Speaking

English for Academic Study

学术英语口语

(爱尔兰) Joan McCormack   （英) Sebastian Watkins 著

外语教学与研究出版社
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND RESEARCH PRESS
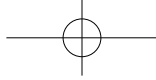
University of Reading

Garnet EDUCATION

Contents

Introduction

Aims of the course

The purpose of this book is to help you develop the speaking skills you need to participate effectively in academic seminars and discussions, as well as to help you develop effective presentation skills.

Structure of the course

- **Unit structure:** There are 10 units in the book. Each of the units focuses on skills and/or speaking functions that learners need to use in an academic context, e.g., collecting and presenting data, supporting your point of view. The content of each unit is also linked to a topic, e.g., a healthy lifestyle, protecting the environment. The discussions and the presentations you make are related to the topic of each unit. The written or listening texts are designed to give you different perspectives on a topic, and also to help you provide evidence to support your ideas, thus giving you practice in one of the essential requirements of academic work.

  Units 1–5 are the core units. Each of these units covers aspects of both seminar skills and presentation skills.

  Unit 6 is a consolidation unit where you have the opportunity to put all these skills into practice by organising your own seminars and discussions, and choosing your own topics (depending on the course you are taking, your teacher may decide that you begin these seminars earlier). Units 7–10 give you further practice in all these skills.

- **Useful language:** Each unit has at least one boxed section on *Useful language* – language related to the task you need to perform in that unit. You should try to use this language in the appropriate situations.

- **Learner diary:** Students are encouraged to create a learner diary, and each unit ends with this section. The purpose of this is to get you to think about the process of learning, and the particular strategies you are developing. Having this awareness will help you to take more control of developing your language skills.

- **Study tips:** These are included for ease of reference when you are revising what you have studied. They either summarise the outcome of a series of activities or are a summary of other information contained in the unit.

- **Unit summaries:** Each unit is followed by a unit summary, giving you the opportunity
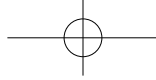
to reflect on what you have learnt.

Additional materials

- **Glossary:** Words or phrases in the text are explained in the glossary on page 107.

- **Reading texts:** These are authentic texts that are referred to throughout the course to provide you with the kind of material you will work with in your faculty study.

- **Transcripts:** At the end of the book you will find transcripts of the audio material. Your teacher will sometimes give you the opportunity to listen to the recordings and follow the transcript at the same time, once you have completed the main listening tasks.

Listening material

This is available on CD and is indicated by the play icon ⊙ . The full transcripts for the audio material are available at the back of the book, starting on page 152. Your teacher might ask you to follow these transcripts while listening to the CD, but this will only be when you have finished the original task.

Working with the course

When you are speaking in another language, you need to think of ideas and the language you need to express those ideas. This can be challenging. This book helps you with this in two ways.

- In many discussion activities in this book you are asked to think about and prepare what you are going to say. This can improve your performance. As you become more confident and competent in speaking in English, the need for preparation time should decrease.

- As it can be difficult to concentrate on both ideas and language, you are sometimes asked to focus on the ideas you want to express on a topic, and to discuss these. After the discussion, you are asked to look at, and sometimes practise, relevant *Useful language* phrases. Following this, you are required to return to the original topic, or a similar one, and discuss it with different students, this time using the *Useful language*.

Note: Some material is to be written in your student notebook.

What you put into the course will determine how much you get out of it. If you want to improve your speaking, it is essential that you practise this skill. You should prepare well for the sessions in class, as well as participate actively in them.

Communicating in academic situations

Being a successful student

In this unit you will:

1   reflect on your experience of speaking in an academic context

2   analyse your strengths and weaknesses in speaking

3   identify and practise language for agreeing and disagreeing

4   consider aspects of a successful presentation

5   give a short informal mini-presentation

There are a number of different situations on your academic courses in which you will need to communicate orally in English. The main situations are presentations, seminars and discussions.

In academic culture, students need to express their views clearly on different issues relating to their subject area. These views are often based on a critical reading and evaluation of written texts.

The more you study and engage with your subject area, the more your ideas will develop and change. This will help you to develop your critical thinking skills, which are a key aspect of academic study. It is also important that you develop the language skills that will enable you to express your ideas most effectively.

Task 1   Your experience of speaking English

1.1   **Look at the following list of academic situations which require you to speak. Which situations have you experienced either in your own language or in English? Put a tick (√) in the appropriate box.**

Situations	English	Own language
1. Giving a formal presentation		
2. Participating in a seminar (group discussion)		
3. Leading a seminar (group discussion)		
4. Discussing and giving your opinion in a seminar on pre-assigned articles you have read		
5. Speaking with a department tutor in a one-to-one tutorial (e.g., about an essay plan)		
6. Discussing feedback on your written work with a tutor in a tutorial		
7. Discussing your studies with other students		
8. Other (please state)		

1.2   Compare your experiences with those of another student, using your answers to Ex 1.1. Give details of:

    a. where you had each experience
    b. how it was organised (e.g., how many students were involved and how long the speaking turns were)
    c. what kinds of topics you covered

1.3   Discuss your attitude to the situations in Ex 1.1. Which academic tasks do you find, or think you will find, the most difficult to do in English? Why?

