

Changing Educational Philosophy and Oral English Methods

Educational Philosophy

- ❑ Before students were thought of as empty vessels that needed to be filled.
- ❑ The teacher forced information on the student through memorization, drills, and recitation.
- ❑ Learning was solely aimed at successfully passing exams.
- ❑ Individual strength and weakness, and learning styles were not taken into consideration.

The new philosophy of education is reflected in the quote:

***Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value.
Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures,
and enable mankind to benefit therefrom.*¹***

- ❑ Each student has special talents, qualities, abilities and skills (gems) hidden within them.
- ❑ Education is the only way that these “gems” can be uncovered.
- ❑ The value of these “gems” is unknown.
- ❑ Education is a process to liberate the human potential within the student. It is a journey of discovery for both teacher and student. The teacher helps the student find his/her hidden talents and virtues, and then encourages the developing and polishing of these “gems.”
- ❑ Because each student is unique, with invaluable “gems”, the only way a person can be a failure is if they DO NOT develop themselves.
- ❑ Each student has a very special purpose or task to accomplish in life. No one can say which task is more or less important. If you give your whole heart and talents to the task, you will be fulfilling an important role in society.
- ❑ Do what is right for you; what will make full use of your special abilities.

***Good behavior and high moral character must come first,
for unless the character is trained,
acquiring knowledge will only prove injurious.
Knowledge is praiseworthy when it is coupled
with ethical conduct and virtuous character;
otherwise it is a deadly poison, a frightful danger.*²***

***Love and kindness have far greater influence that punishment
upon the improvement of human character.*³***

Along with knowledge you must develop your character; to be honest, trustworthy, caring, compassionate and just. These are just a few of the conducts that you must constantly work on developing and strengthening. These are what will enable you to use your knowledge to benefit society and make the world a better place to live in. To emphasize the importance of this quote, you only need to study the use of atomic energy. In many ways, used ethically, atomic energy can be very beneficial to humankind; used unethically it becomes the means of mass destruction and even the possible elimination of all forms of life on this planet. We are at the stage in humankind's development that knowledge is unlimited. Whether we use this knowledge ethically and virtuously, to improve life for all people, or selfishly, for the benefit of a few, will decide the future of our planet. The decisions we will be faced with will not be easy; we will be tempted to forget ethics and morals. Your generation will bear the burden of most of these decisions. Use your knowledge wisely and well for the benefit of all life on this beautiful earth.

¹ Quote by Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *Baha'i Education* – a compilation, #4, p 1.

² Quote by 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Baha'i Education* published in *The Compilation of Compilations, Vol. 1, page 280.*

³ Quote by Shoghi Effendi, quoted in *Baha'i Education* – a compilation, p 54.

Using Oral English Learning Styles for Improved Results

In order to learn English effectively, you need to know your individual learning style. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I remember best if I hear the words spoken, spelled, or have recordings to imitate? If so you are probably an oral learner.
2. Do I learn best if I write down the new material, or copy it over several times? If so you are probably a physical learner.
3. Does it help if I can actively participate in the exercise, acting out movements, or holding things? This is also typical of a physical learner.
4. Do I need to see the information, through watching someone, seeing it in writing, or through watching videos, etc.? If this is the case you are probably a visual learner.

