

Conversation task: Yes, but is it art?

Level: ISE III

Focus: Conversation task

Aims: To develop students' active vocabulary for discussing different art forms and to expand their knowledge of useful phrases to use in conversation

Objectives: To justify an argument by stating what makes something art and to agree or disagree with someone's opinion on the topic of art forms

Subject area: The arts

Language functions: Developing and justifying an argument, and evaluating options, past actions/course of events and different statements – other ISE III language functions may also be used (see page 77)

Lexis: Art forms and phrases used to express opinions

Materials needed: One worksheet per student

Timing: 1 hour

Preparation

1. Print or copy one worksheet per student.
2. Find images online or in a book of different pieces of art and print them out. Ensure you have one set of pictures for every two students.

In class

1. Explain to the class that they will be doing an activity today in class that will help them to practise for the Conversation task of the ISE III exam.
2. Tell the students that the topic of today's lesson is 'art'. Write the following three questions on the board and tell students to discuss the questions in pairs:
 - ▶ **What makes something art?**
 - ▶ **Do you like art?**
 - ▶ **What are the most popular art forms in your country?**Monitor and assist if necessary. Carry out feedback as a group.
3. Write the following 10 art forms on the board: **'photography', 'computer games', 'painting', 'dance', 'comic books', 'architecture', 'web design', 'music', 'literature', 'fashion design'**. Ask students to discuss the meaning of the words in pairs. Carry out feedback as a group.
4. Give each student a copy of the worksheet and ask them to complete task A. Tell the students to rank the art forms from 1 to 10 with 1 meaning the art form is really art and 10 meaning this is not art at all. When students have finished, ask them to compare their top 10 in pairs and discuss the differences. Carry out group feedback and elicit why something may/may not be a form of art.
5. Put students in pairs and tell each pair to choose one art form. Tell them to carry out task B. Ask the students to write down the art form on a piece of paper and then three arguments as to why the art form is art and three arguments as to why it is not art. They could put these under the headings 'Arguments for' and 'Arguments against'. Monitor and correct errors.
6. Tell students to pass their paper to the pair sitting on their right and ask them to add one argument for or against. Repeat this until each pair has added a comment on at least two different art forms. Ask the students to return the papers back to the correct students.
7. Elicit from the students phrases to express opinions, and phrases to express agreement and disagreement and write them on the board. Ask students to look at the sentence starters in the table under task C and tell them to add three more from the ones they have discussed. Drill the sentence starters chorally and individually.

Preparation activities for ISE III Speaking & Listening

8. Ask students to carry out task C. Tell them they should have a discussion based on the arguments on their new piece of paper. One student should play the role of the examiner and should start the discussion with '*Let's talk about art. Do you think ... is/are a real form of art?*' The other student should reply with one of the sentence starters on the worksheet. After three to four minutes, collect the papers and redistribute them. Ask the students to repeat the task but now they should swap the roles. Monitor and write the errors you hear on the board for later group error correction.
9. Have a whole-class discussion on at least two of the art forms. Encourage students to use the sentence starters.
10. Now draw the students' attention to the errors that you have written up on the board. Ask the students to discuss in pairs what is wrong with the sentences or phrases and to correct them. Correct the errors as a group. Elicit the correct answer and the reason.
11. Tell the students that in the Conversation task of the ISE III exam they need to be able to develop and justify an argument. They need to take initiative and they should use a range of phrases as introduced in this lesson to manage the conversation. They can prepare for this by practising with another student and alternating the examiner role. Tell them that they should repeat the task until a wide range of phrases are used naturally.

Extension activity

Find images online or in a book of different pieces of art covering a wide range of genres. Suggestions: Mona Lisa (L Da Vinci), The Persistence of Memory (S Dali), traditional Chinese painting, cave painting, Fountain (M Duchamp), Guernica (P Picasso), The Night Watch (Rembrandt), Number 31 (J Pollock), Campbell's Soup Can (A Warhol), etc. Give each pair a set of pictures. Ask students to discuss, in pairs, whether these are pieces of art or not.

Further support activity

Allow students to talk about the same art form when they change partners. This way they will repeat their ideas.

Homework

Ask students to find a famous piece of art online or in a book and bring a printout or photocopy of it to class. Ask the students to report back in the next class whether the piece of art they found is, according to them, art or not.

Student worksheet: Yes, but is it art?

Task A

Rank the art forms from 1 to 10.

1 = This art form is really art.

10 = This is not art at all.

Art forms	Rank number
photography	
computer games	
painting	
dance	
comic books	
architecture	
web design	
music	
literature	
fashion design	

Task B

Work with a partner. Choose one art form. On a piece of paper, write down the art form. Then under the headings 'Arguments for' write three reasons why the art form can be considered art and under the heading 'Arguments against' three reasons why it is not art.

Task C

Work with a partner. Student A plays the role of the examiner, student B is the candidate. Use the question and the sentence starters below in your discussion.

Student A: Examiner

Let's talk about art. Do you think ... is/are a real form of art?

Preparation activities for ISE III Speaking & Listening

Student B: Candidate

I don't think ...	The way I see it is that ...	In my opinion, ...
I would say that ...	Yes, to a degree. Having said that, ...	From my point of view, ...
To be honest, I don't think ...	Well, it's not that clear-cut because ...	Generally, I think ... is considered art but in my honest opinion ...