Task 2   Your attitude to speaking English

2.1   Look at the following statements. Do you agree or disagree with them? Which points are important to you?

    a. I want to speak English with a perfect native-speaker accent.
    b. I want to speak English without a single grammatical mistake.
    c. I feel as though I am a different person when I speak English.
    d. My pronunciation is not as important as my grammatical accuracy.
    e. If I can communicate my meaning effectively, it does not matter if I make mistakes.
    f. I don't like working in groups during English lessons because I may learn incorrect English from my classmates.
    g. I want to speak English for social reasons as well as for academic reasons.

2.2   In groups, discuss each statement from Ex 2.1. Appoint one student to note which statements are the most controversial for your group, i.e., which statements caused the most disagreement.
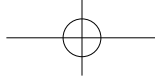
2.3 Listen to some students reporting back on their discussion of the points in Ex 2.1. Which statements do they refer to?

2.4 Choose one student to report back to the class on the most interesting/controversial points from your discussion in Ex 2.2.

Useful language: Reporting back

Our group thought the most controversial point was …
Point X provoked the most discussion.
Point X was the most controversial point.

There was some disagreement about Point X.
Some people felt …
Most of the group agreed …
Others disagreed …

Task 3 Agreeing and disagreeing

3.1 Read the statements below. Do you agree (A), disagree (D) or partly agree (P) with each one?

To succeed at university, you need to:
1. ___ be good at taking exams
2. ___ be a quick reader
3. ___ have a good tutor
4. ___ manage your time well
5. ___ understand your own learning style
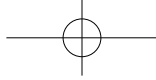6. ___ have a good memory

SAMPLE

3.2 Listen to two students discussing some statements about academic life. Does the second speaker agree, disagree or partly agree with each statement? Underline the correct alternative in the *Opinion* column in the table.

Opinion	Useful language
1. agrees/disagrees/partly agrees	
2. agrees/disagrees/partly agrees	
3. agrees/disagrees/partly agrees	
4. agrees/disagrees/partly agrees	
5. agrees/disagrees/partly agrees	
6. agrees/disagrees/partly agrees	

3.3 Listen to the discussion again.

a   In the *Useful language* column in Ex 3.2, write down the exact words the second speaker uses to agree, disagree or partly agree.

b.   Try to say the words as they are pronounced in the recording.

3.4 Look at the statements in Ex 3.1 again. Work with another student as follows:

Student A: Read a statement.

Student B: Respond, using one of the *Useful language* phrases from the table in Ex 3.2. Give your own opinion and a supporting reason.

Task 4   **Study skills for success**

You are going to hear a conversation between two students discussing the challenges of studying at university. The female student is a native speaker of English. The male student is an international student who studies on a pre-sessional course.

4.1 Listen and number the points below according to the order in which the students discuss them.

1.   ___ Plan ahead and begin working early.

2.   ___ Choose areas to study that you are interested in.

3. ___ Find out what is important on your reading list.
4. ___ Ask a peer to read your work before submitting it.
5. ___ Use reading strategies to help you read quickly.
6. ___ Deal with stress by finding time for relaxation.

4.2   **Think of your own study suggestions to add to those mentioned in the recording and write them below.**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Task 5   Prioritising study skills

5.1   **In groups, discuss the study skills you will need at university.**

a. Come to an agreement on the study skills your group thinks are the most important for success at university.
b. List what your group thinks are the five most important skills.

Build on the ideas from Ex 4.1. Make sure you are able to justify your choice. Remember to use the language for agreeing and disagreeing from Task 3.

Task 6   A mini-presentation: Tips for successful study

Now that you have looked at various aspects of being successful as a student, consider what advice would be useful for new students. Give a group mini-presentation to the class, explaining why the tips you chose in Task 5 are important.
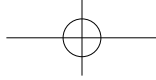
6.1   **You are now going to start preparing your presentation. First, think about what signpost expressions you could use.**

Look at the visual aid below.

Top five study tips

· Be well organised   · Work with classmates   · Keep good notes
· Develop good IT skills   · Be motivated

Listen to a student presenting his/her top five study tips based on this.

a.   Write your five points from Ex 5.1 onto a visual aid, such as a PowerPoint slide or poster. Use key words, not whole sentences. You need to identify the key words for each of your tips.

b.   Look at the *Useful language* expressions from the recording. These expressions signal when you are moving from one point to another. Use them in your presentation.

Useful language: Signpost expressions

There are five main points which we consider important for successful study.

Our first point is …   *Fourthly, we think …*

Next, we have put …   *And finally, our last point is …*
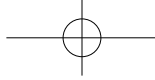
Moving on to our third point, …

Presentation skills: Using signpost expressions

When giving a presentation, you need to help your audience follow your presentation by using signpost expressions. These are important for:

▪   opening a presentation

▪   guiding an audience through the main points

▪   helping an audience understand the presentation's organisation

▪   closing a presentation

See Appendix 1 (page 174) for a more extensive list of signpost expressions.

