

Problem/Solution Example Essay 2

Conversation Confidence

Conversations happen everywhere: work, school, church, stores, dates, and even the gym. Conversations are such a common part of daily life that people often don't think about how difficult they can be, or the anxiety they can cause, if all of these conversations are happening in another language. Many international students avoid participating in conversations, especially with native speakers of English. This avoidance is a serious problem for international students who study English because participating in conversations is crucial for developing their language skills. Avoiding conversations can also cause international students to struggle making friends and make them feel more isolated. While it is natural to feel nervous about participating in conversations, international students need to find ways to be more confident in their ability to participate in a conversation. International students can choose from various solutions to stop avoiding conversations and feel more confident.

One solution for students to develop more conversational confidence is to learn about current, relevant news. Many international students don't join conversations because they aren't sure what to talk about or what other people would be interested in. The Internet makes it very easy to find out what everyone else in the community is talking about; with this knowledge, students can be prepared for conversations because they know what people are generally talking about and can even look up the vocabulary words they need. Students can start this preparation by following a university's social media pages or listening to locally produced news. Learning about current events is an easy way to be ready for a casual conversation.

Students can also prepare for common conversational topics if they want to be more active participants in conversations. While almost every conversation is different, there are some things that come up frequently, and those topics can be practiced. For example, many people might ask international students about their family, their country, their job, their reason for studying English, or their hobbies. Students can practice responding to these types of questions while they are working or preparing dinner by talking to themselves. As topics come up in conversations that they are not able to speak about, they can add those topics to their list to practice. By thinking about and practicing responses to common conversational questions, international students can have more confidence to participate in conversations.

Another way to feel more confident is by listening to conversations. This solution helps students hear how native speakers start (or end) a conversation, as well as how they change topics. Examples of conversations that are easy to find include television shows. These shows, especially if they can be paused and replayed, can be helpful because there is no pressure for the student to participate in the conversation or to understand everything the first time. Other conversations that are easy to watch happen in news broadcasts between the featured stories. These conversations are a little more formal than conversations in TV shows, which can be an advantage because students can observe the similarities and differences between casual and more formal conversations. This listening practice can really help students overcome any anxiety about participating in conversations.

A final way to overcome the habit of avoiding conversations is to refine language skills and prepare questions. By improving their vocabulary, fluency, grammar, and pronunciation, students will not only be more confident in

conversations, but they will look forward to them as an opportunity to practice. Many students are hesitant to speak because they do not want to make mistakes, so by refining their language, they can reduce that concern. However, students should not wait until their language is perfect before they speak. An easy way to start is to listen to questions that people ask and create some grammatically correct questions to ask in a conversation. These questions can be practiced and memorized to make sure the language is correct. With these questions and continued improvement in their language skills, international students can be more actively involved in conversations.

In conclusion, students have many options to solve the problem of avoiding conversations. Choosing to work through one of these solutions will help students improve their English skills and help them build stronger relationships with others. They will be able to take advantage of the time they spend studying in the United States. Since conversations are part of everyday life and can't be entirely avoided, it is better to conquer the fear through preparation than to limit self-expression. Whether students are talking to a supervisor, a classmate, a roommate, or a date, they will feel empowered to be better conversational partners.

Exercises

Exercise 1: Analyze an essay

Read one of the two Process Example Essays on the following pages to complete this exercise.

1. Label the introduction paragraph, the body paragraphs, and the conclusion paragraph.
2. Circle the hook.
3. What is the general topic of the essay?
4. Underline the thesis.
5. Underline each of the topic sentences.
6. Do each of the topic sentences support the thesis?
7. Does the conclusion paragraph start by restating the thesis?



This content is provided to you freely by BYU Open Learning Network.

Access it online or download it at

https://open.byu.edu/academic_a_writing/problemsolution_exam.