English for Business Communication

A modular short course on

- socialising
- telephoning
- presenting
- meetings
- negotiating

Cambridge Professional English

Student's Book

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MODULE 1

CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIALISING

1 Building a relationship

→ Cross-cultural understanding (1)
→ Welcoming visitors
→ Small talk: keeping the conversation going

1 Cross-cultural understanding (1)

1 Look at the picture. In groups, discuss the situation. Decide what you think the people are talking about. Suggest various topics. Say what you think they are definitely *not* talking about. Then spend a few minutes acting out the conversation.

2 Read the text below. Identify the basic message implied by the text.

Eye contact

In many Western societies, including the United States, a person who does not maintain 'good eye contact' is regarded as being slightly suspicious, or a 'shifty' character. Americans unconsciously associate people who avoid eye contact as unfriendly, insecure, untrustworthy, inattentive and impersonal. However, in contrast, Japanese children are taught in school to direct their gaze at the region of their teacher's Adam's apple or tie knot, and, as adults, Japanese lower their eyes when speaking to a superior, a gesture of respect.

Latin American cultures, as well as some African cultures, such as Nigeria, have longer looking time, but prolonged eye contact from an individual of lower status is considered disrespectful. In the US, it is considered rude to stare – regardless of who is looking at whom. In contrast, the polite Englishman is taught to pay strict attention to a speaker, to listen carefully, and to blink his eyes to let the speaker know he or she has been understood as well as heard. Americans signal interest and comprehension by bobbing their heads or grunting.

A widening of the eyes can also be interpreted differently, depending on circumstances and culture. Take, for instance, the case of an American and a Chinese discussing the terms of a proposed contract. Regardless of the language in which the proposed contract is carried out, the US negotiator may interpret a Chinese person's widened eyes as an expression of astonishment instead of as a danger signal (its true meaning) of politely expressed anger.

Adapted from *Managing Cultural Differences, Fourth Edition,* by Phillip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran.
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3 If necessary, read the text again. Then comment on the following:

a) observations about many people from the United States
b) observations about the English
c) an observation about Japanese children
d) the meaning of lowering one's eyes in Japan
e) why looking at someone for a long time may be considered disrespectful
f) the meaning of widened eyes in Chinese culture.

4 Before receiving a visitor from a foreign country – or before travelling abroad – you need to think about the cultural issues that may affect the relationship.

a) Suggest some basic research that you should do before receiving your visitor, or before travelling. What issues should you think about?

Note: After suggesting your own ideas, compare your list with the Skills Checklist at the end of this unit.

b) Listen to the recording. An Englishman, Peter Welch, who is a Director of an international company, talks about what he thinks is important in preparing for business contacts with people from other cultures. He mentions several key areas to find out about. Identify six of them. Did you think of any of the same issues?

Discussion

In what way is the advice in this section useful when doing business? Look again at the Skills Checklist on page 7.

2 Welcoming visitors

What happens when a visitor arrives with an appointment to visit a company? What are the typical stages of the first meeting? What conversations take place?

1 **Listen to the recording in which Klaus Ervald arrives for a meeting with Lars Elstroem and Louise Scott of Evco S.A., a Swedish advertising agency.**
   a) Is the meeting between Klaus Ervald and Evco formal or informal? Give reasons for your answer.
   b) Do they know each other quite well?
   c) Klaus has a problem. What is it?

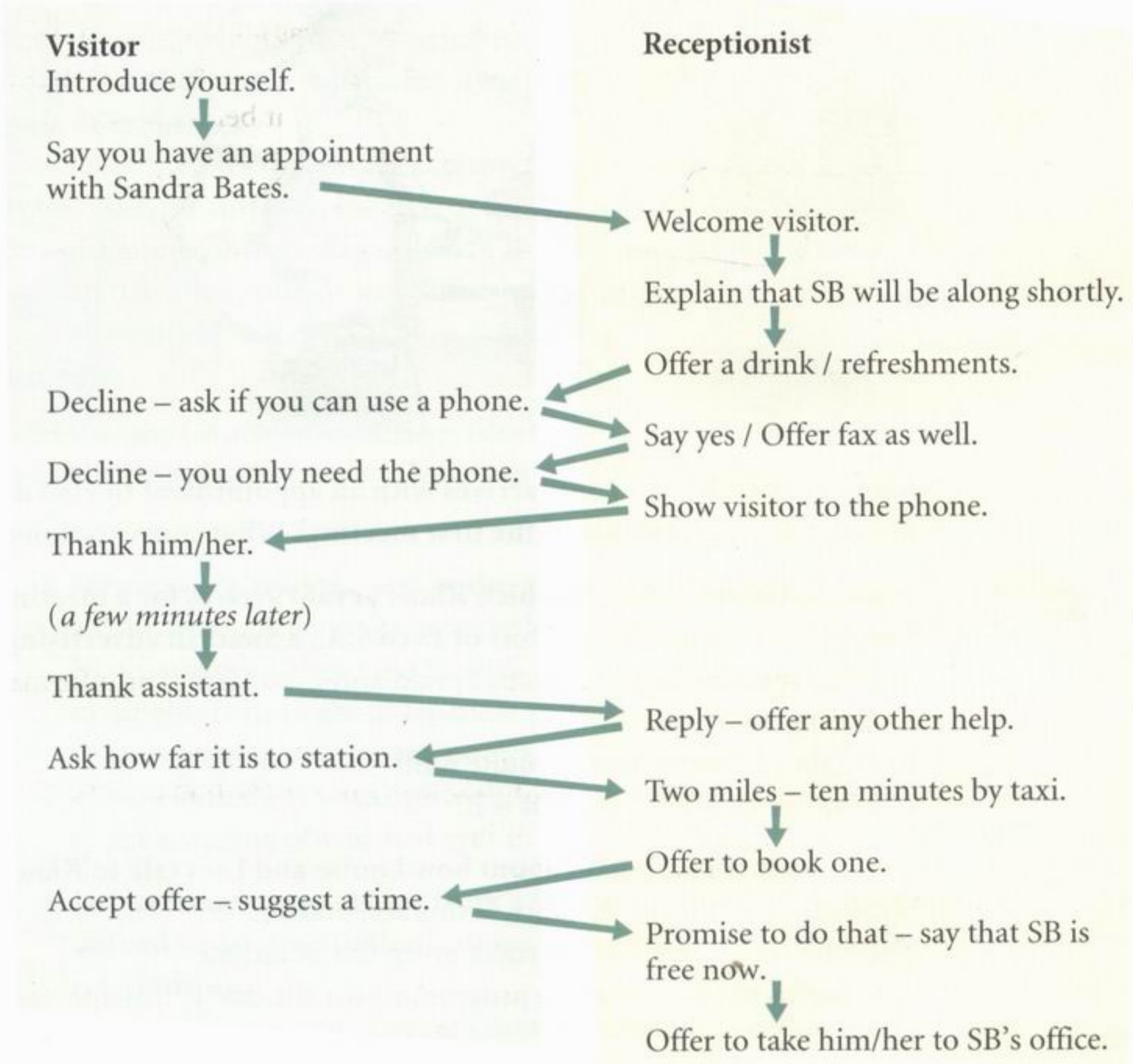
2 **Listen again. Think again about how Louise and Lars talk to Klaus.**
   She interrupts him at the start. Is this acceptable?
   They use first names. Is this right, given the situation?
   Lars begins to talk about the programme for the day. Is this appropriate at this stage?

3 **Listen to the recording of Peter Marwood's arrival at SDA Ltd., in Sydney, Australia. He has to wait a few minutes and asks Stephanie Field for some assistance. Identify two things he needs and three things he does not need.**

Needs	Does not need
a)	c) .....
b)	d) .....
	e) .....

Practice 1

Make a dialogue based on the following flow chart. If you need help, look at the Language Checklist on page 7.



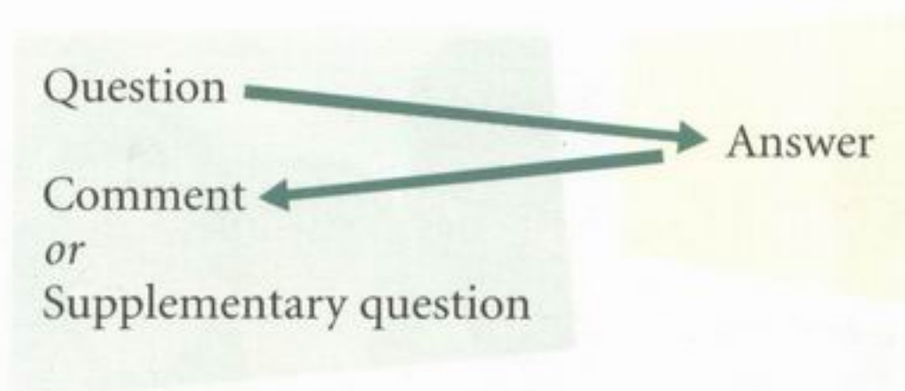
Now listen to the recording of a model answer.

3 Small talk: keeping the conversation going

1 Ruud Hemper from the Netherlands is visiting a customer in India. He is talking to the Production Manager of a manufacturing plant in Delhi. Listen to the recording of an extract of their conversation.

MANAGER: Is this your first visit here?
HEMPER: No, in fact the first time I came was for a trade fair. We began our Southeast Asian operations here at the 1995 Exhibition.
MANAGER: Shall we have a look round the plant before lunch?

a) What is wrong with what the production manager says?
The answer is, of course, that it breaks a 'rule' of conversation. Generally, if you ask a question you should comment on the answer or ask a supplementary question.



b) Now suggest a better version of the same conversation. There is a recording of a model version.

2 Provide a suitable sentence in the spaces in the following dialogue.

PETER: Have you been to Edinburgh before?
JANIS: No, it's my first visit.

PETER: a) .....
JANIS: I'm sure I will.
PETER: And … er, is the hotel all right?
JANIS: Yes, it's very comfortable.

PETER: b) ..... So, do you have much time here in Scotland? Are you staying long?
JANIS: No, I have to go back tomorrow afternoon.

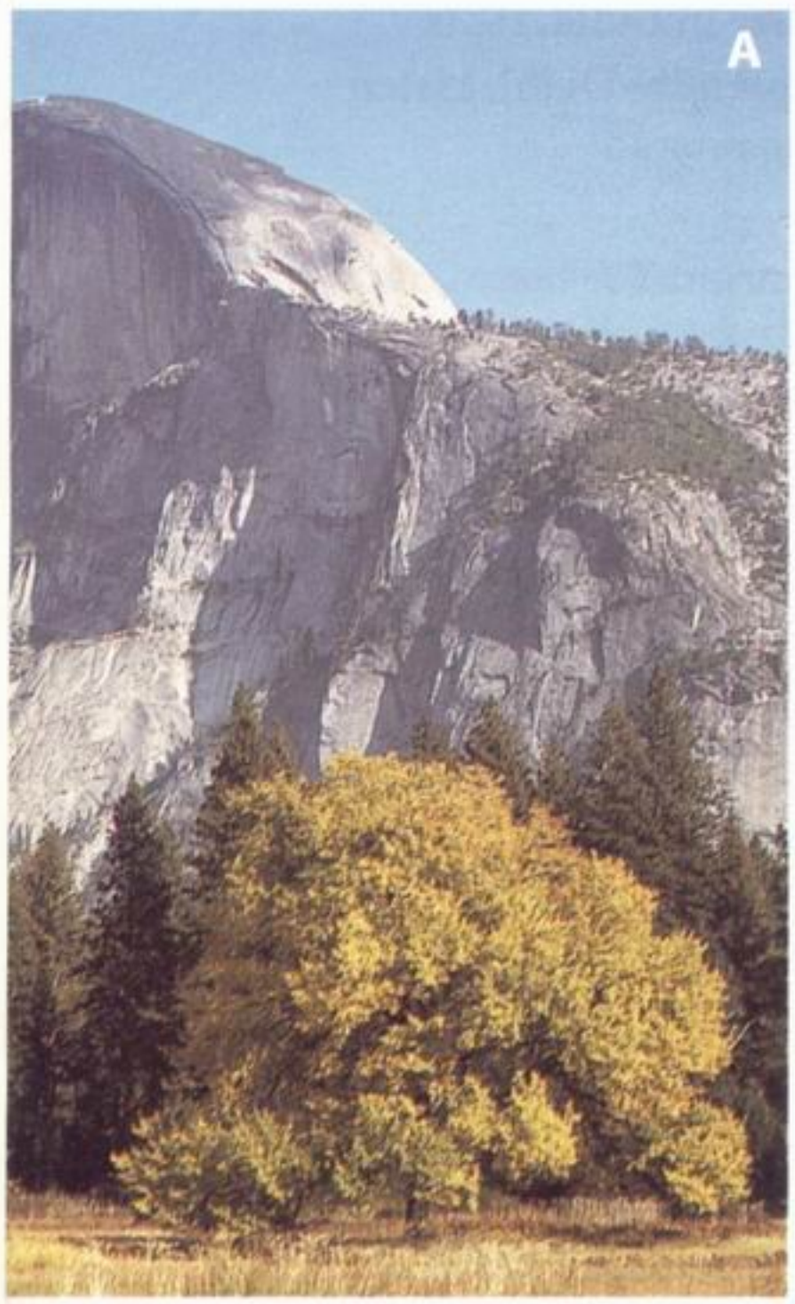
PETER: c) ..... You'll have to come back again!

JANIS: d) .....
PETER: So what time's your flight tomorrow?
JANIS: Early evening, 18.35.
PETER: Well, I can book you a taxi if you like, to get you there in good time.

JANIS: e) .....
PETER: No problem at all. Was it a good flight today?
JANIS: No, it wasn't actually.

PETER: f) ..... g) .....?
JANIS: It was raining – quite hard. There was a lot of turbulence.

PETER: h) .....



3 Listen to the recording of four conversation extracts.

a) Match each of them to one of the four pictures below.

b) Listen to each one again. In each case, suggest how you think the conversation might develop.

c) Do you think any of the topics included would be unacceptable in a particular culture that you know about?

Practice 2

Look at the four pictures above and use each of them for two or three minutes of continual conversation with a partner.

Note:

- there should be no breaks of more than three seconds in your conversation
- listen carefully to what your partner says and pick up on specific points
- keep the conversation flowing.

Role play 1

Working in pairs. Student A should look at File card 1A and Student B should look at File card 1B.

Role play 2

Keep the same A and B. Student A should look at File card 2A. Student B should look at File card 2B.

Transfer

Look at the Skills Checklist and prepare ideas on these topics in relation to a country you know well either through work or pleasure.
Discuss the country you choose with a colleague.

Language Checklist
Cultural diversity and socialising (1)

Welcoming visitors
Welcome to …
My name's …

Arriving
Hello. My name's … from …
I've an appointment to see …
Sorry – I'm a little late / early.
My plane was delayed …

Introducing someone
This is … He/she's my Personal Assistant.
Can I introduce you to … He/she's our (Project Manager).
I'd like to introduce you to …

Meeting someone and small talk
Pleased to meet you.
It's a pleasure.
How was your trip? Did you have a good flight / trip / journey?
How are things in (London)?
How long are you staying in (New York)?
I hope you like it.
Is your hotel comfortable?
Is this your first visit to (the Big Apple)?

Offering assistance
Can I get you anything?
Do you need anything?
Would you like a drink?
If you need to use a phone or fax, please say.
Can we do anything for you?
Do you need a hotel / a taxi / any travel information / etc.?

Asking for assistance
There is one thing I need …
Could you get me …
Could you book me a car / taxi / hotel / … ?
Could you help me arrange a flight to … ?
Can you recommend a good restaurant?
I'd like to book a room for tomorrow night. Can you recommend a hotel?

Skills Checklist
Socialising (1)

Before meeting business partners and fellow professionals from other countries, you could find out about their country:

- the actual political situation
- cultural and regional differences
- religion(s)
- the role of women in business and in society as a whole
- transport and telecommunications systems
- the economy
- the main companies
- the main exports and imports
- the market for the industrial sector which interests you
- competitors.

You might also want to find out:

- which topics are safe for small talk
- which topics are best avoided.

If you are going to visit another country, find out about:

- the conventions regarding socialising
- attitudes towards foreigners
- attitudes towards gifts
- the extent to which public, business and private lives are mixed or are kept separate
- conventions regarding food and drink.

You might also like to find out about:

- the weather at the relevant time of the year
- public holidays
- the conventions regarding working hours
- leisure interests
- tourism
- dress
- body language
- language.

2 Culture and entertainment

→ Cross-cultural understanding (2)
→ Inviting, and accepting or declining
→ Eating out

1 Cross-cultural understanding (2)

1 The following text is about cultural diversity. Read it through once and decide which of the three statements (A, B or C) given below the extract offers the most accurate summary.

The impact of culture on business

Take a look at the new breed of international managers, educated according to the most modern management philosophies. They all know that in the SBU, TQM should reign, with products delivered JIT, where CFTs distribute products while subject to MBO. (SBU = strategic business unit, TQM = total quality management, JIT = just-in-time, CFT = customer first team, MBO = management by objectives.)

But just how universal are these management solutions? Are these 'truths' about what effective management really is: truths that can be applied anywhere, under any circumstances?

Even with experienced international companies, many well-intended 'universal' applications of management theory have turned out badly. For example, pay-for-performance has in many instances been a failure on the African continent because there are particular, though unspoken, rules about the sequence and timing of reward and promotions. Similarly, management by objectives schemes have generally failed within subsidiaries of multinationals in southern Europe, because managers have not wanted to conform to the abstract nature of preconceived policy guidelines.

Even the notion of human-resource management is difficult to translate to other cultures, coming as it does from a typically Anglo-Saxon doctrine. It borrows from economics the idea that human beings are 'resources' like physical and monetary resources. It tends to assume almost unlimited capacities for individual development. In countries without these beliefs, this concept is hard to grasp and unpopular once it is understood. International managers have it tough. They must operate on a number of different premises at any one time. These premises arise from their culture of origin, the culture in which they are working, and the culture of the organisation which employs them.

In every culture in the world such phenomena as authority, bureaucracy, creativity, good fellowship, verification and accountability are experienced in different ways. That we use the same words to describe them tends to make us unaware that our cultural biases and our accustomed conduct may not be appropriate, or shared.

From *Riding the Waves of Culture: Understanding Cultural Diversity in Business* by Fons Trompenaars, Nicholas Brealey Publishing Ltd., London, 1993.

A There are certain popular universal truths about management which can successfully be applied in various cultural contexts.
B Cultures are so varied and so different throughout the world that management has to take account of differences rather than simply assume similarities.
C Effective management of human resources is the key to everyone achieving their full potential.

2 Read the text again. Identify the following:

a) the problem with 'universal' management solutions
b) an example of the failure of pay-for-performance
c) an example of the failure of management by objectives schemes
d) the problem with human-resource management
e) three cultures affecting international managers
f) six areas in which different cultural interpretations apply.

2 Inviting, and accepting or declining

What kinds of social activities in your town could be appropriate ways of entertaining visitors from other countries?

1 Listen to the first example on the recording. You will hear a conversation in which someone invites a business associate to a social event. Identify:

a) what is being suggested
b) the response
c) what will happen next.

2 Listen to the second example, where someone else invites a different business associate to a social event. Identify:

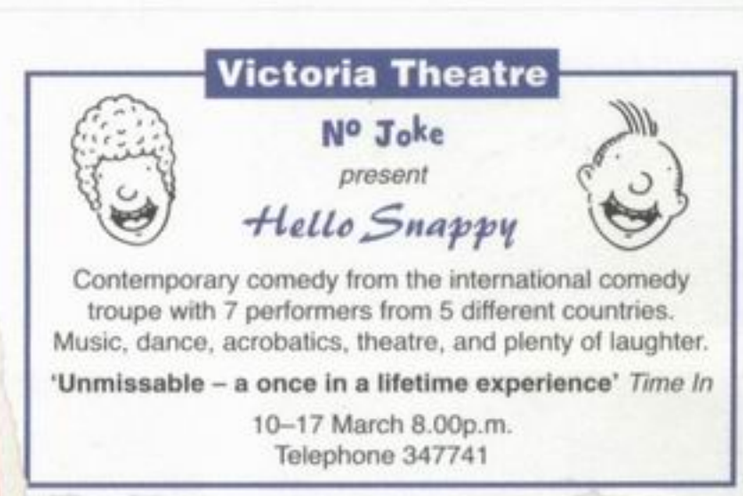
a) what is being suggested
b) the response
c) what will happen next.

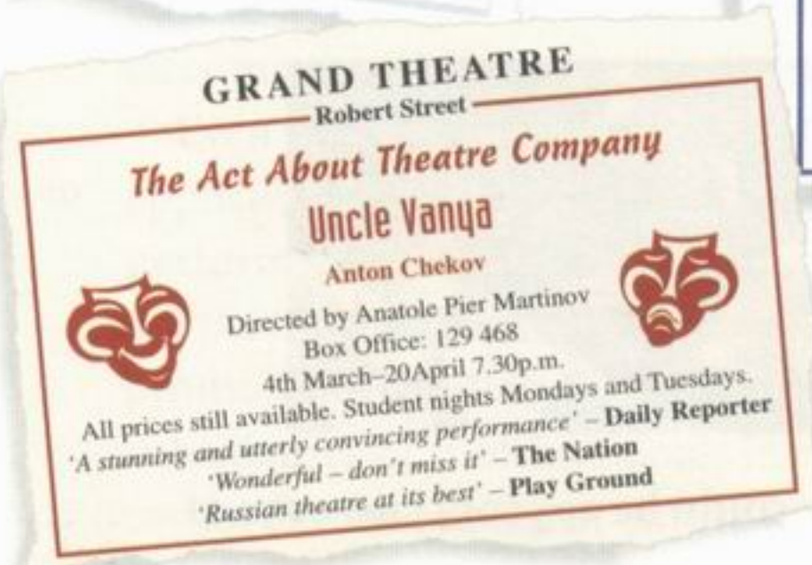
3 Listen to the recording of three short extracts, where hosts invite their visitors to take part in a social activity. The invitations are rejected.

a) Identify each suggested activity.
b) Give the reasons for each rejection.
c) Do you think each rejection is appropriate? Explain your answer.

Activity	Reason for rejection	Comments
1		
2		
3		

4 Work in pairs. Use the advertisements below to invite your partner to something. He/she should respond. Then change roles so you both get to invite and accept or reject in each situation.



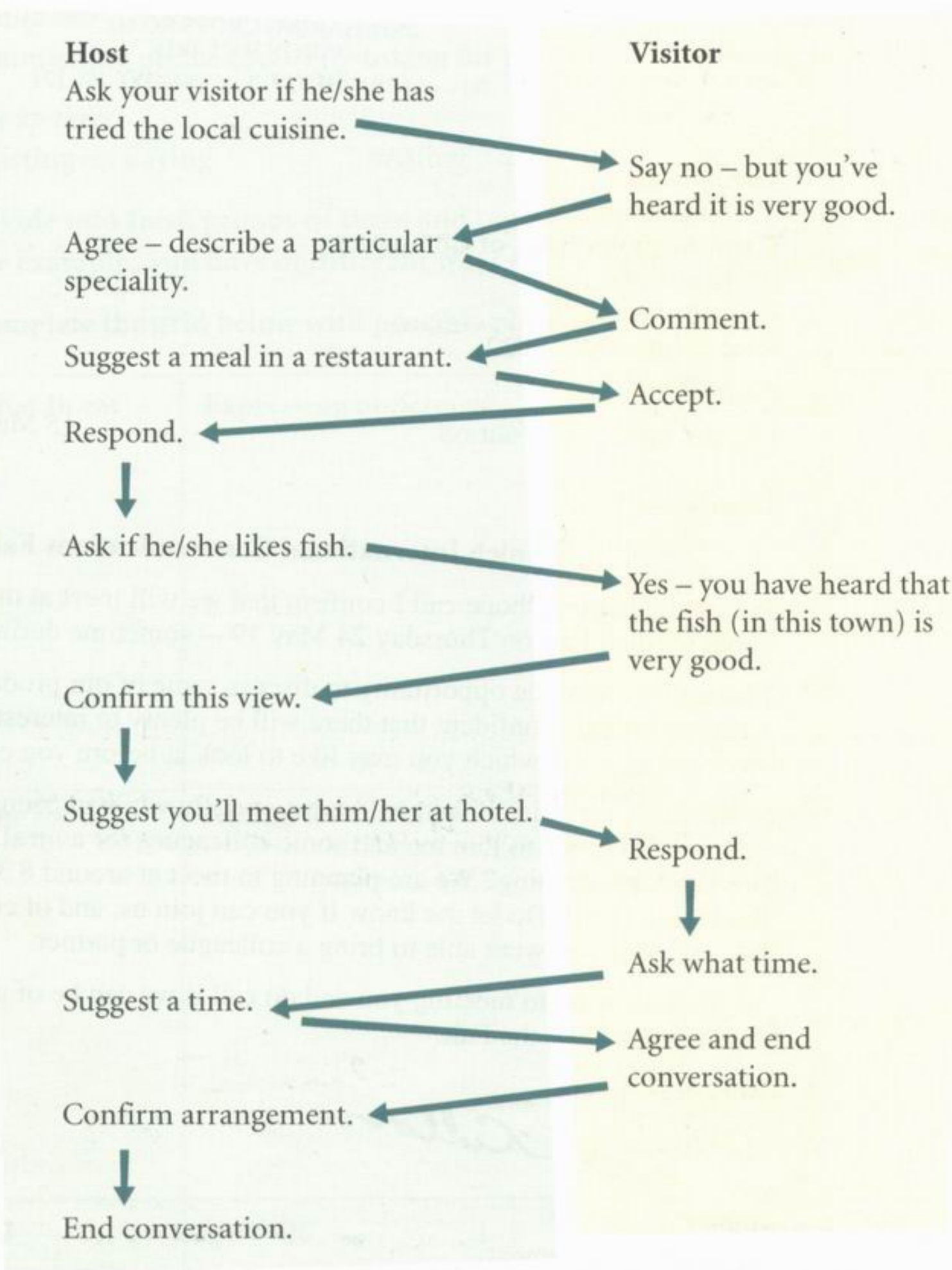


a) tomorrow night / a show or visit the town / or have a meal.
b) this evening / a meal in a restaurant / different colleagues.
c) when you come / what would you like to do?

Finally, listen to the recording of model versions.

Practice

1 Use the following flow chart to construct a dialogue. The situation is a semi-formal business meeting in your country.



Now listen to the recording of a model answer.

2 You receive the letter below from a business partner confirming a meeting with you at a Trade Fair in Munich. Unfortunately you have to leave Munich after your meeting, but you expect to be in London a month later. Write a reply suggesting a different arrangement which you can confirm nearer the time.

INTERLINK PLC

250 CHARING CROSS ROAD
LONDON WC1 4RD
Tel ++44-181 765 329 Fax ++44 181 765 274

Maria Saans
Accounts Manager
South Australia Bank of Commerce
PO Box 400
Bondi Junction
New South Wales 2022
AUSTRALIA

Our ref. GF6 Your ref. 15 March 19—

Dear Maria,

Munich International Communications Fair

Following our telephone call I confirm that we will meet at the Interlink stand at the Munich Fair on Thursday 24 May 19— sometime during the morning.

I look forward to the opportunity to discuss some of our products and services with you and am confident that there will be plenty to interest you. I enclose some information which you may like to look at before you come to Munich.

It would be very nice if we could meet socially while in Munich. I wonder if you would be free to join me and some colleagues for a meal in the city on the Thursday evening? We are planning to meet at around 8.30 for dinner at the Hilton Hotel. Do let me know if you can join us, and of course we would be pleased if you were able to bring a colleague or partner.

