

**On
Speaking
Terms**

Conversational English for Advanced Students

JIMMY G. HARRIS and RON HUBE

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Introduction

This book of dialogs has been successfully used in courses at the Central Institute of English Language in Bangkok for over two years. The dialogs are written in conversational English. Intensive oral practice is provided here to give the student enough control of spoken English to be able to create his own conversations. This book is for **ADVANCED** students, that is, students who are capable of dealing with all the basic structures of English. These dialogs could be taught by native speakers of English or any person who has had experience speaking English with native speakers.

Arrangement. The dialogs have been arranged topically into groups. In each set the first dialogs tend to be shorter than the later ones. Although there is some continuity within sets of dialogs they are not meant to be done in sequence but rather the teacher should move around among the topics for variety of approach.

Replacement is the general technique employed in these dialogs to both teach new phrases and develop fluency. A native speaker **COULD** have used the new phrase in the **SAME SITUATION** as the old one. Usually the substitutions and paraphrases are synonymous and no essential difference in meaning would result from exchanging one for the other. In some cases however, although the words or phrases are equivalent in the dialog situation, they would not always convey the same meaning in a different situation. In case of doubt, **ASK A NATIVE SPEAKER** of English, or try another dialog.

Recordings. One reel-to-reel tape has been prepared to accompany the text consisting of the main dialog of each lesson. The actors on the recording speak standard American English and provide your students with several native models to imitate.

The following are some suggested steps for the successful use of this book.

1. *Comprehension.* The teacher says the dialog twice, (or plays the taped dialog) taking both parts, while the students listen to catch the meaning of the situation and phrases. **NO BOOKS ARE OPEN.** The teacher then asks questions on the content of the passage to determine

how well the students have mastered the situation presented. It is very important that *Implication* questions be practiced and listened for by the students. If students are familiar with only straight factual type questioning the teacher could start off the lesson with an *Implication*-type question, and ask the students to look for it. This shouldn't have to be done more than a couple of times. Each lesson has an *Implication* question suggested to give the idea. None of them have "right answers"; they are there to get the student guessing in English. It's surprising how often the students come up with a situation or a context which is perfectly reasonable but which the teacher has not thought of. This should not take more than ten minutes.

2. *Reading and Explanation.* The teacher now goes through the dialogs with the students reading along, checking the written form of what they have already heard. Questions are asked to see if the students understand the concepts. In some lessons this could lead to a long period of class discussion about the way you say certain things in English. This should be encouraged. We are not teaching dialogs. We are using dialogs to teach English.

3. *Oral Repetition.* The students now learn the dialogs, repeating with the teacher and in groups until they can say the dialogs without looking at their books. At this point of memorization go immediately to the exercises. The students should be able to do this after about fifteen minutes of repetition.

4. *Substitution.* Students are now asked to replace words and short phrases (the italicized words in the main dialog) with the equivalents in the section marked *Substitution*. These are essentially mechanical, and should give the students no problems except for pronunciation, which will have to be cleaned up by the teacher. If there are two substitutions for one line then there will be four possible readings for that line. After the *Substitution* section is completed the entire dialog with its new phrases could be repeated a few times to make sure that the students have not lost the rhythm of the sentences.

5. *Paraphrase.* Here the entire dialog has been paraphrased. The

rhythm and intonation of the new sentences will have to be practiced by the whole class, with the teacher modeling them. A good final exercise for the *Paraphrase* section is for the teacher to say the lines of the original dialog with the class responding with the *Paraphrase*.

6. *Oral Presentation*. The students now come before the class in pairs and present one of the hundreds of possibilities for the dialog they have been practicing, using any of the phrases that have already been learned. This is done without books, after a few minutes of silent study. Students should be encouraged not to say the entire dialog as it originally appeared, and no one should repeat exactly the same form as anyone else. The final product must be in normal conversational English and contain the same ideas as the original dialog. I've found that the best way to do this is to make a grid on the board, three spaces across (for the three versions) and six/seven/eight spaces down (for the lines in the dialog.) Then by randomly filling one square per line, get the class to memorize the combination so produced and then call on two students to say the resulting dialog. It works for most dialogs; where it doesn't, the teacher and class try to figure out why. The reason will be linguistically interesting.

