

Speaking Partners

SIGN UP

English Speaker

An English speaker is the native or near-native English speaking partner that talks with the Pathway student.

Ready to sign up as a Pathway English speaker?

We’d love to have you on the Speaking Partner team! Just follow the steps below to register as a speaking partner and set your available times. If you have any questions about registering, please contact us at speakingpartners@byui.edu or 1-208-496-1835.

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Click here to sign up as a
SPEAKING PARTNER

To register as an English speaker, please do the following:

1. Click above to register as an English speaker (this is for volunteers and BYU-Idaho campus or ENG 106 Pathway students). Previous participants from Spring Semester 2013 or earlier will also re-register at the above link.
2. After completing the registration form, you will be emailed a link to confirm your account creation. Follow this link and proceed to select a time or times when you can commit to being available for the duration of the semester.
3. Once a time availability has been selected and saved, you must wait until an English learner student claims your time slot. This usually happens in the first two weeks of each semester,* but may take a little longer.
4. After your available time slot has been claimed by an English learner, Skype and email contact information will be released to both partners, and you can begin meeting at the scheduled time each week.

* To view semester start and end dates, see the [BYU-I calendar](#).”



FAQ's

Frequently Asked Questions

What's the difference between Pathway and Speaking Partners?

Pathway is the larger educational program that offers LDS members around the world the opportunity to receive a BYU-Idaho education through lowered barriers of cost and admission. Speaking Partners is a sub-program that accompanies and enhances the English-language-learning component of the Pathway education for the Pathway L-version students.

Do I need to know a foreign language?

No. If you do know the student's first language, please do not use that language to explain English vocabulary or grammar concepts. By pushing the student to use only English to try to communicate or work through difficulties, the students will improve their language skills.

How long do speaking partnerships last? What is the commitment?

The speaking partner activity for Pathway students lasts for a duration of 12 weeks each semester (starting the second week and finishing in the next to last week); the partnerships typically last for this duration. The commitment is simply to be available once a week, for 30 minutes, for the 12-week period.

Can I have more than one speaking partner?

English-speakers may have multiple partners, and many do, although each additional partner equates to an additional 30-minute commitment each week for the semester. Simply select the times you are available and wait for a partner request from additional students if you want more! English learners, however, are limited to the equivalent of one speaking partnership per semester.

Where do speaking partner participants come from?

All over the world! In the beginning, our English speakers and volunteers came mainly from the BYU-Idaho campus, but today are scattered all around the English-speaking world. As for the English learners, students are located in countries ranging from Albania to Peru to Zimbabwe! View our [Find a Pathway Site](#) page to see where English-learner partners are currently located.

Do I need to have teaching or tutoring experience?

No. Although it can be helpful to have teaching or tutoring experience, the main purpose of a speaking partner is to provide English interaction opportunities where students can practice their speaking and listening skills. Therefore, you only need to be able to speak English at a native or near-native level to converse with the students. Those looking to improve their teaching skills may read through the [Volunteer Guidelines](#) for advanced teaching tips.

What do we talk about, and how much preparation is required before each visit?

English speakers do not need to prepare material or discussion topics. For each visit, the English-learning students have an assignment that includes discussion questions and language-practice activities related to the course topics studied during the corresponding week. The students are expected to come prepared to lead the discussions. The English speaker will see each assignment on the website and can briefly review the topics/activities prior to each session in anticipation of questions.

May I practice my Spanish, Russian, etc. with the student?

No. The speaking partner visits are focused on the student's English-language learning and fulfilling the assignment; it should not serve as a language exchange. You should interact only in English for the duration of the visit to help the student understand their course content and to improve their ability to communicate. However, if you do know the student's first language, it may help you to understand some areas where they struggle with English and be able to focus on improving those areas.

How do I use Skype? How do I get it on my computer? Can I use other video chat software?

Skype is a free software program that can be downloaded to your computer for video chat capability. Once downloaded, you can use it to speak with people, either with audio only (like a telephone) or with video as well. Use this [link](#) to download Skype. If you need help, try using these [tutorials](#) from GSFlearnfree. You are welcome to use other video chat software (e.g. Google Hangout, Facebook Chat, etc), but you will have to arrange this individually with your partner.

Is audio chat enough, or do we need to use video?

If at all possible, it's best to use video as you talk with your assigned student since non-verbal, visual cues can be a great help in understanding what is being said (both by you and by your partner). However, if you have slow connections, or if you're simply having trouble with the video component, you may use audio only.

Do I have to have a webcam?

Ideally yes—or at least access to one. We require all of our speaking partners to have a functioning webcam. Most computer devices have webcams built-in; if yours does not have one, you can purchase a webcam for very reasonable prices at places like [Walmart](#), [Target](#), [Newegg.com](#), or [Amazon.com](#).

It seems like my/their Internet is too slow. What do we do?

In this situation, you may want to use audio only, rather than the video. If you need help doing this, see this [page](#) of tutorials from GCFlearnfree.org, and watch the video called "Making Calls with Skype."

I / my partner missed the appointment. What should I do?

If you know you can't make an appointment, do everything in your power to reschedule beforehand. If you forgot or missed your appointment, send an email to your partner to apologize for missing the session; if you are participating as part of a course assignment, you will have to forfeit the points for failing to show up. If it was your partner who missed the appointment, you are not obligated to meet again that week; however, if you are participating as part of a course assignment, refer to your instructor or syllabus for instructions on completing a reserve or alternative assignment for that week.

