



# Fostering Brave Spaces for More Speaking and Mutual Learning

With Lee Shainis, Co-Founder of Intercambio

[www.intercambio.org](http://www.intercambio.org)

*Teaching English  
Connecting People*

Together we will create *brave space*  
Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”  
We exist in the real world  
We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.  
In this space  
We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world,  
We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,  
We call each other to more truth and love  
We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.  
We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.  
We will not be perfect.  
This space will not be perfect.  
It will not always be what we wish it to be  
But  
It will be *our brave space together,*  
*and*  
*We will work on it side by side.*

From *Invitation to Brave Space* – [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)

# Agenda:

1. Quickly acknowledge complexities of our work
2. Cultural humility and multi-directional learning
3. How to get students talking about their stories, knowledge, experiences and cultural perspectives
4. Creating brave, welcoming environments
5. Engaging the broader community
6. Your next steps

But 1<sup>st</sup>....who am I and why am I here?



# The Intercambio Way<sup>®</sup>

## Increasing Access

Supportive programs and national partnerships that create new possibilities for English learners and community volunteers to connect through structured, relationship-based English classes and gatherings

## Learning Together

Provide curriculum and training that promote effective English language acquisition, cultural humility, and conversations where all participants learn from each other's experiences and perspectives.

## Growing Together

Participants build the skills and confidence to communicate across language barriers and foster genuine connections.

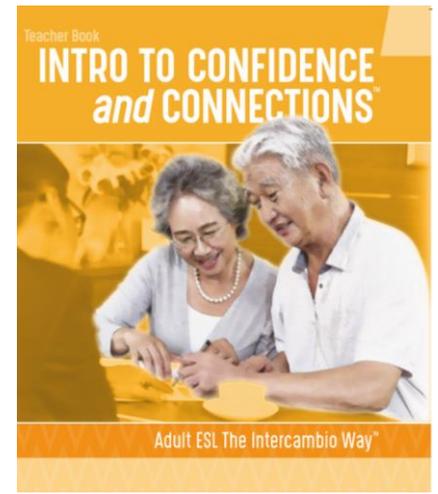
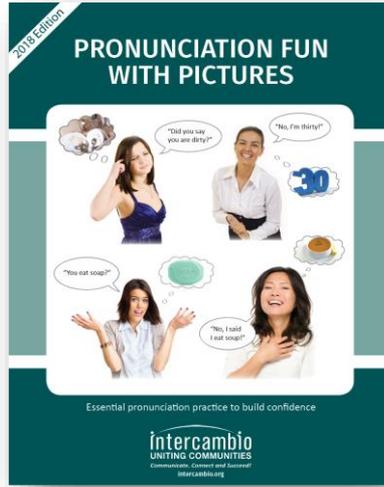
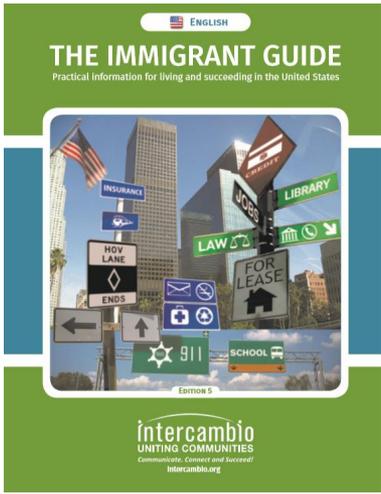


## Creating a New Future Together

One cross-cultural connection at a time, Intercambio participants model and cultivate a new level of human interaction.

### Long-Term Impacts





# Our tools

# Who participates our programs?

Learners from vastly different backgrounds

- Nationality
- Age
- Socioeconomic status
- Academic background



# Challenges...and less talked about challenges

- Confidence, low self esteem
- Fear of failure
- Cultural differences
- Feel judged or stupid
- Don't feel belonging



# What is culture?

*“Culture encompasses religion, food, what we wear, how we wear it, our language, marriage, music, what we believe is right or wrong, how we sit at the table, how we greet visitors, how we behave with loved ones, and a million other things.” - Cristina De Rossi*



# Dimensions of Individual Culture



6

# Agree or Disagree?

1. It's okay to ask people you meet, "What do you do for work?"
2. All meetings should start and end on time
3. It is rude to interrupt someone while they are talking
4. One invitation is a real invitation
5. It's polite to say "thank you" if someone opens a door for me
6. Saying "hi" to strangers is important for the community
7. Making direct eye contact shows that you are paying attention
8. If I am late for a class, I will enter the class quietly

# "Your culture"



Small group discussion



How does it feel if people ask you "What's that like in your culture?"

What does "your culture" mean to you?

Do you feel like you represent a group of people (nationality, race, gender, age, etc)? Why or why not?