7. *Composition*. This means ORAL composition, not written composition. The students are now required to compose a new dialog using the same structural patterns and logical sequence as the one they have already experimented with, but changing the situation. The first nine dialogs of the book show how this is done. (The part the student would be expected to fill in is italicized). The students use the clues given in the *Composition* section to figure out the new situation. Sometimes the new situations are so similar to the old ones that only a few changes in vocabulary are required. In other cases a little more imagination is necessary. Students can work on these as a class with the teacher, in small groups, or even individually as a test. Some of the new dialogs should be performed as a concluding presentation. Never give a *Composition* section for homework; students should never sleep on their mistakes.

8. *Discussion*. A simple discussion question has been added to every dialog. These are related to the content of the passages, though sometimes not very. They are split between typical serious discussion topics and explanations, and a study of English sayings, quotations and clichés which may be useful as a take off point in looking at the way English speaking people look at life. These questions give the students practice with conditional and comparative constructions. The teacher can expand the process with further remarks and requests for information and opinions. This is not intended to lead to heated discussions of vital importance but to the student's mastery of the grammatical means by which discussions are carried on in English.

The combination of all these exercises should lead the students a long way on the path from memorized dialog to original conversation, while avoiding the problems which often go with so-called free discussions.

Our experience has been that classes using this material take about two hours to go through the dialogs and exercises. Good classes tend to take longer. This book has also been used with private students in a tutorial situation.

To get the maximum benefit from this book there are a few more suggestions which teachers should be aware of.

1. *Do Not Do the Dialogs in Any Predictable Order*. If the students know which dialog is coming next, any attempt at using them for aural comprehension is lost.

2. *The Number of Dialogs Completed By the Class Is of No Importance*. This book is designed to give students practice with spoken English, it is neither a course nor a textbook, but resource material. As long as the students are speaking English and discovering new ways of saying things they are using the book as it is intended.

3. *Dialogs Left Out Are Not Wasted*. No one is going to be able to do the whole book with a class. When the student leaves the classroom he will have plenty of dialogs with which to keep practicing his English, although he should have access to a native speaker for matters of usage

and pronunciation. The standardized format allows the student to dip into the book at any page where the situation interests him.

It is hoped that with the number of dialogs presented here in either total or unfinished form, there will be adequate scope for the advanced student to increase his ability to converse naturally in normal spoken English. The methods should help the student to transfer the classroom experience into the real world of conversation.

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Contents

SAMPLES	1
STUDY	10
WORK	21
HOME	35
FOOD & DRINK	45
TRAVEL	52
HEALTH	61
PEOPLE	69
COMMUTING	79
LEISURE	89

Samples

TIME FLIES

- A: I started *going to night school* three years ago.
B: Has it been that long already?
A: Yes, it has, but it really doesn't seem that long.
B: Time *sure flies* when you're *busy*, doesn't it?
A: Yes, it does.



Implication How old are the speakers?

Substitution

attending/evening classes
really passés quickly/working hard

Paraphrase

- A: I've been taking courses at night for three years now.
B: Has it really been that long?
A: Yes, but it seems like only yesterday that I walked into my first class.
B: As they say, hours seem like minutes when you're enjoying your work.
A: I know what you mean.

Composition*

- A: Today is my third wedding anniversary.
B: *Have you really been* married that long?
A: *Yes, I have. It doesn't seem that long since I walked down the aisle.*
B: *Time seems to fly when you're happy, doesn't it?*
A: *It sure does.*

*In the units that follow, students will be asked to complete the composition section themselves. The phrases shown here in italics will henceforth only be hinted at by key words.

Discussion

When does time seem to fly for you? When does it seem to stand still?



Samples

STUDYING AT HOME

- A: Where does he study?
 B: He studies *at home*.
 A: Does he *study alone*?
 B: No. He studies with his brother.
 A: *How much time* do they spend studying?
 B: *Two hours per night*, five nights a week.

Substitution

- in his room
 work by himself
 How long/study
 A couple of/every single



Implication Who is having this conversation? (two students? two teachers?)

Paraphrase

- A: Does he study in the library?
 B: No, he studies in his house.
 A: Does he study alone or with someone else?
 B: He and his brother study together.
 A: How much time do they set aside for studying?
 B: About ten hours a week.

Composition

- A: *Where do you go swimming?*
 B: *At the pool down the street.*
 A: *Do you go alone?*
 B: *No, I usually go with my cousin.*
 A: *How often do you go swimming?*
 B: A couple of times a week.

Discussion

Is it better to study alone or with someone? Why?



