

Nice Talking with You 2



Teacher's Manual

Tom Kenny



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University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India
79 Anson Road, #06–04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.
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www.cambridge.org
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First published 2012
20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6
Printed in Great Britain by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

ISBN 978-0-521-18811-1 paperback Teacher’s Manual 2
ISBN 978-0-521-18809-8 paperback Student’s Book 2
ISBN 978-0-521-18812-8 paperback Teacher’s Manual 1
ISBN 978-0-521-18808-1 paperback Student’s Book 1

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Plan of the Student's Book

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Introduction

Why we wrote this textbook

Conversation strategies are powerful tools, yet simple for students to understand. I tell my students:

Use these words/phrases/strategies when you need them. They'll help you keep the conversation going, fix communication problems, and react in English. Use them and you'll be able to speak English in short conversations on simple topics.

Using *Nice Talking with You 1*, my students get their first training in English fluency practice. The next step is to encourage them to extend their discourse, and there are of course many ways to do that. *Nice Talking with You 2* achieves this by focusing on two key goals, both within the reach of students who have completed basic fluency training:

- Learning to *say more*
- Learning to *do more* in a conversation than just talk about a topic

To push students toward these goals, students need practice extending the length of their turns and performing simple interpersonal or transactional functions. Let's look at how this text does this.

Learning to say more

To encourage learners to say more, students will learn discourse markers like *Speaking of*, *You know what?*, *By the way*, *Can I ask you something?*, *Hey*, and *I have an idea*. These phrases serve to introduce a new segment of discourse within a conversation. For example, *Can I ask you something?* can be used to signal a shift from chatting generally about a topic to asking a personal question related to the topic. It's especially helpful for students to have a small repertoire of such phrases and expressions to replace the over-used (and widely misused) phrase *By the way*.

Students will also acquire phrases that are open-ended and demand clause- or sentence-length utterances to complete, such as *I guess*, *I think*, *I mean*, *It sounds like*, and *So, in other words*. In this way, students who learned in level 1 of *Nice Talking with You* to respond with the formulaic phrase *That sounds good* are now challenged to take it to the next level by saying something like *It sounds like that's a good way to stay healthy*.

Learning to do more in a conversation than just talk about a topic

Students who have experienced their first taste of fluency by mastering basic conversation strategies, such as those presented in *Nice Talking with You 1*, are ready to internalize the conversation strategies they need to perform the short role plays introduced in *Nice Talking with You 2*. Unlike dialogues, the language to be used for role plays is not dictated. Role plays add a new dimension to the students' conversations by providing them with tangible tasks but the freedom to use their imagination to perform them.

In my experience with teaching English-speaking skills to university students, I've found that learners are familiar with role-play dialogues from their earlier study of English. They quickly pick up the idea that there are different kinds of role plays: some are transactional; some are interpersonal. Transactional role plays include ordering food in a restaurant and booking a hotel room; interpersonal role plays include asking for help, permission, advice, and invitations. There is little discourse before and after transactional role plays because the speakers have only a temporary business relationship. Interpersonal role plays, on the other hand, are suited for people who know each other, and constitute a small scene to be performed within a larger discourse picture. These are the role plays that *Nice Talking with You 2* focuses on.

My goal with *Nice Talking with You 2* is therefore to give teachers a text that will help their students both say more and do more than before. It builds on language students know but have not yet used in spoken form. Most of all, it follows the style of level 1, with conversation strategies clearly at the forefront of instruction, so that all the students in the classroom know that these strategies are the tools that help them achieve the goal of speaking English naturally and with confidence.

Conversation strategies

Conversation strategies form the focal point of *Nice Talking with You*. On each double-page Conversation strategies section, several strategies and related expressions are presented. In level 1, they function by guiding the flow of conversation around a specific topic. In level 2, the first strategy serves to introduce a new topic or change the focus of a conversation in some way, while subsequent strategies usually guide a role play related to the unit topic. For example, the topic of **Unit 2, My place**, is about students' homes and neighborhoods. The first strategy shows how to introduce a new idea, in this case an invitation to visit a student's home. The subsequent strategies focus on how to make and accept such general invitations.

The first strategy does not always have to be taught first. In my experience, it is often easier to have students practice this after they have practiced the conversation strategies that guide the role plays, which students perform as part of the timed conversations of the **Do it!** section. In most units, you will have the option of introducing the first strategy after the others, in which case I recommend this be done just before students begin the timed conversations.

Why “Noticing”?

In each of the units, I have included noticing activities. I believe 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 I train my students to notice features in language. I have kept the 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 within which explanations for how learners learn a language were made. 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 does the author, 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, and cultural aspects of the language.

Although higher-frequency occurrence of a language item can increase our chances of noticing it, 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, I 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 many activities in *Nice Talking with You 2*.

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. I 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.

Tom Kenny

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