A business conference
by Andrew Garth

Age: Adults
Level: Elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate
Time: 40 minutes
Objective: to practise using language needed for first-time interactions at networking events
Key skills: speaking
Materials: One role card per student, cut out and folded

Note: A class size of seven or more students is necessary.

Procedure

1. (5 mins)
Tell the students that today’s class is not actually a class; it is a conference. Ask the class if they have ever been to a conference – if so, ask these follow-up questions:
- Where?
- What was the theme?
- How long did it last?
Inform the students that you’ve ‘forgotten’ the details (location, purpose and length) of today’s conference and the students will have to create these details. Elicit some silly suggestions (for example, Antarctica) for these details and come to a decision as a class.

2. (5 mins)
Ask the students what questions they might ask other attendees when meeting for the first time. Write these questions on the board. Make sure the following questions are included and written on the board if the students do not suggest them:
- ‘Who do you work for?’
- ‘Where are you from originally?’
- ‘What is your position?’
- ‘What industry do you work in?’
- ‘Where did you go to school?’
- ‘What languages can you speak?’
- Optional – ‘How old are you?’

(Rule: Either include or omit this question, depending on the cultural backgrounds of your students. In Far Eastern cultures, it is not considered rude to ask a person’s age because it is understood that doing so allows you to establish your relative social position and to show proper respect.)

3. (5 mins)
Elicit some answers to the questions using the details of students in the class and also famous business people (for example, Bill Gates is in the IT industry; Tim Cook is the CEO of Apple).

4. Optional additional activities (5 minutes)
Elementary – practising ways to continue and encourage conversation
Ask the students how they can continue and encourage conversation. Provide a few examples:
- ‘Really?’
- ‘I see.’
- ‘What about you?’ etc.

Gather the students’ suggestions on the board. Put the students in pairs to practise asking each other the conference questions (from step 2), making sure they also practise continuing and encouraging the conversation.

Pre-intermediate – practising ways of starting and ending conversations
Elicit ways one could start a conversation with a stranger at a conference. Gather these suggestions on the board. Include the following suggestions:
- ‘I’m … . I don’t think we’ve met.’
- ‘That is a very nice jacket / shirt / handbag etc.’
- ‘Have we met before? I’m …’
- ‘I really enjoyed the last presentation / activity / dinner etc.’
- ‘What do you think of the conference so far?’

Elicit ways one could end a conversation at a conference.

Gather these suggestions on the board. Include the following suggestions:
- ‘It was really nice to meet you.’
- ‘Excuse me. I have to go and say hello to someone.’
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• ‘I’m starving. Have you tried any food from the buffet?’
• ‘I hope to see you around.’
• ‘Would you be interested in meeting later for a drink?’

You may also want to provide a few comical ways to end a conversation, for example pretending you have a phone call or that you’ve lost your keys and must go and find them immediately.

Put the students in pairs and ask them to practice starting a conversation at a conference, asking a few conference questions (see step 2) and, then, ending the conversation.

Intermediate – practising using tag questions for confirmation

Tell the students that, today, they will be looking at how to check if information is correct. Provide an example by asking one student:

• ‘You haven’t won the lottery, have you?’

Explain how this construction checks the validity of a thought you have. If necessary, spend time reviewing how the tag must be positive if the initial phrase is negative and vice versa. Elicit from the students ways they could rephrase the conference questions on the board (from step 2) to include tag questions. Some examples may include:

• ‘You’re not the CEO, are you?’
• ‘You work in the fashion industry, don’t you?’

Put the students in pairs and have them practice this grammar point about their real lives and jobs using the conference questions on the board (from step 2).

5. (2–3 minutes)
Give each student a role card. Inform them that they now have a new identity for today’s conference and that the information about that identity is on the CV. Give them a few minutes to read through their CV and ask any questions.

6. (2–3 minutes)
Tell the students to unfold their role card to reveal a note from their company’s human resources manager. Tell the students that he or she is a bit strange and has very specific ideas about the people he or she wants to employ. Tell the students that they should read through the list of qualities the people must have. (If the students ask why one person from the list on each role card has a line through it, just say that the HR manager changed his or her mind.)

