

Change the Topic

A discussion class for speaking skills

by Lindsay Clandfield

Level: Intermediate

Aim: Students learn expressions for responding in conversation and changing the topic, then play a discussion game.

Language: Expressions for responding to what someone says and changing the topic.

Note: The worksheet attached to this lesson plan can be changed to better suit your students' interests and/or current events. All you need is a series of topics, each of which could easily be linked to the previous one.

Procedure

1. Start by telling the class you are going to dictate them some expressions. Read out the following – repeating each one once.

You know, that reminds me ...

Really?

Yeah, I guess.

By the way ...

Yeah, I know what you mean.

I've just thought of something ...

Mmm.

You're kidding.

Speaking about ...

2. Ask students to check their dictation in pairs. Then draw the diagram below on the board and ask them to copy it down and put the expressions in the right place.

Changing the Topic	Responding to What Someone Says

Answers

Changing the topic

You know, that reminds me ...

By the way ...

I've just thought of something ...

Speaking about ...

Responding to what someone says

Really?

You're kidding.

I guess.

Mmm.

Yeah, I know what you mean.

3. When students have finished, ask a pair to come up and write their answers on the board. Go through all the expressions, clarifying what they mean (this could mean translating some of them).
4. (optional) At this stage, if the students haven't encountered these expressions before it may be worthwhile to drill them. Have the class repeat them in chorus after you, then ask individual students to say them.
5. Ask students to choose three expressions from each column (total six) and copy them onto separate little pieces of paper. Do an example first to show them what you mean.
6. Put the students in groups of four. Tell them to collect all papers and mix them up. They should now redistribute the papers so that each student has a mixture of six papers.
7. Distribute the worksheet. Explain that the first person in the group should start to talk about the weekend. They can say one or two sentences.
8. When the first person stops, the next person in the group must 'play' one of their cards. If they play a response card (really, you're joking etc), they must start with that word/phrase and add something else. If they play a change the topic card (by the way, speaking about etc.), they must start with that word/phrase and then introduce the next topic on the worksheet.
9. The next player continues in the same way.
10. Before students start, give an example (you can read this out, or put it on the board):

S1: I didn't do much this weekend. The weather was bad.

S2: (plays Really?) Really? I went out on Friday and Saturday night. It was great.

S3: (plays Speaking about ...) Speaking about the weekend, I saw the football match on Saturday night. What a great match.

9. Students continue to play until they finish the topic board or their cards.

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