We look forward to meeting you and do call if we can be of any assistance between now and the Fair.

Very best wishes,

John Callam
Product Development

encs.

Role play 1

Work in pairs. Student A should look at File card 3A. Student B should look at File card 3B.

3 Eating out

1 Imagine you are in a restaurant with a business colleague. Work in groups of three. Brainstorm as many examples as you can of the language indicated below.

Group one
recommending what to eat expressing preference ordering

Group two
commenting on the food asking for the bill offering to pay

Group three
insisting on paying inviting thanking

2 Divide into fresh groups of three and together in your new groups share all the examples you have of different ways of saying the nine functions above.

Complete the grid below with possible phrases:

Recommending what to eat	Expressing preference	Ordering
Commenting on the food	Asking for the bill	Offering to pay
Insisting on paying	Inviting	Thanking

3 Now listen to a conversation recorded in a restaurant. The recording contains parts of a conversation between Patricia Cork and Sandra Malcolm. They are colleagues in a joint venture between two American companies.

Note any similarities between your suggestions and the language in the recording. Note also any phrases used on the tape that you did not suggest.

Role play 2

Student A should turn to File card 4A and Student B should turn to File card 4B.

Transfer

Think of any professional or business contact you have with other countries. Think about any conventions that are different to those in your country and may affect your dealing with people from these countries. Consider for example:

- conventions of dress
- conventions regarding alcohol and food
- socialising
- shaking hands
- physical contact
- gestures
- eye contact
- humour
- the relationship between work and pleasure
- the relationship between family and work
- family matters.

Language Checklist
Socialising (2)

Saying what's on and what's available
There's a (good) film / play / concert / on at …
We have a good theatre in the city …
There are some …
- interesting museums / public buildings …
- good restaurants

Are you interested in …
- eating out?
- visiting / seeing … ?

Inviting
Would you be interested in going to see …
I'd like to invite you to have dinner this evening. Is that a good idea?

Responding to an invitation
That would be very nice.
I'd like that.
Thank you. That would be a pleasure.

Declining an invitation
I'd like to, but I'm afraid …
That would be nice, but unfortunately …
- I'm rather tired …
- I have an appointment this evening …
- I'm rather busy …
- I have some work to do …

Stating preference
I like (Japanese) cuisine very much …
I think I'd like to …
I think I'd prefer …
I particularly like (classical) music …

Looking at a menu
The (fish) sounds nice …
I think I'd like to try …
I think I'll have …
Shall we have a bottle of … ?

Commenting on an evening out
It's been a lovely evening.
It's been very nice.
Thank you very much for your hospitality.
I enjoyed it very much.

Skills Checklist
Socialising (2)

Before receiving visitors to your company
Be prepared to talk in English about your professional field and/or your company and business:
- the professional field you are involved in
- your professional activities
- current research and other projects
- future plans
- the history of your company
- company organisation
- who owns the company
- the number of employees
- the international involvement of your company
- products and services
- the market
- competition.

Be able to talk about:
- your country and your town
- history
- tourism
- museums and public buildings
- entertainment
- cultural and religious centres of interest.

You may wish to talk about:
- education
- transport systems
- the economy
- companies
- exports and imports.

MODULE 2

TELEPHONING

3 Could I leave a message?

→ Preparing to make a telephone call
→ Receiving calls
→ Taking and leaving messages
→ Asking for and giving repetition
→ The secretarial barrier

1 Preparing to make a telephone call

1 Look at the cartoon. What do you imagine they are saying? Say what the problems are and how problems like this can be avoided.

2 Listen to the recording of Clare Macey, a director of Inter Marketing, suggesting ways to prepare for telephone calls. Then tick the suggestions that she makes that are included in the list below.

Do *not* try to guess what the other person will say. ☐
Think about your objectives from the call – any questions you need to ask or things you need to say. ☐
If someone calls and you are not ready for them, ask them to call back later. ☐
Desk preparation: prepare the desk – paper, pen, any relevant documentation, computer files. ☐
Check recent correspondence, know the situation. ☐
Have your diary on hand, so you can fix appointments. ☐

3 Different people have different objectives in a telephone call. What do you think are the objectives of the people in the situations below? The first is done for you as an example.

a) A Purchasing Manager who has received an incomplete delivery.

- *to tell the supplier that the delivery is incomplete.*
- *to arrange to get the rest of the delivery sent as soon as possible.*
- *(possibly) to complain about the poor service.*

b) A computer operator with a software problem calling a Software Helpline.

c) A Sales Representative for a furniture manufacturer making a first call to Moda Design, a company which sells office furniture.

d) A purchaser at Moda Design who takes the call in situation c.

2 Receiving calls

1 Look at the picture as you listen to the recording. Say what the problem is and how problems like this can be avoided.

2 Listen to another short extract from the recording of Clare Macey. Here she is talking about being prepared for incoming calls. Tick what she recommends.

Send a fax suggesting someone calls you – then be prepared for their call. ☐

If you expect a call, think about what the other person will say or what they will ask. ☐

Check any relevant documentation or correspondence. ☐

If you are busy or not ready when they call, ask them to call back later. ☐

3 Taking and leaving messages

1 Listen to the recording and complete the missing information on the message pads below.

a)

☎ **Telephone Message**

For: *Time of call:*

Caller: *Company:*

Phone number:

Message:

b)

☎ **Telephone Message**

For: Time of call:

Caller: Company:

Phone number:

Message:

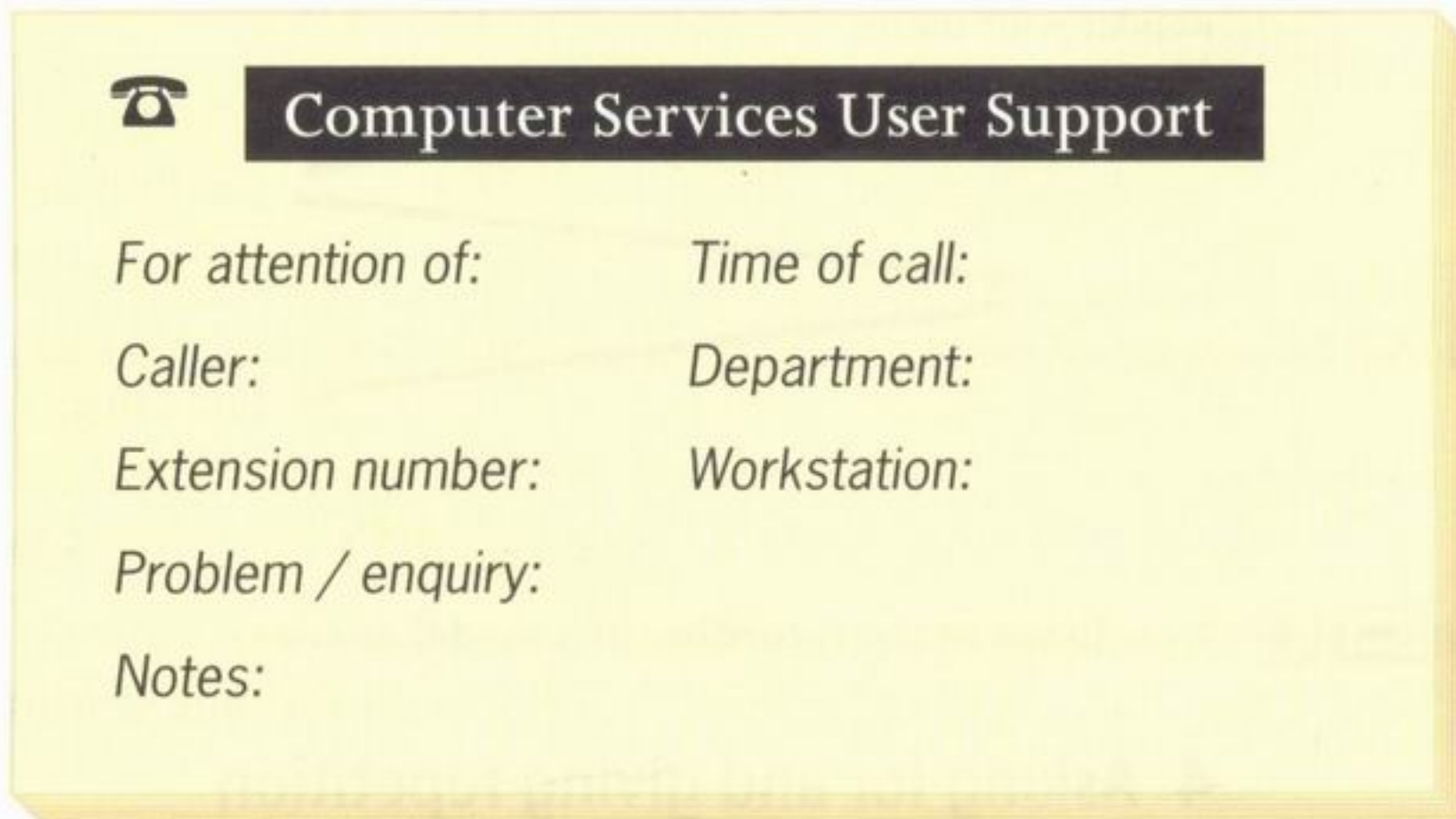
Discussion

Compare the styles of the callers in the two conversations you have heard. How are they different? Comment on how the people answering the calls handle each caller.

Now listen to two more examples and complete the message pads below.

c)

d)

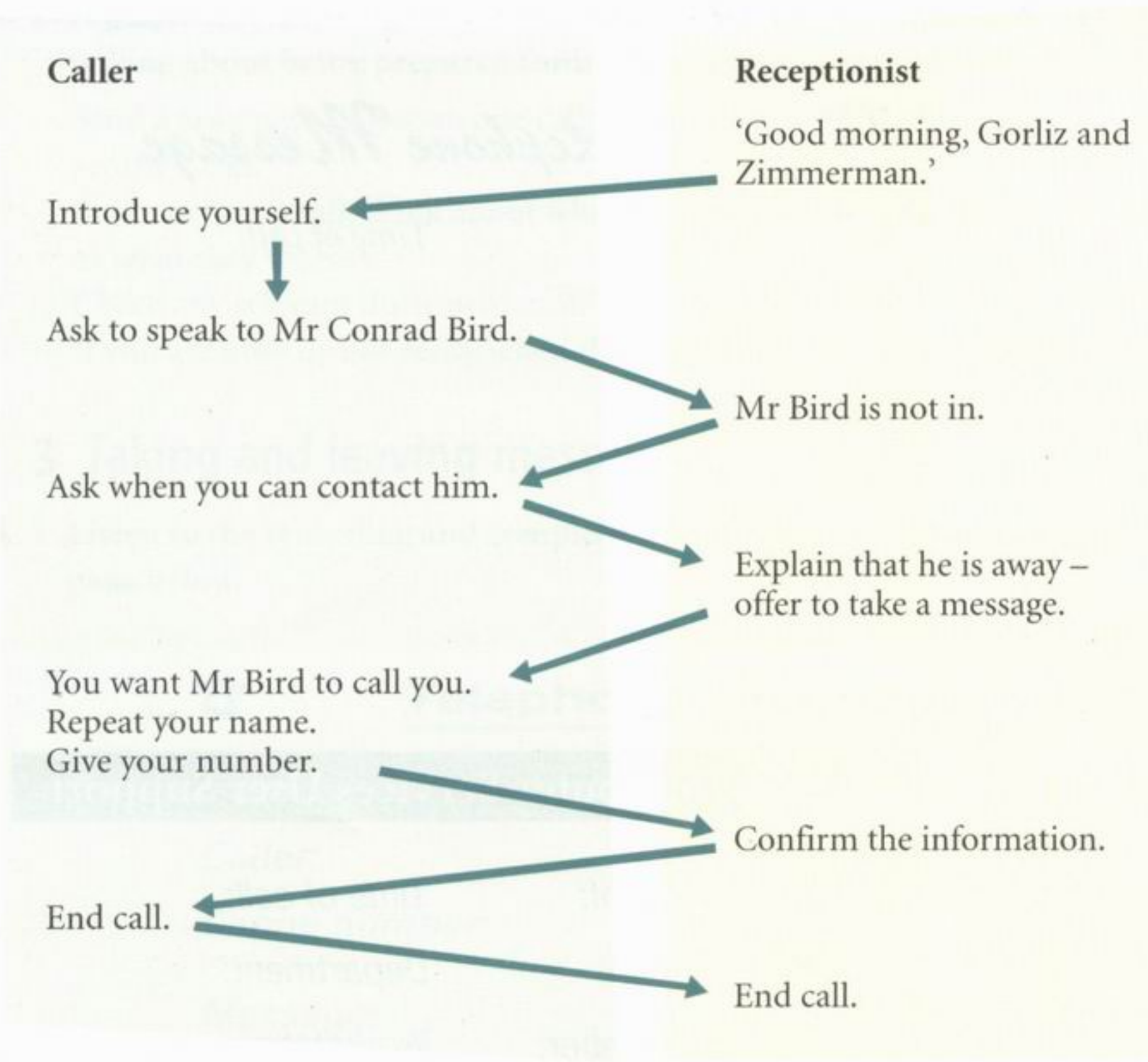


Discussion

Discuss the style of the various speakers in the last two conversations. How does the style change according to the speaker and the situation? Is the style used always the right one?

Practice

Use the following flow chart to make a complete telephone conversation. If you need to, listen again to the recordings you have heard and refer to the Language Checklist on page 24.



Now listen to the recording of a model answer.

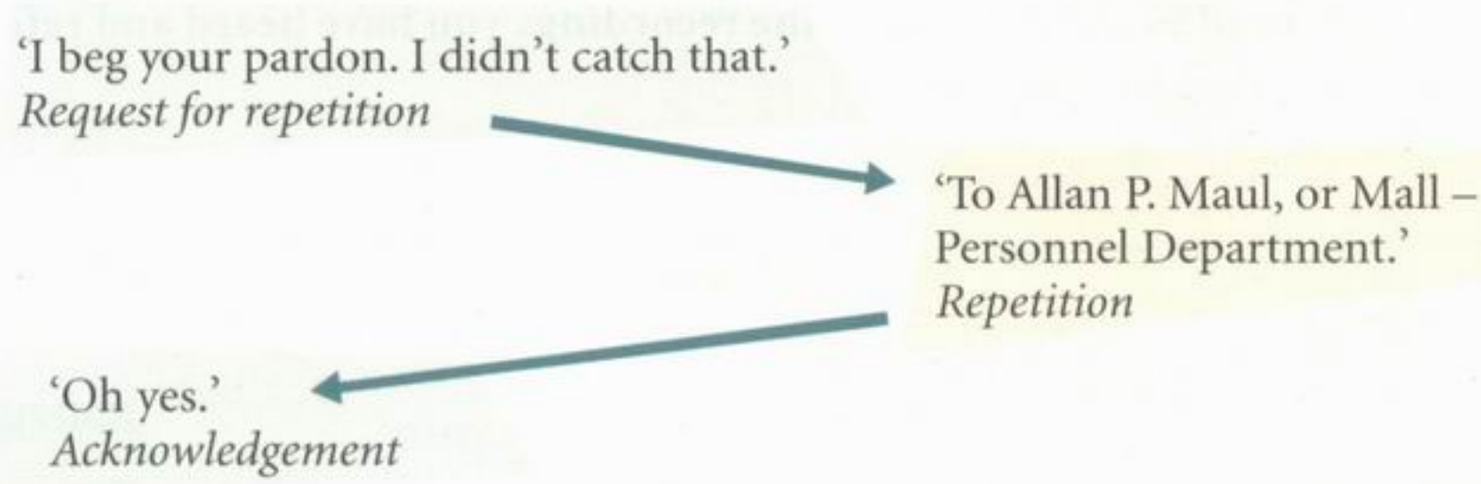
4 Asking for and giving repetition

1 **Listen to the recording of a conversation between a woman who calls the Personnel Office in the Singapore branch of Michigan Insurance Inc. She has to attend for a job interview.**

a) The first time you listen, say why she calls.

b) Listen again. Notice that there are four requests for repetition. Why?

2 **In each request for repetition, the person asking for the repetition also acknowledges it. It is important that any repetition is followed by an acknowledgement. Look at the following example that you have heard:**



Listen again. Identify two other ways to acknowledge repetition.

3 Look at the following situations and listen to the recording for each one. In each case, suggest why someone might ask for repetition and suggest a suitable phrase.

1

2

3

Role play 1

Work in pairs. Student A should turn to File card 5A. Student B should turn to File card 5B.

Role play 2

Keep to the same A or B. Student A should turn to File card 6A and Student B should turn to File card 6B.

5 The secretarial barrier

1 Frequently a Sales Representative may make a 'cold call' to a purchasing manager or some other influential person in a company. Imagine the following situation:

Dominique Peron is Personal Assistant to Jacques Le Grand, Production Controller in Tarbet Garonne Compagnie (TGC), a French manufacturer of paints and varnishes. M. Le Grand has asked not to be disturbed by uninvited sales calls. Walter Barry from London would like to speak to M. Le Grand.

a) Listen to the tape and say what Dominique is trying to do. What is her objective?

b) Dominique Peron finally makes a suggestion to the caller. What does she say?

2 Listen again. Complete the script below by writing down all the phrases used by Dominique Peron to block the caller.

TGC: Bonjour, ici La TGC.

WALTER BARRY: Good morning, Walter Barry, here, calling from London. Could I speak to Monsieur Le Grand, please?

TGC: Who's calling, please?

WALTER BARRY: I'm sorry – Walter Barry, from London.

TGC: Er, _____ _____ _____ _____, please?

WALTER BARRY: Well, I understand that your company has a chemical processing plant. My own company, LCP, Liquid Control Products, is a leader in safety from leaks in the field of chemical processing. I would like to speak to M. Le Grand to discuss ways in which we could help TGC protect itself from such problems and save money at the same time.

TGC: Yes, I see. Well, M. Le Grand _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

WALTER BARRY: Can you tell me when I could reach him?

TGC: He's _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____, then _____ _____ _____ in New York. So it is difficult to give you a time.

WALTER BARRY: Could you ask him to ring me?

TGC: I _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____, he's _____ _____ _____ _____.

WALTER BARRY: Could I speak to someone else, perhaps?

TGC: Who in particular?

WALTER BARRY: A colleague for example?

TGC: You are speaking to his Personal Assistant. I can deal with calls for M. Le Grande.

WALTER BARRY: Yes, well … er … yes … could I ring him tomorrow?

TGC: No, _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

_____ _____. Listen, let me suggest something. You send us details of your products and services, together with references from other companies and then we'll contact you.

WALTER BARRY: Yes, that's very kind. I have your address.

TGC: Very good, Mr er er …

WALTER BARRY: Barry. Walter Barry from LCP in London.

TGC: Right Mr Barry. We look forward to hearing from you.

WALTER BARRY: Thank you. Goodbye.

TGC: Bye.

3 Listen to the beginning of another conversation. A Sales Manager for a Dutch tools manufacturer, Reuter, is telephoning Dixon Auto, a British car components company.

a) Who does the caller ask to speak to?
b) What is the result?
c) Why is the caller successful / not successful here?

Role play 3

Work in pairs. Student A should refer to File card 7A and Student B should use File card 7B.

Role play 4

Keep to the same A or B. Student A should refer to File card 8A and Student B should turn to File card 8B.

Transfer

Think about any of the following – whichever is most likely for you now or in the future. Prepare the call (maximum three minutes preparation!). Explain the details of the situation to a colleague or to your teacher, then practise the call.

1 Ring a company to ask for product details or prices.
2 Ring a hotel to book a night's accommodation.
3 Ring a travel agent to ask about flights to a city you need to visit.

If possible record your conversation.

Language Checklist
Telephoning (1)

Introducing yourself
Good morning, Aristo.
Hello, this is … from … .
Hello, my name's … calling from … .

Saying who you want
I'd like to speak to …, please.
Could I have the … Department, please?
Is … there, please?

Saying someone is not available
I'm sorry he/she's not available … .
Sorry, he/she's away / not in / in a meeting / in Milan.

Leaving and taking messages
Could you give him/her a message?
Can I leave him/her a message?

Please tell him/her …
Please ask him/her to ring me on …

Can I take a message?
Would you like to leave a message?
If you give me your number I'll ask him/her to call you later.

Offering to help in other ways
Can anyone else help you?
Can I help you perhaps?
Would you like to speak to his assistant?
Shall I ask him to call you back?

Asking for repetition
Sorry, I didn't catch (your name / your number / your company name / etc.).
Sorry, could you repeat your (name, number, etc.).
Sorry, I didn't hear that.
Sorry, I didn't understand that.
Could you spell (that / your name), please.

Acknowledging repetition
Okay, I've got that now.
(Mr Kyoto.) I understand.
I see, thank you.

Skills Checklist
Telephoning: Preparation for a call

Reading – background information

Desk preparation
Have the following available:
- relevant documentation / notes
- correspondence received
- computer files on screen
- pen and paper
- diary.

Check time available
How much time do you need?
How much time do you have?

Objectives
Who do you want to speak to?
In case of non-availability, have an alternative strategy:
- call back / be called back – when?
- leave a message
- speak to someone else
- write or fax information.

Do you want to:
- find out information?
- give information?

Introduction
Do you need to refer to:
- a previous call?
- a letter, order, invoice or fax?
- someone else (who?)
- an event (what? when?)

Prediction
What do you expect the other person to say / ask you? How will you respond?

Language
Key phrases (see Language Checklist)
Pronunciation
Spelling

4 Good to hear from you again!

→ Cross-cultural communication on the telephone (1)
→ Making arrangements
→ Changing arrangements
→ Ending a call

1 Cross-cultural communication on the telephone (1)

1 Listen to the three recorded extracts. Match each call to the appropriate picture below. In each case there is a communication problem.

What is the problem, and how could it be solved?

a

b

c

Conversation 1 Picture ..... Problem .....

Solution .....

Conversation 2 Picture ..... Problem .....

Solution .....

Conversation 3 Picture ..... Problem .....

Solution .....

2 Look briefly at the text. *Before* reading, say:

a) what it is about
b) what the message of the cartoon opposite is
c) what you think the text probably recommends.

3 Now read the text. Identify the following:

a) something that is important before telephoning
b) advice on how to use your voice
c) advice on checking your understanding
d) examples of 'explicit' cultures – what does this mean?
e) examples of 'subtle' cultures – what does this mean?
f) a possible problem about the phone that you would not have face-to-face.

Telephoning across cultures

Many people are not very confident about using the telephone in English. However, good preparation can make telephoning much easier and more effective. Then, once the call begins, speak slowly and clearly and use simple language.

Check that you understand what has been said. Repeat the most important information, look for confirmation. Ask for repetition if you think it is necessary.

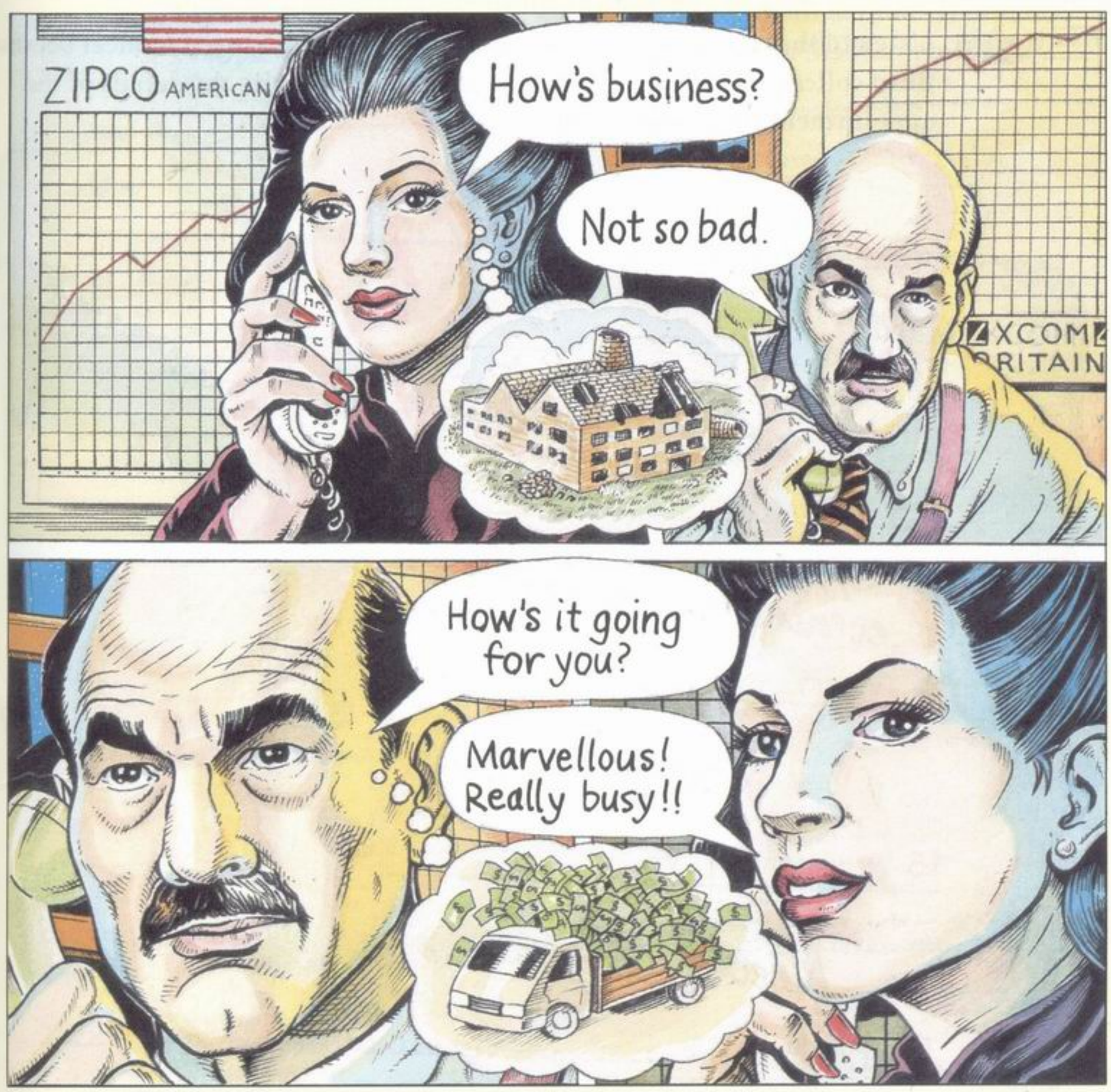
Remember too that different cultures have different ways of using language. Some speak in a very literal way so it is always quite clear what they mean. Others are more indirect, using hints, suggestions and understatement (for example 'not very good results' = 'absolutely disastrous') to put over their message. North America, Scandinavia, Germany and France are 'explicit' countries, while the British have a reputation for not making clear exactly what they mean. One reason for this seems to be that the British use language in a more abstract way than most Americans and continental Europeans. In Britain there are also conventions of politeness and a tendency to avoid showing one's true feelings. For example if a Dutchman says an idea is 'interesting' he means that it is interesting. If an Englishman says that an idea is 'interesting' you have to deduce from the way he says it whether he means it is a good idea or a bad idea.

Meanwhile, for similar reasons Japanese, Russians and Arabs – 'subtle' countries – sometimes seem vague and devious to the British. If they say an idea is interesting it may be out of politeness.