# Cultural competence

- Cultural Competence - a set of skills, values and principles that acknowledge, respect and work towards optimal interactions between the individual and various cultural and ethnic groups

*...in many frequently used competency measures, whiteness was understood and represented as the norm. - Hogg Blog*

*Anytime we say that racial group should change to be more like our racial group—or to be more American, which is code word for White American—we are articulating an assimilationist idea. - Ibram X. Kendi*

*The goal of cultural competency sounds ideal, but it may lead us to generalize rather than recognize uniqueness of everyone. And it's not realistic. – Psych Hub*

# Cultural humility

- Continuously reflecting on your biases on how you treat and understand others
- Being aware of power imbalances
- Recognizing that no culture is superior or inferior. Listening without judgement or taking a stance on what is "wrong, right, good, bad, polite or rude".
- Curiosity, ongoing learning about other cultures
- Having open, honest dialogues
- Being open about what we haven't learned yet

Competency is a goal. Humility is a mindset

# What happens when the helping and learning is multi-directional?

We enhance **belonging, confidence** and **engagement** by opening doors for students to be teachers and givers by sharing their experiences, knowledge, stories and perspectives.

Teachers become learners  
Students become teachers

*The best teachers are the best learners,  
not “saviors”*



# And it's critical to language acquisition!

When the topics are interesting and relevant to their lives, students stretch to speak more.

When they speak more, they acquire the language faster.



# How can we spark conversations about experiences and perspectives?

Structure! When it's in a book, it feels safer.



## CULTURE TIP

In the US, many children leave home to live on their own soon after they graduate from high school. Why do you think they do this? What do you think it means? Is this the same in your native country? What are some different conclusions someone could have about this?



## CONNECT WITH CONVERSATION

Get to know a partner. Talk about:

- Their favorite holiday and why.
- What they did on their favorite holiday last year.
- What they are thankful for.
- What they did the last time they spent time with their family or got together with friends.

# Why have them ask YOU questions?

- Humanizes you
- Practice asking questions
- You can model the courage to respond and humility



## CONNECT WITH CONVERSATION

Get to know a partner. Talk about:

- activities that are most important to them in a community
- what they like to do in their community
- activities they went to in their community in the past year
- activities they're going to do in their community this year