6.2 **Now think about how you would deliver your presentation. Look at the following list of important aspects of delivering a presentation clearly.**

- pronunciation of sounds and words
- intonation
- volume
- speed
- eye contact

Presentation skills: Clear delivery

The delivery of your presentation is equally as important as the content. If your audience cannot understand what you are saying, e.g., because your pronunciation is poor or because you speak too fast, then the content will be wasted.

6.3 **In your group, discuss the delivery of the presentation.**

a. Decide who will give the presentation – either one group member or two or more group members.
b. Practise the presentation, focusing on the points in Ex 6.2. Group members should give the presenter(s) feedback on these areas, e.g., *You need to make more eye contact with the audience.*

Presentation skills: Listening to feedback

Presentation skills develop with practice, so you will not do everything perfectly from the beginning. Listen carefully to group feedback – whether you are presenting or not – as it will help you improve.

6.4 **Now give the presentation to the class.**

For each presenter, complete a presentation assessment form (Appendix 9a, page 188). At the end of each group's presentation, compare your assessment forms in your groups.

6.5 **At the end of all the presentations, give each presenter the assessment form you completed for his/her presentation.**

a. Read and think about any feedback you as a presenter receive from other students.
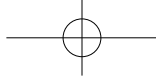
b. Decide as a class which presentation was the best according to the criteria on the assessment form.

Task 7 Assessing a successful presentation

7.1 **Think about the following points related to the delivery of a presentation. Which would you consider appropriate or inappropriate, and which depend on the presentation? Tick (√) the relevant box.**

Presentation point	Appropriate	It depends	Inappropriate
1. The presenter puts as much information as possible on each poster or slide.			
2. The presenter uses colour and sound to liven up his/her PowerPoint slides.			
3. The presenter reads from a script.			
4. The presenter memorises a script and recites it.			
5. The presenter uses notes.			
6. The presenter pauses after each main point.			
7. The presenter reads all the information on the poster or slide.			
8. The presenter stands in one place all the time.			
9. The presenter speaks at the same speed all the time.			

7.2   In groups, discuss your completed table and state your reasons for the choices.

Task 8   Review: Preparing to use a learner diary

Research into language learning has shown that reflecting on the process of learning has a strong impact on its effectiveness. One way of doing this is through keeping a diary. Before you fill in your first diary entry, complete a self-assessment questionnaire on your speaking skills.

8.1   Look at the following range of speaking skills. Indicate which of these you feel to be easy or difficult (5 = I can do this well; 1 = I do not feel competent at all). Put a tick (√) in the appropriate box.

Speaking skill	1	2	3	4	5
I can speak accurately, without making too many grammatical mistakes.					
I can speak without hesitating too much.					
I can find ways to express my meaning, even if I cannot find exactly the right words.					
I can usually find the words I need to say what I want.					
I can make most people understand my pronunciation.					
I can speak confidently in front of an audience.					
I can contribute effectively in group discussions.					
I can talk confidently in my own subject area.					

8.2   Consider the questions below.

a. What makes speaking in another language difficult?
b. Can you think of some practical suggestions you could do to improve your spoken English, inside and outside the classroom – e.g., talking to yourself in English? Make a list. For each suggestion, ask yourself these questions:
   - How would it help me?
   - How easy would it be to organise?

Learner diary

Read the learner diary questions and example diary entry.

- What areas of speaking English do you feel you need to work on?
- What can you do to improve in these areas, either inside or outside the classroom?
- How do you feel about the speaking you have done so far in the lessons on this course?

Learner diary 3rd July

I think my main problem in speaking English is my pronunciation and my limited vocabulary. I also feel very nervous when speaking in front of the class.

I did a presentation on good study skills in the speaking class and was really worried before I spoke. I think I need to do more practice of this type, so that I get more confidence. I also need to spend more time practising individual sounds – maybe I could do this in the self-access centre …

Make an entry in your own learner diary, answering the questions. Think about your strengths and weaknesses in speaking English as identified in the questionnaire in Ex 8.1.

Unit summary

In this unit you have looked at the speaking skills you need in academic situations and thought about your own strengths and weaknesses.

1 **Complete the sentences below in any way you want so that they are true for you.**

a. I find speaking in English difficult when

_____

_____

b. I find using English in academic situations can be different from other situations. I think it is important to be able to speak _____ but some people feel _____

c. I agree with others in the class that _____

_____

_____

2 **Think about the discussions you have had while working on this unit. Discuss the following questions and agree on a suitable answer for each one.**

a. To what extent did other students agree in the discussion in Task 2 about attitudes to speaking English?

b. Which discussion statement in Ex 2.1 about study skills did students find most controversial?

c. What do you think are the key points to remember when giving a presentation?