The opposite of this is that plain speakers can seem rude and dominating to subtle speakers, as Americans can sound to the British – or the British to the Japanese. The British have a tendency to engage in small talk at the beginning and end of a telephone conversation. Questions about the weather, health, business in general and what one has been doing recently are all part of telephoning, laying a foundation for the true purpose of the call. At the end of the call there may well be various pleasantries, *Nice talking to you, Say hello to the family* (if you have met them) and *Looking forward to seeing you again soon.* A sharp, brief style of talking on the phone may appear unfriendly to a British partner. Not all nationalities are as keen on small talk as the British!

Being aware of these differences can help in understanding people with different cultural traditions. The difficulty on the telephone is that you cannot see the body language to help you.

Adapted from *Faxes, phones and foreigners* by kind permission of British Telecommunications plc.



4 Choose the closest definition of the following words from the text.

1 literal (l.7)
a) direct and clear b) full of literary style c) abstract and complicated

2 understatement (l.8)
a) kind words b) less strong way of talking c) clever speech

3 deduce (l.15)
a) reduce b) work out c) disagree

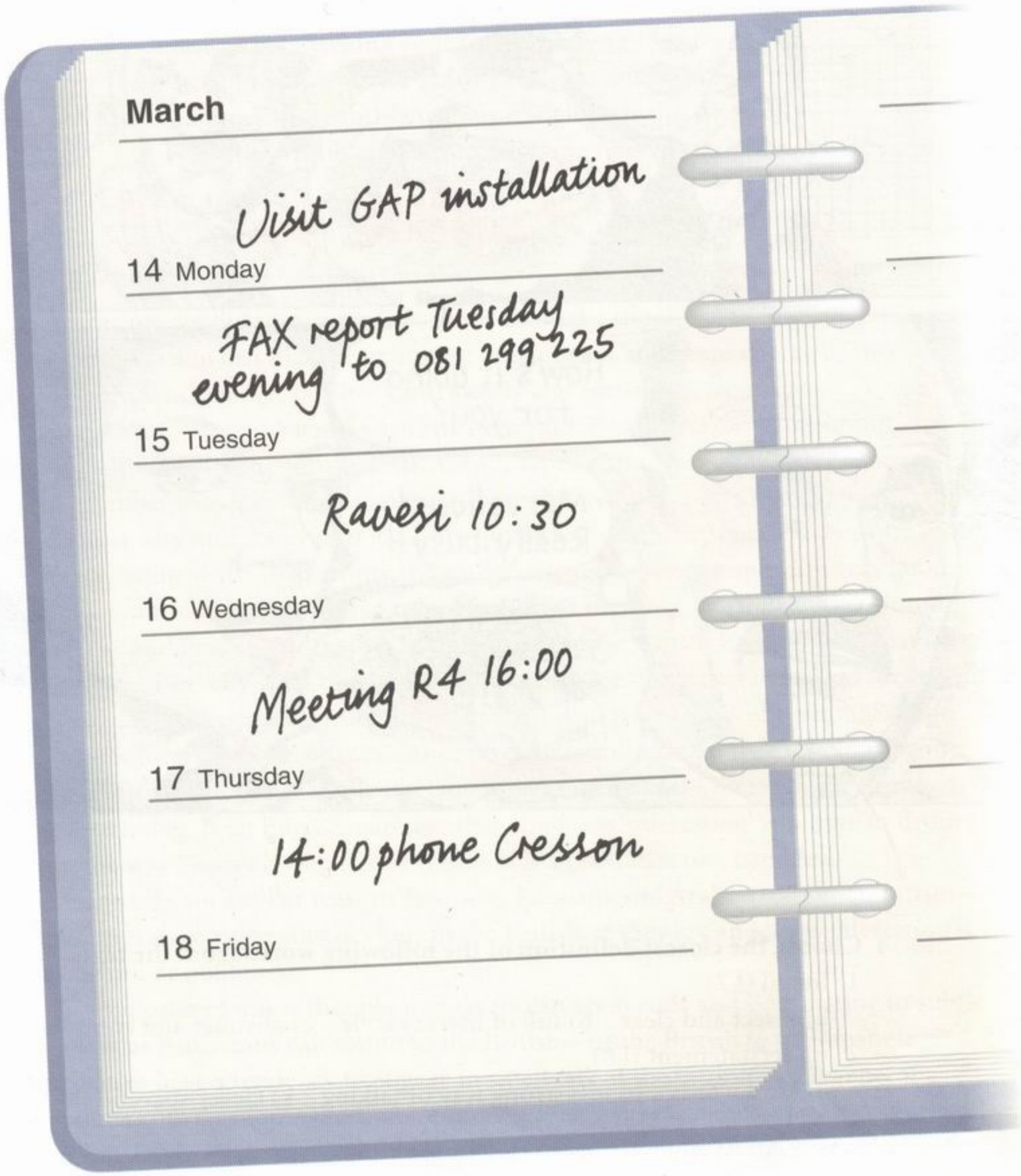
4 vague (l.18)
a) unclear b) unfriendly c) insincere

5 devious (l.18)
a) rude b) dishonest c) clever

6 pleasantries (l.25)
a) questions b) requests c) polite remarks

2 Making arrangements

1 **Listen to the recording. Two colleagues, Bob and Lara, need to meet because a third colleague, Leon, has resigned. As you listen, write the details of the appointment they make in Bob's diary.**



2 Here Vladimir Kramnik from Moscow calls Joanna Hannam of Swallow Exports Ltd., in London. He wants an appointment with Ms Hannam. Complete the details of the arrangement made in Ms Hannam's diary.

3 Compare the two recordings.

a) Identify three ways in which Ms Hannam's secretary offers to help Mr Kramnik.

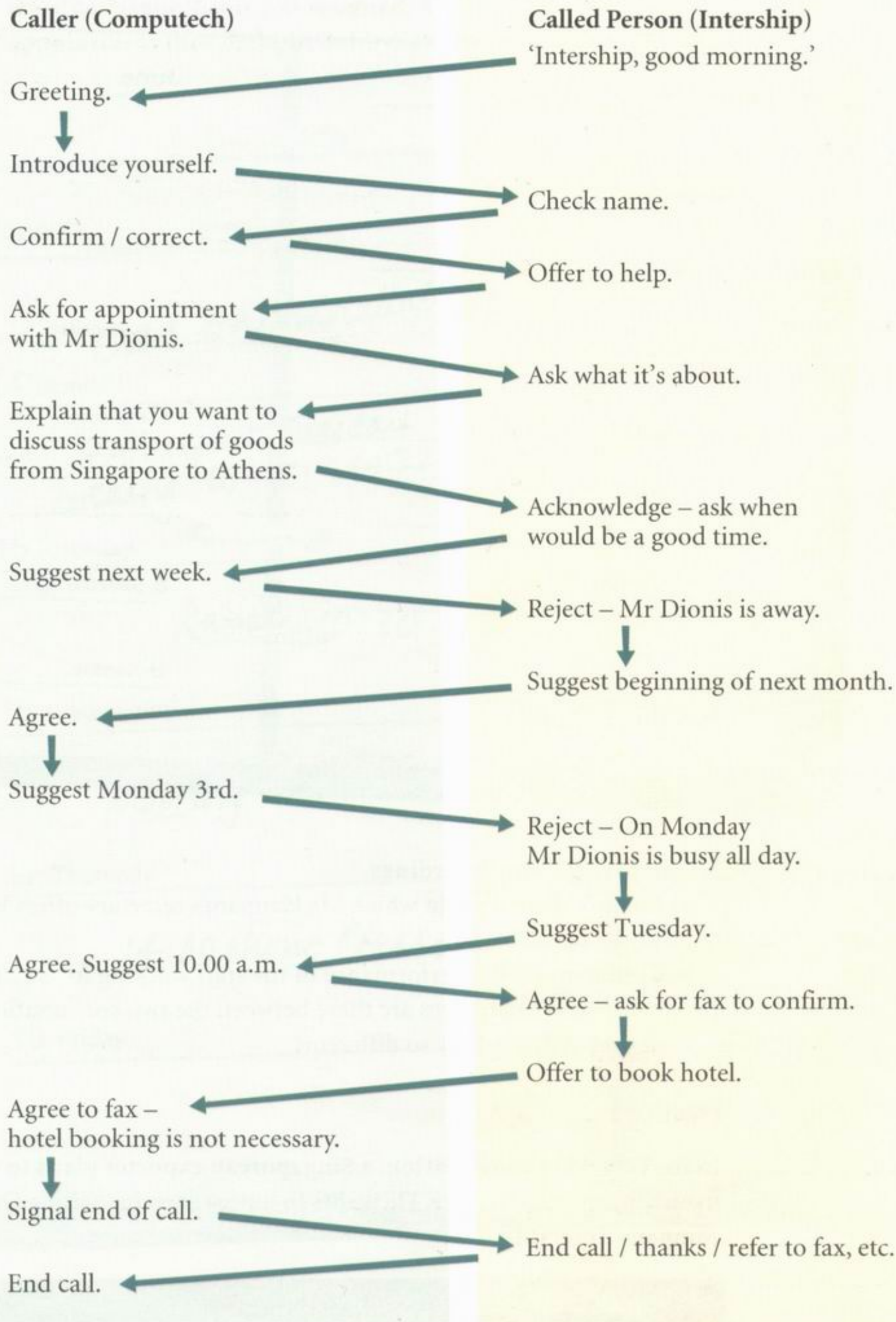
b) Comment on the performance of the staff working for Swallow Exports.

c) What style differences are there between the two conversations in 1 and 2 above? Why are they so different?

Practice 1

In the following conversation, a Singaporean exporter plans to send goods from Singapore to Greece. He wants to have a meeting with a Greek shipping company, Intership.

Suggest suitable phrases for each step in the conversation, then practise the dialogue with a colleague.



Now listen to the recording of a model answer.

Practice 2

Sending a fax after a telephone conversation is an important way to check that there has been no misunderstanding in the conversation. Many companies also like to have written confirmation of things agreed by telephone.
Use the template below to write a fax confirming the arrangements made in the Computech/Intership conversation.

COMPUTECH ARCOS

Lorong One Toa Payoh
Singapore 1253
Telephone: ++65 350 574

Fax: ++65 250 552

Fax to: Mr Dionis (Intership S.A.)
Fax Number: Page 1 of 1
From: Date:

Message

3 Changing arrangements

1 Listen to a conversation between two colleagues, John and Paula. Note:
a) details of the original arrangement
b) reasons for change
c) the new arrangement.

2 a) How would you characterise the style of this conversation?
b) Why is it like that?

3 Listen again to the conversation between John and Paula. Note the four part structure of a conversation about changing arrangements. Complete the missing words from the key phrases below:

(1) reference to original arrangement

'We're _____ _____ _____ today ...'

(2) Statement of problem ⟶ Need for change

'I'm _____ , I really can't _____ _____ .'

(3) Fixing new arrangement

'Can we _____ _____ _____ _____ ?'

(4) Confirmation

'See you _____ _____ .'

Role play 1

Work in pairs. Student A should turn to File card 9A. Student B should use File card 9B.

Role play 2

Keep to the same A or B. Student A should turn to File card 10A. Student B should look at File card 10B.

4 Ending a call

1 You will hear a recording of Catherine Welsh, a Communications Consultant, talking about telephoning and, in particular, ending phone calls.

Before you listen, suggest what she *might* say about the following:

a) ways to avoid misunderstandings
b) a way to check that there's nothing left to say
c) the importance of small talk
d) ways to get off the phone when the other person keeps talking and you are very busy.

2 Now listen to what Catherine actually says. Compare her suggestions with what you suggested above. Discuss these and other suggestions.

3 Hans Rossler is an Export Manager for a German company in Munich. An agent, Hassam Akhtar from Morocco, is planning to visit him. You will hear two versions of how Hans ends a phone conversation with Hassam. Notice how they are different.

a) What is wrong in the first version?
b) Which key phrase is in the second ending that was not in the first one?

4 Listen to the next recording of a conversation between two colleagues, Celia Walton and Gerd Hoffmann, who work for a Swiss toy manufacturer.

a) What is Celia's problem?
b) How does she resolve it?

Practice 3

Sit back-to-back with a colleague and have a telephone conversation about any small talk topic. One of you should try hard to keep the conversation going. The other should politely try to get off the phone.

Reverse roles and repeat the exercise.

Transfer 1

Work in pairs, A and B, to devise and practise two role plays. First, each of you should think about your own work or real life situation. Choose a situation where you need to call someone to arrange a meeting. Explain the situation to your partner. Then practise first one conversation, then the other. Remember to end the call appropriately.

Transfer 2

Next time you have to arrange a real meeting by telephone, use the language and recommendations made in this unit. Prepare the call, think about the call structure (see Skills Checklist) and think about how to end the call.

Language Checklist
Telephoning (2)

Stating reason for a call
I'm ringing to …
I'd like to …
I need some information about …

Making arrangements
Could we meet some time next month?
When would be a good time?
Would Thursday at 5 o'clock suit you?
What about July 21st?

That would be fine.
No, sorry, I can't make it then.
Sorry, I'm too busy next week.

Changing arrangements
We've an appointment for next month, but …
I'm afraid I can't come on that day.
Could we fix an alternative?

Confirming information
So …
Can I check that? You said …
To confirm that …
Can you / Can I confirm that by fax?

Ending a call
Right. I think that's all.
Thanks very much for your help.
Do call if you need anything else.
I look forward to … seeing you / your call / your letter / your fax / our meeting.
Goodbye and thanks.
Bye for now.

Skills Checklist
Telephoning (2)

Voice
- speed
- clarity
- volume

Structure
- background information
- key information
- repetition, emphasis and confirmation
- possible confirmation by fax

Style
- formal / informal
- cold call / new contact / established contact
- in-company vs. customer
  supplier
  outside agent
- colleague / friend / business associate / public
- company image

Structure of a call

Beginning
introduce yourself
get who you want
small talk
state problem / reason for call
|
Middle
ask questions
get / give information
confirm information
|
End
signal end
thank other person
small talk
refer to next contact
close call
check that there's nothing else to say

5 Unfortunately there's a problem . . .

→ Cross-cultural communication on the telephone (2)
→ Problem solving on the telephone
→ Complaints

1 Cross-cultural communication on the telephone (2)

1 **The following text gives some advice about telephoning between different cultures. Before you read it, quickly answer these questions about the organisation of the text:**
a) What is the picture about?
b) How many paragraphs are there?
c) How many main points are probably in the article?

2 **Read the text, then mark the sentences that follow as True (T) or False (F).**

In some countries, like Italy and Britain, conversation is a form of entertainment. There is an endless flow of talk and if you break the flow for a second someone else will pick it up. In other countries there is a higher value placed on listening – it is not only impolite to break in but listeners will consider what has been said in silence before responding. Finland and Japan are examples.

If you are talking to people who are also speaking English as a foreign language, they are likely to leave gaps and silences while they search for words or try to make sense of what you have just said. So be patient and try not to interrupt, as you would hope they would be patient with you.

Every country has its own codes of etiquette. For example it is common for Anglo-Saxons to use first names very quickly, even in a letter or fax or telephone call. Such instant familiarity is much less acceptable in the rest of Europe and Asia where even business partners and colleagues of many years' acquaintance address each other by the equivalent of Mr or Mrs and the last name or job title.

So stick to last names unless you specifically agree to do otherwise. Don't interpret the other person's formality as stiffness or unfriendliness. On the other hand, if business partners with an Anglo-Saxon background get on to first name terms straightaway, don't be surprised.

Above all, one should remember that people do not usually mind if their own codes
20 are broken by foreigners as long as they sense consideration and goodwill. This is much more important than a set of rules of etiquette.

Adapted from *Faxes, phones and foreigners* by kind permission of British Telecommunications plc.

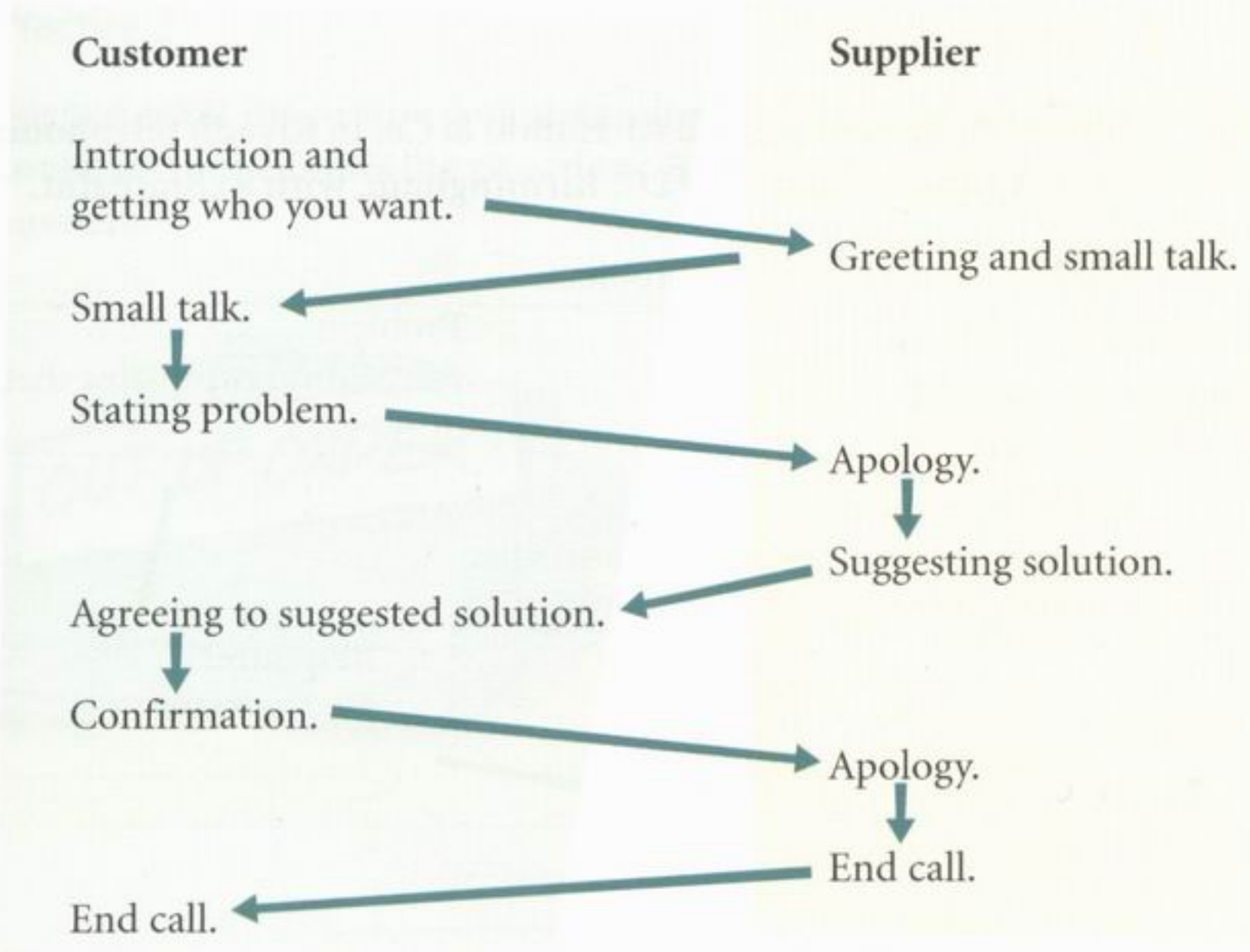
a) For the British and the Italians it is normal to interrupt the other speaker during the conversation. ☐
b) A special importance is attached to listening in Japanese and Finnish cultures. ☐
c) One should interrupt and try to help speakers who may have difficulty in saying what they want to say. ☐
d) It is unusual for Americans and British to use first names early in a business relationship. ☐
e) It doesn't matter if you break certain social rules if it is clear that you are sensitive to other people. ☐
f) Etiquette is the critical point in telephoning between different cultures. ☐

3 Which do you think is the most important point?

2 Problem solving on the telephone

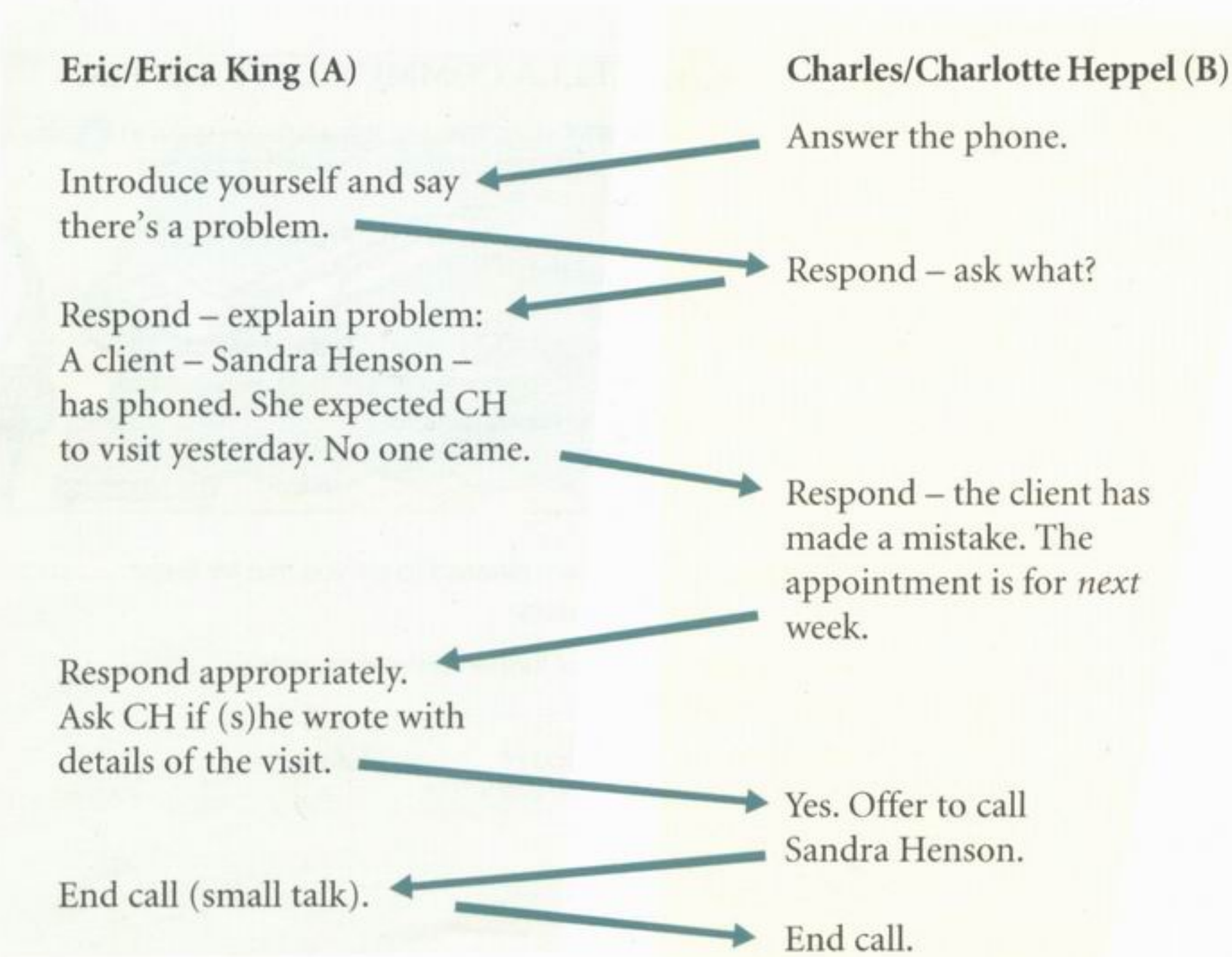
1 Lee Summerfield is a telecommunications equipment retailer from Los Angeles. Listen to the recording of a conversation he has with a supplier, Yoshinaga Takafumi. He works for AKA Company, a Japanese telephone systems manufacturer.

a) Identify the problem and the suggested solution.
b) Listen again. Do you think Yoshinaga Takafumi provided good customer service? In what ways?
c) Notice how the conversation follows the structure shown here:



Practice 1

Work in pairs, A and B. Create a dialogue based on the prompts below. A is the Client Services Manager of Keene Investments who calls B, a financial adviser. A is B's boss.



Now listen to a recording of a model answer.

3 Complaints

1 Hamid Nadimi of Ahmed Al-Hamid & Co. in Riyadh telephones Peter Carr, from Stella Communications PLC, Birmingham, with a complaint.

a) Listen and identify the problem.

b) Listen again and write the remaining key information on the flow chart:

Problem?
Mr Nadimi complains that

Response?
Mr Carr says ----------

Action decided?
Mr Carr promises ----------

Discuss how Peter Carr handles the call. Do you think he said the right things?

2 Work in pairs to create a new version of the above conversation beginning with the same basic problem. Provide better customer service in your version.

3 Imagine you are Peter Carr. Following the above phone call and then a conversation with Mr Bains, write a fax to Mr Nadimi. Tell him Mr Bains will return in four days with the parts and the system will be repaired within five days. Use the fax template below:

STELLA COMMUNICATIONS PLC

PO BOX 45, 27 PARKWAY, HALL GREEN, BIRMINGHAM BH56 4TR ENGLAND
Phone: 44 121 312 769/221 Fax: 44 121 312 593

Fax To: Hamid Nadimi
Ahmed Al-Hamid & Company
Fax number: 966 1 367933
No of Pages (inc. this one): 1

From: Peter Carr

Date: 4 March, 19—

ATTN: Hamid Nadimi—Operations Director

Re: ----------

Following our --------- I am pleased to tell you that Mr Bains ---------
and ---------- within five days.

If there is any way I can be of further assistance, please ----------
Once again, please accept -------- .