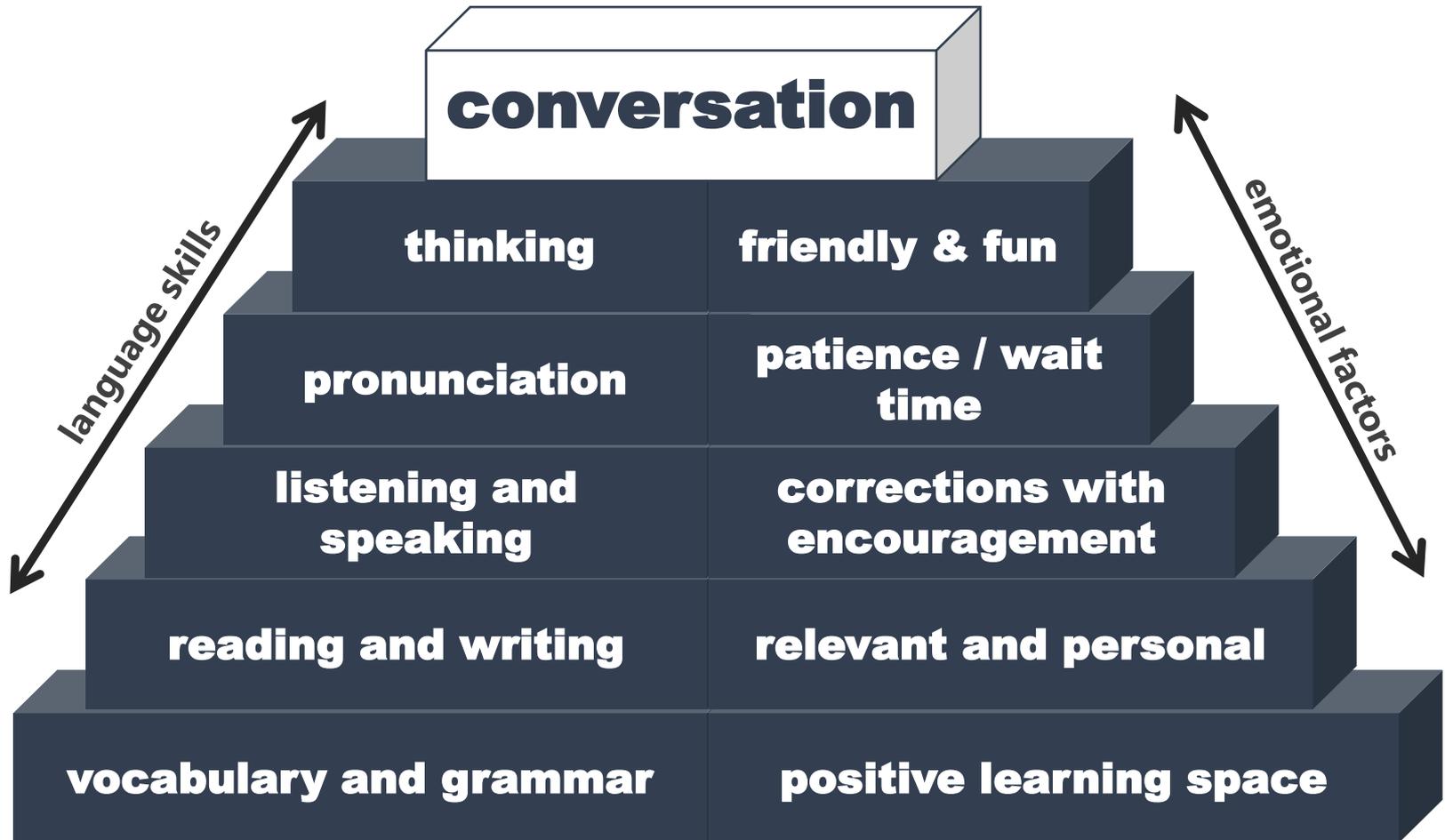


## CONNECT WITH CONVERSATION

Get to know a partner. Talk about:

- an event or place they went to and what it was like
- how they feel about visiting family, going to the doctor, coming to English class
- what's exciting or interesting in their life right now
- what makes them frustrated

# Getting to the Conversation



# The Immigrant Guide also opens doors for multi-directional learning

- ✓ Scams
- ✓ Laws
- ✓ Rights
- ✓ Norms
- ✓ Jobs
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Finances
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Education system

What Every Immigrant Needs to Know

## The Law and the Role of Police

Laws and police make our communities safe. Police are *strict* and follow the law as it is written. Never bribe a police officer. It is your responsibility to understand and follow the laws. Always talk to police officers with respect.

### 1) Calling 911

- 911 responds fast to emergency calls.
- Dial 911 to:
  - Report a fire.
  - Report a crime while it is happening.
  - Report a car accident.
  - Get an ambulance for an emergency.
- Be prepared to give your address and information about the emergency. If you do not speak English, you can ask for an interpreter.
- Do not call 911 for something that is not an emergency.



### 2) Alcohol & Drugs

- Drinking alcohol is only legal for adults over 21 years old. You will be asked for proof of your age when buying alcohol or entering bars.
- There are penalties for providing alcohol to people under the age of 21.
- It is usually illegal to drink alcohol on the street or outdoors.
- You can get arrested or deported for selling or having illegal drugs.
- Using drugs around children can be considered child abuse.
- If you or someone you know has a problem with drugs or alcohol, you can contact rehabilitation programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA).



### 3) Drinking and Driving

- Driving after drinking alcohol can cause serious accidents and problems.
- Driving after having one or two drinks can get you arrested.
- Legal drinking limits for driving are different in different states.



### 4) Know Your Rights

- Laws and police make our communities safe. You have rights when talking with police.
- If a police or immigration officer asks you questions, you have the right to remain silent and not answer the questions.
- You can request to speak with an attorney before answering questions or signing documents.
- If you do not have an attorney, the government provides an attorney for you.
- You only have to let law enforcement officers into your house if they have a search warrant.



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ENGLISH

# THE IMMIGRANT GUIDE

Practical information for living and succeeding in the United States



EDITION 5

intercambio  
UNITING COMMUNITIES  
Communicate. Connect and Succeed!  
intercambio.org

# Create Judgment-Free Zones

It can be scary to share your life and perspectives

Set expectations at the beginning to make class feel safer:

- ✓ **Introduce the topic and always let students opt out of sharing**
- ✓ ***Encourage* them to take risks and speak without fear of mistakes**
- ✓ ***Be interested* in cultural differences and in people's stories**
- ✓ **Do not judge**
- ✓ **Build trust first before discussing potentially divisive topics**
- ✓ **Have *fun*!**

What is your mantra?

# Make Students Feel Like They Belong

*\*Belonging cues are behaviors that create safe connection in groups.*

**1. Energy:** *They invest in the exchange that is occurring (preparation)*

**2. Individualization:** *They treat the person as unique and valued (know about their lives)*

**3. Future orientation:** *They signal the relationship will continue (I'm with you until the end of the term)*

*\*From the book Culture Code*



# Create the right space

- Prepare your space ahead of time
- Make it so people can see each other's faces (circle or horseshoe in person, lighting and distance online)



# Community Conversations

1. Invite community volunteers to practice English conversation with your students – 90 minute commitment
2. Provide volunteers with a 30-minute training and tips
3. Pair up with 1-3 students to have English conversation, speed-dating style
4. Rotate 2-3 times and then debrief at the end



# Taking action!



- What is 1 thing you will implement from this workshop?
- What do you need to make it happen?

<https://intercambio.org/registration/post-conference-survey/>

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[www.intercambio.org](http://www.intercambio.org)