

## 2.3 Skills: Presenting a case at a meeting

### Learning outcomes

- Present the benefits and stages of a future change.
- Use discourse markers to organise and clarify your arguments.
- Analyse differences in presentation styles across cultures.

### Introduction

- 1 What are the main differences between a meeting and a presentation?
- 2 Have you ever had to give a formal presentation in class or at work? How did you feel?
- 3 Would you prefer to give a formal presentation or lead a Q&A (question and answer) session where you have to provide the answers?
- 4 Complete the table below comparing formal presentations and Q&A sessions in meetings. The first has been done for you.



	Formal presentation	Q&A session
Turn-taking	Not usually	Yes
Spontaneous speech		
Communication is one-way		
Questions and answers		
Rhetorical questions (asked for effect, not for an answer)		
Active listening (responses, e.g. <i>yes</i> , <i>uh-huh</i> )		
Immediate responses		

5 Which requires more preparation, a presentation or a Q&A session? Can you prepare for a Q&A session?

6 Choose one of the following:

- Your company has launched a new product, e.g. food, clothing, media. Think of what the product might be. It is not selling well and your boss wants to know why. Think of a course of action, and present it.
- Think about how you could market a product that sells well in your domestic market to an international audience. Think of ways of making this product popular abroad, and present it.

### Listening 1: Upgrading the operating system



1.12

When making a presentation at a meeting, the speaker usually presents the case first, and a discussion or Q&A session then follows. You are going to listen to a presentation at the Tokyo office of a multinational bank's IT department. The presenter, Alison, is describing the upgrading of a new operating system.

1 Before you listen, think of two reasons why installing an up-to-date operating system (OS) is important for a company.

**2** The presentation has the following stages. Put them into a logical order. Then listen to the presentation and see if you were correct.

- A Giving background information
- B Outlining the problem and the risk
- C Outlining how the solution will be achieved in practice
- D Starting the presentation
- E Stating the proposed change

#### Intercultural analysis: Presentation styles

Presentation styles are different in different cultures. For example, in the USA the main point of the presentation is usually made at the start. In some countries, like Japan, people often give the background and state the main point near the end. The presentation at the meeting you have listened to is from an American bank in Japan.

Which style do you think is preferred in the workplace in the Listening? Which style do you prefer? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

#### Language focus: Discourse markers

Discourse markers link segments of talk to one another and show how speakers organise, manage and feel about the information. They do not contain information. Common markers include: *So, I mean, right, on the other hand, it's time to, then*. A presentation that contains many discourse markers is easier to follow.

**1** Here are some sentences from the presentation you heard in Listening 1. Underline the discourse markers.

- 1 OK, we may as well start.
- 2 So, our Windows operating system. We've been using our present OS in Japan for at least four years and it's time to upgrade.
- 3 It's more a question of what will happen if we don't upgrade ... Obviously, this creates a business risk for us because ... The longer we wait, the greater this risk becomes.
- 4 So, how do we start? Well, I've already done this.
- 5 So, just to give you a bit of background. Mainstream support for the present system expired ...

**2** Match the sentences with the five stages in Listening 1 exercise 2.

#### Listening 2: Q&A session

1.13

Following the presentation, there is a Q&A session. One person in the audience, Nigel, asks about the global implementation of the new operating system (OS). He wants to know if any departments have implemented this system in all of their worldwide offices. Listen to the recording.

**1** What answer does the presenter give to the question?

**2** The answer given by the speaker is not very clear. What are some possible reasons for this?

**3** When answering questions, the following format is useful:

Showing you will rephrase, e.g. *So you mean ...*

Rephrasing, e.g. *You want to know ...*

Checking the response is sufficient, e.g. *Does that answer your question?*

Listen again and see if the speaker follows this format.

**4** Practise this format in pairs by asking each other a question.

#### Output: Presenting a case

Stage 1

Look back at Listening 1 and the five stages in a presentation. Work in pairs. Prepare a 3-minute presentation on one of these topics:

- The problem of motivating lazy workers/students
- The introduction of new working hours at your workplace / place of study

Use the five stages to put your presentation in a logical order, and make sure you use discourse markers to organise your presentation. Remember to note some key language from the audio script (page 149). Make your solutions as imaginative as you like. Then try to predict two or three questions that you might be asked in a Q&A session. Practise answering them following the steps in Listening 2.

Stage 2

Make your presentation to another pair, and encourage questions afterwards. Listen to the other pair's presentation, and ask some follow-up questions.

▶ Watch Sequence 1 on the DVD to find out more about Business environment.