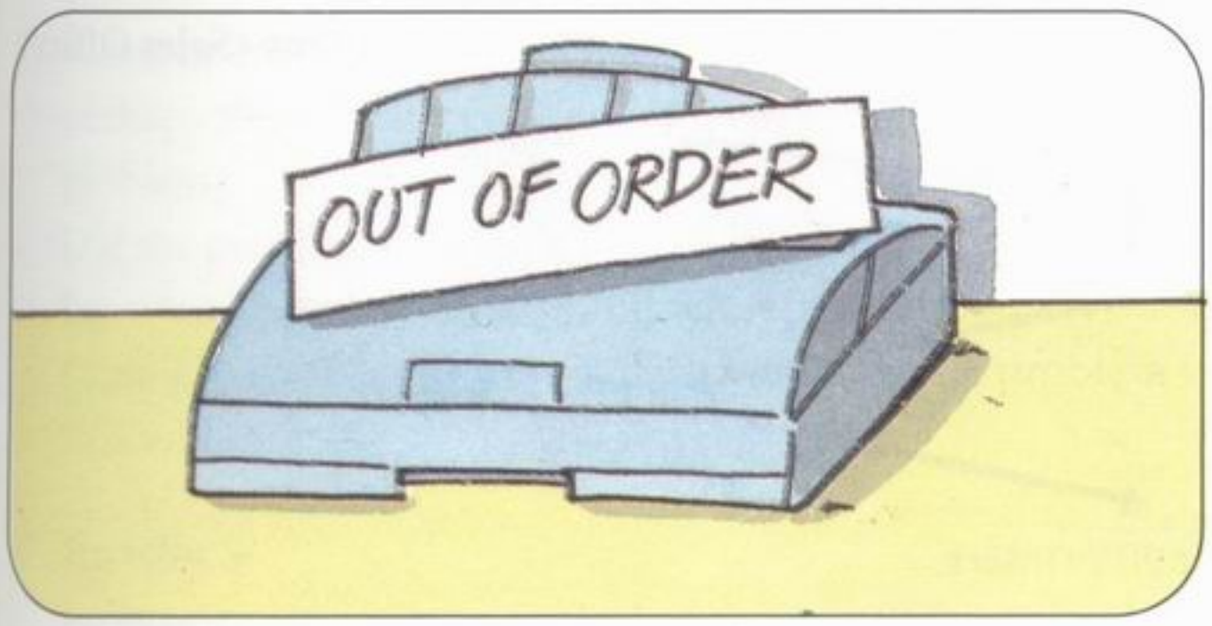
Furthermore, let me assure you of -------- future.
Best regards,

Peter Carr

Peter Carr
Customer Service

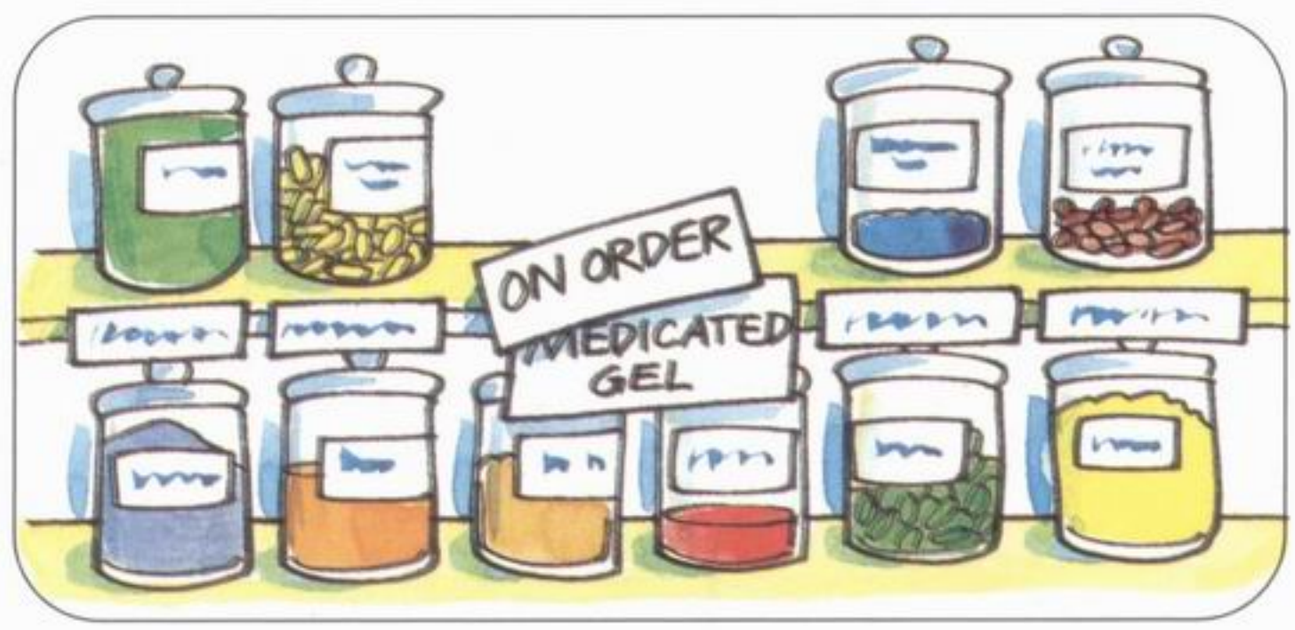
Practice 2

Suggest what the person complaining and the person handling the complaint could say in the following situations. Then listen to the recordings of model answers.



1 A printer purchased three months ago has broken down for a fourth time.

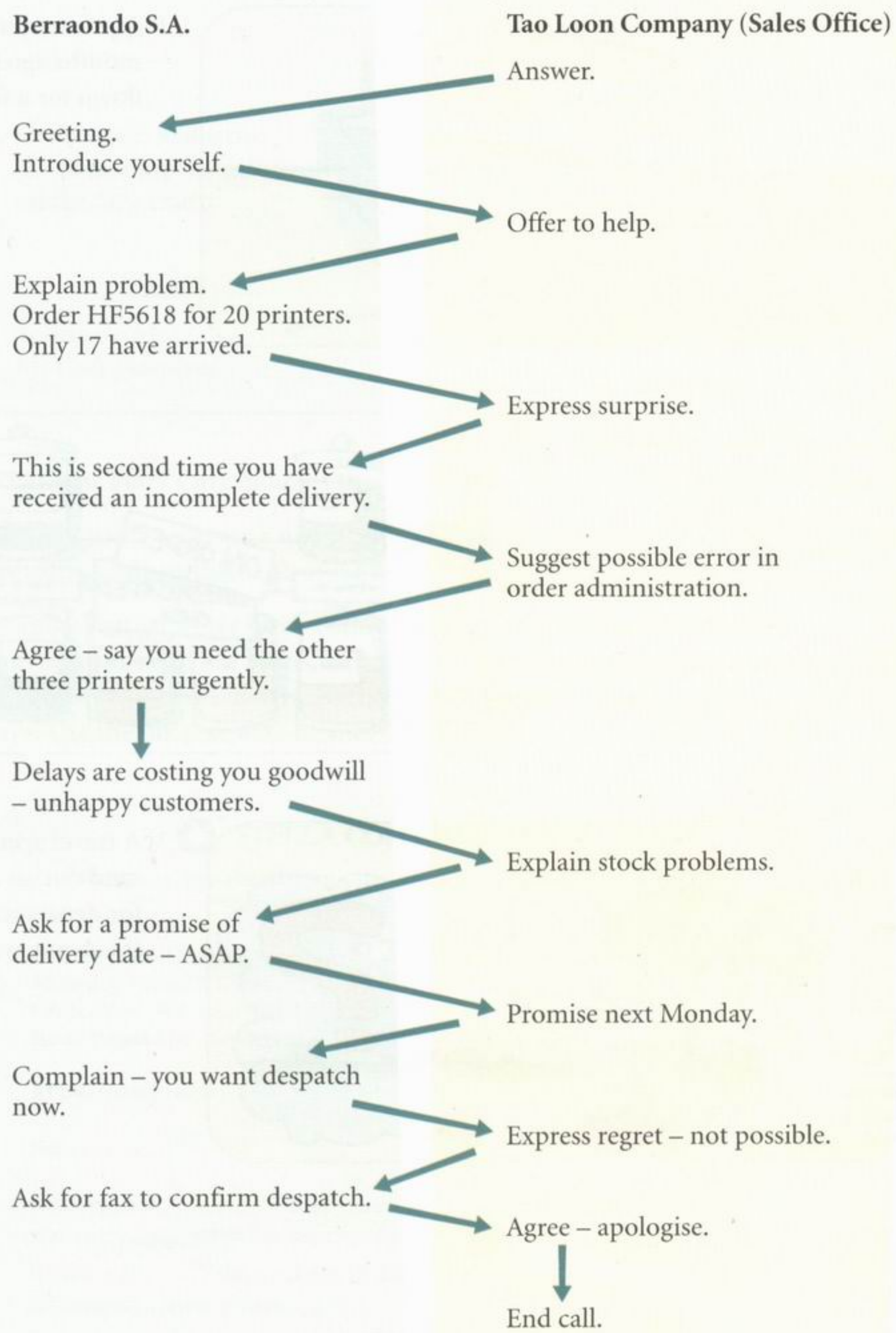
2 An order from a hospital for 500 × 100 ml of medicated gel has not arrived.



3 A travel agent promised to send out an airline ticket for departure tomorrow. It has not arrived.

Practice 3

Use the flow chart below as the basis for a telephone conversation involving a complaint.



Now listen to the recording of a model answer.

Role play

Work in pairs, A and B. Student A should look at File card 11A and Student B should look at File card 11B.

Transfer 1

Think of examples of where you have needed to resolve a problem on the telephone, perhaps with a colleague (an internal problem) or with another company (an external problem).
Did the problem involve a complaint?
Say what the situation was and what problem occurred.
Explain any difficulty you had and say how the problem was resolved.

Transfer 2

Prepare a conversation typical of the sorts of problems or complaints you are faced with in your working life. Explain the situation and the roles involved to a colleague and then perform the conversation.

Language Checklist
Telephoning (3)

Stating reason for the call
I'm ringing about …
Unfortunately, there's a problem with …
I'm ringing to complain about …

Explaining the problem
There seems to be …
We haven't received …
The … doesn't work.
The quality of the work is below standard.
The specifications are not in accordance with our order.

Referring to previous problems
It's not the first time we've had this problem.
This is the (third) time this has happened.
Three months ago …
We had a meeting about this and you assured us that …

Threatening
If the problem is not resolved …
we'll have to reconsider our position.
we'll have to renegotiate the contract.
we'll contact other suppliers.
the consequences could be very serious.

Handling complaints and other problems

Asking for details
Could you tell me exactly what … ?
Can you tell me … ?
What's the … ?

Apologising
I'm sorry to hear that.
I'm very sorry about the problem / delay / mistake …

Denying an accusation
No, I don't think that can be right.
I'm sorry but I think you're mistaken.
I'm afraid that's not quite right.
I'm afraid that can't be true.

Skills Checklist
Telephoning (3)

If you receive a complaint:
- consider your company's reputation
- express surprise
- ask for details
- suggest action
- promise to investigate
- make reasonable suggestions, offers to help.

Consider your customer and:
- show polite understanding
- use active listening
- reassure customer.

If you make a complaint:
- prepare for the call
- be sure of the facts
- have documentation available
- decide what you require to resolve the problem – at least partially – or completely.

Who is to blame?
Who is responsible?
Are you talking to the right person?
Was your order or your specifications correct?
Were you partly responsible for arrangements which went wrong, e.g. transport?
Does responsibility actually lie elsewhere, i.e. with a third party?

If you do not get what you want:
- keep control – state what you need calmly
- do you need to continue to do business with the other side?
- if you do, keep a good relationship
- express disappointment – not anger
- don't use threats – unless you have to!

MODULE 3

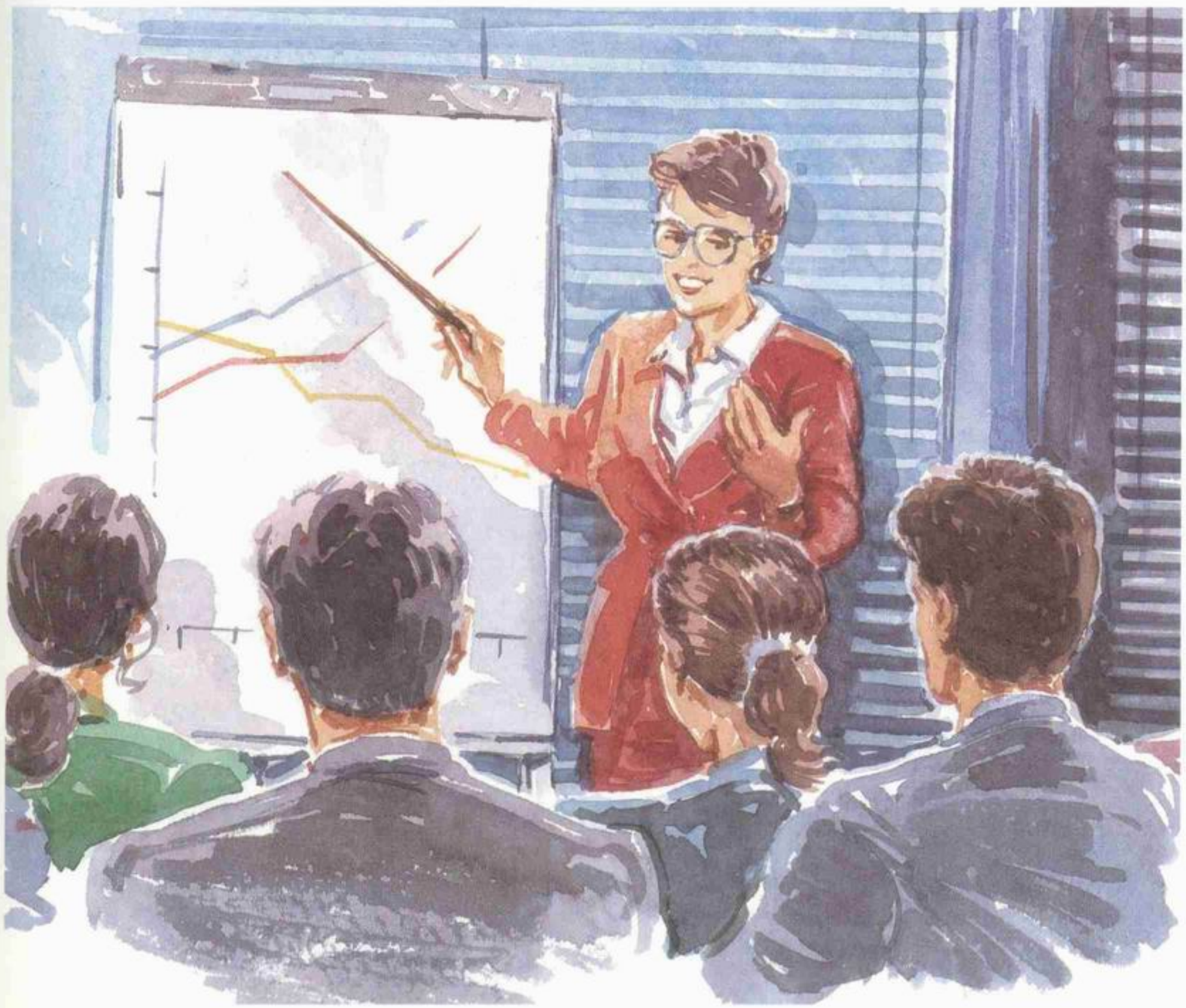
PRESENTATIONS

6 Planning and getting started

→ Presentation technique and preparation
→ The audience
→ Structure (1) The introduction

1 Presentation technique and preparation

1 Look at the picture. Discuss or make notes on the characteristics of a good presentation. Think about both the *content* and the *way* the speaker presents information.



2 **This article, from the *Financial Times*, is about presentation technique. Scan the text to identify seven examples of bad technique and five characteristics of good technique. You do *not* have to read the article in detail or understand every word to do this.**

When incompetence is 'tantamount to fraud'

by John Kirkman

Not long ago, I went to a two-day conference. The fee, travel, and hotel accommodation cost nearly £300.

The conference offered 20 papers. Of those, nine were rendered partly or wholly incomprehensible by poor design or inept handling of visual aids. Of the 20 speakers, 12 overran their allotted time, so the programme on both days fell behind schedule. To cope with this, the chairpersons asked some speakers to cut short their planned presentations. They did. With the other paying customers, I shall never know what I missed. I do know, however, that I did not get the full 20 presentations I was entitled to expect.

Incompetent presentation is tantamount to fraud. Here are extracts from my notes on that conference.

Speaker 1 Got slides out of sequence with talk, distractingly putting them up before she reached the relevant point in her script. Read inexorably through the script, stumbling over written word-clusters she could not articulate.

Speaker 2 Put up transparencies on overhead projector, with comment: 'You won't be able to read these.' Correct! Had an electronic watch that beeped at 15 minutes; commented that the beep meant time was up; went on speaking. Overran by 10 per cent.

Speaker 3 Used first five of allocated 15 minutes to tell an anecdote relevant to talk. Overran by 27 per cent.

Speaker 4 was warned twice by the chair about time to stop; so he spoke twice as fast to try to finish with slides whistling to and fro at a rate that made reading impossible. He confused himself as well as us by putting up a slide that 'should not have been there'. Overran by almost a third.

Speakers 2, 3 and 4 all began by stressing what they could not do in 15 minutes, thereby reducing substantially what they could do.

Things got worse. One speaker began by belittling himself and insulting us: 'I will just put up this slide to keep you occupied while I go through the boring facts.' He offered an example, but could not find it: 'I have some figures somewhere … (fumbled in notes) … but I can't find them, never mind.'

Day two brought no relief. We were offered overhead transparencies made by photocopying A4 pages in a small typeface. One illustration, 11 columns ∞ five rows of figures was put up with no comment other than: 'There are the figures.' I was sitting about halfway back, 50–60 feet from the screen. The figures were utterly unreadable. The edifice of the speaker's argument came crashing down. My comprehension never emerged from the rubble.

One speaker's monotonal mumble defeated even the halter microphone he was asked to wear because we could not hear him. He misunderstood the chair's warning about time, and stopped three minutes early. Blessed relief!

Another speaker did not know whether or not he had a slide to illustrate his point: 'I think we have a slide for this. It is slide six. Oh no, sorry. Well, we will go on.' How were we supposed to follow, if he himself was lost?

My notes have favourable comments on only three speakers, and those notes make an important point: the value of being simply competent. My comments on speaker eight illustrate that point: 'Vigorous, organised, enthusiastic, clear. Content not new or exciting, but mere competence of presentation made it seem easily the best so far.'

I knew before I went to the conference that the presenters were not professional lecturers, so was I expecting too much? I was not looking for outstanding oratory, merely for competent presentation, constructed for the periods allocated, and delivered with simple clarity.

It is possible to learn to be a competent speaker. Competence (not brilliance, but competence) rests more on acquired skills than on inherited flair. But most presenters at this conference had made little effort to learn how to protect their own reputations and those of their employers.

The Financial Times, 23 May 1986

Vocabulary notes

tantamount to fraud = almost the same as dishonestly taking someone's money
inept = incapable, amateurish
allotted = made available, given
rubble = chaos

3 What are the key considerations involved in *preparing* a presentation?

4 Listen to a group of management trainees talking about the preparation of presentations. They mention eight key areas, each represented by one of the pictures below. Number the pictures in the order in which they are mentioned.

3 A

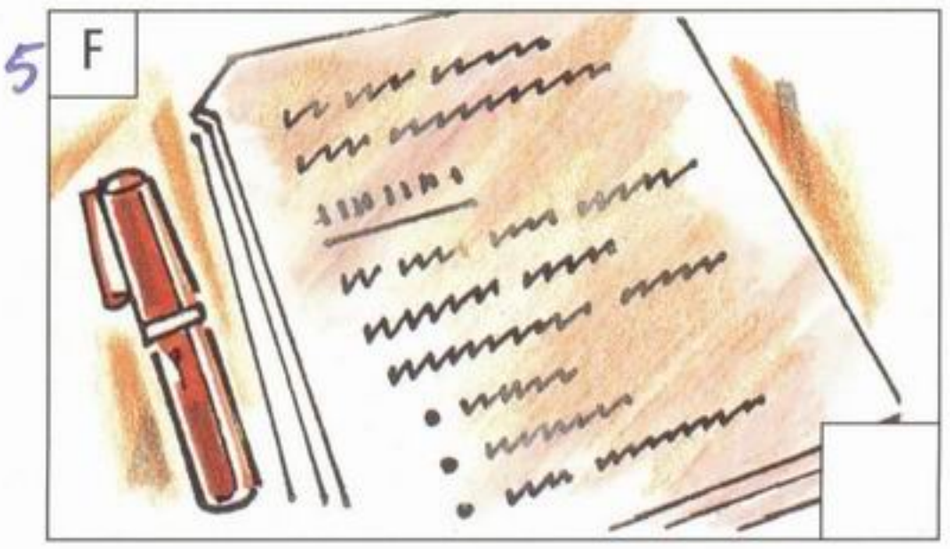
2 B

8 C

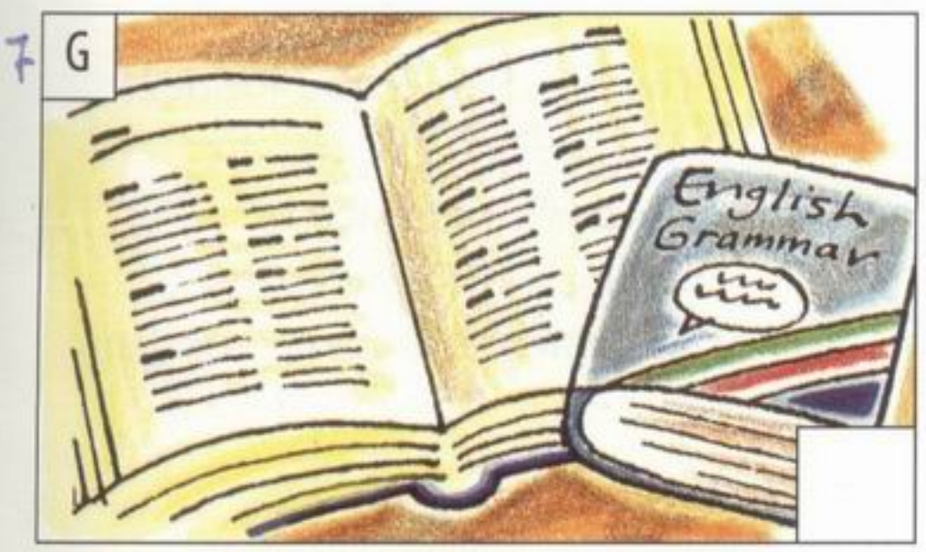
6 D

1 E

5 F



7 G

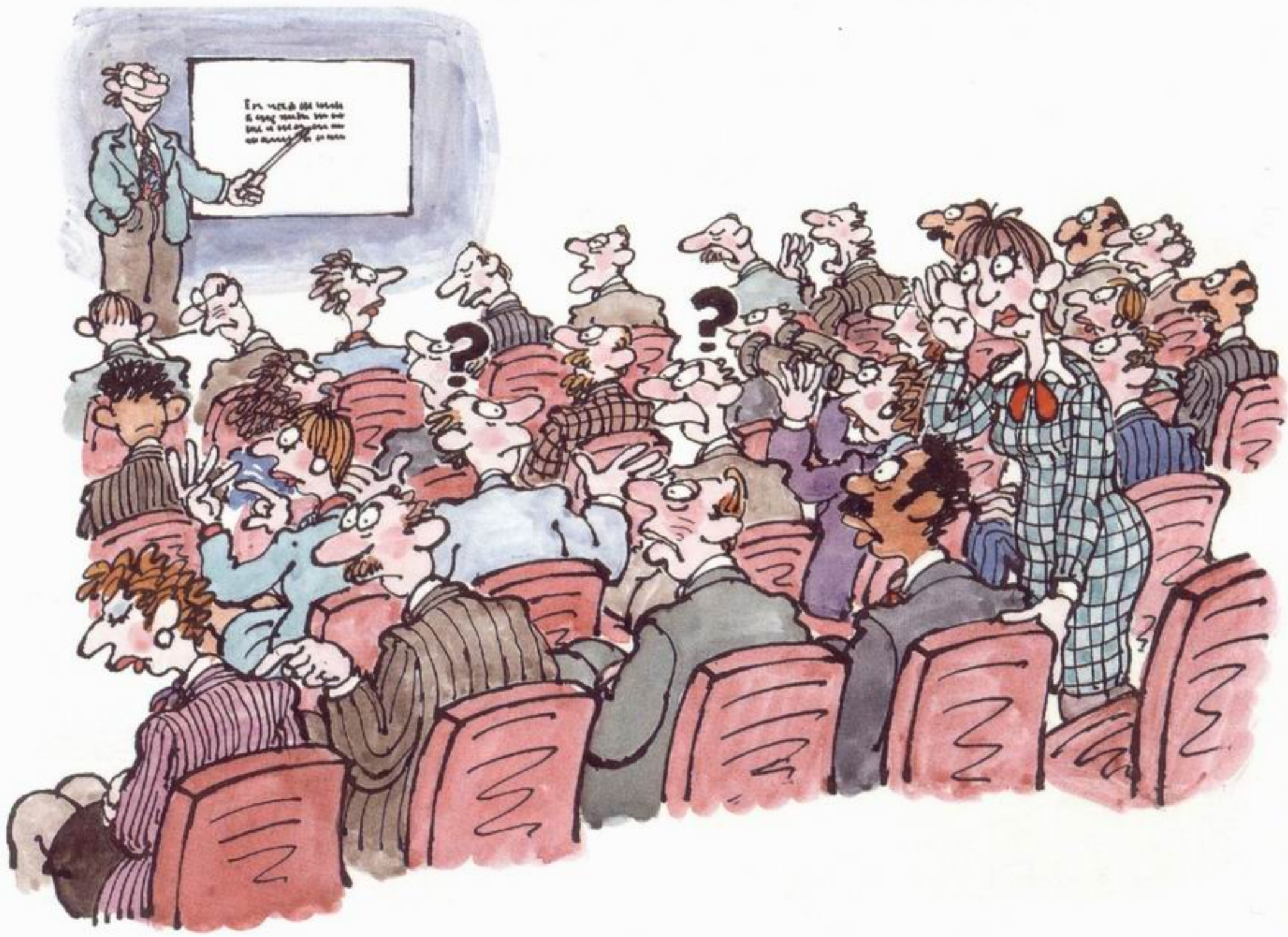


4 H

Discussion

Comment on any of the points mentioned in the discussion you have heard. Which do you think are the most important? Do you feel it is necessary to write out a presentation?

2 The audience



1 Read the comments from the audience who are listening to a presentation at an international conference. What caused the problem in each case.

a) 'What ~~on earth~~ the fuck is he talking about?' 'I've no idea!'
b) 'Hey, Sarah! Wake up! He's finished!'
c) 'Read that! I can't read that! I'd need a pair of binoculars!'
d) 'Speak up! I can't hear a thing!'
e) 'Summarise four main points? I only noticed one! Have I been asleep?'

2 Look at the following situations.

A medical congress in Tokyo with papers on new techniques in open heart surgery.

The Purchasing and Product Managers of a Taiwanese company interested in buying some production equipment from your company.

An internal meeting of administrative staff to discuss a new accounting procedure.

A staff meeting to discuss a charity event for earthquake victims.

Imagine you have to give a brief presentation in *two* of the above situations, plus one other situation that you decide. Make brief notes on the following:

a) Will your talk be formal or informal?
b) What are the audience's expectations in terms of technical detail, expertise, etc.?
c) What is the audience's probable level of specialist knowledge? Are they experts or non-experts?
d) How long will your talk be: five minutes, twenty minutes, half a day, or longer?
e) What is your policy on questions? Will the audience interrupt or will they ask questions afterwards? Will there be any discussion?
f) How will you help the audience to remember what you tell them?

