Tips for keeping the conversation going naturally:

1. While listening, make agreement sounds – 嗯ēn, 好 hâo, 对 duī, 哦ō
2. After answering a question, always ask 你呢 to pass the same question back.
3. Repeat the question what you heard to buy some time to think; you could also just repeat the key words too while thinking
4. Ask the others to say the question again to buy some time to think: 对不起，你说shuō什么？
5. Say: 对不起，我的中文不好 when necessary to gain some compassion
6. Say: 对不起，我不知zhī道dào (sorry I do not know) to avoid answering a question you do not know how to answer
7. Instead of trying to find the correct answer, answer whatever comes to your mind (words you could say)at that moment.
8. Exit the conversation by saying 谢谢，再见 in a graceful way if you really have nothing else to say