Conversation Partner Program
Table of Contents

Program Overview & Expectations ...............................................................Page 2
Program Goals ........................................................................................................Page 3
The First Meeting: Where to Start .................................................................Page 4
Tips and Suggestions for Conversation .......................................................Pages 5
Suggested Topics for Conversation ..............................................................Pages 6-12
The Cultural Iceberg ........................................................................................Page 13
Activity Resources .............................................................................................Page 14
Referral Resources .............................................................................................Page 15
Additional Notes .................................................................................................Page 16
Program Overview

Emory University’s Conversation Partner Program is a volunteer program that pairs international and domestic participants to build cross-cultural relationships and improve English language acquisition. This program strives to build bridges between partners through conversation, cultural exchange, and friendship.

Expectations of the Conversation Partner Program

The Conversation Partner Program is a voluntary commitment. For the duration of the program, each partner should:

- Maintain a one semester commitment
- Meet for a minimum of one hour, once a week as schedules permit (communicate with your partner if you are unable to meet)
- Meet on campus to begin, and always meet in a mutually agreeable place
- Fill out a waiver form for any off campus activities
- Understand the purpose of the program, and work to create a productive and mutually beneficial language partnership
- Provide feedback about the experience throughout the semester
- Contact the Office of International Student Life (oisl@emory.edu) if any problems develop during your meetings
Goals of the Conversation Partner Program

Language goals for international participants may include:
- Building confidence in one's English language skills
- Increasing fluency by enhancing accuracy (grammar, pronunciation, etc.)
- Increasing knowledge of language formality (academic language, colloquialism/slang)

Participation goals for all participants may include:
- Sharing one’s own culture
- Learning about a different culture
- Making a new friend from a different part of the world
- Expanding one’s worldview
- Experiencing personal and professional growth
- Learning another language

Have you established other goals for your participation? Record them below!

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The First Meeting: Where to Start & What to Do

There are many ways to engage with your language partner through conversation! Consider the following at your first meeting to ensure you both feel comfortable and prepared:

- Meet your partner on campus at a mutually agreed upon location so you are both familiar with your surroundings.
- Learn how to properly pronounce each other’s names. Teach your partner how to spell and say your name, and then ask them to help you with their name. Don’t be afraid to ask your partner to repeat their names a few times, as you want to make sure you are saying it correctly!
- Establish your language proficiency level. Explain how long you have been studying a language and in what context.
- Discuss your goals for the program. It is important that you and your partner have the same understanding to create a mutually beneficial partnership.
- Bring other materials! Travel guides, pictures, maps, books, or other belongings may help you explain your country and/or cultural heritage, and give you something to share.
- Discuss the best method(s) of contacting each other (text, phone, social media, etc.) in case you have to cancel or reschedule a meeting.
- Bring a calendar to have your work or school schedules available so you can know what days you are able to meet with your partner. Set a date to meet and add it to your calendar.
- Remember to be friendly and flexible, and to invest time in order to develop the relationship.
Tips & Suggestions for Conversation

**Always have a way to write.** If you do not understand something your partner has said, have your partner write it down. Also record new vocabulary words and phrases!

**Speak Clearly & Slowly, NOT Loudly!** Ask your partner if you are speaking too fast. Annunciate and speak clearly, but there is no need to raise your voice!

**Be Aware of Slang and Idioms.** If you use a phrase that cannot be translated literally into your partner’s language, write it down and ask your partner if they know it. Do not rely too heavily on slang or colloquialisms.

**Be Culturally Sensitive.** If you do not know if your question is appropriate, you may say, “Is it okay if I ask…?” You may find that your conversation partner has different expectations for how men and women should interact, for the amount of personal space between the two of you, or for what topics are considered appropriate. This is an opportunity to open up discussion about the differences and similarities in norms and values of your respective cultures.

**Show Interest.** Express interest by using appropriate body language (leaning forward, maintaining eye contact, etc.) and listening actively. Invite your partner to participate by asking, “What do you think?”

**Don’t Overcorrect.** Let your partner know if they made a grammatical mistake by echoing the phrase in its correct form. Always remember, comprehension over perfection! Overcorrecting can hinder the development of fluency, so only correct errors that block communication.

