Preface

An important explanation

Basic Conversation Strategies is a book for high-beginning and low-intermediate students of English. Although all the language skills are developed, the primary focus is on listening and then responding appropriately to what is said. If the students were given the text of the listening scripts, they would naturally read it. To prevent this and to encourage the students to depend on their ears, the book they work with is a **Student Workbook**. It does not include the scripts, and so it cannot be used without additional input. The teacher can give this input by reading the scripts at the back of this Teacher's Edition, but we recommend the use of the **two audio CD's** because most of what the students listen to is dialogue among two or three people. On the CD's the scripts are read dramatically by four native speakers of English. Using them will enhance both the effectiveness of the lessons and the students' enjoyment. It also ensures that the students hear the strategic language – rejoinders, tag questions, *etc.*– spoken naturally and pronounced clearly, including appropriate stress and intonation, by native speakers.

The introduction to this Teacher's Edition, which begins on page vi, explains the purpose and structure of the material and the methods used.

To make this material easy to work with and to hold down the price, we have in this **Teacher's Edition** included everything you will need to teach from. The first part of this volume is the full Student Workbook for easy reference. At the back, in the **Teacher's Notes** beginning on page 166, there are

- a detailed explanation for using the introductory warm-up lesson
- scripts both for introducing each unit and for the listening activities
- additional suggestions for implementing the exercises
- convenient feedback forms
- oral quizzes
- a list of words used in the text that are beyond the high-beginner level in Pro Lingua's frequency word list, *The Learner's Lexicon*

As you pepare and teach, you will want to flip back and forth in this Teacher's Edition between the Student Workbook in the front and the scripts in the back. A simple bookmark will facilitate this action.

Please note: Many experienced teachers feel they do not need "teacher's books." However, to use **Basic Conversation Strategies**, you will need the scripts and other material in this Teacher's Edition.

Introduction to the Teacher's Edition

Over the years, a certain type of ESL student has occasionally surfaced in our classes, one who always seems to be involved in enjoyable conversations. These students are not necessarily the most fluent speakers in the class, and they may not have the best listening skills or the largest vocabulary. However, whenever they are interacting, stimulating conversations happen.

After analyzing the interactive style of these students, we found some common characteristics:

- They are willing to start a conversation with others.
- When someone starts a conversation with them, they keep the conversation going.
- These students are focused on their conversation partners.
- They make their partners feel special by giving understanding responses (*e.g.,* rejoinders, such as "That's great!") and by asking additional questions.
- They do not dominate the conversation but are willing to contribute by offering some details about their ideas.
- Their participation is fluid. In other words, if the topic of a conversation shifts, they are able to respond naturally to the change and stay involved.

In a nutshell, these students have developed the **art of conversation**.

The goal of this text is to help high-beginning and low-intermediate ESL students not only to develop their speaking and listening skills but also to become good conversationalists. By adopting the characteristics of the "good conversationalists" described above, students are likely to find that speaking in English can be enjoyable, and others (including native English speakers) are likely to feel quite willing to continue to engage them in conversation. The result is longer conversations, resulting in further opportunities for the students to develop their oral skills.

The Warm-up Lesson

Because the format and use of this book is somewhat different from many textbooks that students are familiar with, it is as good idea to introduce the students to the book and how they will use it. The warm-up lesson introduces them to the directions, terminology, and procedures they will use with particular emphasis on understanding and following directions. Then they will be better able to begin Unit One and focus on the content, not the format of the material.

Each unit has three parts.

Part One: Focus on the Conversation Strategy

In this part, through listening and/or interactive exercises, students are introduced to the conversation strategy of the unit.

The features are:

- Giving understanding responses in the form of rejoinders (to show interest, happiness, sadness, and surprise)
- Using follow-up questions
- Asking clarification questions
- Asking questions
- Using small talk
- Starting and ending conversations
- Extending conversations
- Agreeing and disagreeing

Part Two: Practicing the Conversation Strategy

Each unit has exercises in which students practice using the conversation strategy in speaking tasks.

Part Three: Focused Listening

At first glance, it may seem that this book is mostly about speaking – responding and asking. However, to achieve the overall goal of this book, to become good conversationalists, the students need to develop good listening skills. If they don't understand what is said, they can't respond appropriately. In this third part, students engage in developing their listening skills through a variety of practice activities. If, for example, they can understand the first word of a sentence or question, this small piece of language can serve as a basis for preparing a response.

Special note on the jig-saw dialogs

The central practice activity in the book is a structured dialogue between a pair of students. Each student in the pair has half of a conversation and cannot see their partner's half. Student A starts the conversation by reading entry 1, Then Student B chooses between two possible responses. Then back to Student A, who responds to B, and so forth.

Student A	Student B
1. Hello.	2. Today is Tuesday. Hi, how are you?
3. Fine, thank you. And you?	4. My name is Bob. I'm fine, too. Thanks.

In some cases, responses may seem too obvious, but there are reasons underlying their apparent simplicity.

1) The students are assumed to be of limited proficiency.

2) The activity is designed to be confidence building. Being able to continue the flow of conversation without too much hesitation feels good and builds confidence.

3) Some students may need to work on their pronunciation, and so a wrong response can signal incorrect comprehension caused by poor pronunciation.