Introduction to Speaking Skills: Language for Discussion

OPENERS	RESPONSES

ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION

Could you explain what you mean | by this / ø |, please?

I'm not quite with you.

What do you mean?

| I'm sorry but / I'm afraid / ø | I don't | quite / really / ø | understand what you

| are trying to say. / mean by this. / are getting at. / are driving at. |

| I'm sorry but / I'm afraid / ø | I'm not clear about . . .

I'm not | quite / ø | sure I | understand that. / follow you. / know that you mean. |

I'm afraid I can't even begin to understand what you are trying to say.

ASKING FOR OPINIONS

What do you think | about / of | …?

What is you opinion | about / on / of | …?

How do you | find / feel about | …?

What are your | feelings / views | | concerning / regarding / about | …?

Has anybody got / ø | any | other / ø | ideas / views / opinions / suggestions | concerning / regarding / about / ø | …?

GIVING CLARIFICATION

Well, / ø | what / all | I'm | trying to say / saying | is that …

Well, / ø | what I mean is …

Well, / ø | the point is ...

EXPRESSING OPINIONS

Personally / Frankly / ø | I think that …

What I think is that…

It's | quite / ø | clear | to me / ø | that…

I feel …
It's obvious that …
In my opinion …
As far as I am concerned
The way I look at it …
As I see it …

I'd | just / ø | like to | point out that … / say… |

OPENERS

What | would / do | you suggest?

What / How | about …?

What would you say | about / to | … ?

How does the idea of … appeal to you?

Would / Will | it be a good idea | if / to | …?

Will / Won't / Would / Wouldn't / Do / Don't | you agree that … ?

Except for 'What do you suggest?' the above can also be used for:
EXPRESSING OPINIONS
EXPRESSING SUGGESTIONS

INTRODUCING A POINT

I'm | sure / convinced / absolutely certain | that …

It seems | quite clear / obvious / evident / ø | that…

Wouldn't you | agree / admit / say | that …

The | first / basic / main / most important | problem / point | seems to be … / is …

RESPONSES

I'm | absolutely / perfectly / quite / ø | convinced / certain / confident / sure | that you'll | all / ø | agree

with me / ø | when I say / ø | that …

EXPRESSING AGREEMENT

I couldn't agree more.
I agree entirely.
I fully agree with | what you have just said. / your comment.

That's | exactly / just / ø | what I was thinking. / what I think. / what I've been wanting to say. / what I've been saying all along. / how I feel about the problem. / how I see all this.

I'd / I'll | go / ø | along | with | that point of view. / you on that. / you there.

I think / ø | you have a very interesting point there. / there is a lot of truth in that argument. / there is a lot to be said for that point of view.

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OPENERS	**RESPONSES**

RESPONSES

I must say	I find that a		very
ø	I think that is a		most
			ø

convincing	argument.
pertinent	remark.
relevant	suggestion.
interesting	comment.
	line of reasoning.

INTRODUCING AN OPPOSITE POINT

I | take | your point but …
  | see |

Possibly,	but	on the other hand …
True,		if you look at this from a different point of view …
Yes,		looking at this from another point of view …

EXPRESSING SUGGESTIONS

Don't you think | I | could | …?
| you | should |
| he |
| she |
| it |
| we |
| they |

Don't you think it would be | a good | idea to …?
| a sensible |
| an |

One way out would be to …

Wouldn't it be possible for | me | to … ?
| you |
| him |
| her |
| it |
| us |
| them |

Have you | ever | thought of | …?
| ø | thought about |
| | considered |

Why don't | I | …?
| you |
| we |
| they |

EXPRESSING ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTIONS

Don't you think | I | 'd better…?
| you |
| he |
| she |
| it |
| we |

| Can't | I | … instead?
Couldn't	you
	he
	she
	it
	we
	they

| I must say | I'd rather …
| ø |

Wouldn't it be better | if | … ?
| to |

Don't you think it would be better | if | …?
| to |

EXPRESSING TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

That | certainly | sounds | like a good idea.
| ø | seems |

OPENERS	RESPONSES

Why doesn't | he / she / it | …?

That's | certainly / definitely / ø | a possibility. / something to consider. / something worth consideration.

