



Basketball is a fast game. Players pass the ball from one person to another quickly and take turns to shoot and score points.

It's not just our personalities that determine our conversational style. Researchers have found that culture is important as well.

Susan Steinbach, an instructor at the University of California, has an interesting way of explaining the cultural differences. She compares them to different sports.

In some cultures, being considerate in conversations is a top priority. Interrupting is often rude and people may wait for one person to finish before they speak. Who starts a conversation is often important. In Japan or Korea, for example, seniority may matter, so a younger person might wait for an older one to speak first. Susan compares this with the sport of ¹ _____.

In other cultures, it's more important to show that you're engaged in a conversation. People might do that with lots of gestures, strong eye contact and also by interrupting. If you're listening to a conversation in Russia, Greece, Africa or Central and South America, for example, you may find more than one person is speaking at a time. Susan compares this with ² _____.

And some cultures have a mixture of these styles. In the US, UK, Australia and Canada, for example, speakers pass the topic to one another quickly and everyone is expected to take turns. People interrupt each other a lot but only at certain times. They generally wait until someone comes to the end of a thought and then jump in. Speakers overlap* each other briefly* as they change topics. Susan says it's like ³ _____.

overlap: when speakers overlap each other, they speak at the same time

briefly: for a short time

Listening: Developing conversations

6 **2.6** Listen to a conversation about a football match. Why does the conversation not develop?

7 **2.7** Listen to another conversation. How does the man help it develop?

8 Listen to the conversation again and complete the missing words.

A: Great match last night.

B: Yes, ¹ _____.

A: I thought Pato played well.

B: Yes he was ² _____. Definitely their best player.

A: But do you think Milan deserved that second goal?

B: No, I think it was a mistake.

³ _____ ?

A: Yeah. It was a bad decision by the referee.

B: ⁴ _____ the Barcelona match tonight.

A: Do you think they'll win?

9 Which of the man's answers comment on what the woman has said? Which introduce a new idea to the conversation?

Speaking: Passing the ball

10 Think of two more hobbies or pastimes to add to this list.

stamp collecting golf reading for pleasure
video games gardening watching television walking
cycling fishing painting working on cars

11 Work in small groups and play a conversation game. Your goal is to hold conversations about the hobbies in exercise 10 for as long as possible without interruptions or hesitations.

1 Choose someone in your group to be a timekeeper. They should time how long your conversations last.

2 Take a piece of paper and screw it up to make a ball. From now on, if you want to speak, you must hold the ball.

3 When someone wants to say something, they can hold out their hand so the speaker can pass them the ball.

4 The speaker can also throw the ball to another group member. The person receiving the ball must then ask a question or make a comment to develop the conversation.

5 Long pauses or silence are not allowed. If the person with the ball hesitates for too long, the clock stops and the group has to start again with a new hobby as the topic.

Possible conversation openers:

I enjoy ... because ...

I think ... is boring because ...

An interesting thing about ... is ...