3 **Think of good presentations you have seen. What made them good in terms of:**
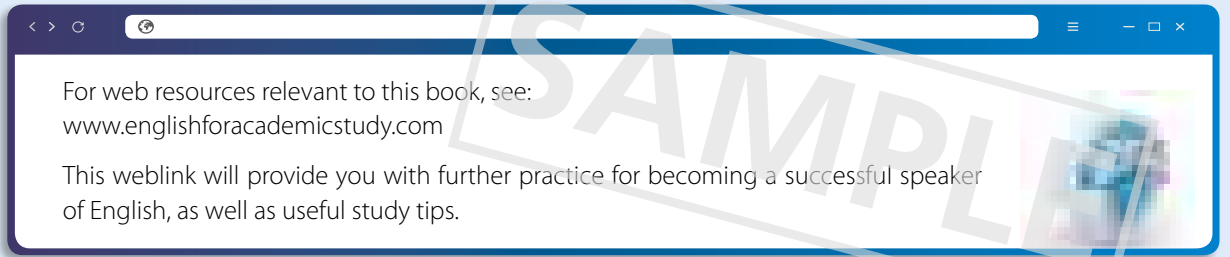
- content?
- delivery?
- visual aids?
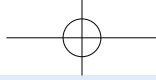
For web resources relevant to this book, see:
www.englishforacademicstudy.com

This weblink will provide you with further practice for becoming a successful speaker of English, as well as useful study tips.

Seminars and discussions

Learning online

In this unit you will:

1 identify characteristics of successful participation in seminars and discussions

2 consider problematic issues from different perspectives

3 practise summarising the outcome of a discussion

4 examine the role of a chairperson in a discussion

In your academic studies you will need to participate in seminars and discussions with groups of other students. Usually you are expected to have done some preparation, e.g., read an article. Seminars take various formats. Some are led by tutors and others by students. In semina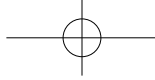rs you need to be able to state your viewpoint clearly and to develop the confidence to do this. This unit will give you practice in participating in seminars, as well as the opportunity to lead one.

It is important to think about how you can contribute effectively to a seminar. The purpose of Task1 is to start you thinking about how you can do this.

Task 1   The role of seminars

1.1   **Discuss questions 1–3.**

1.   What is the role of seminars in academic studies?
2.   What do tutors expect from students?
3.   How can you prepare for seminars?

Task 2   Participating successfully in group discussions

2.1   **Decide the degree to which the statements 1–11 in the table describe characteristics of good or poor seminar participants.**

a.   Put a tick (√) in the appropriate box.
b.   Prepare a list of reasons for your answers; if your answer is *It depends*, be prepared to explain further.

| The participant …	Good	It depends	Poor
1. listens to what others say and builds on this, adding his/her opinion			
2. tries to get other people to change their minds and agree with his/her opinion			
3. always agrees with other people's opinions			
4. does not say anything at all			
5. explains his/her point in great detail, and at great length			
6. explains his/her points briefly			
7. is nervous about speaking, but makes himself/herself do it			
8. encourages others to speak, inviting them into the discussion			
9. only speaks when asked			
10. asks other students to clarify what they mean, or to explain further			
11. changes his/her opinion during the discussion			

2.2 **Compare and discuss your answers in Ex 2.1 with those of another student, explaining the reasons for your choices.**

2.3 **Reflect on factors affecting group discussions in different cultures.**

1. What is considered good behaviour in group discussions in your own country?
2. Do you think there are any differences from an English-speaking country?
3. If you have experience of different English-speaking countries, do you feel there are differences between any of them?
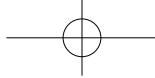
Considering different perspectives on an issue

3.1 **Look at questions 1–4. Think about who would be affected, either directly or indirectly, by each issue.**

1.   At what age should formal education begin?
2.   What is the most effective way to maintain discipline within large classes of children?
3.   Who should decide what is taught in schools?
4.   How might different groups of people (e.g., parents) or organisations respond to the points above?

3.2 **Look at this statement concerning education and consider it from the perspectives of the different people involved (1–7).**

> A seriously disruptive child should be excluded permanently from school.

1.   the teacher of the child
2.   the parents of the child
3.   the headteacher of the child's school
4.   the child
5.   the child's classmates
6.   a child psychologist
7.   the education authorities

3.3 **Read the text *Learning support units* on page 109 (note: Ofsted is the UK office for standards in education). Do you think these units are a solution to the problem of disruptive children?**

Study tip

In academic study, you need to look at issues from different perspectives and to think beyond your own experience or position. This is part of the process of reaching a balanced conclusion.

3.4 **Compare and discuss your ideas with those of another student, giving reasons for the view of each person. Use some of the *Useful language* expressions for comparing perspectives.**
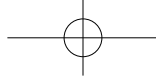
Useful language: Comparing perspectives

From (a teacher's) perspective, …

If I were (the headteacher of the child's school), I'd probably feel that …

(The child psychologist) would argue that …

From the point of view of (the parents), …

3.5 Now listen to a student comparing different perspectives on the statement in Ex 3.2. What does the speaker say about the views of those involved?

Task 4 **Reaching a balanced conclusion**

4.1 Look at the following statements about school education.

- Corporal punishment is necessary to maintain discipline.
- Children should be given formal tests and exams from the age of six.
- Children should be allowed to leave school at 16 if they wish.
- Parents should be allowed to educate children at home if they wish.
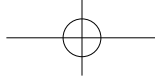- Children should be able to choose which subjects they want to study at the age of 15.