What if my partner and I can't understand each other?

The spoken language in your meetings should be as authentic and real as possible. If your partner doesn't understand, then slow down slightly, enunciate the words more, use a simpler vocabulary, restate things in more than one way, or even type some of your key words, phrases, or sentences into the chat function. Using hand gestures and other non-verbal cues can also help. Rest assured, the English learner will improve and become more accustomed to native English speech over time.

Do participants need to be a member of the LDS Church, or can I share this as a volunteer opportunity with members of other faiths?

All volunteers should be members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or BYU-Idaho students since several of the discussion topics are focused on gospel material, which is one of the great benefits of the discussions.

I am a Pathway missionary with questions about the Speaking Partner Program in my area.

Whom can I contact to answer my questions?

Please feel free to contact the Speaking Partner Program team at speakingpartners@byui.edu or 1.208.496.1835.

I am a Pathway graduate that has received notice to serve as a Speaking Partner. Where do I register to be a Pathway Speaking Partner?

We are grateful to have you in the Speaking Partner Program! Please register and set your available time at <https://web.byui.edu/speakingpartners/volunteer/register>.

I am a current student in a course that requires my participation in the Speaking Partner Program. Where do I register to be a Pathway Speaking Partner?

Welcome to the Speaking Partner Program! Please register and set your available time at

<https://web.byui.edu/speakingpartners/volunteer/register>.

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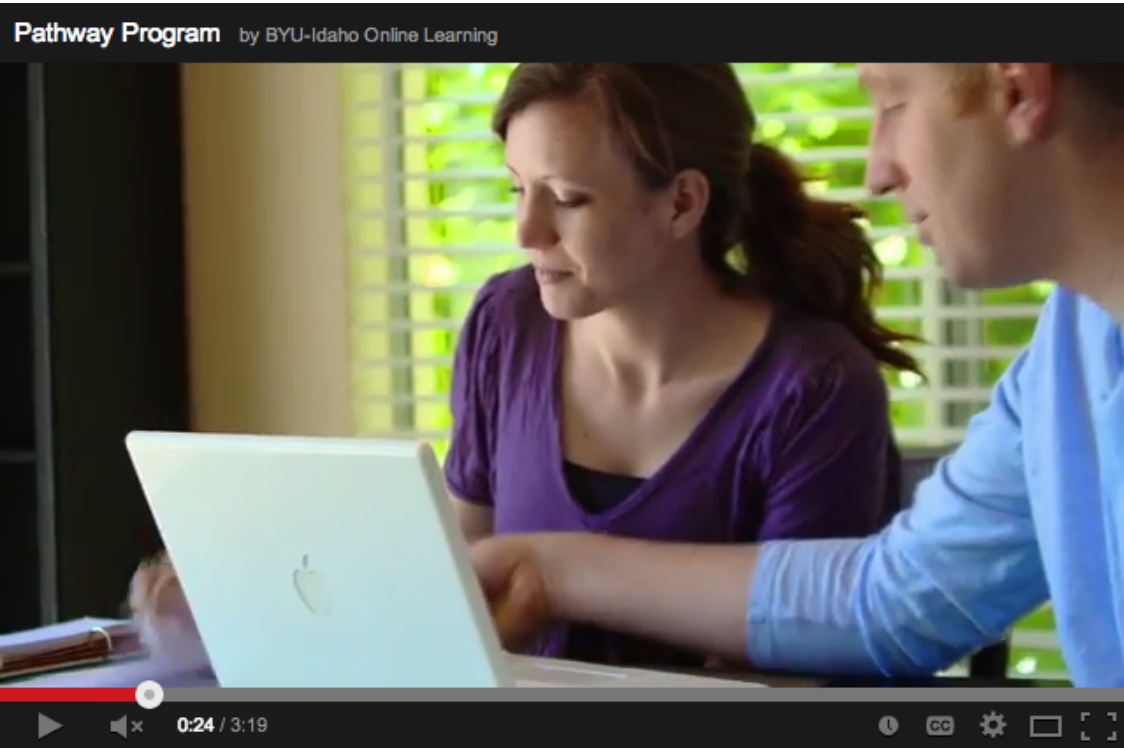


What is the Speaking Partner Program?

The Speaking Partner Program facilitates conversations between native or near-native English speakers and English-learning Pathway students. Through the Speaking Partner Program, Pathway students enhance their English skills, increase in confidence, and have better job opportunities as they graduate.



Watch the video below to learn more about the speaking partner program.



To watch more videos or learn more about about Pathway, visit our media page, or click on one of the social media links at the bottom of the page.

Requirements to serve as a Pathway English Speaker:

- Speak native or near-native English
- Be an LDS member or BYU-Idaho student
- Be 18 years of age or older
- Have access to internet and video chat setup
- Be available 30 minutes a week for 12 weeks



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Speaking Partners

DISCUSSION MATERIALS

Although the most important thing you can do is meet with your partner to speak English, discussion material is provided below which correlates with the Pathway student's coursework.

Click on the course in which your student is enrolled, and find the appropriate lesson for the week of your visit. First semester students take GS 120L; second semester students take Math 100L; third semester students take ENG 106L.

GS 120L: Life Skills

This course teaches students leadership principles, study skills, career exploration, and other skills that are essential to success, both in college and in life.

