

ENGLISH CONVERSATION

DR. MORA – UPB – SEMESTER 2, 2011



**UNIVERSIDAD PONTIFICIA BOLIVARIANA
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY**

B.A. IN TEACHING, BASIC EDUCATION AND ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English Conversation

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Schedule: Friday 18:00 to 21:00 - Room: 504, Block 6

Attention to students: Fridays, 15:00 to 17:00 or by Appointment

Course Overview

The ability to engage in conversation over formal and informal topics alike is an important skill that requires practice and, in some cases, open instruction in order to find out what we need to improve. In the context of a preservice English education program, spaces for prospective teachers to practice and engage in conversation with their peers are necessary. These spaces enable these teachers to work on their own fluency and performance outside their classrooms. I emphasize the word "performance" because teaching is not that dissimilar to acting. The best teachers are also good performers of their craft. Practice and performance, then, are two elements that permeate this 10-week course on English Conversation.

During these ten sessions, all class members will engage in formal discussions and debates about hot educational topics. They will also partake in performance activities, including poetry, dialogs, and storytelling. The activities in this course feature a healthy balance between activities for which they will have to prepare beforehand and impromptu activities. After all, all speech acts in real life are a combination of both of these moments.

However, as I said before, this course is part of a preservice English teacher education program. Therefore, there is the expectation that these prospective teachers can gain some insights and ideas on how to engage in conversation activities. I hope that at the end of these ten sessions, the class members will find ways to think of and create meaningful conversation activities with their students.

Course objectives

1. To practice English in a wide array of situations as a means to improve one's fluency and accuracy in the use of the language.
2. To use the activities as inspiration for students to create their own conversation activities to use in their classrooms.

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Assignments

Within the course, there will be a series of activities in every class, plus a major course project, as follows:

Discussions/Debates. There will be 3 discussion sessions during the course. Each session has a specific topic and preparation requirements. Every student has to be well prepared to engage in debate with the rest of the class. (30% of the grade)

Acting. Some of the activities will require the students to perform a certain task as part of a group. In others, the students have to perform a text in front of the class. (20% of the grade)

Story-telling. There will be at least two activities where students have to share a story in front of the class. Stories are based on their real-life experiences. (20% of the grade)

Slam Poetry Project. The main project for the class requires students to compose (worst-case scenario, choose) a piece of Slam Poetry to perform in front of an audience in the last class session. (30% of the grade)

Assessing the activities. There will be a rubric for all the activities. The following criteria comprise this rubric: (a) Quality of performance/participation; (b) Fluency (that includes Pronunciation); (c) Accuracy (that includes Grammar)

Expectations

Classwork. I expect all students to be on time every week. If, for some reason, you cannot be in class, please notify me as soon as possible. Make sure to talk to either your other classmates or me to make up for the work. The deadlines are set well in advance so check your personal or work schedules and check there are not any conflicts. If you foresee a conflict, talk to me immediately so we can make proper arrangements.

Participation. I expect all students to be prepared to participate in every class. This includes preparing whatever materials are necessary for the session and bringing all required resources at all times. Since all of you will probably be (or may already be) teachers, I also expect a high degree of professionalism and ethical behavior from all of you. If you disagree with any ideas in class, especially during the discussions and debates, feel free to say so in a proper manner. To me, the classroom is a community of learners and scholars. Respectful interactions are important for the success of the academic exercises in which we will engage. Equally important, if

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there is any area of the course with which you may not agree, whatever it is, please talk to me FIRST, before moving on to other stages. It is my belief that most student-teacher matters can be solved through an open, mature dialog.

Resources

Some of the resources we will use for this course will be available online on the Moodle site the instructor has set up for this course. To access the site, look for Electiva Conversación Inglesa. The short name for the course is "Conversation" and the access code for the course is "convo-drberry."

Technology

If you happen to have a laptop, you may bring it to class should you see it fits the objectives of the activities at hand. Regarding the use of other online applications in class (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, e-mail, etc.), I kindly ask all of you to avoid using them during class. Regarding the use of cell phones and smartphones, I have a **no-phoning, no-texting** policy in class. We only meet for two hours a week, so unless we are talking about life-or-death situations in your lives (which may happen), I expect not to see any communication devices in your hands.

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CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Topics and Activities
1 July 8	1. Introduction to the course 2. The Slam Poetry Project 3. Improv #1: Telenovela!
2 July 15	Debate #1: Cell phones in class: A necessary evil, a spawn from hell, or an educational opportunity?
3 July 22	1. Improv #2: Happily ever after?? 2. Refocalization: Fairy tales from the supporting cast's perspective 3. Slam Poetry Project Updates
4 July 29	1. Improv #3: Edufomercials... say that again? 2. Be like Walken, perform a song! 3. Student-generated topic
5 Aug 5	Debate #2: Teachers in the media
6 Aug 12	1. Story-telling: One song, one story 2. Slam Poetry Project: Feedback session 3. Student-generated topic
7 Aug 19*	To Be Determined (Possibly rehearsal for Slam Poetry project)
8 Aug 26	1. Story-telling: Inspirational people (for better AND for worse) 2. Improv #4: One scene, multiple moods! 3. Slam Poetry Project Updates
9 Sept 2	Debate #3: Taboo language
10 Sept 9	SLAM POETRY FESTIVAL!