YOUR PROFESSION

- A: What's your *profession*?
B: I'm a *doctor*.
A: Is your brother in the same *profession*?
B: He used to be a doctor, but now he's *retired*.
A: How long did your brother *practice medicine*?
B: *Over thirty years*.

Substitution

occupation
physician
field
stopped working
work as a doctor
More than



Implication How well do the two speakers know each other?

Paraphrase

- A: What kind of work do you do?
B: I'm an M.D.
A: Is anyone else in your family in the same field?
B: My brother was a doctor for a long time, but he's taking it easy now.
A: How many years did he practice?
B: About thirty.

Composition

- A: What do you do for a living?
B: I'm a lawyer.
A: Is your wife a lawyer, too?
B: She was. But now she teaches at a law school.
A: How long did she practice law?
B: About ten years.

Discussion

Choose an occupation. Have the other students ask questions to guess what it is.



Samples

THE BORROWED BOOK

- | | | |
|----|---|-------------------|
| A: | Here's the book I <i>borrowed</i> from you. | got |
| B: | This isn't <i>my book</i> . | mine |
| A: | If it isn't <i>your book</i> then it must be your brother's. | yours |
| B: | Do you want me to <i>return it</i> to him for you? | give it back |
| A: | Would you please? (A hands the book to B) <i>Thank you very much.</i> | I'd appreciate it |



Implication Does the first speaker lead a busy life?

Paraphrase

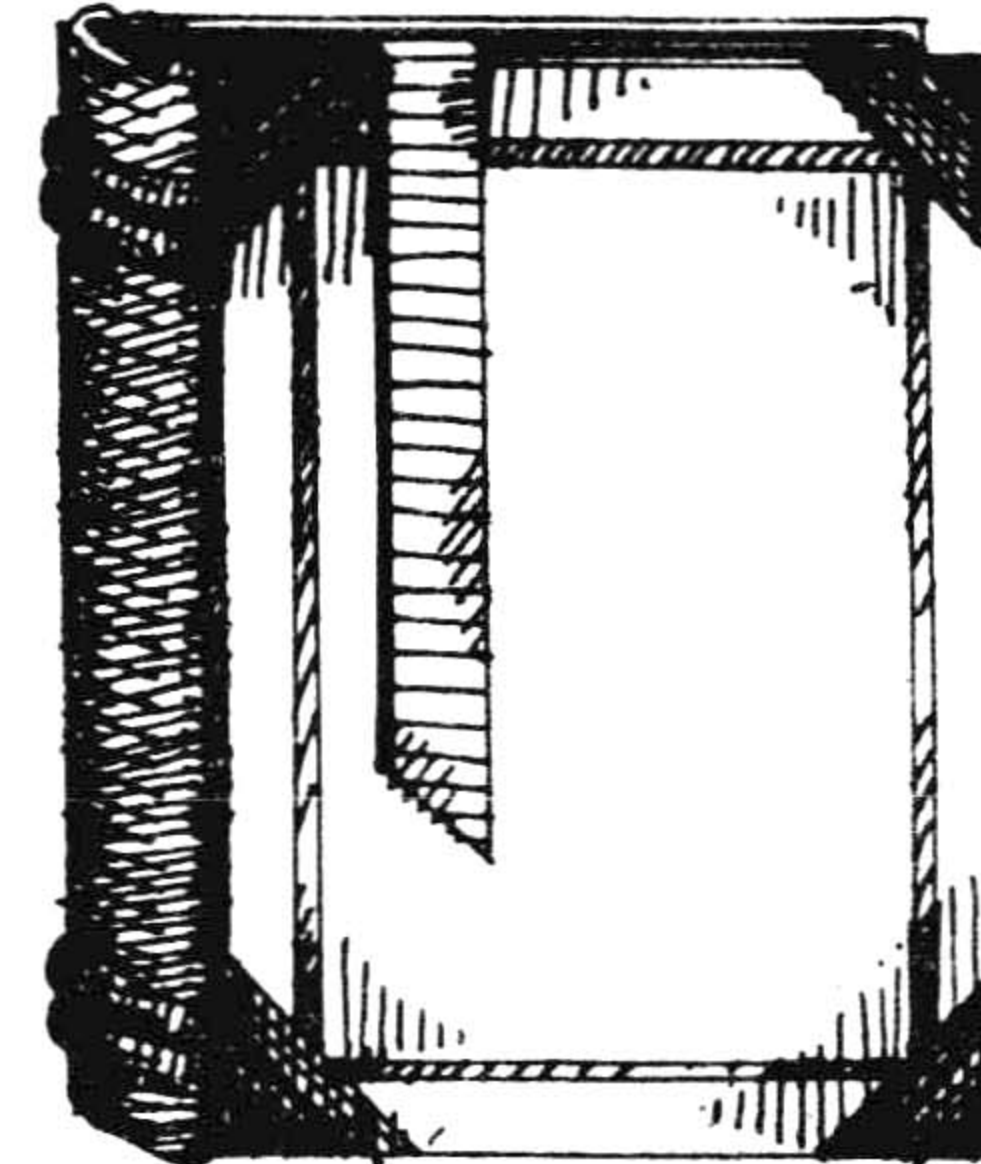
- A: I'm returning the book you lent me.
 B: This isn't my book.
 A: It's not? That's funny. It must belong to your brother then.
 B: Should I give it to him for you?
 A: That'd be a big help. Thanks a lot.