GS 120L Visit Assignments

MATH 100L: Personal Finance

A math course for people who don't like math! This course starts at the beginning with rounding and estimation, and ramps up to graphs, slopes, and equations of lines.

Math 100L Visit Assignments

ENG 106L: Basic Writing

This is a basic writing course, designed to prepare students for college-level writing. Students review basic concepts of grammar and writing and submit papers throughout the course.

ENG 106L Visit Assignments

Speaking Partner guides for [GS 120L](#), [Math 100L](#), and [ENG 106L](#).

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Speaking Partners

SPEAKING PARTNER GUIDELINES

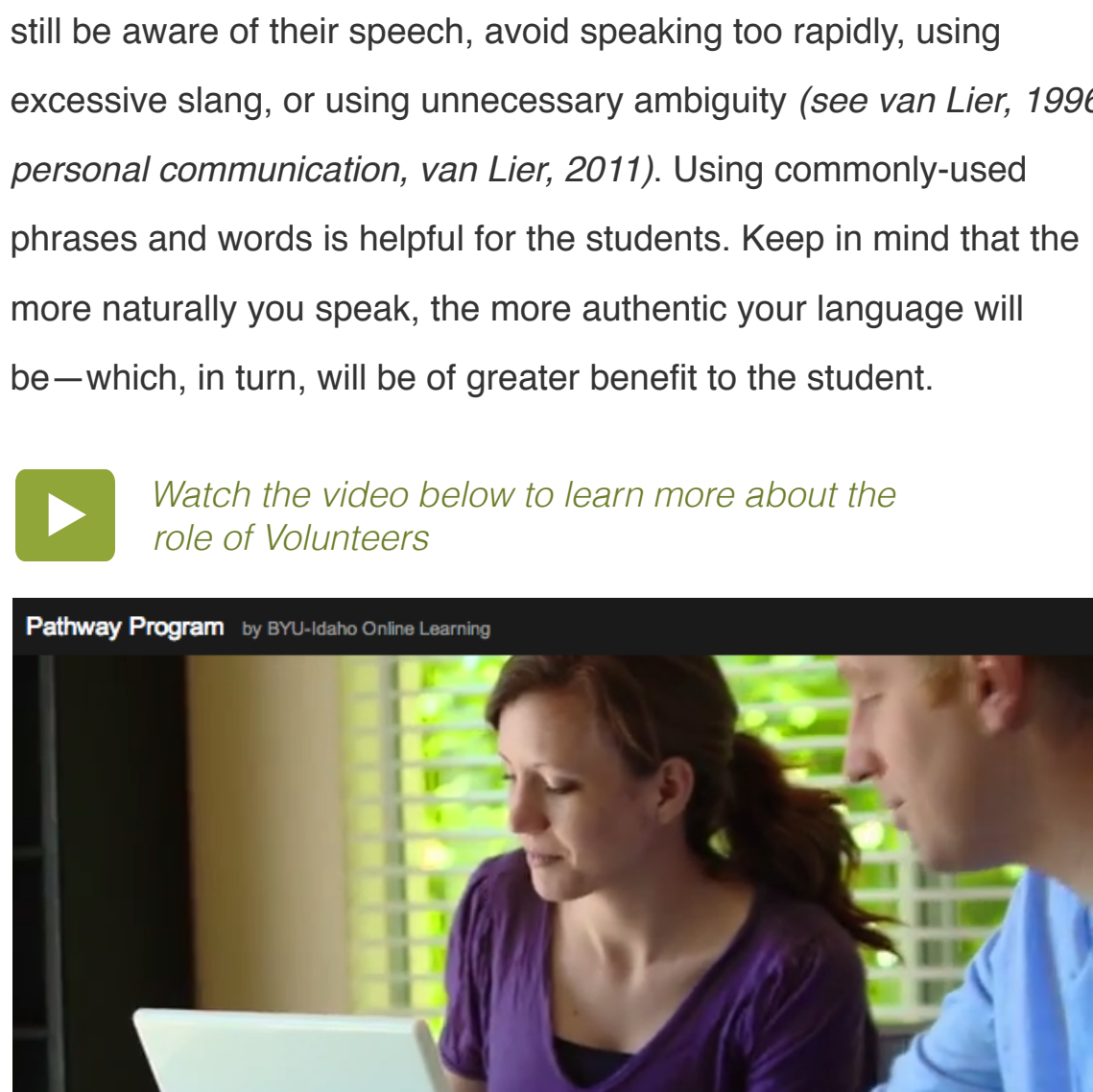
Please Note:

It is NOT required or necessary to study all of the information in this document in order to volunteer as a speaking partner. The most important thing you can do is meet with your partner and let them speak English to you and with you. However, the following guidelines may be of especial interest to those wanting to improve their teaching, tutoring, or foreign language-learning skills.

Volunteer Role

Most language learning takes place in a formal face-to-face classroom setting. However, in the Pathway English Language Program, we have the challenge of accomplishing the same learning goals in an online setting. Speaking and real-time communication are among the most important skills in learning a new language.