Consider each statement from the perspective of three or four different people who might be affected. Consider:

1. how they would view the issue
2. the long- and short-term implications of the statements

In addition to the people mentioned in Ex 3.2, think about the viewpoints of other sectors of society – such as young people or employers – and society as a whole.

4.2 Now record your points using the table in Appendix 2 (page 175). Remember you are recording what you think the views of those directly involved might be, not your own views.

4.3 **In groups, discuss each of the statements from Ex 4.1, comparing your ideas about the different views of the people involved.**

Step 1: Compare what you wrote for the first statement in the *Different perspectives* columns of the table in Appendix 2. Use some of the *Useful language* expressions from Ex 3.4.

Step 2: When you have completed Step 1, give your own opinion on the first statement. What do you think should happen?

Step 3: In groups, compare your answers to Step 2. Do you agree?

Step 4: Now repeat Steps 1–3 for the other statements.

Task 5 Summarising the outcome of a discussion

In seminars, you may have to summarise the final outcome of a long discussion. Did people agree or disagree on the main issues, and why? What were the main points for and against?
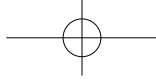
5.1 **Listen to a student summarising a group discussion of the statement from Ex 3.2 relating to the exclusion of disruptive children. Did the group agree or disagree with the statement?**

5.2 **Look at the following extract from the student's talk, paying attention to how the speaker organises the points.**

The missing phrases are where the speaker:
- states whether or not the group agreed
- acknowledges a strong argument against the final position
- qualifies the final position

> This is a difficult question, but _____ such
> a child should be excluded from school, as this would be in the best
> interests of most people concerned. _____
> this action might cause some damage to the child's long-term ability
> to socialise effectively with other children, so we also agreed that
> _____ there is no other
> solution – I mean, if all else fails.

6 Listen again and complete the gaps.

5.3 Underline the words you think are stressed in the three phrases in Ex 5.2. If necessary, listen again.

5.4 Next to each phrase in the following *Useful language* box there is a number. This number tells you how many words are stressed when this phrase is spoken aloud and with the correct emphasis.

7

a. Predict which of the words are stressed.
b. Listen to a student using some of the phrases.
c. Practise saying the phrases in a natural way. Make sure you are using the correct stress.

Useful language: Summarising a discussion

Summing up your position
We finally all agreed that … 3
After much consideration, we decided that … 3
All things considered, we felt that … 4
On balance, we felt that … 2
We couldn't reach agreement on this issue … 3
Some of us felt that …, whilst others … 4

Recognising strong arguments against your position
It's true that … 1
We recognised that … 1
We're fully aware that … 2
*One has to acknowledge that … 2*
Qualifying your position
This action should only be taken if … 4
So, although we agreed with the statement, we stressed that … 5

5.5 Take turns to present a summary of your discussion of one of the statements from Ex 4.1 to the class. Use the *Useful language* expressions in your summary.

After you have listened to the summaries given by the other groups, be prepared to make comments or ask questions about what they have said.
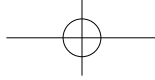
Task 6   Considering issues in higher education

6.1   **Look at questions 1–3. Who is affected by these issues? What might the different responses be?**

1. How should higher education be funded?
2. How much of its time and resources should a university spend on research and how much on teaching?
3. How can a developing country best improve its higher education system?

Task 7   The role of a chairperson in a discussion

When having a group discussion it is often a good idea to appoint a chairperson. This will help the management of the discussion. Task 7 looks at the role of the chairperson.

7.1   **Online learning is rapidly becoming more popular as an increasing number of students choose to study in this way. Use the table below to make notes on the advantages and disadvantages of online learning.**

a. Use ideas from your own experience.
b. Read the texts on pages 111–118. Think about whether the texts have changed your opinions and amend your notes as appropriate.
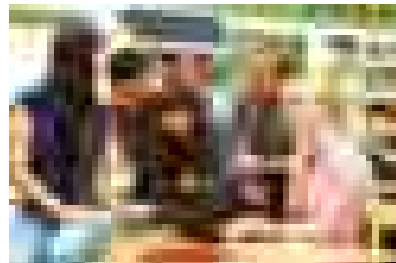
Advantages	Disadvantages
	– not all people have access to the technology
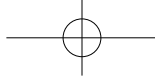
7.2   **Take part in a group discussion on the topic given. Follow the steps.**

> Online learning will eventually replace many forms of face-to-face teaching.

Step 1: Think about the points you want to make and what your overall position on the issue is.

Step 2: Appoint a chairperson to manage the discussion. Some of the chairperson's responsibilities are listed below. The appointed chairperson should refer to the *Useful language* expressions below.

The role of chairperson includes:
- getting the discussion started
- giving a brief overview of the topic (introducing it)
- possibly giving definitions
- keeping the discussion going by encouraging everyone to participate
- clarifying what people say, if necessary
- ensuring that one person does not dominate
- checking that all contributions were understood
- managing the time
- summing up the discussion at the end

Note: The chairperson should not dominate or control the discussion too much.