Composition

- A: *Here are the magazines you lent me.*
 B: *These aren't mine.*
 A: *That's funny. They must be your roommate's then.*
 B: *I could give them to him for you.*
 A: *Thanks, I'd appreciate it.*

Discussion

Is it a good idea to lend things to friends?



THE NEW JOB

- A: Did you *start* your new job today?
B: Yes, I did.
A: How *do you like it* so far?
B: It's *demanding*, but it's very *interesting*.
A: How about your *boss*?
B: He *seems* to be very kind and *patient*.

Substitution

- begin
does it seem
a lot of work/satisfying
employer
appears/thoughtful



Implication What kind of work does the second speaker do?

Paraphrase

- A: You started working today, right?
B: Right.
A: Do you think you will enjoy it?
B: Well, it's hard work but stimulating.
A: What's your boss like?
B: He seems very considerate.

Discussion

What qualities should a good boss have?

Composition

- A: *Did you* move into your new house this month?
B: *Yes, we did*.
A: *How do you like it* so far?
B: *It's* small, *but* very quiet.
A: *How are your* neighbors?
B: *They seem* very pleasant.



Samples

THE NEW HOUSE

- A: Are you *moving into* your new house soon?
 B: We moved in *two* days ago.
 A: Have you already signed a lease?
 B: Yes, we did that *three* weeks ago.
 A: How do you like it *so far*?
 B: *Fine, I think* we'll be very comfortable there.

Substitution

- going to start living in
 a couple of

 a few
 up till now
 Great/I'm sure



Implication Why does the second speaker say "we"?