3 Structure (1) The introduction

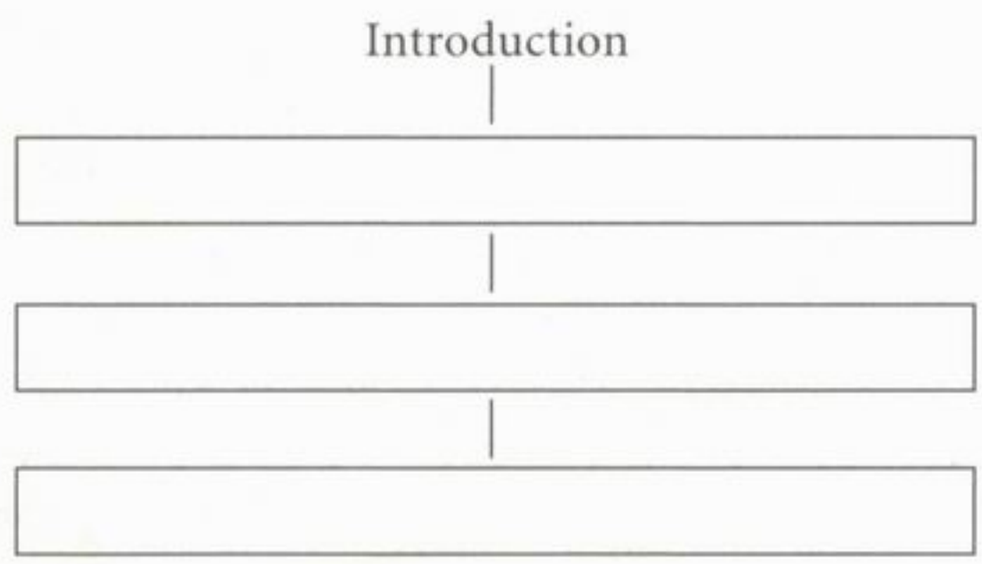
1 **In any presentation the beginning is crucial. Certainly some things are essential in an introduction and others are useful. Here is a list of what could be included in an introduction. Mark them according to how necessary they are using the following scale:**

Essential		Useful		Not necessary
1	2	3	4	5

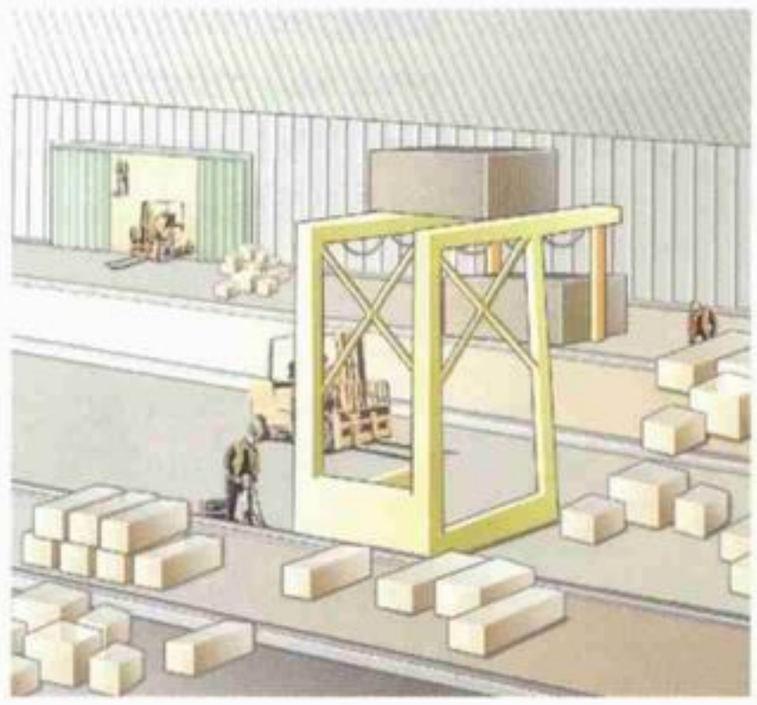
Subject / title of talk. ☐
Introduction to oneself, job title, etc. ☐
Reference to questions and /or discussion. ☐
Reference to the programme for the day. ☐
Reference to how long you are going to speak for. ☐
Reference to the visual aids you plan to use. ☐
The scope of your talk: what is and is not included. ☐
An outline of the structure of your talk. ☐
A summary of the conclusions. ☐

2 **Listen to the beginning of a presentation on the marketing plans for a new telecommunications system produced by Telco.**

a) Is it a good introduction?
b) Why? Why not?
c) Label the structure of the talk.



3 Now listen to a second example of an introduction to a presentation. This one is about plans to develop a new production plant in Taiwan.



As you listen, think about these points:

a) Is it a good introduction?
b) Why? Why not?
c) Label the structure of the talk.

Introduction

i) ii)

End/Discussion

4 Work in pairs. Each of you should suggest a possible phrase for each of the prompts below.

a) Greet your audience.
b) Introduce yourself.
c) Give the title of your talk.
d) Describe the structure of your talk.
e) Explain that the audience can interrupt if they want.
f) Say something about the length of your talk.
g) Say a colleague will be showing a video later.

Now listen to the recording of a model introduction based on suitable phrases for a–g.

Practice 1

Use the notes below to prepare a brief introduction to a talk on safety for a manufacturing company.

New safety conditions for production staff

1 *Protective clothing*
2 *Training in accident prevention*
3 *Changes to working practices*

Questions / discussion

Listen to the recording of a model answer after you have given your own version.

Practice 2

Give a one minute introduction only to a talk on any topic you like! If you cannot think of a topic, choose from the list below:

your home town	your favourite sport	tourism
your first ever job	eating out	holidays
a thing you really like	your previous job	your hobbies

Transfer

Prepare an introduction to a short talk on one of the following:

- your company and / or its products / services
- any company you know well
- an institution that you know well.

Decide who the audience is. Make notes. Look at the Skills Checklist on page 50 and remember in particular to consider the points under the heading *Audience*. Look at the Language Checklist on page 50.

Do not write the whole text. When you are ready, practise your introduction. If you can, make a recording. When you have finished, answer the following questions:

- Did you make a recording? If you did, listen to it now.
- Does the recording sound well prepared and competent?
- Did you read everything you said from detailed notes?
- Did you talk using only brief notes?
- Did you speak clearly and not too fast?
- Did you outline the topic, structure and content of your talk?
- Did you refer to audience questions and to discussion?
- How could you improve your introduction?

Language Checklist

Structure (1) The introduction to a presentation

Greeting

Good morning / afternoon ladies and gentlemen.
(Ladies and) Gentlemen …

Subject

I plan to say a few words about …
I'm going to talk about …
The subject of my talk is …
The theme of my presentation is …
I'd like to give you an overview of …

Structure

I've divided my talk into (three) parts.
My talk will be in (three) parts.
I'm going to divide …
First …
Second …
Third …
In the first part …
Then in the second part …
Finally …

Timing

My talk will take about ten minutes.
The presentation will take about two hours … but there'll be a twenty minute break in the middle. We'll stop for lunch at 12 o'clock.

Policy on questions / discussion

Please interrupt if you have any questions.
After my talk there'll be time for a discussion and any questions.

Skills Checklist

Effective presentations – planning and preparation

Audience
- expectations
- technical knowledge
- size
- questions and / or discussion

Speaker's competence
- knowledge
- presentation technique

Content
- what to include
- length / depth (technical detail)
- number of key ideas

Structure
- sequence
  - beginning, middle, end
- repetition, summarising

Delivery
- style
  - formal / informal
  - enthusiasm / confidence
- voice
  - variety / speed
  - pauses
- body language
  - eye contact
  - gesture / movement
  - posture

Visual aids
- type / design / clarity
- relevance

Practice
- tape recorder
- script or notes

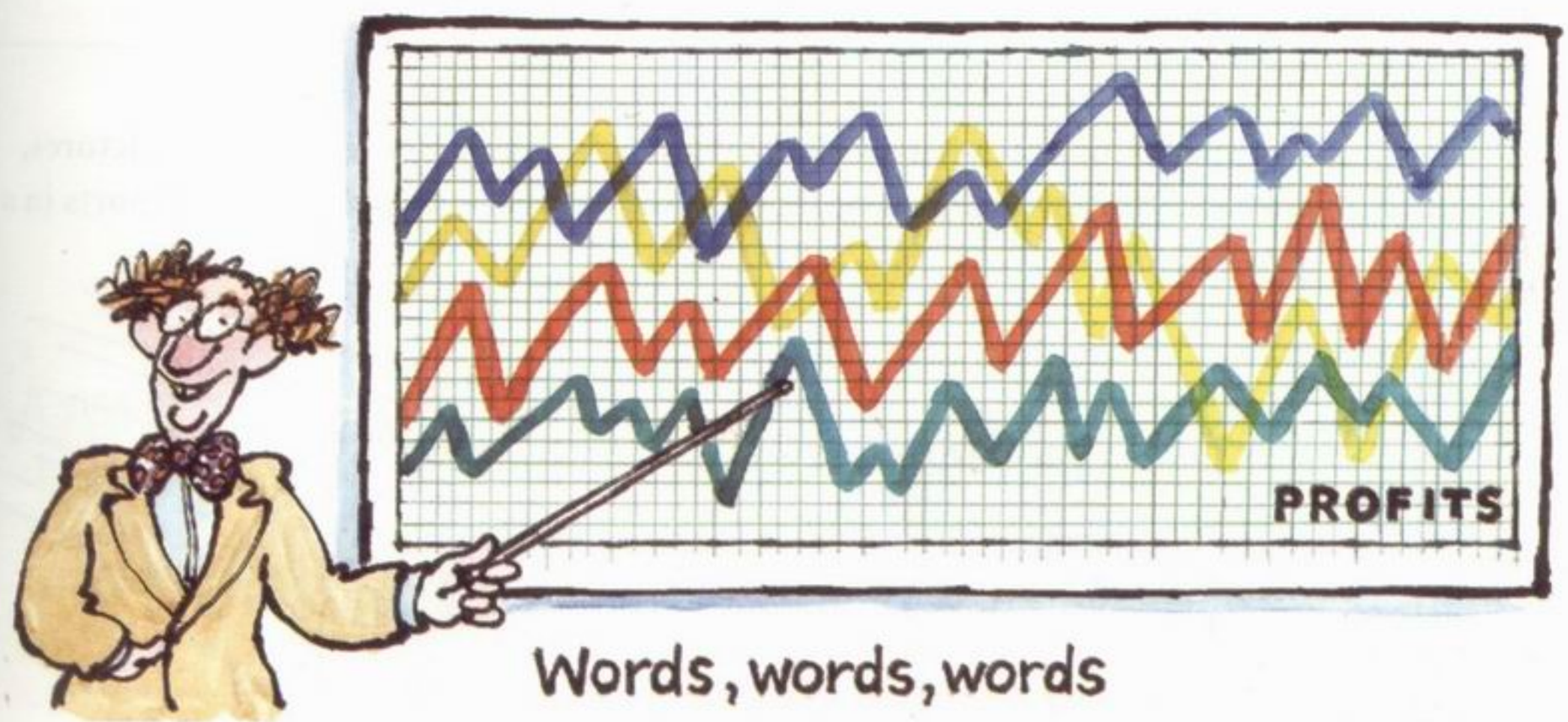
Room
- size / seating
- equipment (does it work?)
- sound quality

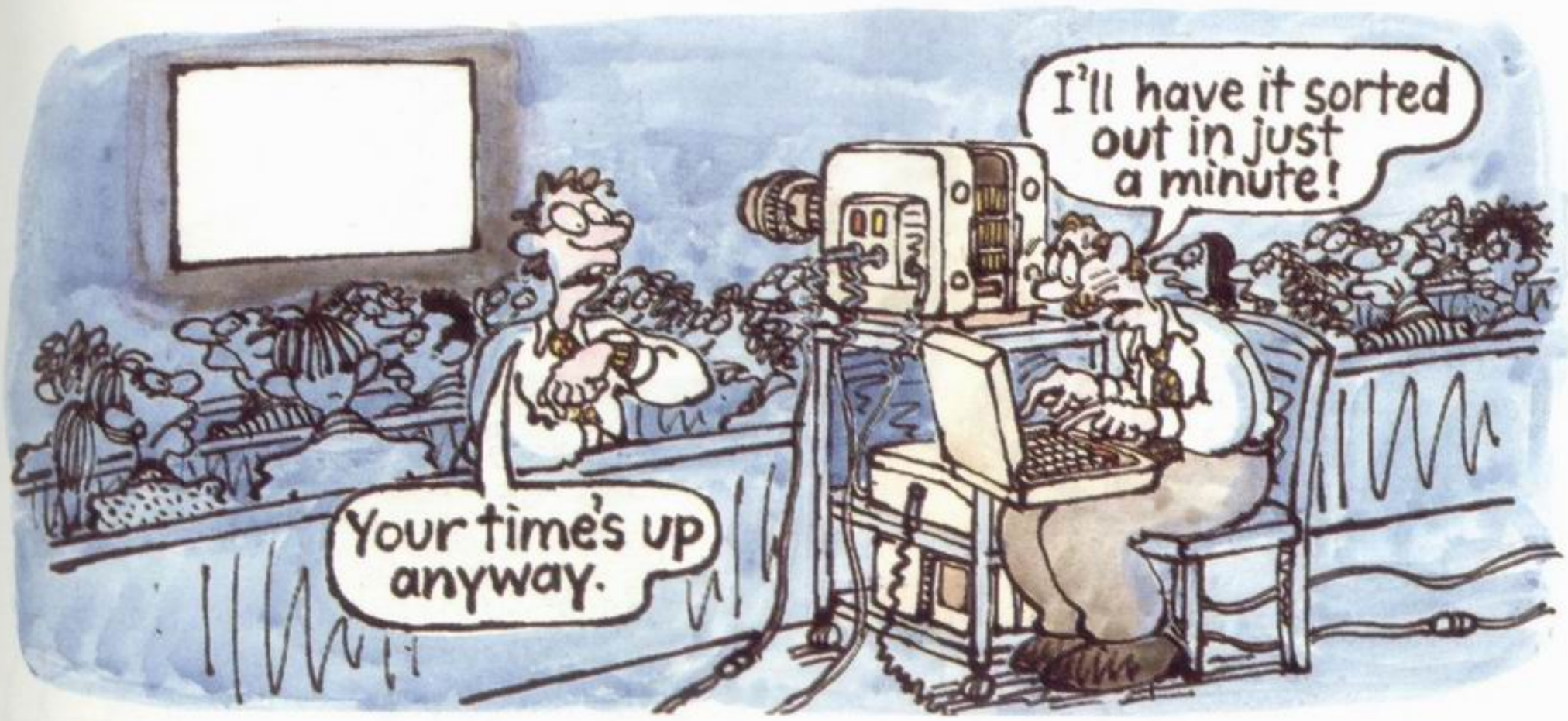
Language
- simple / clear
- spelling
- sentence length
- structure signals

7 Image, impact and making an impression

→ Using visual aids: general principles
→ Talking about the content of visual aids
→ Describing change

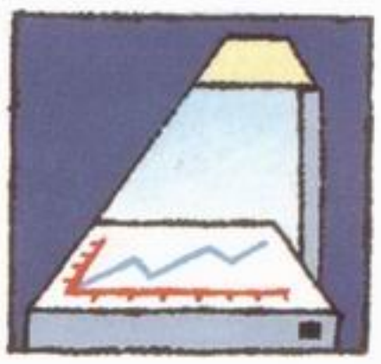
1 Using visual aids: general principles

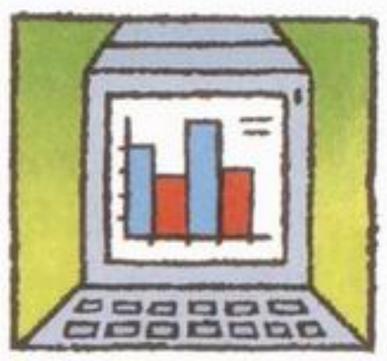


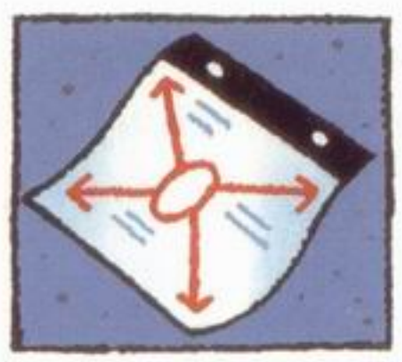


1 What points do the illustrations imply?

2 Look at the pictures below. Label the tools used to present visual information.







3 Comment on how visual information is being presented in these pictures, then produce five key recommendations for how to use visual supports in a presentation.

4 Read the text below and find:

a) eight advantages of using visual aids

b) *three warnings about using visual aids.*

Dinckel and Parnham (1985) say that 'The great danger (in using visual aids) is that presenters place the major emphasis on visual aids and relegate themselves to the minor role of narrator or technician. You are central to the presentation. The visual aid needs you, your interpretation, your explanation, your conviction and your justification.'

5 Visual aids can make information more memorable and they help the speaker. However, they must literally support what the speaker says and not simply replace the spoken information. It is also not enough to just read text from a visual aid.

There are many advantages to the correct use of visual aids. They can show information which is not easily expressed in words or they can highlight information. They cause the

10 audience to employ another sense to receive information, they bring variety and therefore increase the audience's attention. They save time and they clarify complex information.

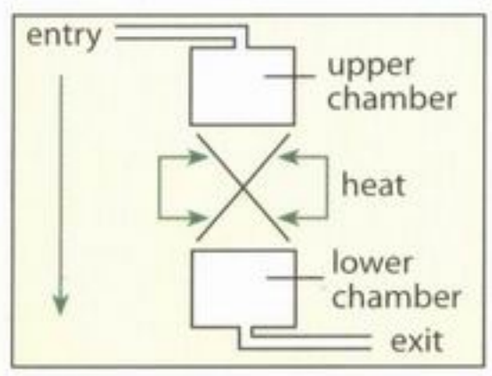
Adapted from Bernice Hurst *The Handbook of Communication Skills* (London: Kogan Page, 1991).

2 Talking about the content of visual aids

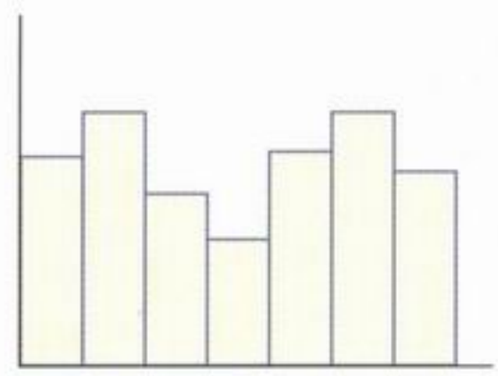
1 Label the following using words from the boxes.

pie chart map bar graph table diagram picture
line graph flow chart plan

a



b



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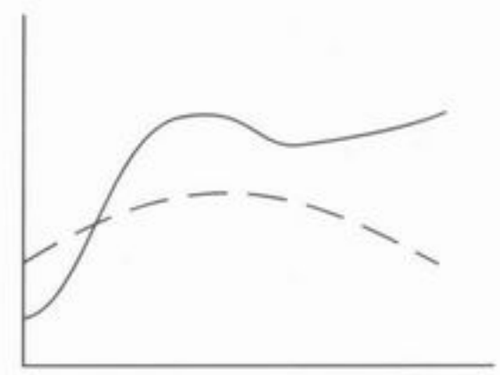

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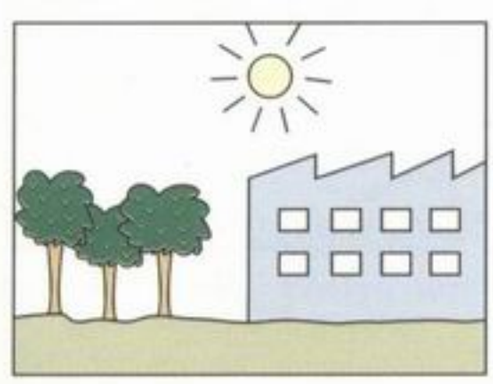

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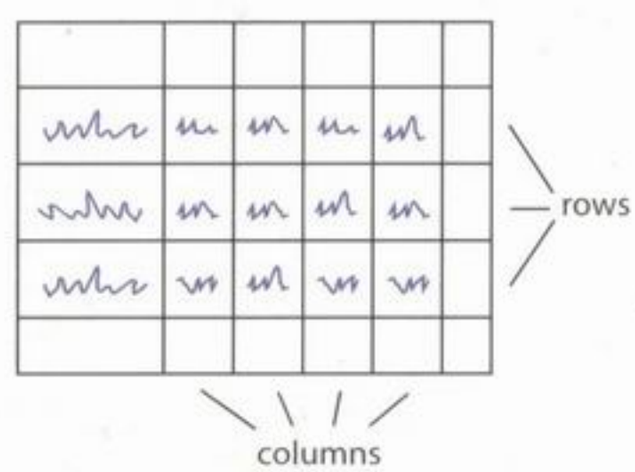

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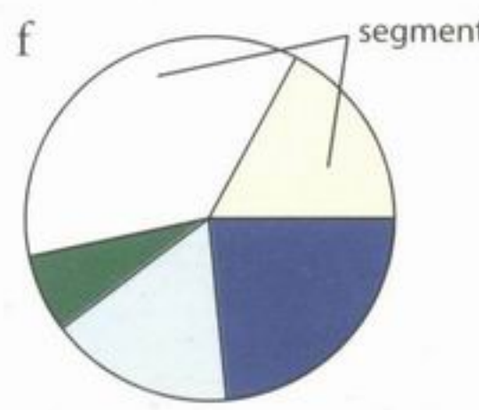
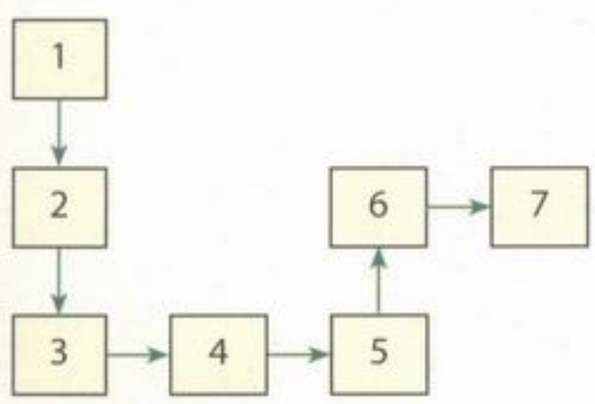
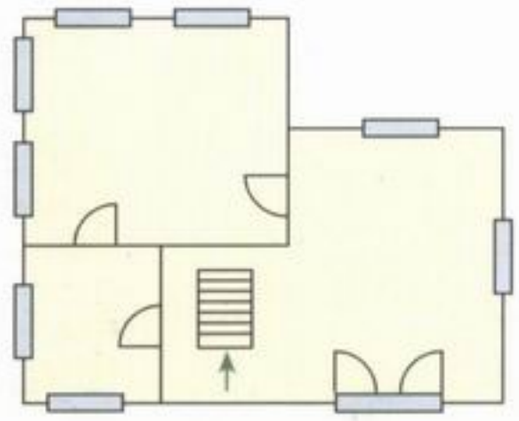


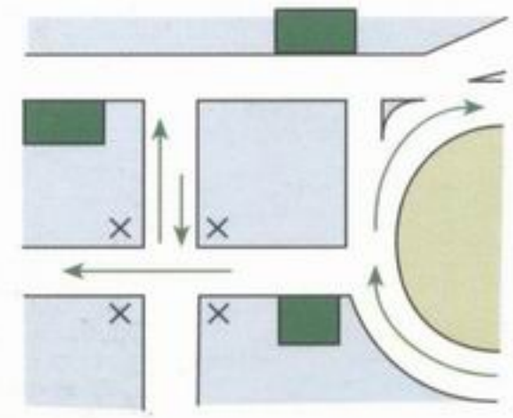
g



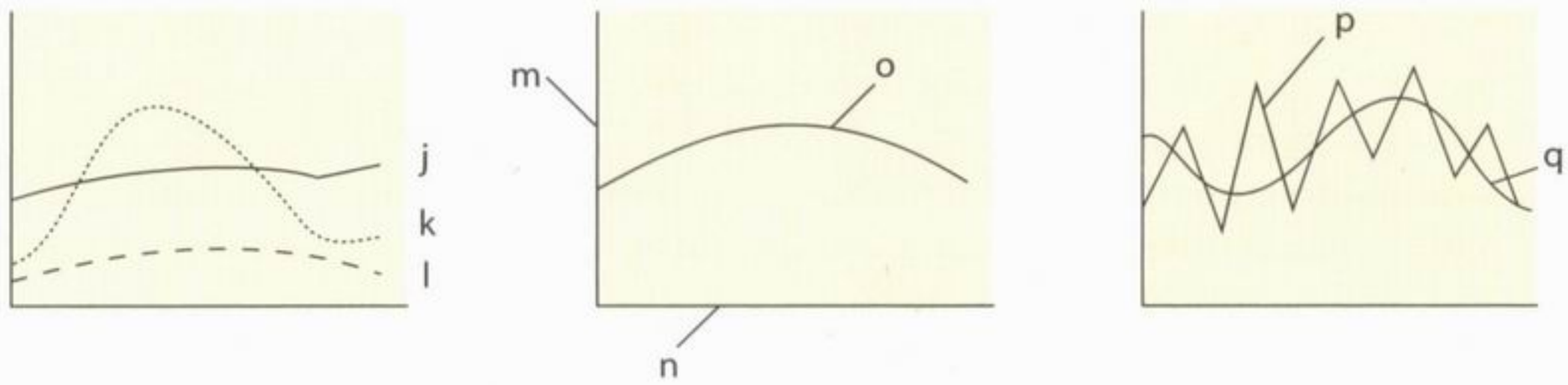
h



i



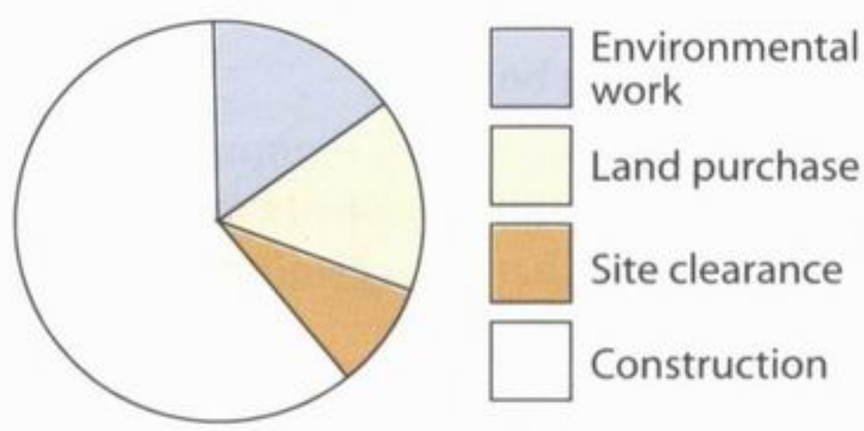
dotted line curve fluctuating line vertical axis
broken line undulating line horizontal axis solid line



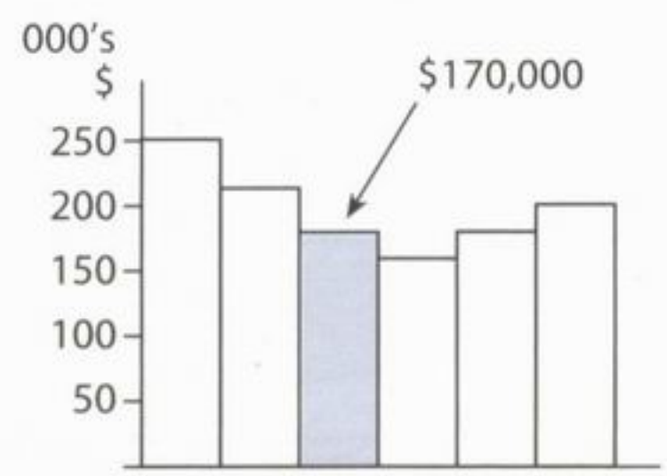
2 A project manager for FDF, a manufacturing company, makes a presentation on the reasons for choosing a particular location for a new plant. Listen to four extracts from his talk.

a) Match each extract (1–4) to the correct picture below.

a

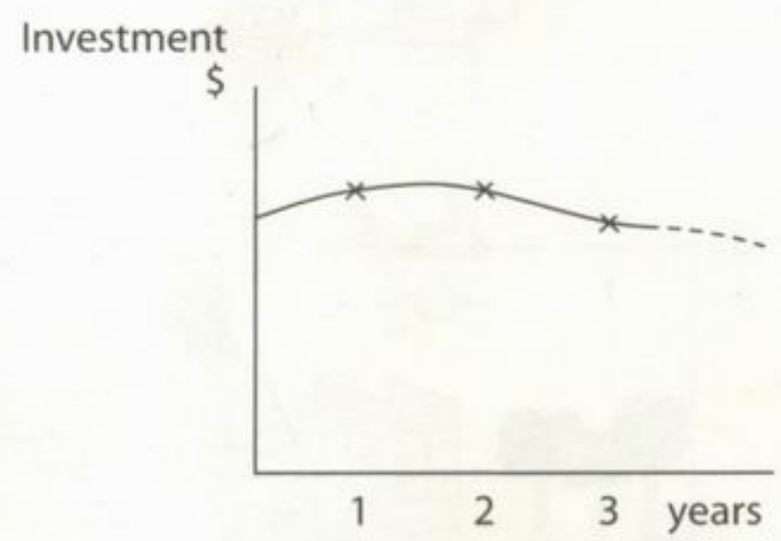


b



c

d



b) Listen again. What is the key point the speaker makes about each picture?