Watch the video below to learn more about the role of Volunteers

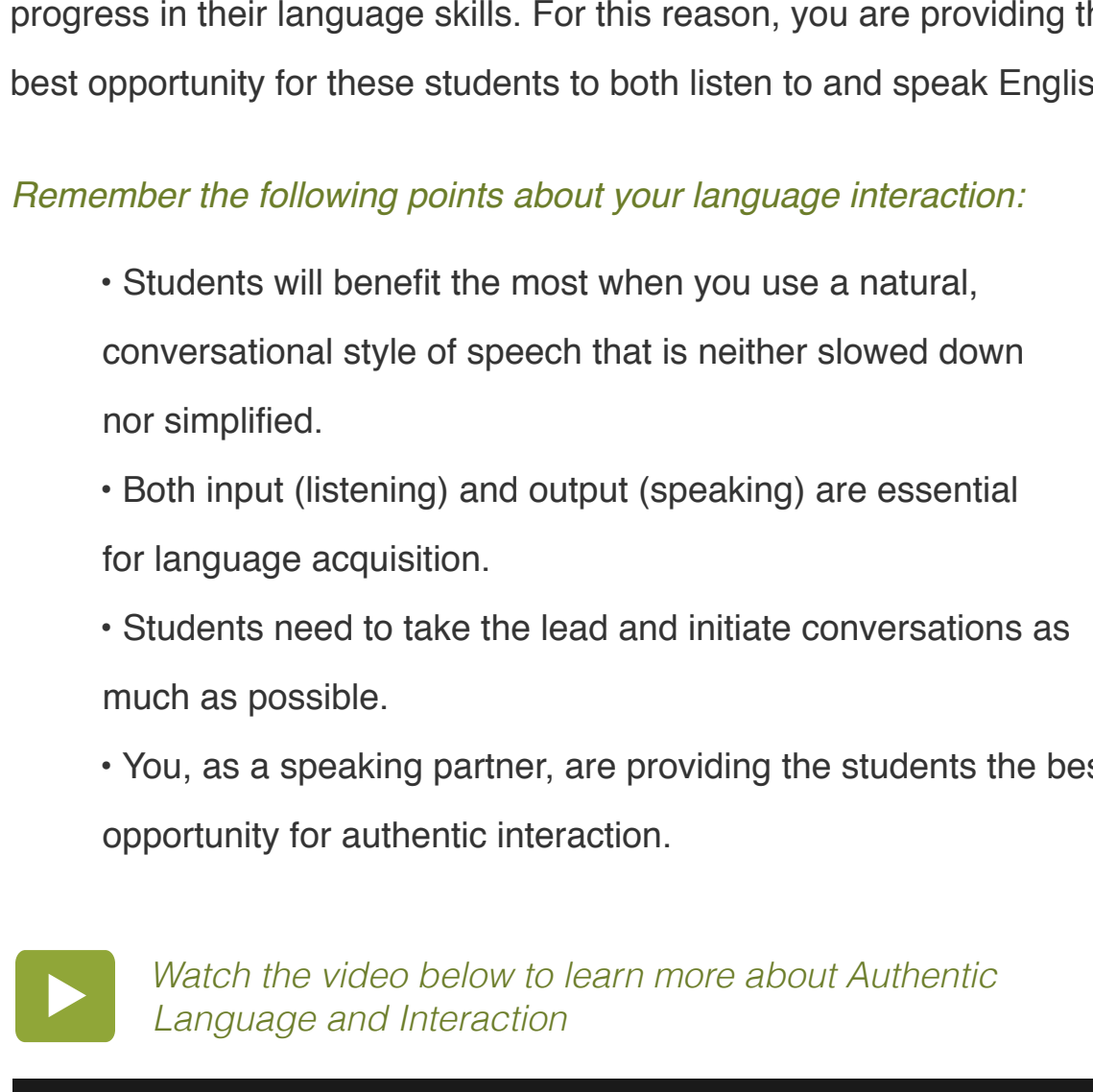


You, as a speaking partner, play a significant role by allowing the Pathway student to practice these skills on a regular basis.

Authentic Language and Interaction

The term "authentic language" means that the speakers are engaged in a natural conversation, listening attentively, and responding with interest. In other words, speaking partners should not try to slow down excessively to accommodate the student, nor should they modify their speech to simplify their English. However, speaking partners should still be aware of their speech, avoid speaking too rapidly, using excessive slang, or using unnecessary ambiguity (see van Lier, 1996; personal communication, van Lier, 2011). Using commonly-used phrases and words is helpful for the students. Keep in mind that the more naturally you speak, the more authentic your language will be—which, in turn, will be of greater benefit to the student.

Watch the video below to learn more about the role of Volunteers



As a speaking partner, you are providing language input as you interact with the student. In order to improve second language skills, a learner needs to receive lots of input that is comprehensible—that is, just a little above the learner's current skill-level in the language (see Mitchell & Myles, 2004; see also Krashen, 1982, 1985).

Speaking at either too simple or too difficult a level does not allow the student to progress in his or her English skills. In addition to this input, the student also needs to produce output. In other words, the student needs to practice speaking and writing in the language he or she is learning. Since the ultimate goal is for the student to communicate effectively in the new language, the student needs plenty of both meaningful input and meaningful output. This means that you should give the student ample opportunity to initiate or lead discussions.

