

**Teaching Materials Ideas on Soliciting and Giving Advice**  
[As part of a larger set of materials on interactive academic listening/speaking]

**A. Strategies for soliciting advice**

**Activity 1 (Listening)**

Listen to the following two extracts in which speakers solicit advice.  
Write down below who you think the participants in each extract are, and what the academic speech event might be.

*Extract A*

1. Participants: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Context: \_\_\_\_\_

*Extract B*

1. Participants: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Context: \_\_\_\_\_

Listen again to the two extracts and try to write down the phrases the speakers use for soliciting (asking for) advice

*Extract A*

Phrases for soliciting advice: \_\_\_\_\_

*Extract B*

Phrases for soliciting advice: \_\_\_\_\_

In Extract B advice is given. What phrases are used to *offer* advice? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now take a look at the transcripts for these extracts and see if you were right:

*Extract A*

[Event: Statistics Office Hours]

S1: um I have to\_ and then I have to go away this weekend what should I do? I have to leave tomorrow morning so what should I do? I wanna\_ I'm going on a plane and I wanna do a bunch of practice for stats [S2: mhm ] so what sh- what would you recommend?

*Extract B*

[Event: Academic Advising]

S1: I want to start working on some other major and, [S2: mhm ] one major I'm interested in economics but I want to do something else with economics, what do you suggest? math? stats? what would go well? [S2: no let me\_ I feel like ] a double major?

S2: you can do a double major or did you know that you can concentrate in mathematical economics?

(...)

S2: i mean that's a possibility to take another humanities if you're thinking about maybe majoring in statistics, you might wanna go on and take Calc Three.

**Activity 2 (Speaking / Writing)**

The above solicitations for advice are phrased as direct questions

What other phrases could you use to ask for advice in the following situations?

1. You want to know if your advisor agrees that you take an intro statistics class
2. You would like some feedback on a paper you have written

**B. Rating advice/suggestion examples for degree of obligation or commitment**

**(Listening / Reading)**

Listen to and read each of the following excerpts of someone giving advice.

- Try to figure out who the advice-giver might be, and who they are talking to.
- Think about how compelling or imperative the advice or suggestion sounds—i.e. how obligated do you think the speaker is to follow the advice?
- Rate the five extracts from 1 to 5, with 1 being the weakest and 5 being the strongest or most obligatory.
- Circle or underline key words that help you decide how to interpret it.

\_\_\_ I mean that's a possibility to take another humanities if you're thinking about maybe majoring in statistics, you might wanna go on and take Calc Three.

\_\_\_ so\_ now one thing I I was gonna say a minute ago one thing that you might do, to help yourself out here is, proofread the way you proofread now. f- for one, move through the through the paper going through the whole paper from beginning to end. and then, start from the back. and don't proofread, with any kind of logic in your mind that's gonna control the way you see things. just read sentence by sentence from the back to the front.

\_\_\_ you could, quote Williams for that cuz she does talk about how that may be happening in downtown, um, in the downtown and Alma Valley

\_\_\_ one other thing about the um, abstract (...) I think it would be good, uh to say something about the sources of your, [mhm] I I mean in an abstract for a dissertation I think it's always a good thing to include, what is this based on?

\_\_\_ so when you're laying out the comparison between Novi and Howell in the beginning, you probably wanna say that kinda thing right? and maybe even in that paragraph where you start to describe, um, what your uncle says about Novi.

**C. Interpreting examples of advice/suggestions (Listening / Reading)**

*Should*-statements are less common than other patterns or strategies for giving advice or suggestions, and they convey much stronger authority and can be perceived as more face-threatening. So, for example, statements like the following can sound harsh or overly authoritative or direct:

You shouldn't use so many words.

You should revise this sentence to make it shorter.

You should make sure that each paragraph (or sentence) has only one clear main idea.

You should be more specific.

Choose 2 of the above statements and think about some ways of rephrasing them to convey roughly the same idea in a softer or more indirect way.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Here are several excerpts that make approximately the same point as one of the above statements. For each excerpt, answer the following questions:

- a.) How direct or indirect does it seem to you? Rate each excerpt on a scale from 1 to 5, as in exercise B above.
- b.) Does the speaker use any *hedging* or *softening* devices? Circle these.
- c.) Underline the phrases that indicate some kind of advice. Is it phrased as criticism or as advice/suggestion? If both, label the part that is criticism and the part that is advice.
- d.) On the line below each excerpt, summarize the essence of the advice and/or criticism, being as brief and direct as you can. (i.e. rewrite as simple statements and imperative commands; the first one is done for you.)

1. um, okay. this is a tiny bit repetitive in here so you might just wanna somehow tighten it up, um.

\_\_\_\_\_ This is repetitive. Tighten it up. \_\_\_\_\_

2. um, here's a case where, I think that that to begin with with that move into into the Housman poem, it's a little too, um... informal and casual for the rest of the writing um, here. uh that that maybe what you could do\_ I mean here's another instance where, you could use a while transition and say, while in Larkin's poem this happens in To an Athlete Dying Young Housman uses, mokay. that that, you wanna make a distinction and you need to to do that. and again, uh, you're using you're using more words than you need to.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. it seems to me like in this paragraph there are lots of totally different things going on. um, and in general you should do this throughout the paper too. you need to go through and ask yourself what the point of each paragraph is, right? um and make sure it has a point, and make sure it says what its point is, okay? [S1: okay ]
- 

4. okay now this is a bit of a different point. right? um, I mean, this first point about um, the mall becoming a place for people to socialize, is directly tied to your, thesis right? [S1: okay ] this is a point that you do wanna make, but you don't wanna make it in the same paragraph. right?
- 

5. now here's a place where you could pull in more, specifically um, you know partly from the Crawford i think um, but you could pull in more specifically I mean, all businesses exist to make money. right? [S1: mhm ] I mean that's the nature of, capitalism. um, so... you gotta be a little more specific than "malls exist to make money." you know what I mean?
-