Extract 1: .....

Extract 2: .....

Extract 3: .....

Extract 4: .....

3 a) Suggest a typical structure for how a speaker could describe a visual aid, such as the graph below, taken from a presentation, 'World energy – going up the chimney', given at an environment conference.

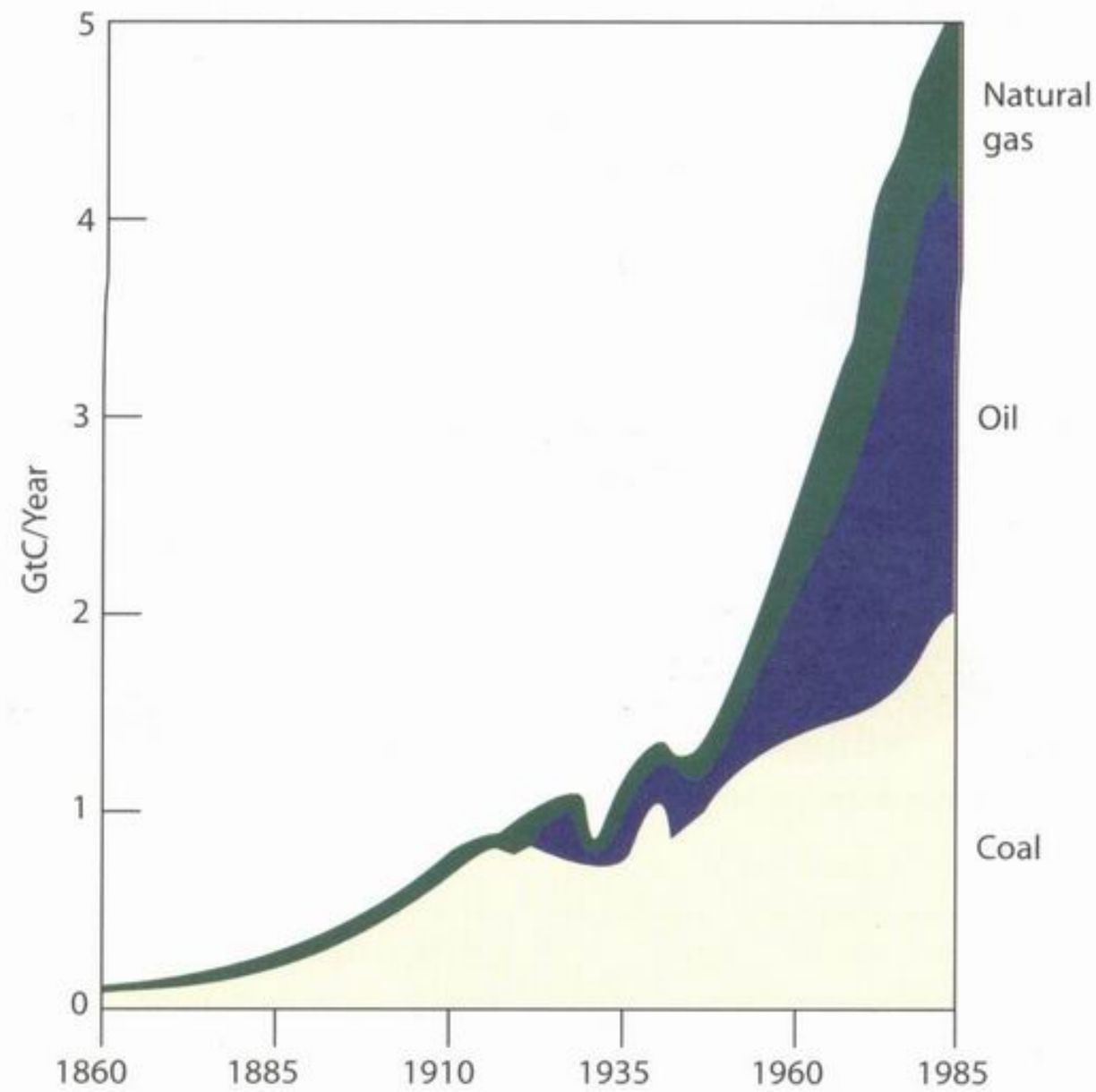


Fig. 1. Growth in fossil fuel consumption since Industrial Revolution and current world energy consumption. © Greenpeace Communications Ltd 1990. Reprinted from *Global Warming: The Greenpeace Report* edited by Jeremy Leggett (1990) by permission of Oxford University Press.

b) Now listen to the description on the tape. Compare the description with your own version. What is the speaker's main point?

c) Listen again. Complete the spaces in the following phrases.

1 Now, I'd like (a) ..... this graph. It (b) ..... the (c) ..... in fossil fuel consumption since the mid-19th century.

2 On (d) ..... you see fossil fuel consumption measured in giga tonnes of carbon, while the (e) ..... time in years. On the (f) ..... you can see the three main types of fossil fuel: coal, oil and gas.

3 What we (g) ..... here is, quite clearly, (h) ..... in fossil fuel consumption and a trend towards more oil and gas.

4 In pairs, suggest an explanation for the information below, from the same presentation.

Note: For each picture, select two or three main points for special emphasis in your explanation.

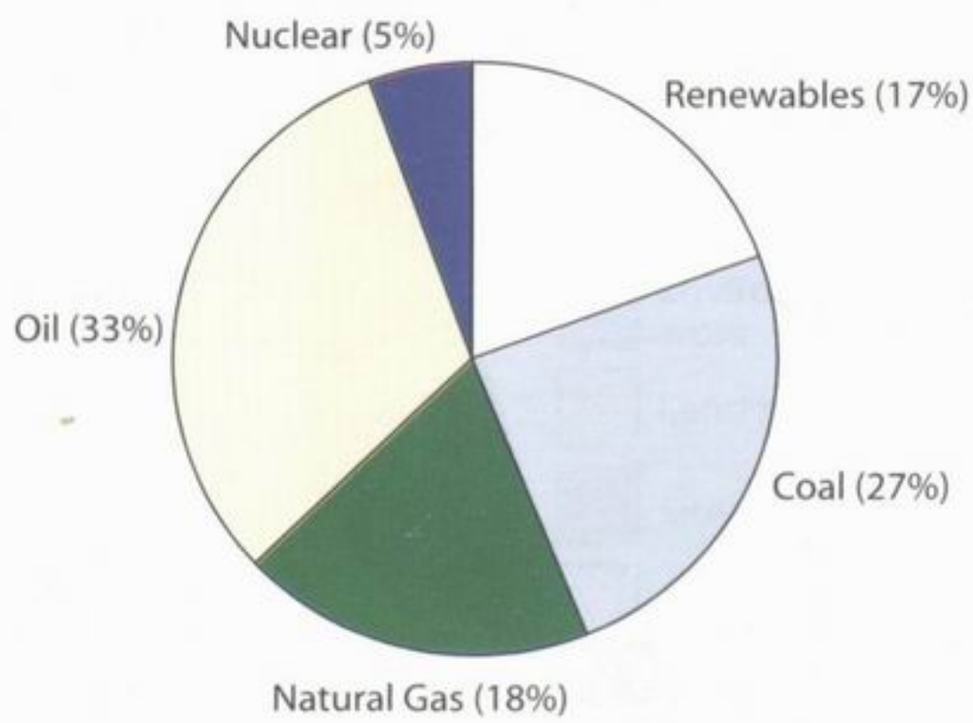


Fig. 2. Relative consumption of fossil fuels (1990). © Greenpeace Communications Ltd 1990. Reprinted from *Global Warming: The Greenpeace Report* edited by Jeremy Leggett (1990) by permission of Oxford University Press.

	Million tonnes CO_2		
	1980	1986	1989
United Kingdom	528.7	525.9	530.1
Belgium	120.0	95.4	99.1
France	459.2	353.2	360.6
Germany	767.5	675.3	647.9
Italy	355.6	343.2	386.1
Spain	196.2	176.1	194.9
European Community	2,747.1	2,492.0	2,562.9

Fig. 3. Carbon dioxide emissions: major EU countries

Source: *Social Trends 1992.* Crown Copyright 1992. Reproduced by permission of the Controller of HMSO and of the Office for National Statistics.

Now listen to a recording of a model presentation.

Practice 1

Imagine using the graph below in a presentation about air quality. Suggest how you would describe it. Use the prompts at a–d.

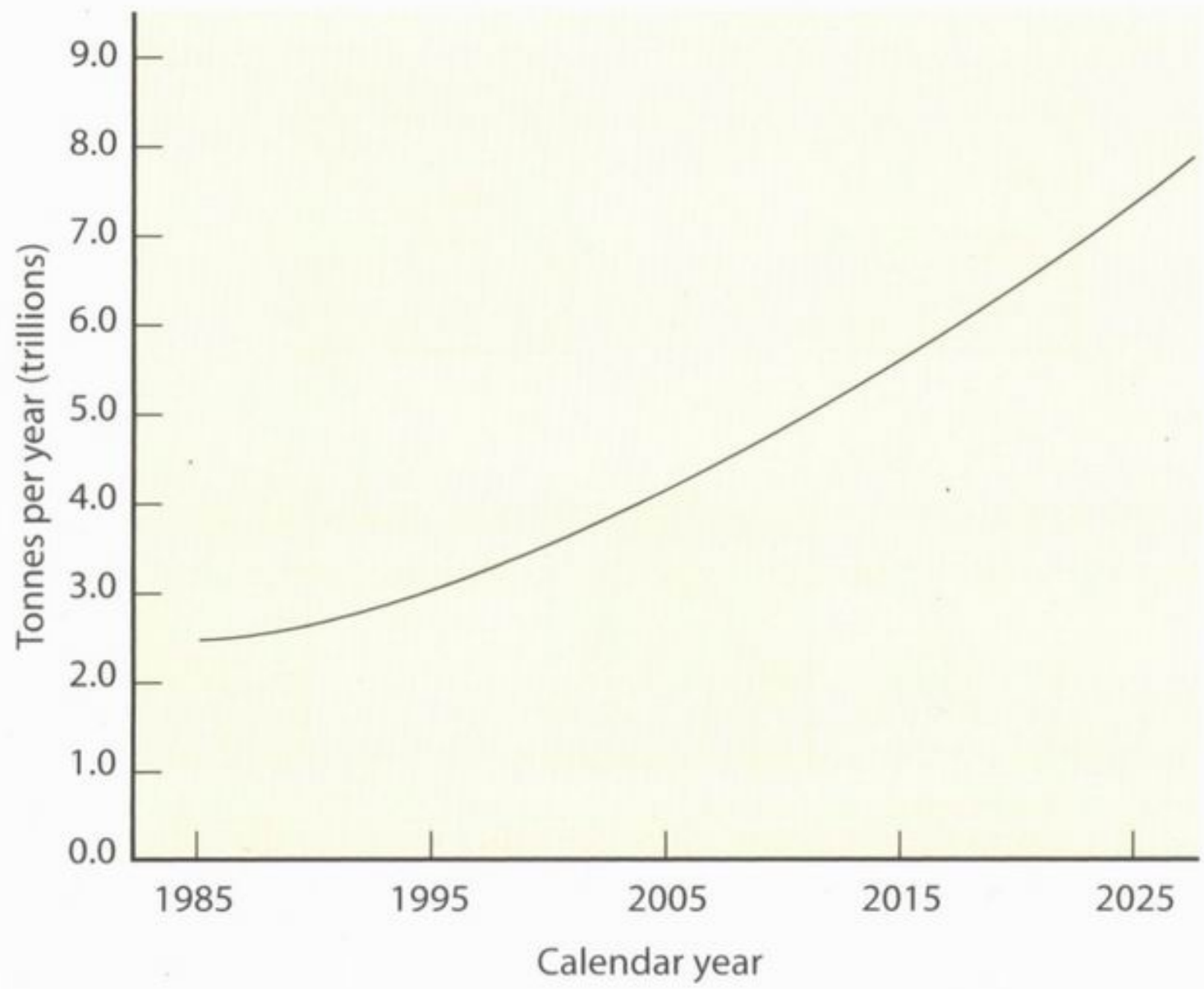


Fig. 4. Global vehicle CO_2 emissions assuming no improvements in vehicle efficiency.
© Greenpeace Communications Ltd 1990. Reprinted from *Global Warming: The Greenpeace Report* edited by Jeremy Leggett (1990) by permission of Oxford University Press.

a) 'Now .....'

b) 'It shows .....'

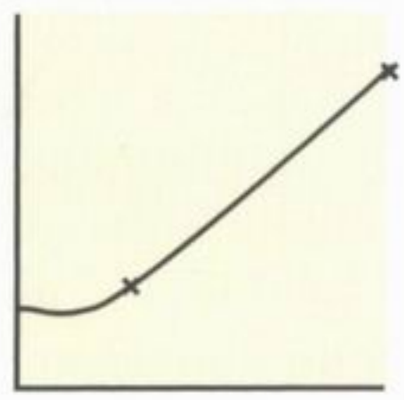
c) 'The vertical ..... while .....'

d) 'Clearly, we can see that .....'

3 Describing change

1 The vocabulary in this section is used to describe movement or trends. This task checks your knowledge of several key words and phrases used to describe movement. For example:

a



increased rapidly

b

went up a bit

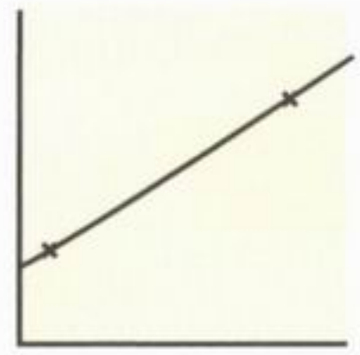
Match the following pictures with the correct phrase:

climbed slightly increased steadily dropped markedly
declined a little rose dramatically

c

d

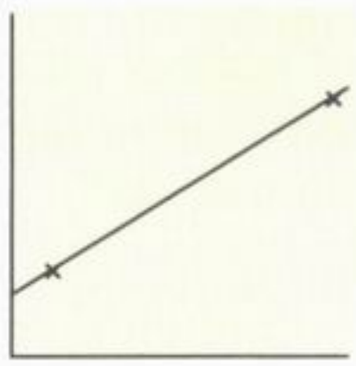
e



f

g

2 Look at the diagrams and write other words to describe what each one shows. Try to find the noun form for each verb, for example *to increase / an increase.*



a) to increase an increase

to ....

to ....

to ....

to ....

to ....

b) to decrease a decrease

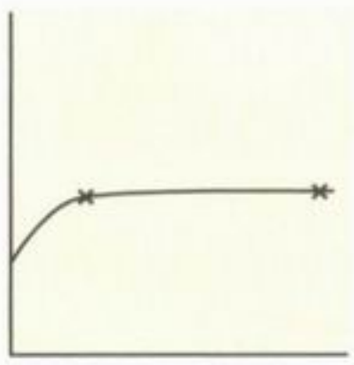
to ....

to ....

to ....

to ....

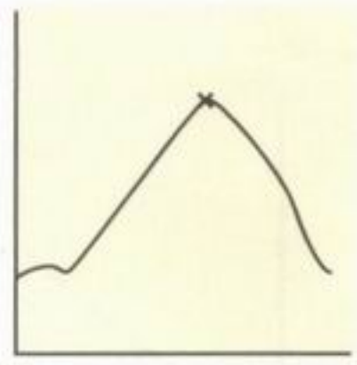
to ....



c) to stay the same

to .....

to .....



d) to reach a maximum

to .....

to .....

e) to recover a recovery

to ....

to ....

f) to deteriorate a deterioration

to ....

to ....

Role play

Work in pairs, A and B. Student A should look at File card 12A and Student B should look at File card 12B. Look at the Language Checklist if you need to.

Practice 2

Draw a line graph for use in a presentation. Choose any situation or subject, real or imagined. If possible draw the picture on an overhead transparency. Then present the graph as you would in a presentation. Your description should last no more than a minute.

If possible, construct a graph that makes comparisons possible. Use solid, dotted or broken lines (or colours) to make the picture clear.

Transfer

Think of your professional or study situation. Prepare any pictures or visuals for use in a presentation. Prepare a description for each one.

Record your description without reading directly from your notes, though you may of course look at the pictures.

If you can, video record your presentation of the pictures. Treat the video camera as 'one of the audience'.

Later, if you video recorded your presentation, watch it first with the sound off. Consider the following:

- the appearance and design of the visual
- your body position in relation to 'the audience'
- any gestures, use of hands, etc.
- your maintaining eye contact.

Now either watch your video recording with the sound on or listen to the audio recording. Consider the following:

- the clarity of your message
- the appropriacy of the words you used
- highlighting of the main facts
- the amount of detail – not too much.

Language Checklist
Using visuals

Types of visual support
visual (n.)
film / video
picture
diagram
chart
pie chart
– segment
table graph
– x axis / horizontal axis
– y axis / vertical axis
– left hand / right hand axis
line graph
– solid line
– dotted line
– broken line

Equipment
(slide) projector
– slides (Br. Eng.)
– diapositives (Am. Eng.)
overhead projector (OHP)
– transparency (Br. Eng.)
– slide (Am. Eng.)
flip chart
whiteboard
metaplan board

Introducing a visual
I'd like to show you …
Have a look at this …
This (graph) shows / represents …
Here we can see …
Let's look at this …
Here you see the trend in …

Comparisons
This compares *x* with *y*
Let's compare the …
Here you see a comparison between …

Describing trends

to go up to increase to rise to climb to improve	 an increase a rise a climb an improvement	to go down to decrease to fall to decline to deteriorate	 a decrease a fall a decline a deterioration
to recover to get better	a recovery an upturn	to get worse	a downturn
to level out to stabilise to stay the same	a levelling out		
to reach a peak to reach a maximum to peak	a peak	to reach a low point to hit bottom	 a trough
to undulate to fluctuate	an undulation a fluctuation		

Describing the speed of change

a dramatic a marked a significant a slight	increase / fall	to increase / fall	dramatically markedly slightly significantly

Skills Checklist

Using visual supports

Visuals must be:

- well prepared
- well chosen
- clear

Available media

Use media which suit the room and audience size.

- overhead projector (OHP)
  – transparencies / OHTs / slides (Am. Eng.)
- slide projector
  – slides / diapositives (Am. Eng.)
- video / computer graphics / flip chart / whiteboard

Use of visual aids

Combination of OHP and flip chart with pens often good.

First visual should give the title of talk.

Second should show structure of talk – main headings.

Keep text to minimum – never just read text from visuals.

Do not use too many visuals – guide is one per minute.

Use pauses – give audience time to comprehend picture.

Never show a visual until you want to talk about it.

Remove visual once finished talking about it.

Switch off equipment not in use.

Use of colour

For slides, white writing on blue / green is good. Use different colours if colour improves clarity of message (e.g. pie charts).

Use appropriate colour combinations: yellow and pink are weak colours on white backgrounds.

Use of room and machinery

Check equipment in advance.

Check organisation of room, equipment, seating, microphones, etc.

Use a pointer on the screen (not your hand).

Have a good supply of pens.

Check order of your slides / OHTs, etc.

You in relation to your audience

Decide appropriate level of formality, dress accordingly.

Keep eye contact at least 80% of the time.

Use available space.

Move around, unless restricted by a podium.

Use gesture.

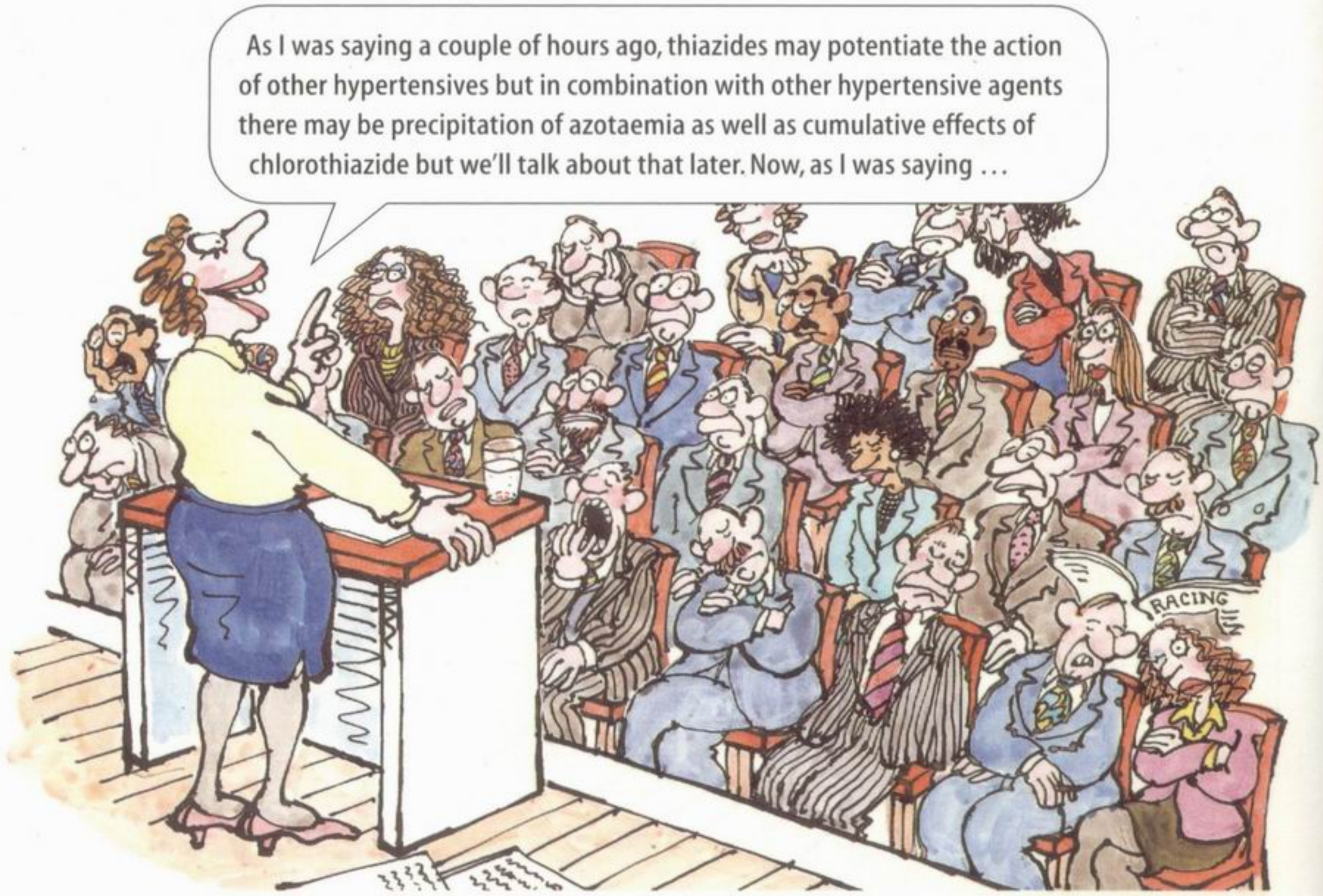
8 The middle of the presentation

→ Holding the audience's attention
→ Structure (2) The main body
→ Listing information
→ Linking ideas
→ Sequencing

1 Holding the audience's attention

'First you say what you're going to say. Then you say it. Then you tell them what you've said.'

'All acts of communication have a beginning, a middle and an end.'



1 What are the problems with the presentation above? Suggest ways that you think a good speaker *can* hold the audience's attention.

2 Read the following passage and identify at least *six* recommendations about speaking technique which can help to make the message in a presentation clear.

You're lost if you lose your audience

Clear objectives, clear plan, clear signals: the secrets of presentation success

Any presentation requires a clear strategy or plan to help you reach your objectives. The aim is not to pass away twenty minutes talking non-stop and showing a lot of nice pictures. It is to convey a message that is worth hearing to an audience who want to hear it. However, how many speakers really hold an audience's attention? What is the secret for those who do? First, find out about the audience and what they need to know. Plan what you're going to say and say it clearly and concisely.

A good speaker uses various signals to help hold the audience's attention and make the information clear. One type of signal is to introduce a list with a phrase like *There are three things we have to consider.* The speaker then says what the three things are and talks about each one at the required level of detail. For example: *There are three types of price that we have to think about: economic price, market price and psychological price. Let's look at each of these in more detail. First, economic price. This is based on production costs and the need to make a profit* ... and the speaker goes on to describe this type of price. After that, he goes on to talk about the market price and so on.

Another signalling technique is to give a link between parts of the presentation. Say where one part of the talk finishes and another starts. For example, a well organised presentation usually contains different parts and progression from one part to the next must be clear, with phrases like *That's all I want to say about the development of the product. Now let's turn to the actual marketing plan.* This technique is very helpful to the audience, including those who are mainly interested in one part only.

Another type of signalling is sequencing of information. This usually follows a logical order, perhaps based on time. So a project may be described in terms of the background, the present situation and the future. Key words in sequencing information are *first, then, next, after that, later, at the end, finally,* etc.

Still another technique which helps to emphasise key points is careful repetition. Examples are *As I've already said, there is no alternative but to increase production by 100 per cent* or *I'd like to emphasise the main benefit of the new design – it achieves twice as much power with half as much fuel.*

A final point concerns timing and quantity of information. Psychologists have suggested that concentration is reduced after about twenty minutes without a break or a change in activity. Furthermore, audiences should not be overburdened with technical details or given too many facts to remember. It is claimed that to ask people to remember more than three things in a five minute talk is too much. Some say that seven is the maximum number of any length of presentation. Any such calculations are probably not very reliable, but every speaker needs to think about exactly how much information of a particular type a specific audience is likely to absorb and to plan accordingly.

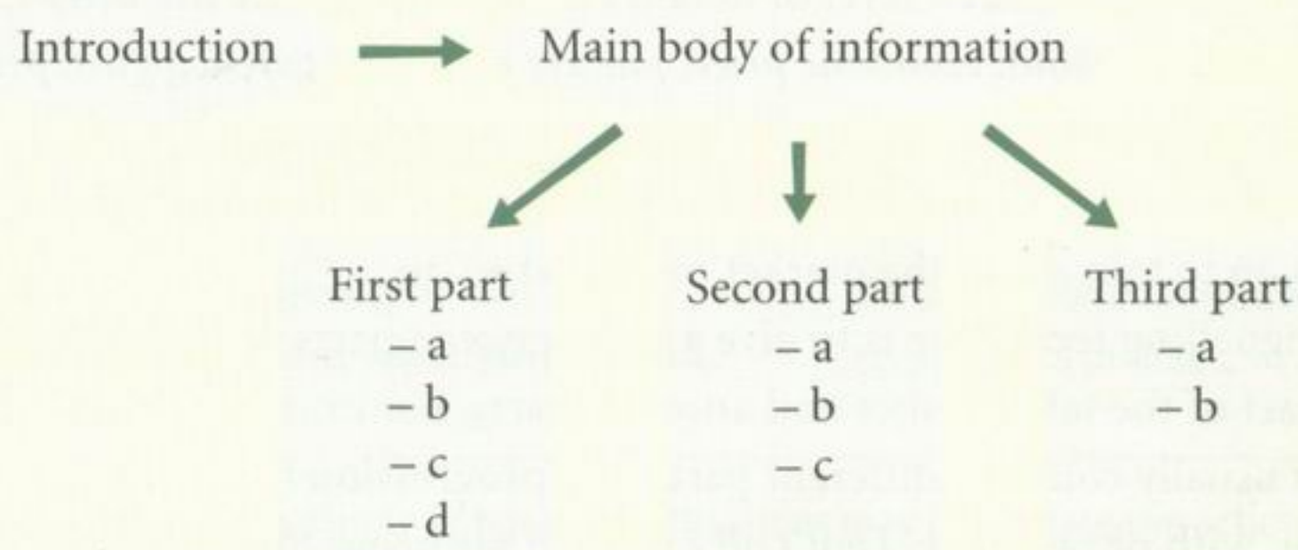
2 Structure (2) The main body

1 Read the following text and identify the following:

a) the relationship between the main body of the presentation and the introduction

b) a recommendation on one way to divide the main body of a talk.