**Don’t Interrupt!** Don’t finish your partner’s sentences. Let them learn and grow by practicing.

**Keep it a Two-Way Conversation.** Ask clarifying statements, use open-ended questions, and ask for details about topics of interest.
Suggested Topics for Conversation

1. Getting to Know You

Objective
Learn about your partner, family structures, cultural values, and lifestyle.

Preparation
Bring photos of friends, family, pets, home, etc.

Conversation Ideas
- Discuss likes and dislikes, activities, academic study, future plans, etc.
- Share favorite memories about your family, relatives, friends, etc.
- Talk about parents' professions, your home, your family vacations, your upbringing, etc.
- Tell each other about any pets (dog, cat, fish, bird, etc.) you or your family own.
- Discuss parenting customs in your country.
- Discuss key lessons your parents taught you.

Places to Go/Things to Do
- Public place on campus (e.g. Starbucks, Jazzman’s café)

Record new vocabulary words & phrases below:
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2. Food

Objective
Learn about daily meals and special foods for celebrations and possibly try new foods and exchange recipes.

Optional Activities
- Eat at the campus café or dining hall.
- Meet at a restaurant and try new dishes.
- Exchange a favorite recipe or dish from each other’s culture.
- Host each other for lunch or dinner at home.
- Take turns teaching one another how to cook a favorite dish.

Conversation Ideas
- Discuss what food is served during a typical day – do meals include breakfast, lunch, and dinner?
- Discover what foods are prepared on holidays and special occasions (birthdays, weddings, etc.)
- Talk about eating norms (etiquette, manners, eating utensils, etc.) and rituals
- Talk about dining out (ordering food, proper tipping, etc.)
- Discuss conceptions of your home country’s food and cooking, including regional differences.

Record new vocabulary words & phrases below:

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3. Sports and Recreation

Objective
Learn about national pastimes and each other’s interests and hobbies.

Optional Activities
- Bring a deck of cards or favorite board game and play together.
- Support Emory’s athletic program by attending a sporting event together.
- Watch a sporting event on television.

Conversation Ideas
- Discuss what people enjoy doing as a pastime when not working or studying.
- Introduce favorite hobbies and crafts (comic books, jewelry making, etc.)
- Explain the basics of popular national sports (for example, baseball vs. cricket).
- Discuss the sports you like (and don’t like) to play and those you enjoy watching on TV.

Record new vocabulary words & phrases below:
4. Arts and Entertainment

Objective
Learn about culture through the discussion of movies, T.V., books, music, art, etc.

Optional Activities
- Go to a movie, play, concert, or ballet.
- Go to a cultural festival, art festival, or museum.
- Listen to music from your partner’s country.

Conversation Ideas
- Discuss favorite movies and T.V. shows and compare popular series.
- Compare and contrast music and dance styles between your home country and your partner’s home country. Ask about popular artists, bands, and other entertainers.
- Talk about other creative expressions such as art or literature.

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5. Education

Objective
Learn about educational systems and teaching methods.

Conversation Ideas
- Find out what your partner is studying/doing at Emory, why they chose their academic major or career field, etc.
- Talk about primary and secondary schooling, the ages when children begin their education, the length of the school day and year, and preparations for college.
- Discuss how and why your partner decided to come to the U.S./Emory, and what their experience has been like at Emory thus far.
- Talk about how teaching styles and professors are different in each culture.
- Share success tips on studying.

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6. Travel and Vacation

Objective
Learn about geography and tourism.

Preparation
Bring an atlas or maps of the world, your country, and your partner’s country. Share travel photos or brochures.

Conversation Ideas
- Explain how you prepare for a big trip – planning, packing, mental preparation, etc.
- Show on the map which places (countries, provinces, states, cities, etc.) you have toured and visited, and where you would like to go in the future.
- Make suggestions for spring break travel or plans for vacations during breaks.

Tip: We have a world map in OISL (DUC E228)!

Record new vocabulary words & phrases below:

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7. Holidays

Objective
Learn about special days throughout the year and how they are celebrated.

Optional Activities
- Invite each other to celebrate a special holiday.
- Carve a pumpkin, go to a haunted house, decorate a Christmas tree, etc.