Paraphrase

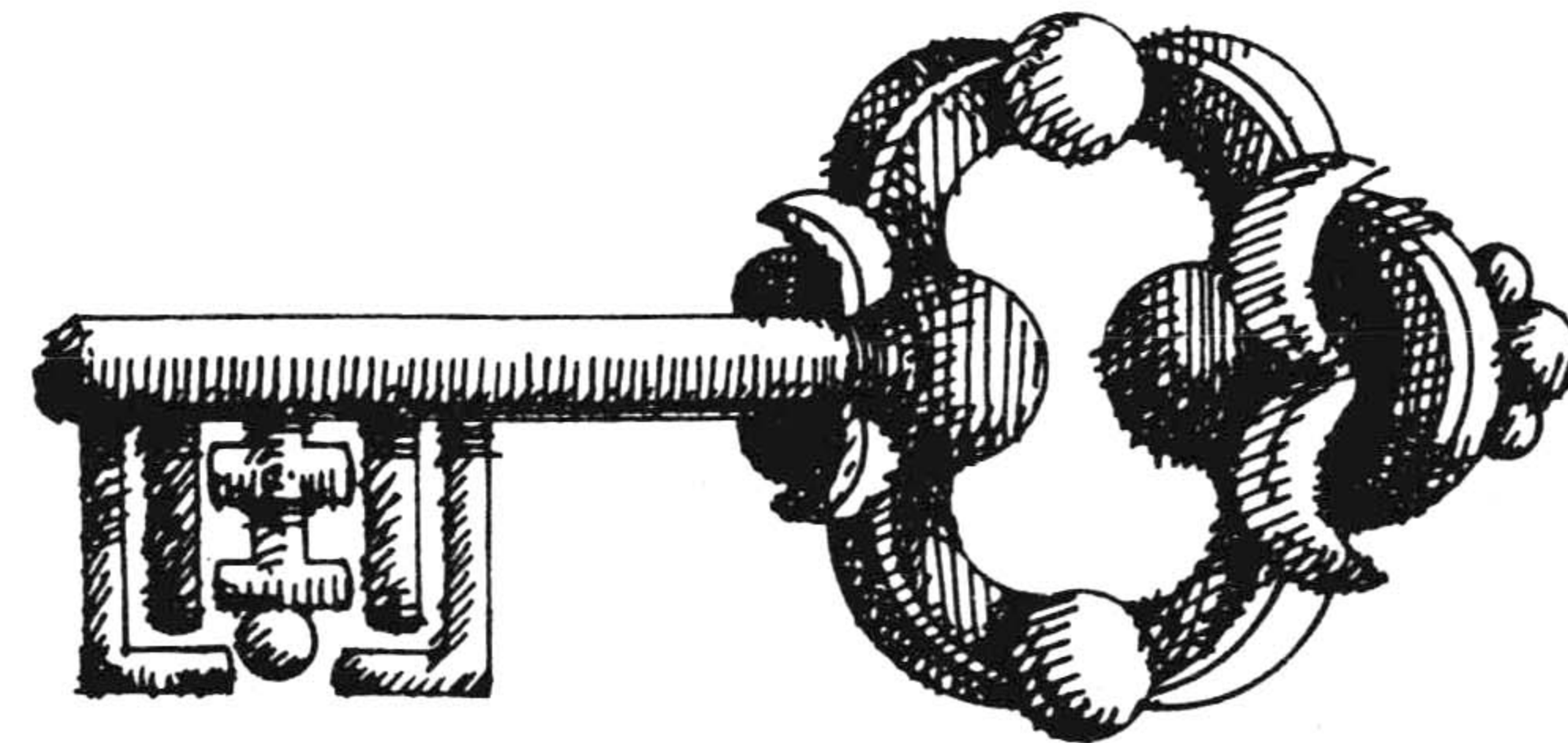
- A: Are you getting set up in your new place?
 B: We've been in it for two days now.
 A: Have you already signed the papers?
 B: Oh, yes. We signed them about a month ago.
 A: How does it suit you so far?
 B: I think we'll be very pleased with it.

Discussion

When is it better to rent a house rather than buy one?

Composition

- A: *Are you picking up* your new car soon?
 B: *I picked it up* yesterday.
 A: How did you pay *for it*?
 B: *I got a loan* from the bank.
 A: *How do you like having* a car?
 B: *I can tell it will be* very convenient.



Samples

PHONE CALL

- A: *May I speak with David Jones, please?*
B: *He works in another building.*
A: *Would you give me his phone number, please?*
B: *If you like, I can connect you.*
A: *Fine. Thank you very much.*
B: *Not at all, sir.*

Substitution

- Could/to
office
telephone
wish/ring him for you.
Yes, please.
Don't mention it.



Implication Where are each of the speakers?