The main body of the presentation contains the details of the subject or themes described in the introduction. All the above techniques are especially useful in making the main body easily understood. They help the audience to follow the information and to remember it. They also help the speaker to keep to the planned structure and to know exactly what stage has been reached at all times during the presentation. Clear structure doesn't just help the audience! In many presentations the main body can be usefully divided into different parts. The main parts, each with a main heading, are referred to in the Introduction (see Unit 6). Clearly there are many ways to divide the main body of a presentation and often different parts will themselves be divided into smaller sections of information:



3 Listing information

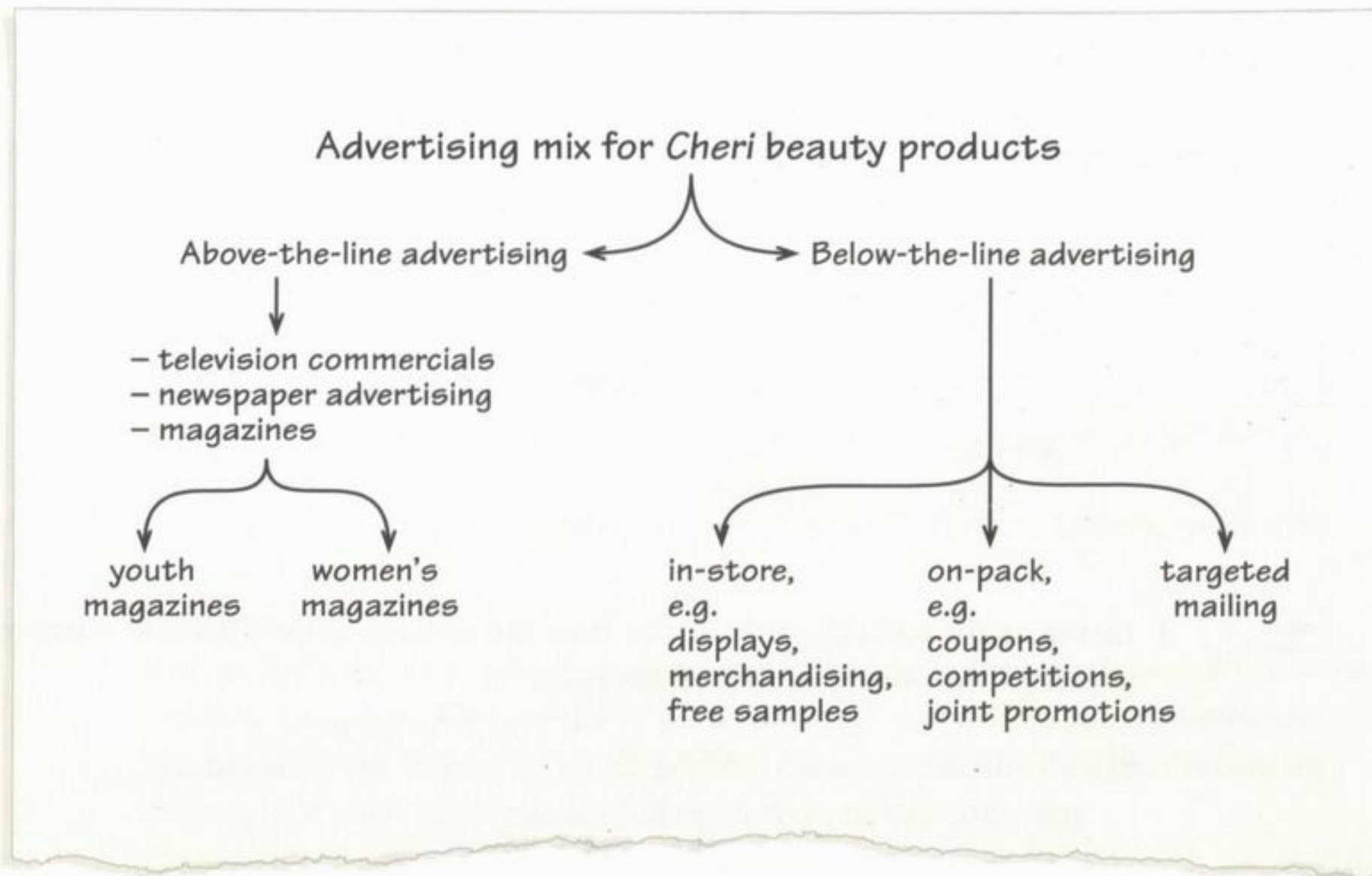
1 Listen to two presentations of the same information about climatic change. Which is easiest to understand: Example 1 or 2? Why?

2 Now read the transcript of one of the two examples. Underline the words and phrases which list key information and give signals to the audience.

'… climatic changes in the Northern hemisphere may have been the result of three types of effect on the environment: first, volcanic activity, second, industrial pollution, and thirdly, transport. Let's look at these in more detail. First, volcanic eruptions. The 1991 eruption may have contributed to ozone damage causing the unusually high world temperatures in 1992. The second key area is industrial contamination. Industry puts important quantities of noxious gases and chemicals into the atmosphere. There are four important gases released by burning fossil fuels. These are CO_2, SO_2, CO and NO_2. They contribute to the so-called 'greenhouse' effect and global warming. The second main area of industrial pollution of the atmosphere is the release of ozone damaging chemicals like chlorofluorocarbons and polychlorobiphenols. These are used in refrigeration, some manufacturing processes and in fire extinguishers. Finally, the third source of damage to the environment is transport. Car and plane engines are a problem because they release the so-called 'greenhouse' gases such as CO_2.'

Practice 1

The information below is part of a Product Manager's notes for a presentation on an advertising mix for a new range of beauty products, with the brand name *Cheri*. He is talking to a marketing team set up to promote the new range. Use the notes to give a short summary of the information using listing techniques.



Begin as follows:

'Good morning, everyone. I'd like to talk about the advertising mix for the new *Cheri* range of beauty products. We are planning two categories of advertising, above-the-line and below-the-line. I'll talk first about … '

Vocabulary

Merchandising: Any direct efforts to encourage sales of a product, increase consumer awareness, etc.

Above-the-line advertising: Mass media advertising, such as television, radio and newspaper.

Below-the-line advertising: Forms of advertising at the point of sale or directly on the product, such as packaging, shop displays, etc.

Now listen to a recording of a model presentation.

4 Linking ideas

1 Listen to the recording of part of the main body of a presentation on Energy Resources in Latin America and complete the notes below.

Topic: Energy resources in Venezuela, Argentina and Peru.

Venezuela → .....

Argentina → ..... power and .....

Peru → ..... but .....

WHY?

..... and ..... factors

and .....

2 Listen again and this time notice how the speaker links different parts of the presentation. Write in the missing words.

a)

new topic

Let's ..... **Argentina**, which .....
Venezuela in that it hasn't enjoyed such …

old topic

b)

old topic

That's ..... **Argentina**.

Now ..... **Peru**. For many …

new topic

c)

old topic

Now, ... **Peru**. I now want .....
other opportunities in Latin America (*fade*).

new topic

3 Suggest other language that can be used to make links between different parts of a presentation.

Practice 2

Choose one of the situations on page 67 to present a short extract from a presentation. Use linking expressions to connect the different parts of the talk.

Situation 1

You are a Project Manager of Sasi, a Dutch electronic components manufacturer. You have to give a presentation to colleagues explaining the company's decision to build a factory in Indonesia.

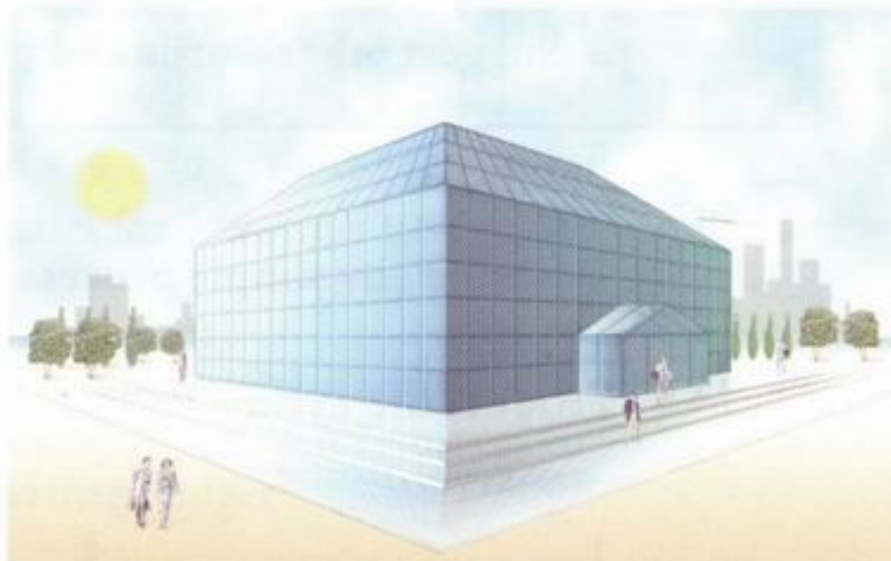
Important factors
influencing the decision are:

a) local employment conditions: well-trained workforce, skilled in oil industry, experienced in chemical engineering
b) local economic factors and market potential: strong growth in Indonesian economy, wealth of Java, good location, access to Southeast Asia market
c) economically strong area
d) available subsidies, tax concessions: government wants inward investment.

Situation 2

You are a design consultant working for Land Inc., a New York-based financial services company. The company plans to build new offices for its European headquarters in Brussels. There are three tenders for the design. Present an overview of each tender to senior executives of the company.

a) **Fox Lee Associates**: British
- $4.0m
- conventional air conditioning and heating system
- Neo-classical design



b) **Shikishima**: Japanese
- $5.8m
- ultra-modern
- solar energy-based heating and air-conditioning

c) **Harald Khaan Group**: Dutch
- $6.0m
- 20% more office space
- low-running costs, conventional heating
- modern design
- exceptional energy conservation

5 Sequencing

1 Listen to part of a presentation about a construction project in Seoul, South Korea. Number the stages in the project in the right order.

Put out tenders for construction. ☐
Technical consultation to determine design needs. ☐
Purchasing procedure. [2]
Building. ☐
Put out a call for tenders to architects. ☐
Select the best proposal. ☐
Commission research to find best location for plant. [1]
Period of consultation with architects over details. ☐

2 Listen again, this time focusing on the language used to indicate the sequence of events. Identify seven words or phrases that are used in this way.

a) F i r s t o f a l l

b) N _ _ _

c) W _

d) The _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ be

e) T _ _ _

f) H _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

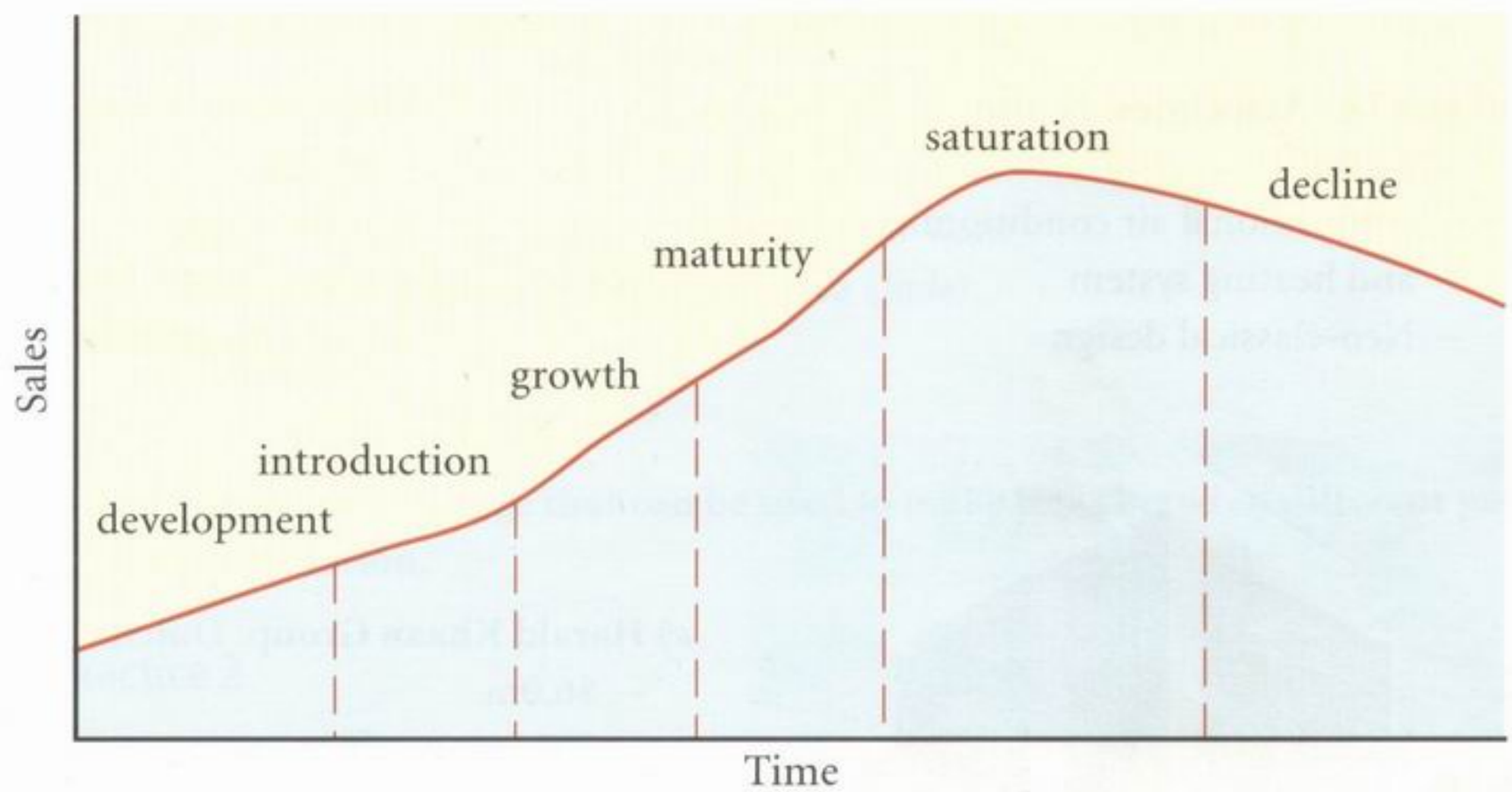
g) The _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ to

3 Suggest other words and phrases that indicate the sequence of events.

Practice 3

Describe any simple process or the diagram below using sequencing language.

Product life cycle



Now listen to a recording of a model description.

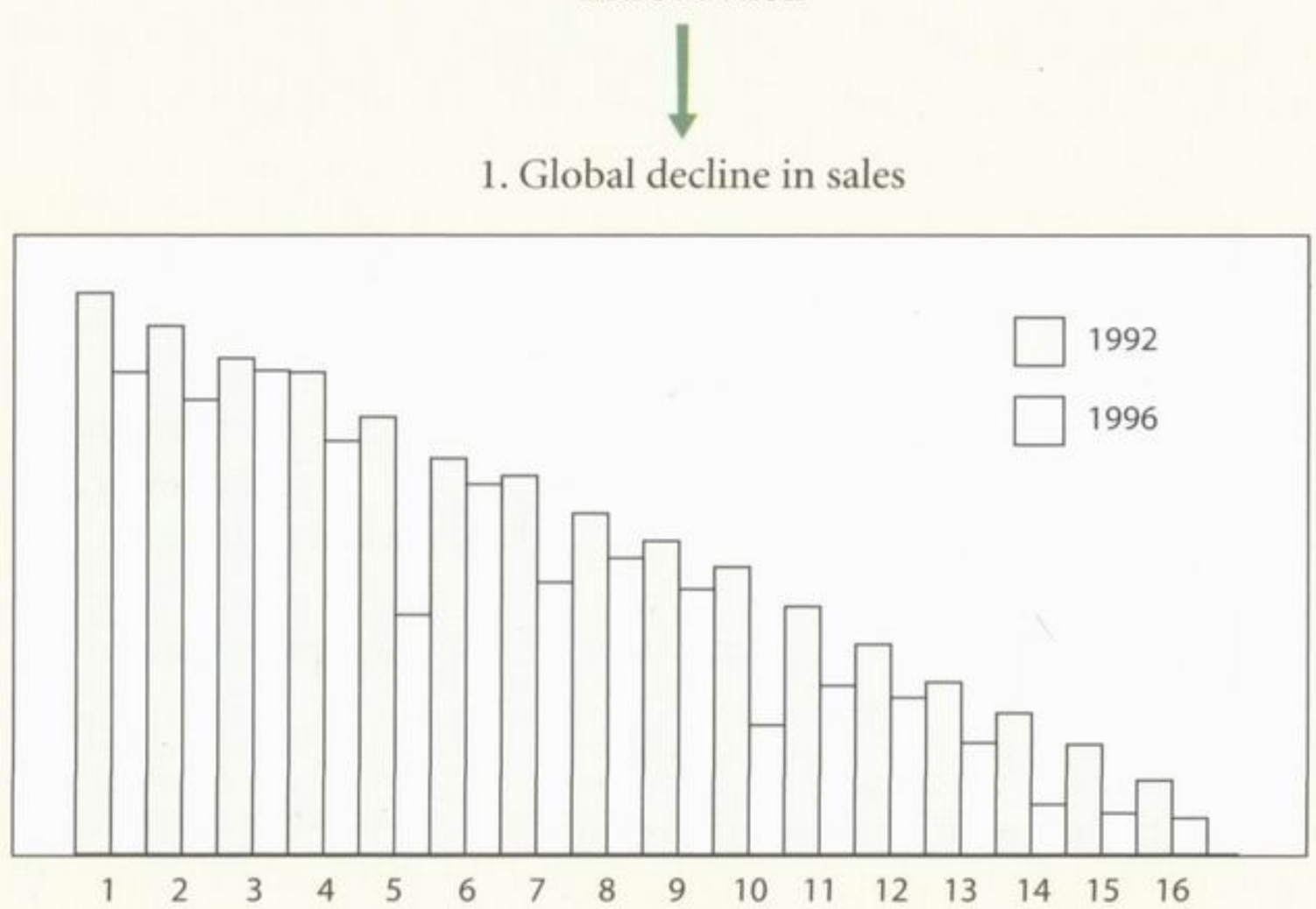
Practice 4

Use the information below to give a presentation of about seven minutes. Use listing, linking and sequencing where necessary.

You have been asked by GUBU Inc., a Boston-based toy manufacturer, to advise them on a business plan to reverse falling sales. Make a presentation to GUBU executives. Tell them your recommendations.

Sales of GUBU toys

Introduction



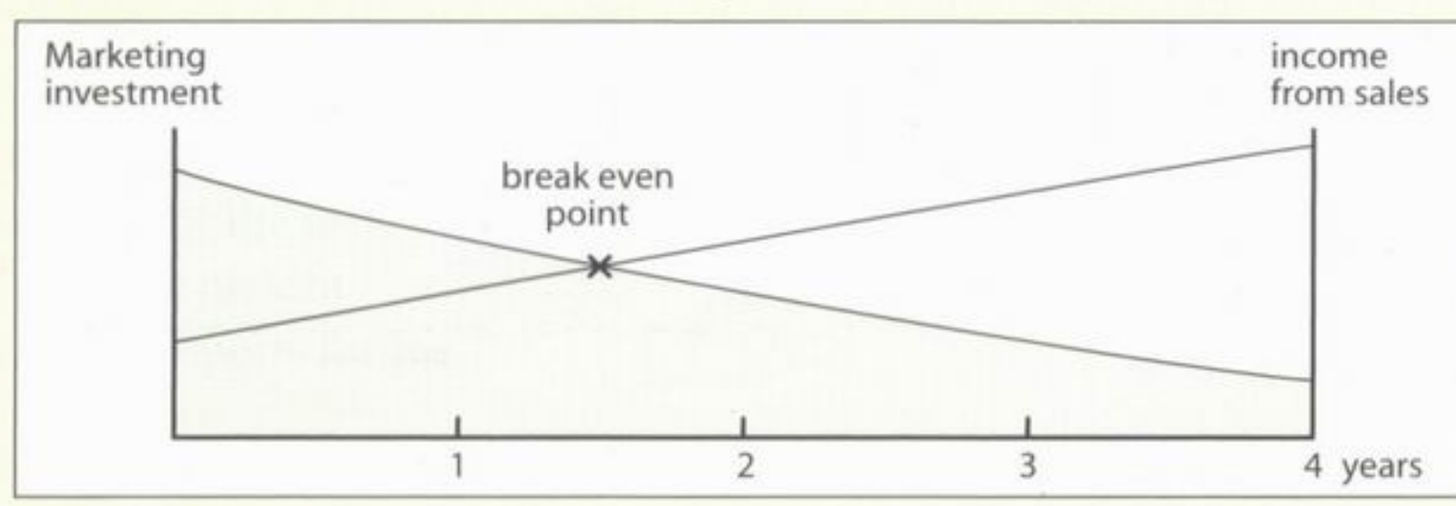
1. Global decline in sales

Comparison between combined sales for 1992 and 1996 for 16 products.

2. Reasons for decline in sales
   - poor investment in new products
   - old products losing appeal, not fashionable
   - declining marketing budget

3. Proposed action to reverse trend
   - drop half of existing product range
   - new product investment
   - new marketing strategy with heavy marketing investment

4. Prospects



Transfer

Prepare an informal presentation on a topic of your own choice.

- It does not have to concern your work or studies but should be a topic which interests you.
- Think about having a clear introduction (see Unit 6) and a clear structure.
- Include visual aids (see Unit 7) if you like.

Give the presentation to your teacher and / or colleagues.

Language Checklist
Structure (2) The main body

Signalling different parts in a presentation:

Ending the introduction

So that concludes the introduction.
That's all for the introduction.

Beginning the main body

Now let's move to the first part of my talk, which is about …
So, first … To begin with …

Listing

There are three things to consider. First … Second … Third …
There are two kinds of … . The first is … The second is …
We can see four advantages and two disadvantages. First, advantages.
One is … Another is … A third advantage is … Finally …
On the other hand, the two disadvantages. First … Second …

Linking: Ending parts within the main body

That completes / concludes …
That's all (I want to say for now) on …

Linking: Beginning a new part

Let's move to (the next part which is) …
So now we come to …
Now I want to describe …

Sequencing

There are (seven) different stages to the process
First / then / next / after that / then (*x*) / after *x* there's *y*, last …
There are two steps involved.
The first step is … . The second step is …
There are four stages to the project.
At the beginning, later, then, finally …
I'll describe the development of the idea.
First the background, then the present situation, and then the prospects for the future.

Skills Checklist
Structure (2) The main body

Organisation of presentation

- Logical progression of ideas and/or parts of presentation.
- Clear development.
- Sequential description of processes.
- Chronological order of events, i.e. background → present → future.

Topic

Main parts	Sections	Subsections
A	i	a.
		b.
	ii.	
B	i.	a.
		b.
	ii.	
	iii.	a.
		b.
		c.
C	i.	a.
		b.
	ii.	

Internal structure of the main body of a complex presentation

Signalling the structure

- Use listing techniques.
- Link different parts.
- Use sequencing language.

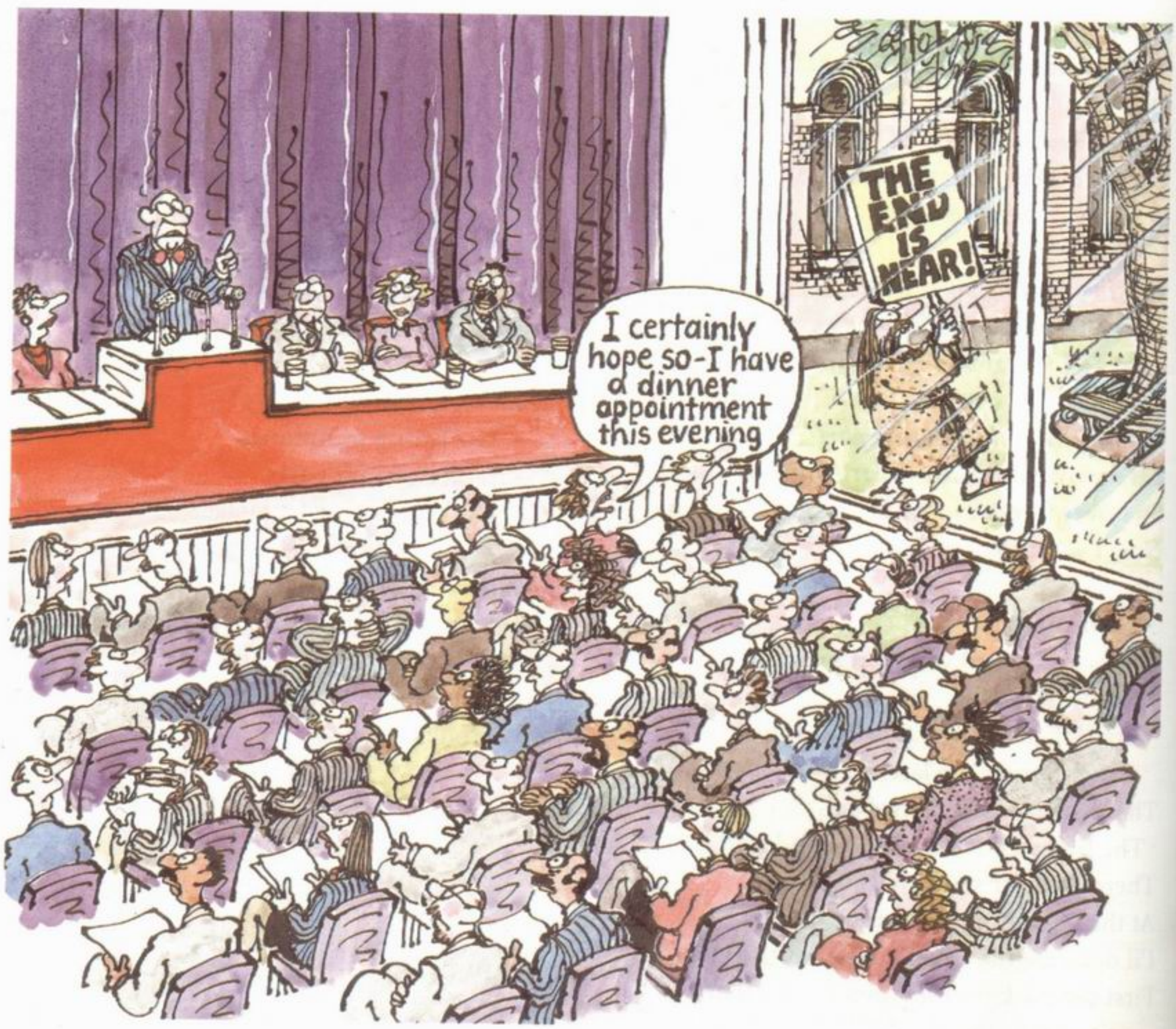
Signalling the structure …

– makes the organisation of the talk clear
– helps the audience to follow
– helps *you* to follow the development of your talk.