Why not …?
Let's …
Let | me … / him … / her … / it … / them …

I thought / ø | I / you / he / she / it / we / they | would … / could …

EXPRESSING DISAGREEMENT IN A DISCUSSION

Wouldn't it be rather risky to …?
You haven't convinced me that …
Isn't that out of the question?
I can't accept that.
Do you expect me to believe that?
No way.
What an absurd idea!

Can / Can't / Could / Couldn't | I / you / he / she / it / we / they | … ?

I don't suppose | you / she / they | would | like to / fancy / ø | …?

I'd better…

All of the above can be preceded by:
You | might / may | not agree with me but …

See also ASKING FOR OPINIONS

EXPRESSING DOUBT

DEALING WITH DOUBTS AND OBJECTIONS

I | take / see | your point but …
I see what you mean but …
I agree with you on the whole but …

Perhaps, / Possibly, / Yes, | but …

I can assure you that …
You needn't worry about …
Look at it in another way …

This may seem | impossible / improbable | to you but …

OPENERS	**RESPONSES**

OPENERS

Oh, but don't you | think | that … ?
| see |

That's all very well but …
That's true | I suppose | but ...
| ø |

That's an interesting | point of view | but …
| comment |
| remark |

That's easier said than done. You see …
Well, you have a point there but …
It's all very well for you to say that but …

It | all | sounds | quite | interesting | but…
ø		most	convincing
		very
		ø

Might it not also be true that ...?
Isn't it just possible that …?
Can we be sure that …?
What will happen if …?
Yes, but you don't seem to realize that …

The above can also be used for:
POLITE DISAGREEMENT

See Also EXPRESSING INDECISION

EXPRESSION INDECISION

Oh, I don't know …
I'm not | really | sure.
| ø |

The above can also be used for:
POLITE DISAGREEMENT

RESPONSES

EXPRESSING DISAGREEMENT

I'm rather worried about what you said …
I honestly don't see why …
I don't think there is any need to …

I 'm not sure | I quite agree.
I don't think | I'll go along with you on that.
| I'll go along with you there.
| it would be advisable to …
| I can accept that suggestion.

You see …
I wouldn't agree.

I don't agree at all.
You can't really mean that.
You don't mean that, do you?
You don't seem to realize that …
Surely you realize that …
Are you really trying to say that …?

You don't seem to understand what I'm | driving at.
| trying to say.
| saying.

I'm afraid | that's | quite | out of the question.
ø | | ø |

Yes, but | on the other hand…
| you can't deny that…
| you've got to remember that…
| don't forget that…

It's not as easy as all that. You see …

Well, | actually …
| to be quite honest …
| I'm afraid that ….

Oh, do you really think so?

Most of the above can be preceded by:
That's very good idea but …

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OPENERS	**RESPONSES**

MAKING EVERYBODY ACTIVE

INTERRUPTING

What do you think, Mrs. Davis?

By the way …
Sorry to interrupt but …

| Don't | you agree, Miss Pullen? |
| Do | |

| That 's | all | very interesting but … |
| | ø | |

I don't know what Mr. Millington thinks but …

You're very quiet, Mrs. Patterson.

| Excuse me but | that reminds me … |
| ø | |

| You haven't said | anything | so far, Dr Loft. |
| | much | |

| I'm afraid | I've got | to interrupt you | here. |
| I'm sorry but | I have | | ø |

Let's hear what Mrs. Patterson	thinks.
	says.
	has to say.

| I'm afraid | I've got | something | important | to tell you. |
| I'm sorry but | I have | | ø | |

EXPRESSING EXASPERATION at not being listened to

BRINGING A DISCUSSION BACK TO THE POINT

| Why doesn't | anybody | ever | listen to me? |
| Won't | | ø | take any notice of what I'm saying? |

Please come to the point …
The whole point is that …
Could you stick to the point, please?
Perhaps we could get back to the main point.
That's off the point.

| Why | can't | you listen to me | for once? |
| | won't | | ø |

| That's | all | very interesting but I don't think it's really |
| | ø | |

to the point.

| I'm afraid | that's not the point. |
| ø | you've missed the point. |

| Can we leave that and | get | back to … |
| | go | |

We seem to be talking at cross-purposes.

| This isn't | very | relevant, | is it? |
| | ø | | ø |

(Taken from Golebiowska, A., 1990. **Getting Students to Talk.** Cambridge: Prentice Hall, pp.141-152.)