Paraphrase

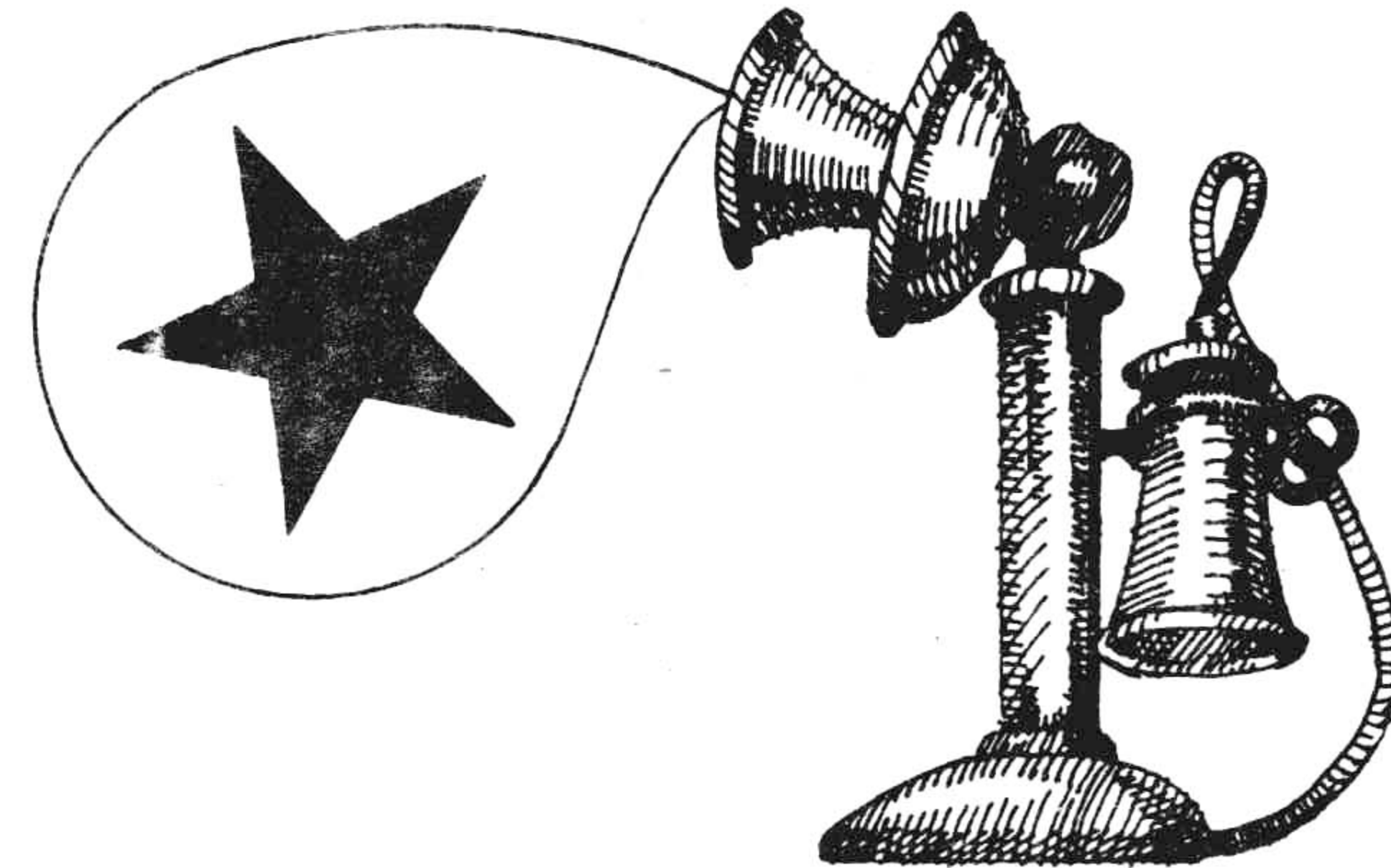
- A: *I'd like to speak to David Jones, please.*
B: *He doesn't work in this department.*
A: *Is there a number where I can reach him?*
B: *I can transfer the call, if you'd like.*
A: *That would be better. Thank you.*
B: *You're welcome, sir.*

Composition

- A: *I have a telegram for Susan Howard.*
B: *She's out for the evening.*
A: *Is there any way I can contact her?*
B: *I'll give it to her in the morning, if you'd like.*
A: *Thank you. Sign here please.*
B: *Good-bye.*

Discussion

In what instances would you make a long distance phone call rather than send a telegram?



Samples

PARKING THE CAR

- A: *Why don't you wait here while I park the car?*
 B: All right.
 A: *On second thought, why don't you go ahead and buy the tickets?*
 B: *O.K. I'll meet you in front of the theater.*
 A: *I may be a while. There aren't any parking spaces on this block.*

Substitution

- Would you like to
 Now that I think of it/go on
 Sure
 a few minutes/
 street



Implication How big is the town where this conversation takes place?