Step 3: You have 10–15 minutes for your discussion. Each person should try to make at least one contribution to the discussion; you do not need to wait for the chairperson to invite you to speak.

Useful language: Chairing a discussion

Getting started	**Managing contributions**
Shall we begin?	*Thanks, Pete, for your contribution …*
Today, we're looking at the following question/topic …	*OK, Pete. Would anyone else like to comment?*
Who would like to begin?	**Concluding**
Clarification	*So, to sum up, …*
So what you mean is …	*We're running out of time, so …*
If I've understood you correctly, …	*Does anyone want to make a final point?*
	Have I forgotten anything?

7.3   Review your group's discussion in Ex 7.2 by completing the discussion review form in Appendix 9b (page 189).

7.4   With a student from another group, compare and discuss your discussion review forms. If you are a chairperson in the discussion, join with another chairperson.

Learner diary

Make another entry in your learner diary.

Reflect on the characteristics of a good/poor discussion participant you considered at the start of this unit.

- Do you feel that you were a "good participant" in the discussion activities in this unit? Can you say why or why not?
- What areas do you think you need to improve on to become a better participant?

Make an entry in your learner diary, answering the questions. If you prefer, you can make an audio recording of your thoughts and give it to your teacher to listen to.

Unit summary

In this unit you have looked at the speaking skills you need to participate in and summarise seminars and discussions. You have also looked at the role of the chairperson.

1   **Read the opinion below and discuss the questions with another student.**

> I believe we should be allowed to leave school at the age of 15.

   a.   Do you agree with this teenager's perspective? Why? Why not?
     b.   How could you complete the sentence below? *From the point of view of an employer, …*
     c.   What other perspectives could this issue be considered from?
     d.   Why is it important for a seminar participant to be able to think about different perspectives in advance when preparing for a discussion?

2   **Complete the text with the words and phrases in the box from Unit 2. There is one word which you will not need to use.**

> clarify   participate   dominate   overview   sum up
> contribution   conclusion   time   dominate

The role of the chairperson

In a seminar, the chairperson is responsible for keeping the discussion going but should not control or _____ it. He or she normally gets the discussion started by giving a brief _____ of the topic and clarifying key concepts. He or she then helps the discussion run smoothly by encouraging everyone to _____. This means ensuring that one person does not _____ and inviting quieter people to speak where necessary so that everyone makes at least one _____. He or she may also ask people to _____ any points that are unclear. The chairperson also manages the _____ and should _____ the main points at the end.
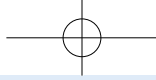
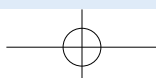For web resources relevant to this book, see:
www.englishforacademicstudy.com

This weblink will encourage you to think about how seminars differ from lectures, provide you with practice in looking at issues from different perspectives and give you some useful language for discussing ideas.

Reading texts

Learning support units

LSUs are school-based centres for pupils who are disaffected, at risk of exclusion or vulnerable because of family or social issues. They provide short-term teaching and support programmes tailored to the needs of pupils who need help in improving their behaviour, attendance or attitude
5   to learning. The aim is to keep pupils in school and working while their problems are addressed, and to help to reintegrate them into mainstream classes as quickly as possible.

Good LSUs have a positive impact on attainment and attitudes towards learning. Ofsted says that pupils with emotional and social difficulties can
10   often respond well to specific, well-targeted and well-managed support.

When LSUs provide a curriculum and tuition which meets individual needs, combined with close attention to preventing and controlling outbursts, they make an effective contribution to ensuring that pupils succeed in mainstream lessons. Pupils who spend time in LSUs often feel better understood and supported, and as a result become less anxious and less volatile.
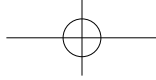
Case studies

Case study 1

15   X is the oldest of a family of seven children. Both X and his sister have a lot of responsibility in the home and the whole family is on the central "at risk" register.

X's attendance at school is good, but he has problems in his relationships with peers. He also has considerable learning difficulties and was admitted to the school's LSU for long-term support, having first been there for a three-day assessment.

20   Prior to his full-time attendance at the LSU, X was frequently being sent out of the classroom, usually at the beginning of lessons. Many of his problems stemmed from his use of abusive language towards his peers, which also led to acts of aggression, either by X or directed at him. He received 12 "red cards" in six weeks and was seriously disrupting the rest of his class.

25   Following his attendance at the LSU and his work on anger management, X coped far better with his peers. Supported by a learning mentor, he was reintegrated into most of his lessons. His literacy and numeracy skills improved, as did his confidence in his own abilities.

Case study 2

In the primary report regarding Y, there were concerns regarding her attitude to learning and education in general. She sometimes absconded and often became challenging if confronted with the consequences of her actions. During classroom observation the mentors and head of year were often concerned at Y's obvious disaffection. When she returned from holidays this attitude was particularly intense and she responded badly to teacher criticisms.
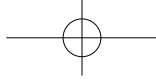
Following a spell in the school's LSU, Y improved considerably. She was better able to cope with criticism without a negative response. There was a definite and more positive shift in her friendships and relationships with her peer group, and there was a significant difference in the way she coped on return from holidays. She was more responsive and sometimes enthusiastic about school.