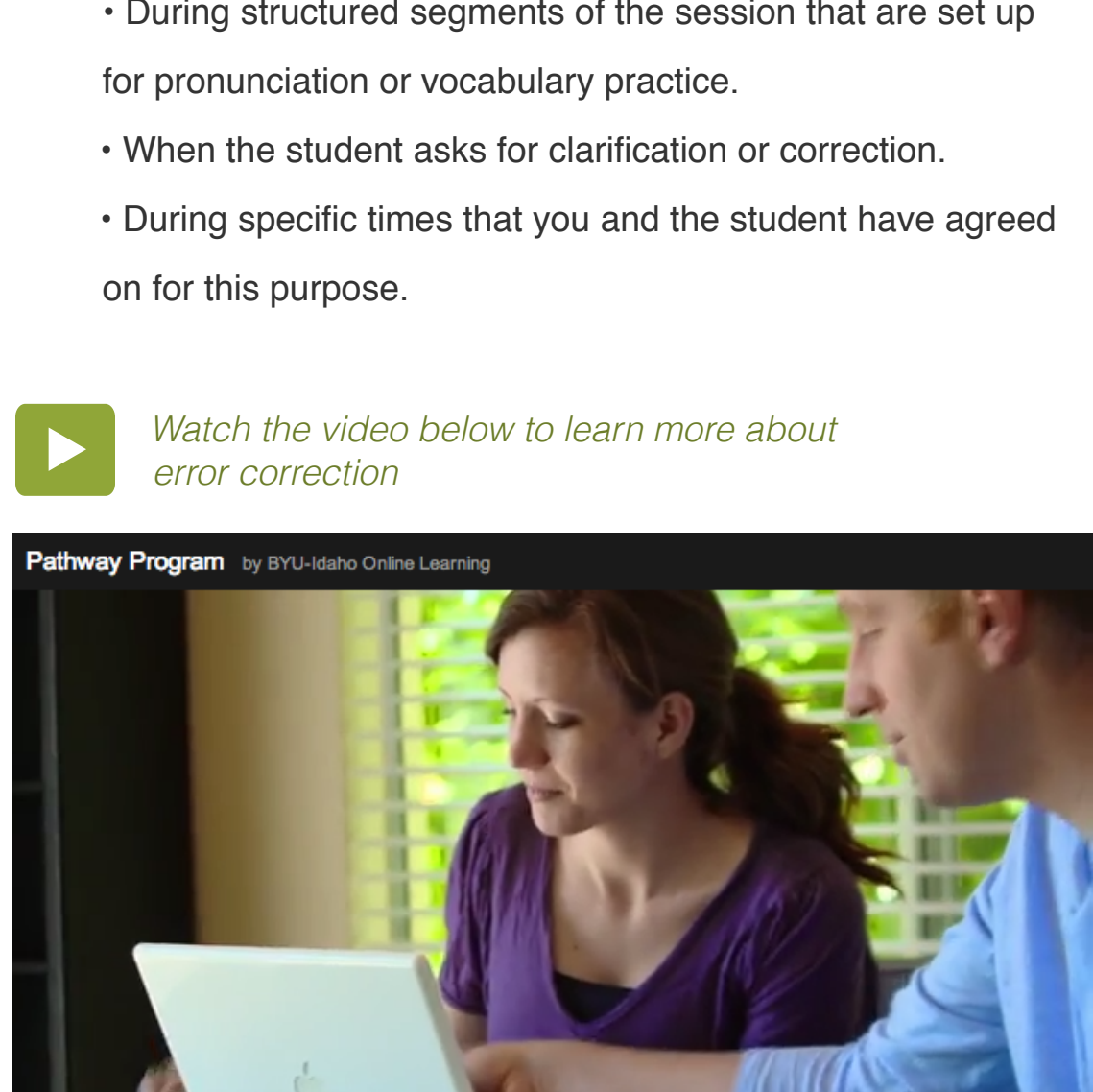
As a speaking partner, you should encourage your Pathway student to take the lead in your discussions and provide opportunities for him or her to do so.

Most Pathway English Language students have little exposure to native or fluent English speakers—or at least, not enough to really progress in their language skills. For this reason, you are providing the best opportunity for these students to both listen to and speak English.

Remember the following points about your language interaction:

- Students will benefit the most when you use a natural, conversational style of speech that is neither slowed down nor simplified.
- Both input (listening) and output (speaking) are essential for language acquisition.
- Students need to take the lead and initiate conversations as much as possible.
- You, as a speaking partner, are providing the students the best opportunity for authentic interaction.

Watch the video below to learn more about Authentic Language and Interaction



References

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language learning*. Oxford, UK: Pergamon.

Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London, UK: Longman.

