at the following turn-taking strategies. Which do you already do? Which do you do in your language, but not when speaking English? Do any seem rude/inappropriate? Discuss with your ASK Tutor. Watch the Newsnight discussion once more and look for examples of these.

Strategies for obtaining a turn	Strategies for retaining a turn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer your response to a question or statement • Expand on what the current speaker is saying • Complete the speaker’s sentence during a pause • Fill a silence • Use facial and body movements e.g. leaning forward, maintaining direct eye-contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase speed and volume • Pause within a sentence rather than at the end • Use markers like <i>first, on the one hand</i> to indicate that you have more to say • Disregard and interruption by returning to the topic with expressions like <i>that’s a good point but / to get back to what I was saying</i>
Strategies for relinquishing a turn	Strategies to shift the topic

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct a question to another participant • Use tag questions e.g. <i>don't you? Can't it?</i> • Slow your rate of delivery towards the end of your sentence and lower the pitch of your voice • Use body language e.g. direct your eyes to another in the group 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use expressions such as: <i>There's another way of looking at this / That's one consequence but what about...? / We haven't considered...</i> 2. Intonation – start the change of topic in a higher than usual pitch 3. Ask a leading question which shifts the topic
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Task 4 Choose two or three of the strategies above which you want to consciously practise. Think about how you will do this. Work in small groups or with your ASK Tutor and discuss the following:

- a) Is there a difference between TV news and print news?*
- b) How often do you watch/read the news? Which sources do you use?*
- c) Do you take news as 'fact' or, consider it critically? Explain how.*
- d) Is it important while studying in the U.K. to follow U.K. news? Why/Why not?*
- e) What is different about newspaper articles compared to journal articles? Why aren't they acceptable as 'academic sources? Does this mean it is better not to read them?*