

5 tips to enhance your experience as a Conversation Partner:

1. We have students of all English proficiency levels, from early beginners to advanced learners. When you first join your class, it might be a good idea to ask the teacher about the proficiency level of that particular class. If the class is advanced, you can speak very much as you normally would. If they are beginners, you may want to speak a little more slowly and avoid using too many “SAT/GRE” words and sentence structures. Generally, though, speak as naturally as possible. The whole point of Conversation Partners for the students is to get authentic practice talking with native speakers. Feel free to ask the teacher in the room for feedback if you’re unsure about your level of speech.
2. As with any first meeting, it may be a bit awkward at first. Don’t let this discourage you! As the semester progresses, you will find that conversation comes more and more naturally as both you and the students get to know each other and get used to the dynamics of the conversations.
3. Some of our students are extremely talkative, while others are very shy and self-conscious about their English skills. If you can, try to draw the more reserved students out by asking them questions. It may take a little while to learn to “read” the students as to whether they are being shy or they just don’t understand what’s being said. This is all part of the learning process! Again, feel free to ask the teacher in the room for tips on getting the hesitant students to talk more.
4. You are probably starting to see a theme develop here: feel free to ask the teachers anything! We all want to help you have the best experience possible, and we know that some of you may not have much experience in communicating with English language learners. You can also ask some of the more “seasoned” Conversation Partners in your classroom for tips; I’m sure they have lots of knowledge to share!
5. If you have any problems or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us at (register-ucaeli@uconn.edu). If, for any reason, you would like to be re-assigned to a different classroom, we will do that - no questions asked. The Conversation Partners program works best if the CP: student ratio is as small as possible, so we want to keep you happy and keep you talking!