

Topic 5. Using diplomatic language

(Highlight any of the language that is not very clear to you and ask your teachers questions.)

Step 1. Skim through the conversation identifying or confirming the parts that might have posed some challenge or confusion during the initial listening.

Step 2. Listen to the conversation again following the script in order to clarify all the details. Do it several times and even try to shadow (say together with our speakers) for clarity, fluency or internalization.

Step 3. Listen to the conversation further for more and more complete familiarization. **Make sure to get back to it from time to time even when you work on other tasks or topics.**

Step 4. Select some of the language items from the **Language tool file** to personalize if needed (If you don't feel confident about some of the language items on the list, try to personalize them; feel free to share with the rest of the group and your teachers.)

Conversation transcript

Alison: Hi there, **thank you for** meeting with me on such short notice.

Abir: Of course, anytime. You mentioned an issue has come up. **Is it anything serious?**

Alison: **Hopefully nothing too major; it's just that** we've reached a bit of an impasse on step four — the one we originally thought might be problematic. **So far, despite our best efforts, we haven't been able to** replicate anything close to the yields quoted in the literature. **Given the tight timeline, I thought it would be best to** consult with you on how to proceed.

Abir: I see. **What're you thinking?**

Alison: **The good news is that** we've already gone ahead and optimized the remaining steps, so **provided** we can resolve this issue, **we're all set**. **The problem is, if we** push ahead with the current yield, we won't have sufficient starting material to get the required amount, **so we could really do with** some additional time to refine this key step before going to production.

Abir: I'm afraid we don't have an awful lot of time to spare.

Alison: Yes, **we appreciate that** time is tight at your end, but **would it be at all possible** for you to give us another couple of weeks to investigate further?

Abir: Normally, that wouldn't be a problem — as you know, we usually try to factor in a reasonable time buffer to allow for issues like this — **but I'm afraid on this occasion, we really don't have a great deal of wiggle room.** The animals are already in the process of being prepped, so we only have a small window in which to perform the trials. **If we miss that window, it'd mean** arranging for a fresh set of test subjects, **which would** push us back at least another couple of months.

Alison: I see. **In that case,** we'll double our efforts and do everything we can to expedite the optimization work.

Abir: Thanks, I appreciate that. **But just to be on the safe side, perhaps we should** explore the other options too. **I know** we dismissed it **before, but do you think it's worth** revisiting the techniques that were detailed in the alternate paper we looked at? They definitely talked about their techniques being able to produce acceptable yields. I know you were doubtful, but I think it's worth trying.

Alison: It's certainly an interesting idea that I'd love to do more research on. **But in view of** the time constraint, **I'm not sure it's** practical. **Even if** everything goes smoothly, **I'm not sure we'd** have sufficient time to develop a robust process in such a short timeframe.

Abir: **Do you not think it's at least** worth trying?

Alison: **I don't want to** dismiss it outright, **but it seems to me that** it would be an all-or-nothing approach. If it works, that'd be great, but **as you know** with this kind of experimental chemistry, **there's no guarantees**.

Abir: **I understand your concerns, but it looks quite** promising to me. **What makes you think** it has such a low chance of success?

Alison: **Don't get me wrong. I absolutely agree with you that** this technique has enormous potential. **If we had** more time, **I'd love to** put effort into developing it. **It's just that based on** our previous experience, **we suspect** it'll take too long to perfect. **Although** we haven't attempted this specific technique before, **we have** tried scaling up a few similar procedures in the past and the results have always been hit and miss.

Abir: I **get you but** do you see any viable alternative. **I'd prefer to** go with the safe option too, **but if** it can't deliver the desired yield, **then we may need to** take the risk.

Furthermore, the potential benefits if it succeeds are significant, and not just for this project. If we can successfully implement this idea, it'd give us a distinct competitive edge over our competitors in future projects.

Alison: I **do understand your position**, and **we'd certainly be happy to** try it out. **However**, I have some concerns about putting all our resources into that approach, **as** we could end up losing the whole batch. **If** we continue with our current process and assign some additional FTEs to it, **I'm confident that** we can deliver half of the required amount on time and the remainder in subsequent batches. **It's not as** efficient **as** we'd like, **but it will get the job done**. **If you're willing to** take on the additional risk from trying the experimental technique, **then we'll do our best to** make it happen, **but there's always the chance that** we won't get any useable product from the reaction.

Abir: I see.

Alison: **And if you like**, we can **always** start research on the alternate route once we **get** this project **out of the way**.

Abir: Okay. Thanks for bringing the issue to my attention. It seems **we've reached an important junction**. I'll **need to** consult my team. When do you need an answer by?

Alison: **The more time the better when it comes to** experimental chemistry. We can continue working on the current process for now.

Abir: Okay. I **need to make sure we understand** all of the possible repercussions of going through with this strategy. I'll **get back to you first thing** tomorrow with this decision.

Alison: I'll **be ready**. **In the meantime**, if we have any success with this step, I'll inform you right away.