Tips for Having a Successful Partnership

Campus Conversation Partners
What if I can’t pronounce my partner’s name?

- At today’s meeting, teach your partner how to say your name and/or a trick to help them remember its pronunciation.
  - For example: Sue sounds like “shoe” but with “s” instead of “sh.” Or, it also sounds like “suit” without the “t.”
  - If you prefer to be called by a nickname, let your partner know that too.
What if I can’t understand my partner?

- Native/Near-native Faculty & Staff
  - Be patient and persistent to figure out what your partner wants to say.
  - Use clarification strategies:
    - Say in a different way
    - Give an example
    - Draw a picture
    - Write it down

- ESL Students, Staff, Scholars
  - Don’t be afraid to ask for more information about a topic you are not familiar with.
  - Ask your partner to:
    - Say it in a different way
    - Give an example
    - Draw a picture
    - Write it down
What can I do to make it easier for my partner to understand?

- Native/Near-native Faculty & Staff
  - Be aware of the expressions you use:
    - Slang, phrasal verbs (like “count on” and “get around to it”) are often difficult. Your partner may have learned “tolerate” but not “put up with.”
    - Ask your partner if they know the expressions you are using and write them down if needed.

- ESL Students, Staff, Scholars
  - Pay attention to your pronunciation and grammar.
    - If your partner seems confused, ask them which word or phrase is confusing them.
    - Don’t be afraid to ask your partner for help pronouncing a word or using a more natural expression in English.
Tips for Both Partners #1

• Speak clearly and at a moderate pace
  – Ask your partner if you are speaking too fast. If your partner’s (polite) answer is, “a little.” It means you should probably slow down a lot.
  – If you are a mumbler (unclear speaker) make an effort to enunciate slowly and clearly.
Tips for Both Partners #2

• Participate equally and share the time.
  – Some people are more talkative than others.
    • If you like to talk, make sure you invite your partner to give their own ideas too. Use questions like, “What do you think?” “How about you?” “What about in your country?”
  – Others are more shy and quiet. If that is you, push yourself to speak.
    • For ESL students, don’t worry about making mistakes, just try! Your partner will help you! That’s why they signed up for this program. They want to learn more about you and your country!
Tips for Both Partners #3

• Make sure that the knowledge of the topics are shared
  – Some topics you will talk about require cultural background that your partner may not have: sports, TV shows, relationships between family and friends, religious practices, holidays, etc.
  – Ask your partner, “Have you heard about this?” “Do you know about this?”
  – If you don’t know about something your partner is talking about, ask them to explain in more detail (or with pictures).
Being Culturally Sensitive

- Movies, music, and mass media play a huge role in teaching us about other cultures. Unfortunately, they often don’t give us an accurate picture of each other’s lives.
  - Don’t be afraid to ask questions about each other’s cultures.
  - If you are not sure if a question is culturally appropriate, begin by saying, “I hope it is ok if I ask you...” A sincere desire to know is usually appreciated, regardless of the topic.
  - Also, if your partner has a preconception about your culture that you think is incorrect, talk to your partner about it. Use yourself and your experiences as examples.
The Most Important Tip for Success...

Relax, learn, and enjoy!