7. (10 minutes)
Tell the students that the conference has begun and that they need to meet the other attendees. Make sure that they know they also have another goal – they need to find the people on the HR manager’s note. Tell them they should write the person’s name over where it says ‘somebody’. Remind the students that they should use whatever language they practiced in class (encouraging conversation for elementary students, starting and ending conversations for pre-intermediates and tag questions for intermediates). Encourage the students to stand up and mingle. If necessary, provide a prize for the student who finds all the requested people.

(Note: If there are only seven students, you will have to assume the remaining role. If there are more than eight students, the teacher can double (or triple) up the roles. If necessary, inform the students there are some ‘twins’ in the class.)

8. (5 minutes)
After a majority of the students have found all of the people requested in the note from the HR manager, ask the students to sit down. Tell the students that we have to check to make sure everyone has the correct information – otherwise, the HR manager may be angry! Tell the students that, if they have a name for a number on the list, you’d like them to call out that name when you say the number. For example, you say ‘One!’ and the students should call out whomever they wrote down for number one on the list. Assuming the students completed the task correctly, they should all call out the same name: ‘Pedro Lopez’. (Note: the answer for each number is the same for all the role cards.)

Key:

Inform the students that the conference is now coming to a close and thank all the attendees for coming.
This is your new identity for today. You are Pedro. This is your CV.

**Pedro Lopez**  
Nationality: Spain  |  Age: 27  
Banking Industry

### Education
- Bachelor’s  
  Madrid University  ~  Finance

### Work experience
- **Bank of New York**  
  Investment Manager  2014  ~  Present
- **Madrid Mutual Funds**  
  Investment Manager  2012  ~  2012

### Language ability
- Spanish  ~  Native  
- English  ~  Fluent  
- French  ~  Advanced

References available upon request

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You’ve just found a note from your company’s human resources manager in your bag. Please read the note to learn about your goal during the conference.

**Hey Pedro.** I hope you enjoy your conference. I am looking for some new employees with specific qualities. Please try to find the following people:

1. Somebody who used to live in Japan.
2. Somebody who is 34 years old.
3. Somebody who is from Korea.
4. Somebody who studied at Delhi University.
5. Somebody who can speak German and Korean.
6. Somebody who is in the electronics industry.
7. Somebody who works for Kingdom Cigarettes.
8. Somebody who is an accountant.

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This is your new identity for today. You are John. This is your CV.

**John Smith**  
Nationality: USA  |  Age: 34  
IT Industry

### Education
- Master’s  
  Springfield University  ~  Computer engineering  
- Bachelor’s  
  Springfield University  ~  Computer engineering

### Work experience
- **Eagle Soft**  
  Software Developer  2012  ~  Present  
- **Software Solutions**  
  Software Developer  2004  ~  2012

### Language ability
- Spanish  ~  Native  
- English  ~  Fluent  
- French  ~  Advanced

References available upon request

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You’ve just found a note from your company’s human resources manager in your bag. Please read the note to learn about your goal during the conference.

**Hey John.** I hope you enjoy your conference. I am looking for some new employees with specific qualities. Please try to find the following people:

2. Somebody who is a designer.
3. Somebody who can speak Chinese and Hindi.
4. Somebody who is in the tobacco industry.
This is your new identity for today. You are Jin. This is your CV.

**Jin Hui Kim**  
Nationality: Korea | Age: 28  
Airline Industry

**Education**  
Bachelor’s  
Seoul University ~ Tourism

**Work experience**  
Asian Airlines  
Flight Attendant 2013 ~ Present  
Korean Airlines  
Accounts Manager 2011 ~ 2013

**Language ability**  
Korean ~ Native  
English ~ Fluent  
Japanese ~ Advanced

References available upon request

This is your new identity for today. You are Kumar. This is your CV.

**Kumar Patel**  
Nationality: India | Age: 57  
Automotive Industry

**Education**  
Doctorate  
Delhi University ~ Economics  
Master’s  
Delhi University ~ Economics  
Bachelor’s  
Delhi University ~ Economics

**Work experience**  
India Auto  
Sales Agent 2001 ~ Present  
Delhi Motors  
Sales Agent 1995 ~ 2001

**Language ability**  
Hindi ~ Native  
English ~ Fluent  
Arabic ~ Advanced

References available upon request

You’ve just found a note from your company’s human resources manager in your bag. Please read the note to learn about your goal during the conference.