Y managed her learning in the LSU well, and on the whole responded positively to the independent-study ethos. This made her feel more positive about learning, and especially about history. Group work in the LSU helped Y learn to express her opinions constructively and understand others' differing opinions.

N E T
EFFECTS

Over the past 30 years, the writing and design of postgraduate courses and learning materials has changed enormously as universities have realised distance learners need much more than a tutor
5 who marks assignments and sends them back. Many organisations now provide summer schools and social events for students, creating a virtual learning community. But it's e-mail and the Internet which now offer the most exciting possibilities.

10 **V**ia the Internet, distance learners can formulate their own curriculum, learn at their own pace and set their own timetable. And regular e-mail correspondence with a tutor can be much more productive and rewarding than infrequent tutorials.

15 **T**he variety of media that online courses can offer means that distance learning can be a rich, inspiring experience. Graphics, sound and video bring dry texts to life and students can choose to spend more time going into depth on particular subjects which they find
20 difficult to grasp by hyperlinking to other pages on a CD-ROM or website. Unlike the slower paper-based courses, e-mail access means tutors and fellow students can help quickly with queries.

The Open University was a pioneer of distance learning
25 and remains the biggest online provider, with more than 25 degrees wholly online, as well as many others with online content.

Some online postgraduate courses offer students
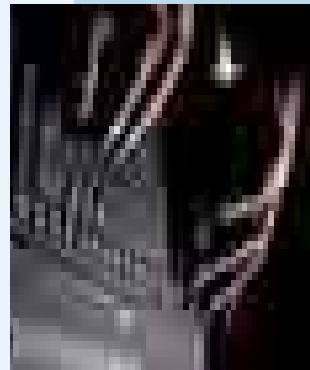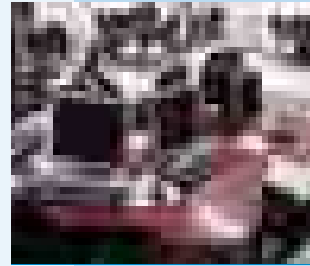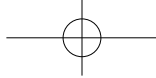
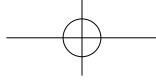access to information that might prove difficult to research
30 if all they had available was the university library. The
University of Surrey's online MBA, for example, has links to
the university's learning resources department, a full range
of academic journals and even Reuters business information.

Source: Adapted from Net effects. (2004). *The Guardian*. © Copyright Guardian News & Media Ltd. 2004.

A whole new world of studying

From video marking to Second Life, technology is transforming the options for online students

THERE'S not a red pen in sight when Russell Stannard marks his master's students' essays – but it's not because the students never make mistakes. Stannard doesn't use a pen,
5 or even paper, to give his students feedback. Instead, he turns on his computer, records himself marking the work on-screen, then e-mails his students the video.

When students open the video, they can
10 hear Stannard's voice commentary as well as watch him going through the process of marking. The resulting feedback is more comprehensive than the more conventional notes scrawled in the margin, and
15 Stannard, who works at the University of Westminster, now believes it has the potential to revolutionise distance learning.

Stannard believes video marking is "perfect" for distance-learning students. "It brings them
20 much closer to the teacher," he says. "They can listen, see and understand how the teacher is marking their piece, why specific comments have been made, and so on."

Second Life

Online marking is part of a package of new
25 technology that is transforming distance education, from traditional correspondence courses to online interactive learning. This is clearly evident on Second Life – the virtual world where users create personalised
30 avatars (characters) that interact with each other. Second Life is home to scores of UK universities, with some teaching entire distance-learning modules through the site. Kingston University has developed a
35 virtual courtroom to allow law students to practise on the site, while e-learning specialists at St George's, University of London, have come up with a program code enabling Second Life users to create
40 training scenarios.

One sees paramedic students enter Second Life to attend emergency scenarios. The characters have to assess and treat patients by speaking to them, checking
45 their pulses, dressing wounds and administering drugs. The characters have to get patients into ambulances and transport them to hospital, and then write handover notes which are e-mailed to the real-life
50 tutor for feedback.

Dr Terry Poulton, head of the Second Life – academia link-up at the university, says the technology has potential applications beyond single disciplines. "The technology
55 could enhance any course with a focus on
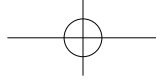
solving real-life problems, such as architecture, law or engineering," he says. "It could also be useful for professional development, particularly when preparing staff for crisis
60 situations that they do not often face."
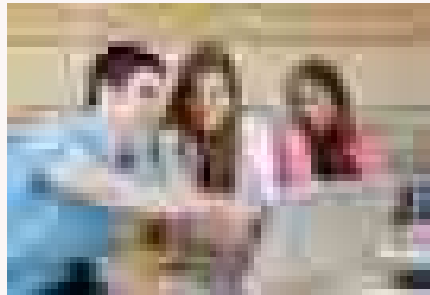
Other academics are already using new technology to make university courses more accessible to working professionals. At Bournemouth University, a part-time
65 master's in creative media practice, launched in 2005, is run entirely online. Recruits are all working people who want to undertake further study but cannot commit to a face-to-face course. The
70 students – over a third of whom are international, living in South Africa, Mexico, the United States and Finland – use blogs, podcasts and Skype, the Internet telephone service, to study. The first time the students
75 and their tutors meet is normally at graduation.

Jon Wardle, associate dean of the media school at Bournemouth, says the course represents a changing mood in academia.
80 "Higher education has recognised the need to provide opportunities for lifelong learning for a long time, but the early work in the area was poor. Now, because of sites like YouTube, Facebook and Skype,
85 these courses are really able to meet learner needs. Lecturers and students are both starting to understand that online learning doesn't have to be a poor alternative to traditional campus-based courses.
90 The days of the very bad, old-school correspondence courses are over. Now the future is about trying to discover new pedagogies which might not work face-to-face, but work wonderfully online."
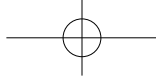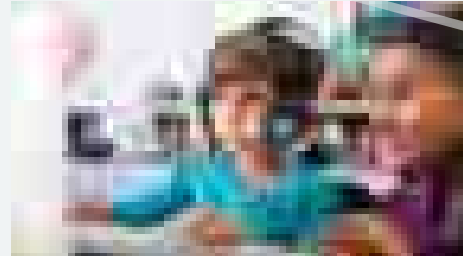
Give them a laptop and a group of pupils will teach themselves

Educational technology professor Sugata Mitra believes all pupils should be given time in groups with a computer to teach themselves

THERE are, and always will be – even in the developed world – places where good teachers do not want to go. How will learners in such areas get an equal opportunity? These areas are not necessarily geographically remote. They may be remote in other ways – for instance, areas in big cities that are socio-economically remote,
5 areas that are religiously or ethnically remote.

Ten years ago, in an experimental project, computers were installed in brick walls in public places in hundreds of villages and slums in India, Cambodia and parts of Africa. The media called this the "hole-in-the-wall" project.

The computers were designed to be used by 6- to 15-year-old children, free of
10 charge and free of any supervision. In its first five years, the project showed that groups of children can teach themselves to use a computer and the Internet, irre-spective of who or where they are, of what language they speak and of whether or not they go to school.

Ten years after her encounter with the computer in the wall as a child, a young
15 woman in rural Maharashtra is studying aeronautical engineering. A young villager who became a genetic engineer at one of India's premier laboratories came to the subject as a boy by reading *New Scientist* at his hole in the wall.

What else could children learn on their own, apart from the use of computers? In Hyderabad, India, groups of children showed significant improvements in
20 English pronunciation after just a few hours' practice on their own. They used a computer and a speech-to-text program that had been trained in a native English accent.

In the tsunami-hit village of Kalikuppam in southern India, children with access to a hole-in-the-wall computer taught themselves basic biotechnology, reaching a test
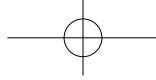
25 score of 30% in just two months. They had started with a score of zero. However, while a 30% score may be impressive, it's still not a pass. A local woman who worked for an NGO was employed to help the children go further. She had no background in biotechnology, but took on the role of an untrained friendly mediator who set out to encourage the children, using their desire to impress

30 each other and their adult friend. Two months on, the scores in Kalikuppam rose to more than 50% – close to what is achieved by trained subject teachers in the private schools of New Delhi.

An appeal was made to British grandparents to give an hour of their time to talk, using Skype, to children in the slums and villages of India. Within days,

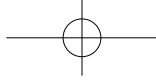35 200 volunteers – of all ages, but including many retired teachers – had come forward.

Over the following months, 40 of these "e-mediators" had more than 200 hours of contact with children in India. They read them stories, played games with them, and chatted about their two countries. A child development specialist is

40 measuring the effects of this on the children's communication skills in English.

The same approach was tried in the UK. Ten-year-olds working in groups were able to answer exam questions they would normally only encounter six years later. The children were asked

45 if they could have done this more quickly if they had not shared a computer but worked on their own. They said they could not have done it at all that way.

50 A model is being developed that could have far-reaching implications. The children work in groups of four, each group with a computer connected to the Internet. They are given selected

55 exam questions to work on. They usually get the answers right. Two months later they are tested again, this time without a computer, and each student on his or her own – as in a normal

60 exam. The children show near-perfect recall of the answers.

It seems that groups of children, given the appropriate digital infrastructure, a safe and free environment, and a

65 friendly but not knowledgeable mediator, can pass school-leaving exams

on their own.

The new model is straightforward. It is referred to as a "self-organised learning environment" (SOLE). All this essentially means is that children are provided
70 with a "cybercafé" environment that is light, comfortable, safe and inexpensive. Children work in self-organised groups of four or five. They have the freedom to work as they please, or not to work if they so please. Order is maintained by the children themselves. Sessions should be timetabled, just as playtime is. Each session is driven by a question designed by teachers.

75 Teachers need to be trained to design simple questions that will evoke curiosity and interest while gently nudging a group towards the curriculum. Then, they can sit back and admire as learning happens. The teachers have to learn to let go.