Paraphrase

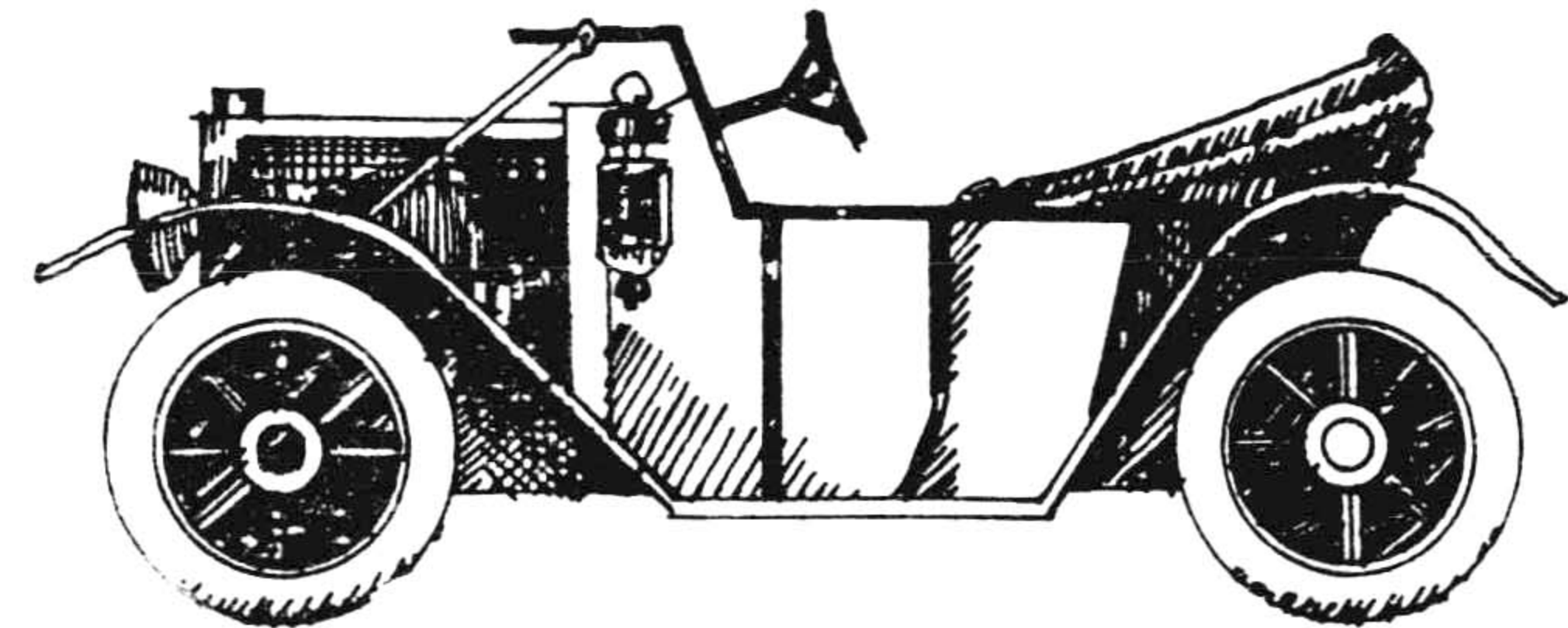
- A: How about waiting here while I look for a parking space?
 B: O.K.
 A: No, I've changed my mind. It might be better if you went ahead and got the tickets.
 B: Good idea. I'll meet you at the box office.
 A: I hope it won't take too long. All the parking spots on this street are taken.

Discussion

Is the automobile destroying civilization or creating a new one?

Composition

- A: *Why don't you wait here and I'll go get the coats?*
 B: *O.K.*
 A: *On second thought, why don't you get the car?*
 B: *Fine. I'll be waiting for you outside.*
 A: *Don't hurry. There's a line up at the check room.*



RESTAURANT RESERVATIONS

- A: *What time do we have reservations at the restaurant?*
B: *Eight o'clock.*
A: *It's going on seven-thirty now.*
B: *Why don't we stop by the bar and have a drink?*
A: *Good enough, let's go.*

Substitution

- When/are our/for dinner
At eight
almost
drop in at/club/cocktail
O.K.



Implication What kind of restaurant are they going to?