Hey Jin Hui, I hope you enjoy your conference. I am looking for some new employees with specific qualities. Please try to find the following people:
1. Somebody who is in the banking industry.  
2. Somebody who works for Eagle Soft.  
3. Somebody who is 57 years old.  
4. Somebody who studied at Berlin University.  
5. Somebody who is from France.  
6. Somebody who is an electrical engineer.  
7. Somebody who can speak Italian and Arabic.

Hey Kumar, I hope you enjoy your conference. I am looking for some new employees with specific qualities. Please try to find the following people:
1. Somebody who can speak Spanish and French.  
2. Somebody who works for Asian Airlines.  
3. Somebody who used to be a model.  
4. Somebody who is from France.  
5. Somebody who studied at Beijing University.  
6. Somebody who is a marketing manager.  
7. Somebody who is a farmer.

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### Alice Martin
**Nationality:** France  |  **Age:** 45  
**Fashion Industry**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Bachelor’s</td>
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<td>Paris University</td>
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<th>Work experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blueberry Clothes</td>
<td>Designer 2002 ~ Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean Bernard Clothes</td>
<td>Designer 1998 ~ 2002</td>
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<tr>
<th>Language ability</th>
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<td>French ~ Native</td>
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<tr>
<td>English ~ Fluent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese ~ Advanced</td>
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References available upon request

### Angela Müller
**Nationality:** German  |  **Age:** 47  
**Telecommunication Industry**

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<td>Accounting</td>
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<tr>
<th>Work experience</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Wireless</td>
<td>Accountant 2006 ~ Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Core Communications</td>
<td>Accountant 2000 ~ 2004</td>
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<tr>
<td>Korean ~ Advanced</td>
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**Notes:**

You've just found a note from your company's human resources manager in your bag. Please read the note to learn about your goal during the conference.

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**Note:**

Hey Alice. I hope you enjoy your conference. I am looking for some new employees with specific qualities. Please try to find the following people:

1. Somebody who is an investment manager.
2. Somebody who can speak Spanish and German.
3. Somebody who is in the airline industry.
4. Somebody who works for India Auto.
5. Somebody who used to live in Brazil.
6. Somebody who is 47 years old.
7. Somebody who is from China.
8. Somebody who studied at Riyadh University.

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**Note:**

Hey Angela. I hope you enjoy your conference. I am looking for some new employees with specific qualities. Please try to find the following people:

2. Somebody who is a software developer.
3. Somebody who can speak Korean and Japanese.
4. Somebody who is in the automotive industry.
5. Somebody who works for Blueberry Clothes.
6. Somebody who used to study at Harvard.
7. Somebody who is 51 years old.
8. Somebody who is from Saudi Arabia.
This is your new identity for today. You are Jackie. This is your CV.

Jackie Yen  
Nationality: China  |  Age: 51  
Electronics Industry

Education  
Doctorate  
Beijing University ~ Electrical Engineering  
Master’s  
Beijing University ~ Electrical Engineering  
Bachelor’s  
Beijing University ~ Electrical Engineering

Work experience  
Beijing Electronics  
Electrical Engineer  2007 ~ Present  
Delhi Motors  
Electrical Engineer  1997 ~ 2007

Language ability  
Chinese ~ Native  
English ~ Fluent  
Hindi ~ Advanced

References available upon request

This is your new identity for today. You are Ahmed. This is your CV.

Ahmed Abadi  
Nationality: Saudi Arabia  |  Age: 35  
Tobacco Industry

Education  
Master’s  
Riyadh University ~ Statistics  
Bachelor’s  
Riyadh University ~ Statistics

Work experience  
Kingdom Cigarettes  
Marketing Manager  2012 ~ Present  
Camel Cigarettes  
Marketing Manager  2008 ~ 2012

Language ability  
Arabic ~ Native  
English ~ Fluent  
Italian ~ Advanced

References available upon request