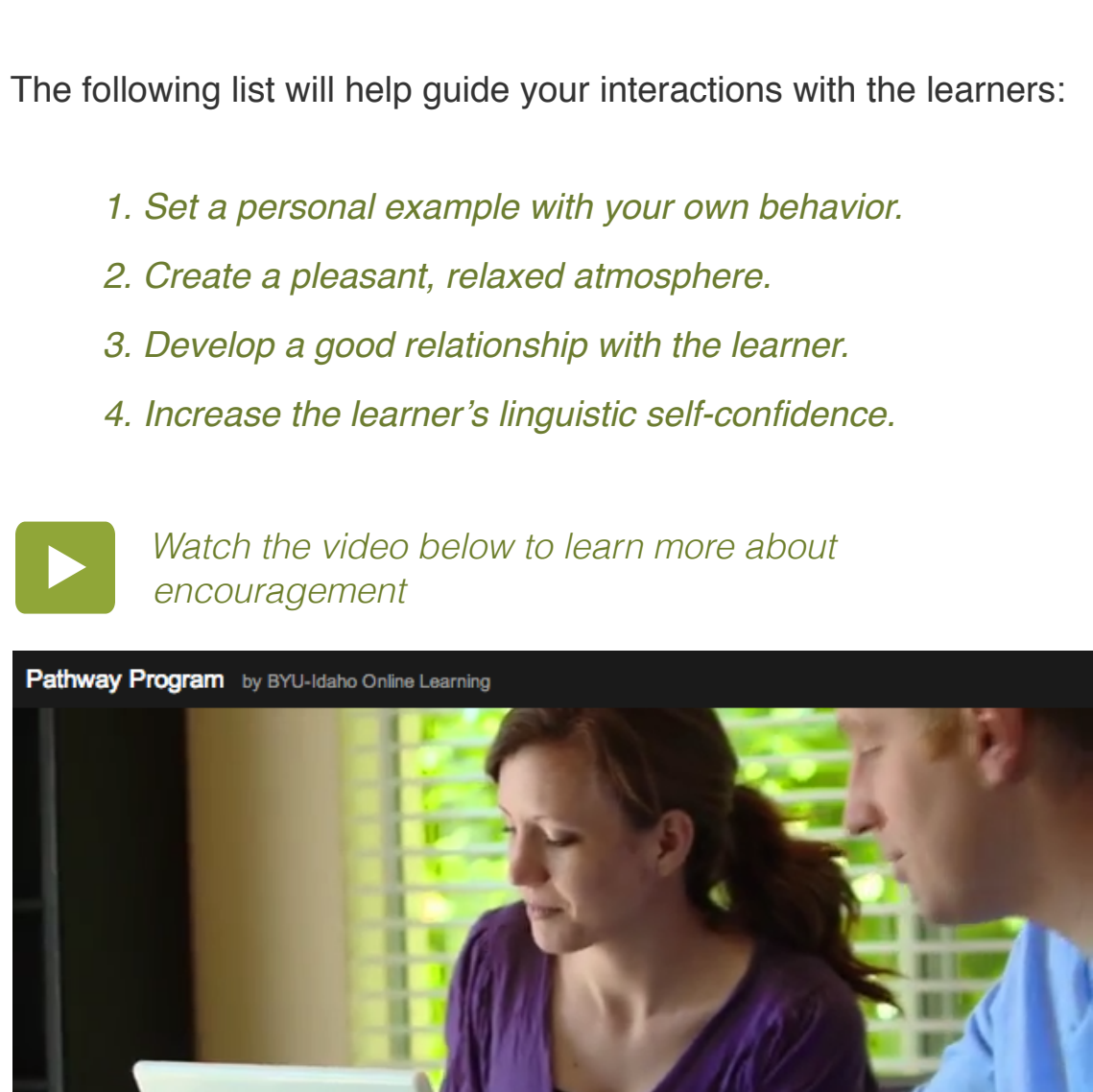
Mitchell, R. & Myles, F. (2004). *Second language learning theories (2nd ed.)*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Van Lier, L. (1996). *Interaction in the language curriculum: Awareness, autonomy, & authenticity*. Harlow, UK: Longman/Pearson.

Corrective Feedback

A typical conversation between two native speakers would not include language correction. This is, therefore, an important difference between truly authentic conversation and a speaking partner's conversation with a Pathway student. Language learners need to be able to test out the language they are learning. This means that learners should be able to speak freely without having to pause with each word and figure out what word they need next. At the same time, they should feel comfortable asking language-related questions of their speaking partners so that they also gain accuracy—using the right word (and the right grammar) at the right time.

Watch the video below to learn more about the use of synonyms



Keep the following things in mind as you decide whether or not to correct something in the student's speech:

AVOID:

- Over-correcting. You do not need to correct every mistake the student makes.
- Correcting errors that are beyond the student's current language level.
- Correcting too often. This will disrupt the student's fluency.

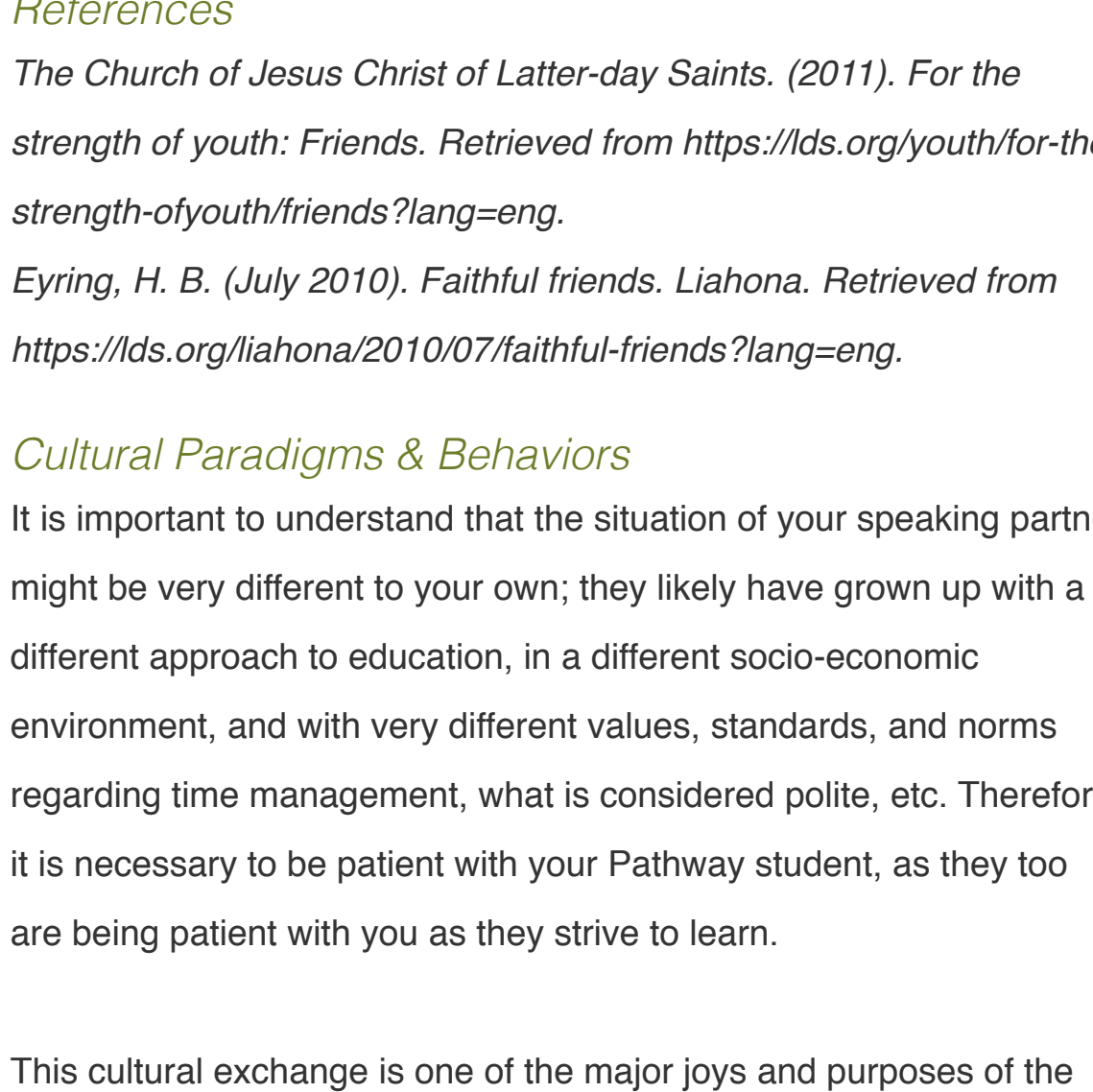
RATHER, DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Correct major errors that make it difficult to understand what the student is trying to say.
- Correct errors that the student makes over and over.
- Consider keeping a running list of errors, so that you can decide which ones are persistent enough or significant enough that you should correct them.

OFFER FEEDBACK AND CORRECTIONS AT THE FOLLOWING TIMES:

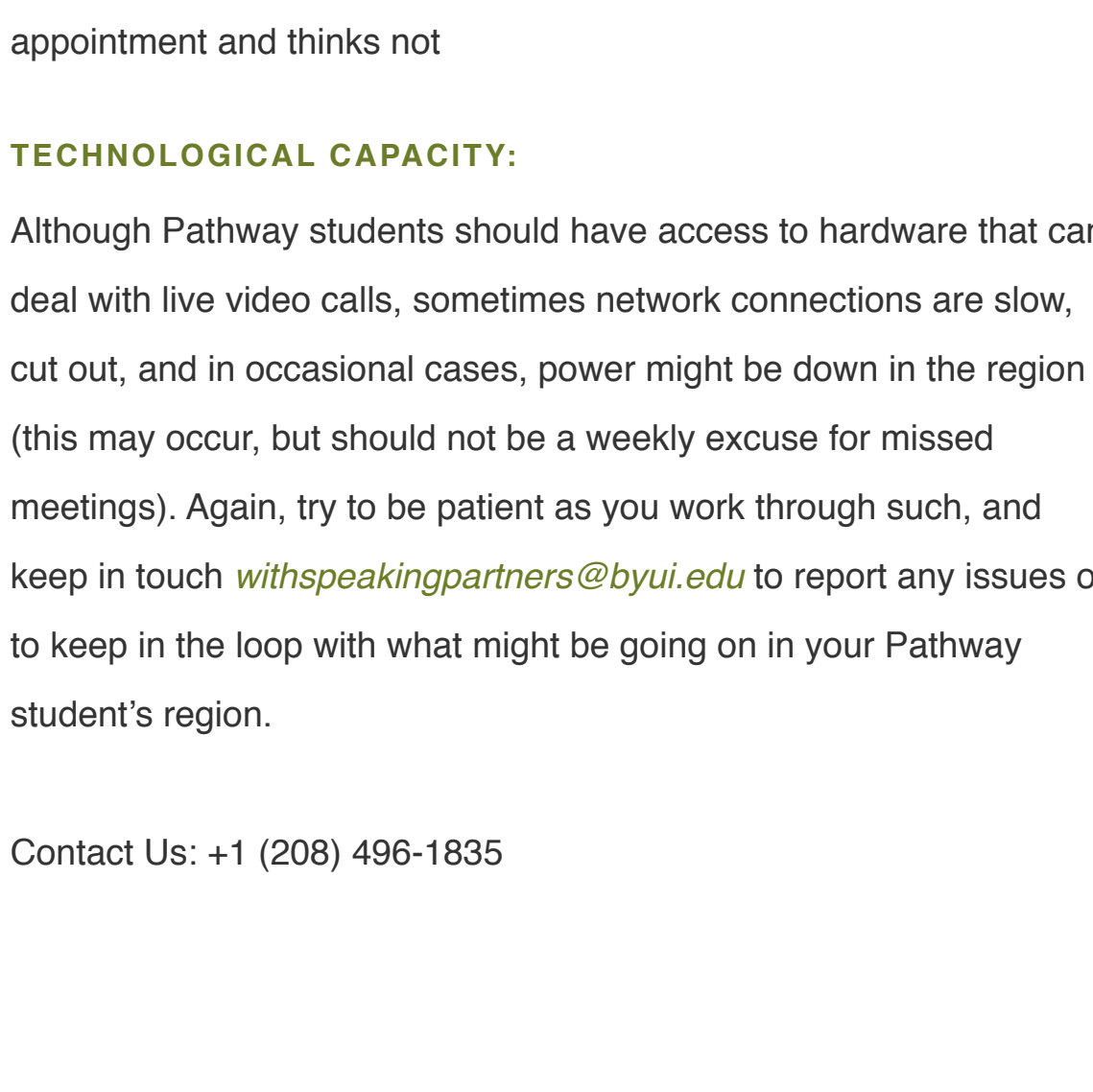
- During structured segments of the session that are set up for pronunciation or vocabulary practice.
- When the student asks for clarification or correction.
- During specific times that you and the student have agreed on for this purpose.