Paraphrase

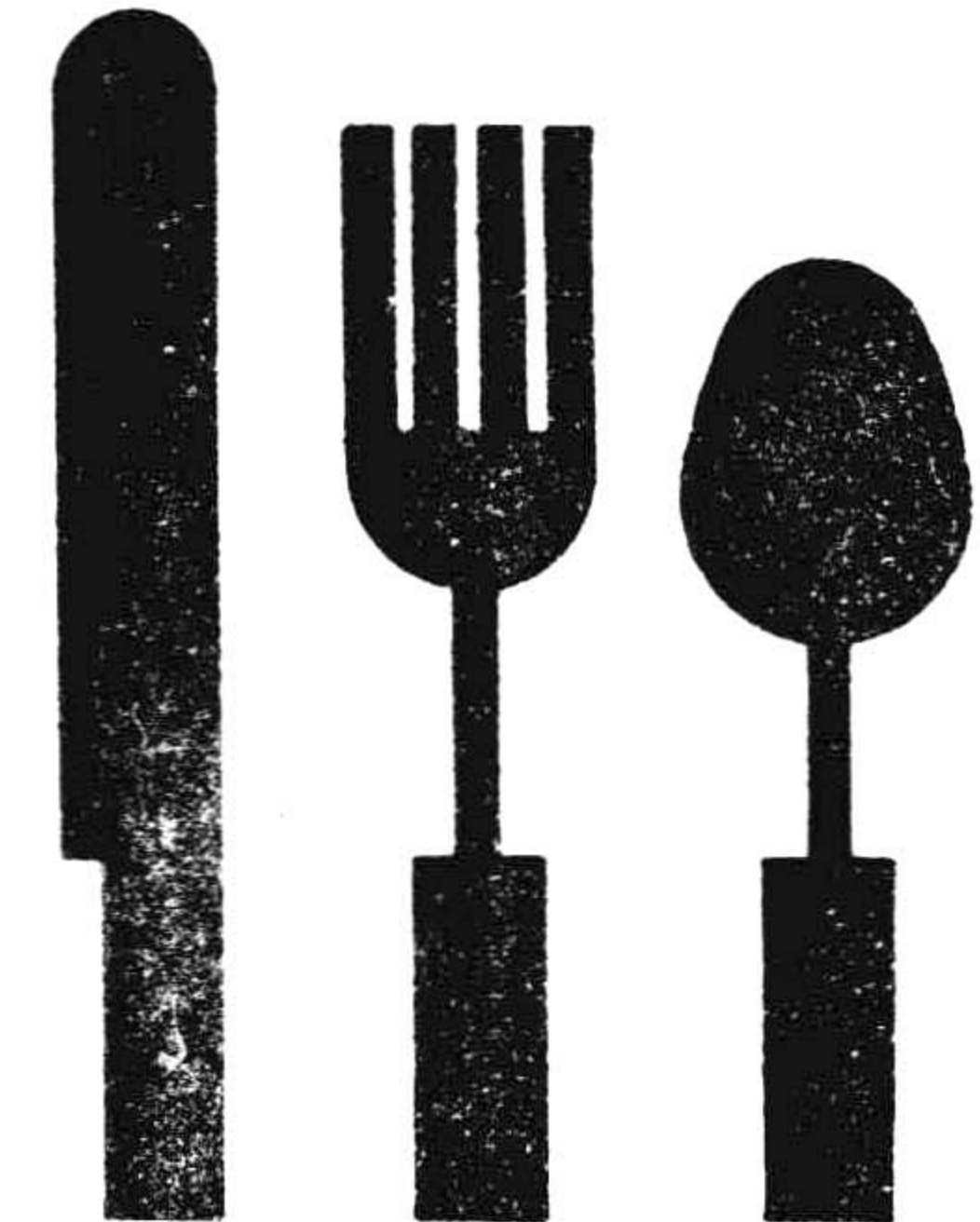
- A: When do we have to be at the restaurant?
B: Eight p.m.
A: It's not quite half past seven. We've got about an hour.
B: Well, let's go and have a drink at the bar first.
A: That's a good idea. We have plenty of time.

Discussion

How much of a role do alcoholic beverages play in your culture?

Composition

- A: *When does the train leave for the city?*
B: *Eight-thirty.*
A: *It's only seven-forty-five now.*
B: *Let's have something to eat at the station first.*
A: *Good idea. I'm starving.*



PROFESSOR JONES

- A: Do you know *Professor Jones*?
 B: Yes, he used to be *my teacher*.
 A: I have a *class in linguistics* with him this *semester*.
 B: You *had better* study *very hard*.
 A: Why?
 B: Because Professor Jones is a *tough grader*.

Substitution

Doctor
 a teacher of mine
 linguistics class/term
 really should/a lot
 hard marker



Implication Which of the speakers is older?

Paraphrase

- A: Do you know anything about Professor Jones?
 B: Yes, he was my teacher last term.
 A: I'm taking a phonology class from him this year.
 B: You're in for a year of hard work.
 A: Why do you say that?
 B: He hates to give good grades.

Discussion

Should students be graded or should schools switch to a simple pass/fail system?

Composition

- A: Nancy Jones?
 B: ... girl friend.
 A:
 B: ... take a lot of money.
 A:
 B:

