Group A – 'play' the scene

This group involved four individuals all of whom were native English speakers. After reading out the scene, the following discussion took place.

Annie: Did anyone understand that, because I didn't understand that at all

Ben: It's a discussion about the 20% and whether it's more or less

Caron: In January it went up by 20%

Annie So it went up to 120

Caron: Then in August it goes down 20%

Annie So 20% of 120 is ... 24 pounds isn't it?

Diana: Yes

Caron: Yes

Annie So it won't be the same

Caron: So we don't agree

Annie: No

At approximately 45 seconds the group appear to have come to the conclusion expected of the text – the 'correct' answer. But then the discussion continues in a more interesting manner for another minute.

Caron: That discussion doesn't make sense to me

Annie: What they're saying is in the beginning it went up 20%

Caron: How much was the original price?

Annie: Let's say it was 100 pounds originally. It went up by 20% that makes it 120. Now it's gone back down to 20%

Ben: That makes it 100

Annie: No ... it'll be less

Caron: It will be less because it goes to 96

Annie: So... you still get ripped off which ever way

Group B – 'play' the scene

In this group, there were three bilingual learners (including Felly) and one native English speaker (Elaine). The latter chose to play the smallest part (Sara)

Elaine: Right,.. so...

Felly: We just read once? Yeah?

Elaine: Right, ok , so now we need to figure it out.

Harriet said that's wrong, that Sue is wrong.

They went up by twenty per cent. Say you had one hundred, that's five ... no ... ten ...

Anyway, [reads out script again]

Now if you take off twenty per cent of one hundred and twenty then you are taking off more than twenty per cent of one hundred. That's what Dan was trying to say ...[interlude involving mobile phone]

So do twenty times one hundred and twenty ... did you do twenty times one hundred and twenty? Do twenty times one hundred and twenty ... divide it by ... divide by one hundred

Oh you've done it ... twenty four.

Ok twenty four ... so that will be ninety six. That will be ninety six pounds they're left over with.

And if you do twenty per cent of one hundred...do twenty percent of one hundred. Do it again? Why are you doing twenty four? Do twenty percent of one hundred. Thanks

So twenty pounds... i want to note these down or i'll get confused.

[it's one hundred and twenty yes?]

One hundred and twenty equals to ninety six and one hundred equals to twenty right? Well eighty basically if you are taking it away.

So which one are you losing more money on? Basically. Not losing ... but you know what i mean?

[Researcher: did you decide whether ... if Sue is correct or not? Or are you not sure yet?]

Elaine: Dan is correct

Researcher: Dan is correct?

Elaine: Dan says its more so Sue is wrong.

Researcher: Sue is wrong?

Elaine: Yes. Because twenty per cent of one hundred and twenty pounds is ninety six. Well you know what I mean, really its twenty four, that's what I was trying to do and that's twenty.

Group C – read the scene

This was a group of three learners, two of which are non native speakers of English (Hamed and Ismael). They read to themselves and start the conversation.

> Gabrielle: I think that Harriet is right. Twenty per cent of one hundred and twenty is more than one hundred pounds. Twenty per cent of one hundred is ... um ... twenty four pounds off one hundred and twenty pounds.
>
> What's twenty per cent of twenty? Twenty per cent of twenty is twenty four pounds
>
> It would be twenty four pounds ... plus ... yeah that
>
> Hamed: What?
>
> Ismael: That's not right. That's wrong.
>
> Gabrielle: Why?
>
> Ismael: Because twenty per cent off ... twenty per cent off ... um ... twenty per cent off one hundred and twenty .. is less than ... Harriet is right
>
> Gabrielle: Harriet is right. Use one hundred and twenty pounds. Twenty per cent of one hundred would be twenty pounds. Then twenty per cent of twenty pounds would be four pounds. That's twenty four pounds off.
>
> Researcher: So is Sue correct or not
>
> Ismael: She is not.

Group D – no scene just the task

This is a group of another three learners but also involves the teacher who takes a significant role in the discussion. In particular, the teacher reads out the situation and task before the conversation starts.

Keith: It must be right

Teacher: Do you agree or not?

Keith: I would say yes. Because if its gone up ... if its gone up in January... January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August...

And then its gone down again. So it must be back to stage one.

Joan: I don't agree

Teacher: Do you agree?

Joan: No.

Teacher: OK Tell us why?

Joan: Because 10% of something is always different (The teacher says 'exactly' here)

Joan: 10% of £100 will be ten pounds, 10% of £200 will be twenty.

So its different.

So, if the fare went up 20%, say the price was £4 then it will be, ummm 20% of £4 ... but then ...

Teacher: 20% of £100 will be £120. That is going up? Yes?

Joan: Yes

Teacher: But then 20% of £120 is ...

Joan: It's different

Keith: Yeah, but what they are saying is that the fares went up 20% in January, then it comes down 20% in August. It doesn't say ... they're not saying over a hundred pounds or two hundred pounds.

Joan: Well that's an example.

Teacher: It says 'what do you think?'

Joan: But if it goes up ... if it goes up ...

Liv: Nothing has changed.

Teacher: You think that the price is going to be the same. (to another) Do you think it would be the same?

Liv: Yes, because it goes up ...then comes down...

Teacher: You (to Keith) think it will be the same. You (to Joan) think it's going to change?

Keith: Well how can it change? If you give the 20% and then take the 20% away in August then the original price must remain.

Joan: 20% is not always the same. It depends upon the amount you have.

Keith: Yes, but there is no amount on it.

Joan: I know

Keith: There is no amount on it.

Joan: I know ... but 20% is not always the same. 20% of one hundred pounds is different to 20% of two hundred pounds.

Keith: I didn't see it. I don't understand ... maybe I didn't see it right.

Researcher: So giving yourself ... what if it was one hundred pounds, if so, what would it go up to?

Joan: One hundred and twenty pounds.

Research: Right...

Keith: So if we take off 20% it would go to one hundred

Researcher: What ... what's twenty per cent of one hundred and twenty pounds?

Keith: Twenty per cent of one hundred and twenty pounds is ...

Teacher: Remember how we calculate ten per cent.

Liv: it's not the same

Joan: it's not the same

Liv: Because before it was one hundred and now you take one hundred and twenty

Joan: yeah, that's what I mean it's not the same

Keith: So the price goes down to 96 now

Liv: yes

Keith: and by going up it goes to one hundred and twenty. Is that what you were saying?