



## Communicating your ideas

Did you know that your university lecture, tutorial, seminar, or class is meant to be a participative experience for both students and academics? There is usually even scope for discussion in lectures. You need to be conscious of the expectations for each activity, and generally the academic will help to make their expectations clear early in the session. For example, you may need to be more formal in a lecture compared to a tutorial.

Remember that you're only human, and so is the academic. As long as you're polite, courteous, and engaged, you'll be fine. There are some helpful phrases below to get you started if you're feeling uncertain.

### Phrasing

Your ideas and thoughts are valuable, even if people don't agree with you or they're contrary to the content being delivered in class. To make sure others can appreciate your perspective and not just switch off, you need to make sure you deliver your ideas properly.

If you're struggling to find the right words, or to know when to say the right words in your class, the following lists are for you!

#### Phrases for starting a conversation or discussion, and for asking someone's opinion:

##### Formal:

- Could I ask...?
- Could you tell me...?
- Perhaps you could tell...

##### Informal:

- I'm interested in...
- What do you think of...

#### Phrases for interrupting:

##### Formal:

- Excuse me for interrupting, but...
- May I interrupt for a moment?
- I'd like to say something, if I may.
- May I ask a question?

##### Informal:

- Excuse me...
- Sorry, but...
- Just a second...
- Can I add something?
- Can I say something here?
- Can I ask a question?

Phrases to use when you are explaining your opinion:

- First of all,...
- The main reason is...
- The main thing is...
- The most important thing is...
  - Secondly,...
  - The other reason is...
  - Another reason is...
  - Besides that, ...
  - And on top of that,...
  - And finally,...

Phrases to use when you want to refer to a point in someone's argument:

- The trouble is...
- The problem is...
- The trouble with...
- The problem with...
  - The point is...
- Don't forget that...

Phrases to use when you want to say something you think is new information:

- Do you realise that...
- Believe it or not,...
- You may not believe it, but...
- It may sound strange, but...
- The surprising thing is...
  - Surprisingly,...
  - Oddly enough,...
  - Funnily enough,...

Phrases to use when what you are going to say may surprise or shock:

- Actually,...
- The only thing is...
- To tell you the truth,...
- To be honest,...
- Frankly,...

Phrases to use when giving your opinion, but when you are not certain:

- I think...
- I suppose...
- I suspect that...
- I'm pretty sure that...
- I'm fairly certain that...
- I wonder if...

Phrases to use when you are certain of your opinion:

- I'm certain that...
- I'm sure that
- It's my opinion that...
- I'm convinced that...
- I honestly believe that...
- I strongly believe that...
- Without a doubt...
- I'm positive...
- I'm absolutely certain that...

Phrases to use when you want to emphasise that what you are going to say is your own opinion:

- In my opinion,...
- I personally believe...
- I personally think...
- I personally feel...
- Not everyone will agree with me, but...
- In my opinion,...
- From my point of view,...
- Well, personally,...
- In my case...

### Reflection questions



Think of two classes that you currently attend where participation is encouraged and you would like to be more engaged.

- What do you think is the tone for each of the classes? For example, is it formal or informal?
- Depending on the tone, think about two phrases from the table above that you could use for each class.
- Attempt the phrases in each of the classes.
- How did you go? Think about what you could do differently, improve on or even continue to do if it went well.
- Listen to how your classmates share their ideas in class. How did others respond? To what extent did they contribute new ideas to the class discussion? What could you learn from them?

### References

Ruthven-Stuart, P. (2001). *Phrases for the Second Year Seminar*. Retrieved from [http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~peterr-s/zemi/kiso\\_seminar\\_phrases.html](http://www.nsknet.or.jp/~peterr-s/zemi/kiso_seminar_phrases.html)