Watch the video below to learn more about error correction



When you meet for the first time with the Pathway student, you should begin a brief discussion on how you will give feedback. For example, you might explain that you will write down their mistakes while you are talking (so as not to interrupt the flow of the conversation) and that you will discuss some of these errors at the end of each meeting.

Watch the video below to learn more about when to give feedback



References

Deci, E. (1975). *Intrinsic motivation*. New York, NY: Plenum Press.

Dörnyei, Z. & Csizér, K. (1998). *Ten commandments for motivating language learners: Results of an empirical study*. *Language Teaching Research*, 2, 203–229.

Building Appropriate Relationships

The purpose of the Speaking Partner Program is to provide English speaking and listening practice for the Pathway English Language students. It is not appropriate for you to use this occasion to practice your foreign language skills. Also remember that you are not the student's instructor. In fact, the best way to look at your role is to consider yourself as meeting with a friend to discuss what they are learning about in their course.

The "For the Strength of Youth" pamphlet provides counsel on how to be a good friend, which speaking partners should strive to follow while working with the student. It states: "A true friend will encourage you to be your best self. ... Show interest in others and let them know you care about them. Treat everyone with kindness and respect" (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2011). The perfect example of this type of friend is the Savior. President Eyring (2010) explained that we also "become His friends as we serve others for Him. ... His motives are pure. ... The perfect friend, Jesus Christ, is completely selfless in offering happiness to others" (Eyring, 2010; see also D&C 84:77, Matt 25:40). Let the Savior be your perfect guide to building this relationship with the students.

If any serious problems do occur, or if, for some reason, the relationship is not appropriate, please contact us so we can guide you as to the procedure you should follow.

Watch the video below to learn more about appropriate relationships

References

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. (2011). *For the strength of youth: Friends*. Retrieved from <https://lds.org/youth/for-the-strength-of-youth/friends?lang=eng>.

Eyring, H. B. (July 2010). *Faithful friends*. *Liahona*. Retrieved from <https://lds.org/liahona/2010/07/faithful-friends?lang=eng>.

Cultural Paradigms & Behaviors

It is important to understand that the situation of your speaking partner might be very different to your own; they likely have grown up with a different approach to education, in a different socio-economic environment, and with very different values, standards, and norms regarding time management, what is considered polite, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to be patient with your Pathway student, as they too are being patient with you as they strive to learn.

This cultural exchange is one of the major joys and purposes of the Speaking Partner Program—learning to communicate across cultures is just as valuable, if not more so, than just learning the English language. Thus, it is important to note that culture is not simply sombreros, bowing to superiors, or a July 4th parade; culture runs deep into the minds and lives of every human being and differs according to one's exposure to varying world experiences.

Things to Be Aware of:

PUNCTUALITY:

In some cultures, time is viewed spatially rather than linearly as it is in the Western world; therefore don't be surprised if a student is 15 minutes late for an appointment and thinks nothing of it.

CONFRONTATION/POLITENESS:

is viewed spatially rather than linearly as it is in the Western world; therefore don't be surprised if a student is 15 minutes late for an appointment and thinks not

TECHNOLOGICAL CAPACITY:

Although Pathway students should have access to hardware that can deal with live video calls, sometimes network connections are slow, cut out, and in occasional cases, power might be down in the region (this may occur, but should not be a weekly excuse for missed meetings). Again, try to be patient as you work through such, and keep in touch with withspeakingpartners@byui.edu to report any issues or to keep in touch with what might be going on in your Pathway student's region.

Contact Us: +1 (208) 496-1835

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Speaking Partners

CONTACT US

If you have questions or concerns about your involvement with the Speaking Partner Program, please feel free to contact us. We also invite any Pathway missionaries and students participating in the Speaking Partner Program to contact us at the email address or phone number listed below.

speakingpartners@byui.edu

1.208.496.1835

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