Conversation Ideas
- Compare and contrast common holidays (New Year, Valentine’s Day, etc.) and how each is celebrated.
- Discuss other special days, such as legal holidays, religious celebrations, etc.

Holidays in the U.S.
The following are holidays when government offices and many businesses are closed:
- New Year’s Day, January 1
- Martin Luther King Day, 3rd Monday in January
- President’s Day, 2nd Monday in February
- Easter, Date varies in March or April
- Memorial Day, Last Monday in May
- Independence Day, July 4
- Labor Day, 1st Monday in September
- Veterans Day, November 11
- Thanksgiving, 4th Thursday in November
- Christmas, December 25

Record new vocabulary words & phrases below:

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12
The Cultural Iceberg

Surface Culture
- Food
- Flags
- Festivals
- Fashion
- Holidays
- Music
- Performances
- Dances
- Games
- Arts & Crafts
- Literature
- Language

Deep Culture

Communications Styles and Rules:
- Facial Expressions
- Gestures
- Eye Contact
- Personal Space
- Touching
- Body Language
- Conversational Patterns in Different Social Situations
- Handling and Displaying of Emotion
- Tone of Voice

Notions of:
- Courtesy and Manners
- Friendship
- Leadership
- Cleanliness
- Modesty
- Beauty

Concepts of:
- Self
- Time
- Past and Future
- Fairness and Justice
- Roles related to Age, Sex, Class, Family, etc.

Attitudes toward:
- Elders
- Adolescents
- Dependents
- Rule Expectations
- Work
- Authority
- Cooperation vs. Competition
- Relationships with Animals
- Age
- Sin
- Death

Approaches to:
- Religion
- Courtship
- Marriage
- Raising Children
- Decision-Making
- Problem Solving
Activity Resources

- Events and things to do on Emory’s campus
  - http://www.emory.edu/home/life/index.html
- Atlanta Festivals and Events
  - http://www.atlanta.net/events/festivals/
- Transportation
  - Free Cliff Shuttles from Emory campus:
    http://transportation.emory.edu/shuttles/
  - MARTA bus schedules (Routes 6 and 36 pass by Emory main campus): http://itsmarta.com/bus-routes-by-route.aspx
    - There is also the option to Uber or call a Lyft if you have a smart phone (https://www.uber.com/ or https://www.lyft.com/)
- Additional Conversation Topics and Pointers
  - http://iteslj.org/questions/
  - http://clas.uiowa.edu/esl/other-programs/campus-conversation-partners
- Office of International Student Life at Emory
  - http://www.oisl.emory.edu
  - Stay up to date with activity ideas by reading our bi-weekly CPP newsletter (sent via email)
  - Our OISL weekly newsletter has additional events and programs put on by our office. Please see our website to request to sign up.
Referral Resources for Students

Conversation partners are only for social conversation practice. We have trained staff and tutors for academic support on campus.

International participants are encouraged to seek help as necessary, and domestic partners are encouraged to help make referrals to these numerous other campus resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Can help with…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Center Resources (listed by school)</td>
<td><a href="http://writingcenter.emory.edu/students/writing_support.html">http://writingcenter.emory.edu/students/writing_support.html</a></td>
<td>See your school for specifics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory Career Center*</td>
<td><a href="http://career.emory.edu/">http://career.emory.edu/</a></td>
<td>Resumes and cover letters, mock interviews, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPASS Tutoring*</td>
<td><a href="http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/tutoring/epass_index.html">http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/tutoring/epass_index.html</a></td>
<td>Assistance with coursework and academic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL Tutoring*</td>
<td><a href="http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/tutoring/index.html">http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/learning/esl/tutoring/index.html</a></td>
<td>College course writing and speaking assignments, essays, etc. (not application essays)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)</td>
<td><a href="http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/">http://studenthealth.emory.edu/cs/</a></td>
<td>Free, confidential counseling or consults for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laney English Language Support Program</td>
<td><a href="http://www.gs.emory.edu/academics/elsp/index.html">http://www.gs.emory.edu/academics/elsp/index.html</a></td>
<td>Grammar and English classes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Services intended for Emory undergraduate students. Please contact your respective graduate school for more information.