

# Unit 7 Speaking Discourse Functions





# LEARNING OUTCOME





Discourse function refers to how a particular expression is used on a particular occasion



Discourse functions include commands, statements or questions



It is important to familiarise yourself with language and discourse functions like turn-taking, asking for and giving information, making suggestions, giving reasons, giving opinions, persuading, drawing conclusions, agreeing and disagreeing, interrupting, managing discussions, etc

## 7.1. INTRODUCTION



## 7.2 Things to keep in mind during interactions



Listen to what the others are saying and make appropriate responses



Non-verbal communication cues are also important



Cooperation with the other members of the group is important so that the discussion can be carried out smoothly



Display initiative by helping to prompt those who find it difficult to continue the discussion



## 7.3 Discourse functions to manage interactions

- + Following are several discourse functions that will enable you to manage interactions between speakers and coordinate communication





## 7.3.1 Interrupting



Give a message to someone



Ask a quick question



Give your opinion on something  
that has been said



Join a conversation



## i) Give a message to someone



I'm sorry to interrupt but you're needed ...



I apologise for the interruption but I had to quickly let you know that ...



Pardon me, I have ...



I hope you'll excuse me for interrupting but could I quickly get you to ...



## ii) Ask a clarifying question



I'm sorry for interrupting  
but I don't quite  
understand .....



Sorry for the interruption  
but could you repeat .....



This will only take a  
minute



I apologise for the  
interruption but I have an  
important question about



Could I jump in?



Could I add something?



Do you mind if I say  
something?



May I interject?





### iii) Share your opinion



That makes me think of ...



Interesting that you say that because ...



What you said about reminds me that ...



Your point sounds an awful lot like something else ...



## iv) Join a conversation

Would you mind if I joined?

I couldn't help overhearing ...

Sorry to butt in but I think ...

If I may, I feel ...



## 7.3.1.1 What to do when you are interrupted



Please let me finish



Can I continue, please?



Let me wrap up my thought  
before you start



Would you please let me finish?

## 7.3.1.2 Allowing an interruption



No problem

Sure

That's alright,  
what is it that  
you want?



## 7.4 Changing topic, resuming and continuing



You may want to change a particular topic when you run out of things to say or because it may be a difficult subject, not appropriate for the situation or if it makes you feel uncomfortable



You may also want to change the topic if it sounds too personal or if you find other people a little bored by it



Several ways to change the topic and to resume the conversation are as follows

## i) Change the topic by asking a related question

By asking a related question, the other person is given a chance to talk more about the topic that they are clearly interested in

In this way, they get the opportunity to express their opinions and feelings while you could avoid talking about something that you are not interested in



ii) Change the subject by introducing a new topic

That's interesting

That seems really popular around here

Yeah, I heard about that too

People keep asking me that question



ii) Change the subject by introducing a new topic

This has nothing to do with what we were talking about, but ...

Not to change the subject but ...

Changing gears a little bit ...

Totally unrelated ...





iii) Change the subject by creating a distraction



WOW, YOU ARE SO PASSIONATE ABOUT  
THIS TOPIC



THANKS FOR SHARING SO MANY  
RESOURCES ABOUT YOUR TRAINING  
PROGRAM

### iii) Change the subject by creating a distraction



Nice phone



Hey, I like your  
haircut



## iv) Abruptly change the subject

Moving on!

Anyway!

On that note ...

On a happier note ...

On a sad note ...

And now for something completely different ...

# 7.5

## Encouraging and inviting another speaker to continue



Would you like to comment on this?



Julie, what's your opinion on the issue?



Mimi, would you like to contribute to the discussion?



What do you think?



Micheal, do you agree?



Give us your opinion on ...



What are your opinions/views regarding ...



What is meant by 'discourse functions'?



What is the element that discourse functions are dependent on?



List 3 elements that discourse functions comprise of



Why is it necessary to familiarise with discourse functions in an interaction?



Interruption should generally be accompanied by .....



List 3 circumstances that lead to an interruption in a conversation



Why is it necessary to keep an interruption as short as possible?



What is an important element that needs to be taken into consideration when there is a need to change a subject abruptly?

# Quick Review Quiz



# Practice 1



Who is managing the discussion?



How did Ben interrupt Lee?



How did Lee encourage another speaker to come in?



What are the 2 statements that show how Lee keeps the interaction and participants on topic?



State 2 expressions used by Aisyah to interrupt the conversation

# Practice 2



Complete the  
following discussion  
between a school  
principal and some  
parents

Then, practise the  
discussion with your  
friends



# Suggested Link

<https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/how-to-interrupt-someone-in-a-nice-way/4735900.html>