9 The end is near . . . this is the end

→ Structure (3) The end
→ Summarising and concluding
→ Questions and discussion

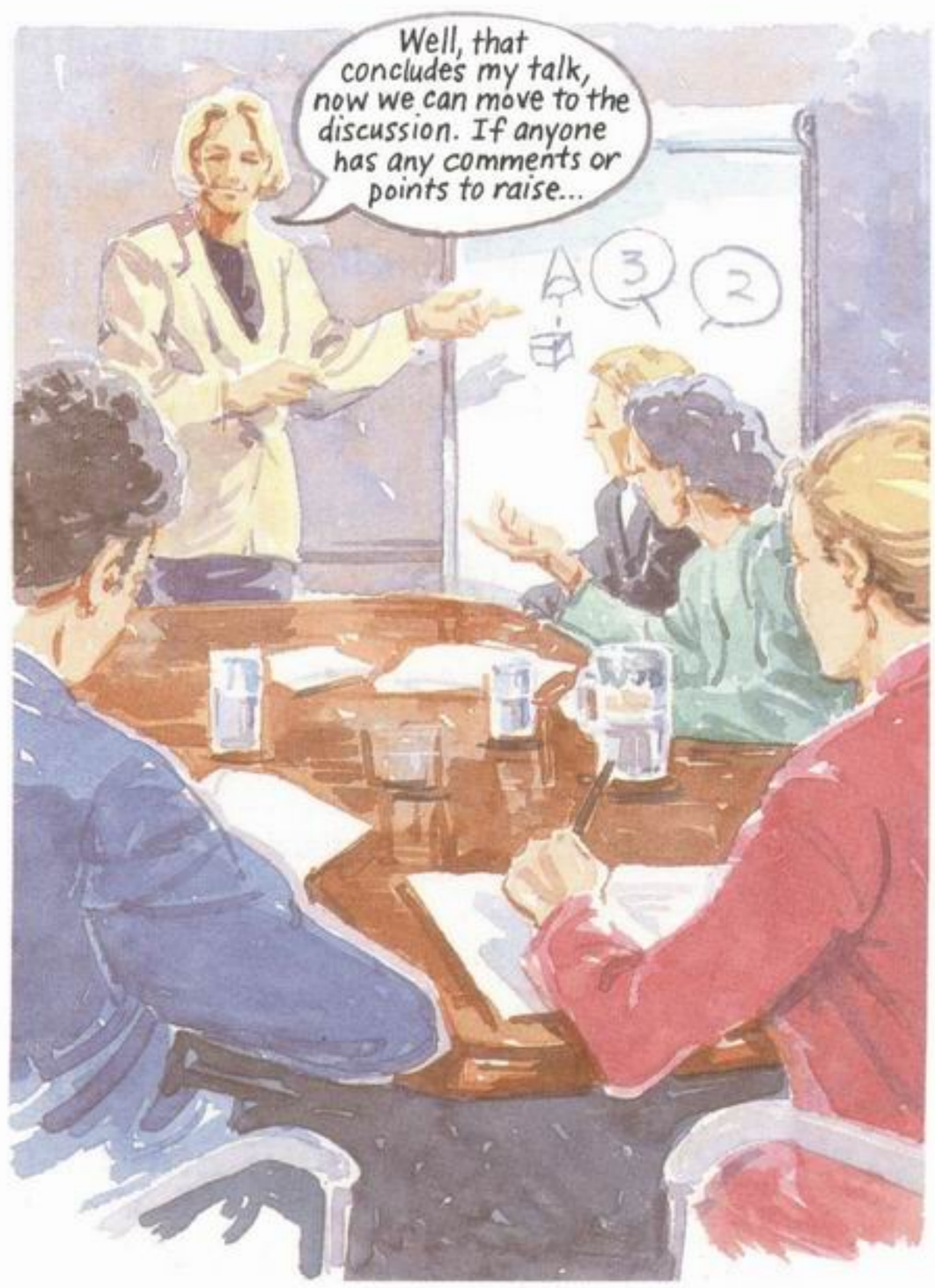
1 Structure (3) The end



1 What does the end of a presentation contain?

2 What is the difference, if any, between a *summary* and a *conclusion*?

3 Comment on the different approaches used by the two speakers in the cartoons. Can you suggest reasons for the different endings?



4 In which of the following situations do you think a *discussion* is more appropriate than *questions*?

- A sales representative's presentation of a new product.
- A Chief Executive's statement on corporate policy.
- A politician's speech on transport policy.
- A team leader's talk to colleagues on the next phase of a project.
- A manager's proposal to a group of senior executives on improving productivity.

2 Summarising and concluding

1 Listen to the end of a presentation by Ben Ingleton, Marketing Director of Foss Ltd., an agricultural machinery manufacturer. His talk is about company valuation. What is his key message?

2 Listen again. Is this a summary or a conclusion or is it both? Explain your answer.

3 Listen again and complete the following phrases.

a) 'I'd like to ..... with a short ..... of the ....'

b) 'So, what are .... that ..... can ..... from this?

I think most importantly, we .... build up …'

Practice 1

Look at the following overhead transparencies used in a presentation on safety procedures on an oil platform. Use them to reconstruct the end of the presentation.

Begin as follows:

'That concludes the main part of my talk. Now I'd like to … '

Summary

1. Three incidents in the year show communication problems.
2. 35% of incidents in the last 5 years contain some degree of communication problem.
3. Existing communication procedures are not considered satisfactory.

Conclusion

1. Training must place more emphasis on communication procedures.
2. Programme of regular revision of communication procedures should be introduced.

Now compare your version with a recording of a model answer.

3 Questions and discussion

1 Listen to a recording of two different ways of ending the same sales presentation by Marisa Repp about an automatic warehouse system, the Storo. Decide if they:

- invite the audience to ask questions
- are a lead-in to a discussion
- invite the audience to ask questions and have a discussion
- request comments.

2 Suggest alternative endings for the presentation you have just heard.

3 Listen to three examples of possible endings to other sales presentations. Match each one to the comments below.

A A **hard sell** approach, mainly interested in selling the product. ☐
B **Weak**, as if the speaker lacks confidence. ☐
C **Customer-friendly**, wants to help the customer. ☐

4 Read the following text and identify:

a) a potential problem at the end of a presentation
b) three ways to avoid the problem.

Open for questions: The silent disaster

A nightmare scenario is as follows: the speaker finishes his talk with the words 'Any questions?' This is met by total silence. Not a word. Then an embarrassed shuffling, a cough … . *How can this be avoided? A possible answer is that if the presentation has* been good and the audience is clearly interested, *someone* will have *something* to say.

Another way to avoid the nightmare of utter silence is to end with an instruction to the audience. This should ensure immediate audience response. Giving an instruction is often useful in sales presentations and where the audience has special requirements. Here are two examples:

A sales presentation
After talking about his or her products or services, the speaker wants the audience to explain their needs and says:

'Okay – I've told you about the ways Snappo can help companies like yours. Now for us to do that, we need to know more about the way you work. For example, tell me about your particular situation, tell me what in particular may interest you … .'

This places a responsibility on the audience to respond – unless of course they have a completely negative view of both the presenter and the message! Assuming they are well-disposed towards the potential supplier, it is probably in their interests to offer some information and begin discussion.

A Training Manager

Speaking to an audience of Department Managers, vice-presidents, or potential trainees, the Training Manager has outlined recommendations and explained what is available. He/she can end with:

'Right! I've told you what we can offer. Now tell me what are your impressions, what are your priorities and what else do you need to know now?'

Another option is for the speaker to have a question prepared. Ask something which you know the audience will have to answer. This often breaks the ice and starts discussion. It may be possible to single out an individual who is most likely to have a question to ask you or a comment to make, or it may be apparent from earlier contact perhaps during the reception or a coffee break, that a particular individual has something to say or to ask.

5 Handling questions is thought by many speakers to be the most difficult part of a presentation. Why do you think this is? How do you think difficulties can be minimised?

Listen to Penny Yates talking about the difficulties that can arise in dealing with questions after a presentation. As you listen, tick any of the following pieces of advice that she gives.

1 Be polite. ☐
2 Listen very carefully. ☐
3 Ask for repetition or clarification. ☐
4 Keep calm. ☐
5 Tell the truth (most of the time!). ☐
6 Don't say anything you'll regret later. ☐
7 Check understanding if necessary by paraphrasing. ☐
8 Agree partially before giving own opinion: *Yes, but* ... ☐

6 A Conference on Land Development in Europe included presentations on Financial Support for Business. Listen to four extracts of different speakers' handling of questions and discussion. Use the table below to mark which extracts are examples of good (✓) or bad (✗) technique. Give reasons for your answers.

	Technique (✓/✗)	Why?
1	.....	.....
2	.....	.....
3	.....	.....
4	.....	.....

Practice 2

Imagine that you have given a talk on *Marketing in Japan* at a conference on business trends. What would you say in these situations?

1 At the end of your presentation, move to comments / discussion / questions.
2 A member of the audience suggests that you said that *many small retail outlets, small shops, had actually closed down in recent years.* In fact, you said this process has been going on for a long time. Politely correct the other person.
3 Ask the audience for comments on why this has happened.
4 Agree with someone's suggestions, but suggest other factors. One is the increasing number of take-overs of smaller companies.
5 A member of the audience says the following: *'I … I understand that a report showed that 700 new soft drinks came out in Japan in 1990 and one year later 90% had failed. That's a pretty amazing figure … '* Paraphrasing this, ask if in the USA or Europe that could not happen.
6 Someone suggests that in Japan there has always been an emphasis on quality and on products. In the West market research has been more developed. Agree, but say the situation is changing.
7 A speaker says something you don't understand. What do you say?

Practice 3

Divide into groups of four. Each person should prepare, in about two to three minutes, part of a short presentation on any topic he/she knows well.

Describe just one or two aspects of the topic in some detail for about three to four minutes. Then end what you say with a brief summary and/or conclusion. Finally, move to questions/comments or discussion.

Your colleagues should:

- ask questions
- ask for more details
- ask for clarification / repetition
- paraphrase part(s) of what you said
- offer more information based on their knowledge and / or experience.

For each contribution, respond appropriately.

Repeat the exercise until everyone in the group has been *in the hot seat.*

Transfer

Give the end of a presentation on a topic of your choice. Include either a summary or a conclusion and move to questions and/or discussion.

Language Checklist

The end of the presentation

Ending the main body of the presentation

Right, that ends (the third part of) my talk.
That's all I want to say for now on …

Beginning the summary and/or conclusion

I'd like to end by emphasising the main point(s).
I'd like to finish with …
- a summary of the main points.
- some observations based on what I've said.
- some conclusions / recommendations.
- a brief conclusion.

Concluding

There are two conclusions / recommendations.
What we need is …
I think we have to …
I think we have seen that we should …

Inviting questions and/or introducing discussion

That concludes (the formal part of) my talk. (Thanks for listening) … Now I'd like to invite your comments.
Now we have (half an hour) for questions and discussion.
Right. Now, any questions or comments?
So, now I'd be very interested to hear your comments.

Handling questions

Understood but difficult or impossible to answer

That's a difficult question to answer in a few words.
- It could be …
- In my experience …
- I would say …
- I don't think I'm the right person to answer that. Perhaps (Mr Holmes) can help …
- I don't have much experience in that field …

Understood but irrelevant or impossible to answer in the time available

I'm afraid that's outside the scope of my talk / this session. If I were you I'd discuss that with …
I'll have to come to that later, perhaps during the break as we're short of time.

Not understood

Sorry, I'm not sure I've understood. Could you repeat?
Are you asking if … ?
Do you mean … ?
I didn't catch (the last part of) your question.
If I have understood you correctly, you mean … ? Is that right?

Checking that your answer is sufficient

Does that answer your question?
Is that okay?

Skills Checklist

Structure (3) Ending the presentation

A summary

- Restates main point(s).
- Restates what the audience must understand and remember.
- Contains no new information.
- Is short.

A conclusion

- States the logical consequences of what has been said.
- Often contains recommendations.
- May contain new and important information.
- Is short.

Questions

- Inviting questions implies that the audience are less expert than the speaker.
- Beware of the 'nightmare scenario' – total silence! Have one or two prepared questions to ask the audience.
- Keep control of the meeting.

Discussion

- Inviting discussion gives the impression that the audience have useful experience, so is often more 'diplomatic'.
- You still need to control the discussion.

Inviting discussion and questions

- Often the best solution.
- Keep control, limit long contributions, watch the time.

Handling questions

- Listen very carefully.
- Ask for repetition or clarification if necessary.
- Paraphrase the question to check you understand it.
- Give yourself time to think – perhaps by paraphrasing the question.
- Check that the question is relevant. If not, don't answer if you don't want to.
- Refer questioner to another person if you can't answer.
- Suggest you'll answer a question later if you prefer.
- Check that the questioner is happy with your answer: eye contact and a pause is often sufficient.
- Keep control.
- Don't allow one or two people to dominate.
- Be polite.
- Signal when time is running out – 'Time for one last question'.
- At the end, thank the audience.

MODULE 4

MEETINGS

10 Making meetings effective

→ What makes a good meeting?
→ Chairing a meeting
→ Establishing the purpose of a meeting

1 What makes a good meeting?

Some comments on business meetings:

'Two or more people getting together for a specific business purpose.'
Gower Publishing Ltd., 1988. Extracted from *The Gower Handbook of Management*, p. 1185.

'The fewer the merrier.'
© Milo O. Frank 1989. Extracted from *How to Run a Successful Meeting in Half the Time* published by Corgi, a division of Transworld Publishers Ltd. All rights reserved.

1 **What makes a good meeting? Suggest what you think are the characteristics of a successful meeting.**

2 **Listen to the recording of Allan Case, an engineer, talking about the characteristics of successful business meetings. He makes *five* of the eight points below. Identify the correct order of these points.**

There is a written agenda. ☐
Clear objectives – known to everyone. ☐
Respect for the time available / time planning. ☐
Good chair – effective control. ☐
Emotions are kept under control. ☐
Good preparation. ☐
Everyone gets to say what they need to say. ☐
Reaching objectives. ☐

2 Chairing a meeting

"Mr. Skelton, can I go out and play now?"

What do you think the functions of the chairperson are during a meeting?

1 **Listen to a recording of a meeting at Hilo Co., a small subsidiary of a multinational company. The meeting is to discuss the decline in profits. Listen once. Say which of the following are given as reasons for the fall.**

Prices are too high. Yes/No
The company has wasted money on research and development. Yes/No
Sales are down. Yes/No
The sales budget is too low. Yes/No
No one likes the Chief Sales Executive. Yes/No
The products are old. Yes/No

2 **Listen again, paying attention to the role of the chair in the discussion. Tick (✓) which of the following functions the chair performs at this meeting.**

Thanks people for coming.	☐	Prevents interruptions.	☐
Starts the meeting on time.	☐	Makes people stick to the subject.	☐
States the objective.	☐	Gives a personal opinion.	☐
Refers to the agenda.	☐	Summarises.	☐
Changes the agenda.	☐	Asks for comments.	☐
Talks about a previous meeting.	☐	Decides when to have a break.	☐
Introduces the first speaker.	☐	Closes the meeting.	☐

3 Suggest phrases which could be used by a chairperson in the following situations in a meeting.

a) To welcome the participants to a meeting.
b) To state the objectives of the meeting.
c) To introduce the agenda.
d) To introduce the first speaker.
e) To prevent an interruption.
f) To thank a speaker for his/her contribution.
g) To introduce another speaker.
h) To keep discussion to the relevant issues.
i) To summarise discussion.
j) To ask if anyone has anything to add.
k) To suggest moving to the next topic on the agenda.
l) To summarise certain actions that must be done following the meeting (for example, do research, write a report, meet again, write a letter, etc.).
m) To close the meeting.

Practice 1

Work in groups of four. Decide on a chair and have a brief meeting using one of the situations below.

After a few minutes' preparation, the chair starts the meeting, introduces the agenda, invites the first speaker to make his/her proposal, prevents interruptions, brings in other speakers, summarises, etc.

Situation 1

Meeting

To identify ways to reduce company costs.

Time: Finish:
Place:
Participants:

Agenda

1. Staff cuts.
2. Reducing the research budget.
3. Cutting salaries and running costs.

Situation 2

Meeting

To decide on training needs and how to spend $100,000 on training.

Time: Finish:
Place:
Participants:

Agenda

1. Decide priorities:
   marketing / information technology / languages.
2. Allocate costs.
3. Decide outline programme.

3 Establishing the purpose of a meeting

1 Below is an incomplete agenda for a meeting of an Environmental Research Unit. Listen to the recording of the start of the meeting. You will hear the opening remarks from the chair, Victor Allen. Note the objectives of the meeting by filling in the spaces in the agenda.

Environmental Research Unit

Quarterly Meeting

24th May 19—
Room A 32, South Side Science Park

Participants: Victor Allen (Chair), Sonia Sandman,
Vince Hamden, Russell James.
Time: 10.00 Finish: 12.00

Agenda

1. (a) _____ present projects

1.1 Hydroclear
1.2 PCB reduction

2. (b) _____

3. (c) _____
   – government
   – United Nations / World Health Organization
   – Industry

Practice 2

1 In groups, work out a brief agenda, with an appropriate order, for a meeting of the marketing department of Axis Finance Ltd., a medium-sized financial services company. Your agenda should include the points listed here:

any other business	new products
minutes of previous meeting	marketing plans for next year
date of next meeting	review of marketing performance in the current year
personnel changes	
chair's opening address	apologies for absence.

2 In pairs, prepare a brief opening statement by the chair to introduce the meeting above:

- think about what the opening statement from the chair needs to say
- use your agenda as a guide
- refer to the Language Checklist
- practise in pairs.

Role play

Work in groups of four.
Ash & Whitebeam is a manufacturing company. The Board has decided to set up a subcommittee to examine the four problems contained in File cards 20–23.
Your group is that subcommittee and you are meeting to discuss these problems and to make recommendations to the Board. Read through the information on the File cards. Decide in groups who should lead discussion on each of the four topics. Each group member should prepare his/her introduction. When everyone is ready, begin the meeting. If possible, also choose an overall Chair for the meeting.

Transfer 1

Think about the role play meeting that you have worked on in this unit and your role in it.
Evaluate the meeting by considering the following:
What were the objectives?
What was your role in the meeting?
Did you use any visual supports?
What was the result of the meeting?
How did you feel about this result?
What action or follow-up was agreed?

Transfer 2

If you were the Chair of the meeting, again think about your role. Consider all the above questions but also the following:
What were the objectives?
How long did it take – was this too long or too short?
Were you an effective Chair?
Did you summarise the meeting?
How could you have chaired the meeting better?

Transfer 3

If you know of any meeting that you are going to participate in, think about your preparation for that meeting. What do you need to consider?

Language Checklist
Chairing and leading discussion

Opening the meeting
Thank you for coming …
(It's ten o'clock). Let's start …
We've received apologies from …
Any comments on our previous meeting?

Introducing the agenda
You've all seen the agenda …
On the agenda, you'll see there are three items.
There is one main item to discuss …

Stating objectives
We're here today to hear about plans for …
Our objective is to discuss different ideas …
What we want to do today is to reach a decision …

Introducing discussion
The background to the problem is …
This issue is about …
The point we have to understand is …

Calling on a speaker
I'd like to ask Mary to tell us about …
Can we hear from Mr Passas on this?
I know that you've prepared a statement on your Department's views …

Controlling the meeting
Sorry Hans, can we let Magda finish?
Er, Henry, we can't talk about that.

Summarising
So, what you're saying is …
Can I summarise that? You mean …
So, the main point is …

Moving the discussion on
Can we go on to think about …
Let's move on to the next point.

Closing the meeting
I think we've covered everything.
So, we've decided …
I think we can close the meeting now.
That's it. The next meeting will be …

Skills Checklist
Preparation for meetings

Chair
- Decide objectives.
- What type of meeting (formal or informal, short or long, regular or a 'one off', internal / external information giving / discussion / decision making)?
- Is a social element required?
- Prepare an agenda.
- Decide time / place / participants / who must attend and who can be notified of decisions.
- Study subjects for discussion.
- Anticipate different opinions.
- Speak to participants.

Secretary
- Obtain agenda and list of participants.
- Inform participants and check:
  - room, equipment, paper, materials.
  - refreshments, meals, accommodation, travel.

Participants
- Study subjects on agenda, work out preliminary options.
- If necessary, find out team or department views.
- Prepare own contribution, ideas, visual supports, etc.

The role of the Chair
- Start and end on time.
- Introduce objectives, agenda.
- Introduce speakers.
- Define time limits for contributions.
- Control discussion, hear all views.
- Summarise discussion at key points.
- Ensure that key decisions are written down by the secretary.
- Ensure that conclusions and decisions are clear and understood.
- Define actions to be taken and individual responsibilities.

11 Sorry to interrupt, but . . .

→ The structure of decision making
→ Stating and asking for opinion
→ Interrupting and handling interruptions

1 The structure of decision making

1 Read the following extract and answer these questions.

a) What kind of meetings is the text about?
b) What *structure* does the text describe?
c) What key point is made about communication?

2 Read the text again. Do you agree with:

a) the first sentence? Give reasons for your answer.
b) Hayne's suggestions for the steps involved in decision making?
c) the view that communication must be a two-way process?
d) what the writer says about consensus in the final paragraph?

The reason for having a meeting is to make a decision. Information may be given in a presentation followed by questions or discussion, but it is to get a consensus that the meeting has been arranged in the first place. Achieving this in the most time- and cost-effective manner possible is a goal that everyone attending (the meeting) must share.

Marion Haynes (1988) maintains that decision making meetings need to follow a specific structure. The rational decision process includes the following steps:

- study / discuss / analyse the situation
- define the problem
- set an objective
- state imperatives and desirables
- generate alternatives
- establish evaluation criteria
- evaluate alternatives
- choose among alternatives.

One other aspect of decision making is the necessity for participants in the meeting to be aware of one another's needs and perceptions. If these are not effectively communicated, if there is an insufficient degree of understanding of one another's requirements, then an acceptable conclusion is unlikely to be reached. There are four essential elements in decision making: awareness, understanding, empathy and perception.

It is only when we accept that communications are a two-way process that any form of communication, including decision making, will become genuinely successful and effective.

Decision making is not always an identifiable activity. Frequently the discussion can evolve into a consensus which can be recognised and verbalised by the leader without the need to 'put things to the vote'.

Adapted from Bernice Hurst *The Handbook of Communication Skills* (London: Kogan Page, 1991).

3 Find words or phrases in the text which mean the same as the following:

a) common agreement
b) economical use of resources
c) aim
d) fix a goal
e) what one must have
f) what one would like to have
g) consider other options
h) way of seeing things
i) seeing things as others see them
j) develop
k) express through speaking.

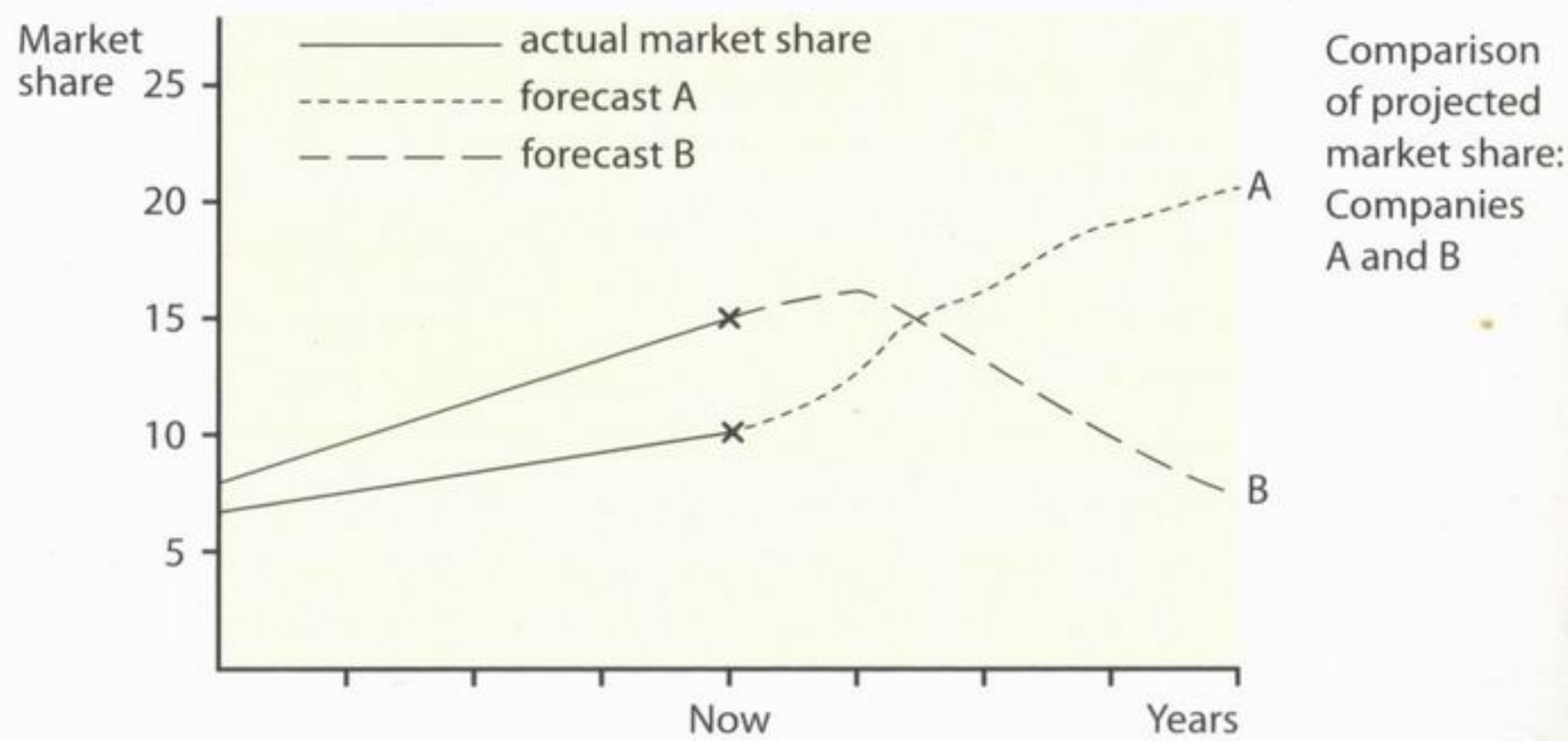
2 Stating and asking for opinion

1 Quickly suggest as many ways of asking for opinion and stating opinion as you can. Two examples are given here:

What do you think about … ? – I think …

Do you have any opinion on … ? – In my experience …

2 Listen to a recording of directors of a pharmaceuticals company discussing buying new production control equipment. They have to choose between two alternative suppliers, A and B. As you listen, refer to the graph below which shows the market share development of suppliers A and B.



Comparison of projected market share: Companies A and B

a) In technical terms, which system is the best?
b) Which is the cheapest?
c) Which system seems to be the best choice? Why?

3 Listen again. Identify examples of language used to:
a) ask for opinion
b) state opinion.

Did you think of these in Exercise 1?

Practice 1

Below are a series of topics. Ask colleagues for their views and note if their opinions are weak, strong or neutral. If asked, give your views on the subjects – either quite strongly or fairly weakly.

1 Arms trade

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....

2 Testing cosmetic products on animals

Your opinion .....

Others' opinion .....