Points to Remember

- ❑ All of these are different ways that you can learn the same material. What you need to remember is to use your specific style of learning whenever possible. For most people, the more senses you involve in the learning process, the better you will retain the material.
- ❑ If you receive encouragement from your teachers or peers, even yourself, you will also learn better. Few people learn well under pressure, or criticism.
- ❑ When learning is **fun** you are more likely to do it and remember it, so when you study or practice, try to make it fun. For example, don't just read a story, act it out with your friends. Play games with words and sentences. You will find you will retain the material better and will study longer because the time will pass quickly.
- ❑ Carry a small notebook and pencil with you that will fit in your pocket. Whenever you hear a word you want to remember, write it down. If you find you don't know a word, write down the Chinese word and when you get home look up the English word.
- ❑ Keep a permanent notebook with all the words you are learning, but don't just memorize the words; learn how to use them in sentences using your own words. Then they are yours and you will remember them.
- ❑ Review the words you are learning occasionally by playing a game using those words so you don't forget them.
- ❑ Study with a partner. Help each other. Talk to them, not to a tree. They will be able to give you valuable insights and encouragement, as well as develop a lasting friendship. You will find that you will have different strengths and weaknesses so it will be truly a shared learning experience, with both of you being student and teacher at different times.
- ❑ Finally, record yourself on a cassette, speaking in a conversation, and reading a passage. Every 3–4 months, record yourself again. You will be able to hear your progress. Often you think now progress is being made because it is slight. The tape will prove you otherwise. A little progress over many days leads to a large improvement. The mistakes you still make will become your new goals to overcome in the next 3-4 months.

Oral English Teaching Games

Word Association Games

These are games where you use associations to help learning. This helps you put words into categories or groups for quick recall. They can be words starting with the same beginning sound, a similar idea (color, use, shape, type), or the same rhythm (2 syllables with the stress on the first syllable) This helps develop new vocabulary and is a good way to review old vocabulary.

Word Chains (for two or more people)

The first person begins with any word. The next person says a word that relates to it. To begin with have the person say a word that begins with the previous word's ending letter or sound, i.e. bird, - drink, king, girl etc. Another chain may be formed through association. The words need to be associated with each other, i.e. bird, fly, plane, travel, holiday etc. Think up new word chains yourself.

I Spy (For two or more people)

One person thinks of an object they can see in the room. They then give a clue; I spy with my little eye something that is green, or that begins with 'b', or that ends with 'sh'. The other person(s) try to guess what the thing is. When someone guesses it, the turn passes to the next person who thinks of a different object.

Person, Place or Thing (for two or more people)

One person thinks of a person, place or thing. He begins by saying, "I'm thinking of a place (or person or thing)." The other players then ask him questions that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. Try to begin with general questions such as "is it a real place, is it on the earth, is it in China, and is it famous". Through listening to the answers, and eliminating possibilities, you can find the answer. What you think of is limited only by your imagination, but start with simple things until you learn good questions to ask.

20 Questions

This is the same game as above, however to make this more difficult you limit it to a total of 20 questions.

Sequencing Games

Sequencing games help you order your thoughts. These can be cause and effect, practicing ordinal sequences, or describing daily activities.

Sentence Scramble 1 (for 1 or more people)

You need a copy of a story for each person or group of people. Each sentence is written on a separate line. The sentences are cut apart and mixed up. You must reassemble the story in the proper order. Use a story with a logical sequence of events that uses joining words, first, then, after that... Keep a copy of the story to check your answer.

Sentence Scramble 2 - Developing Listening Skills (groups of people of 5 or more)

Copy a story with the same or more number of sentences as people. Cut the sentences apart and give each person one or more sentences. To begin each person reads his sentence once. The group must then decide the order of the sentences. You may only *listen* to the sentences. You only read/see your own sentence. The sentences can be reread as often as necessary, individually or in order. When you think the passage is correct, check your story with the original.

Fortunately and Unfortunately (2 or more people)

One person says a sentence beginning with fortunately. The next person starts the next sentence with unfortunately. (Fortunately is used when describing something good that happened, unfortunately when describing something bad that happened) The third person continues the story in the same way, i.e. “Fortunately when we went on the picnic we found a beautiful place to camp.” (2nd person) “Unfortunately as soon as we arrived it began to pour. It poured so hard that soon all our things were floating away.” (3rd person) “Fortunately some of us had umbrellas so we turned them upside down and sat in them and floated down the stream.” (4th person) “Unfortunately soon we heard a loud roaring in the distance and knew a waterfall must be near. We could not stop and were soon being swept over the waterfall.”... Each person can have as many turns as they wish. The more you use your imagination and the more unlikely the happenings, the more fun this exercise is.

Picture Scramble (for one or more people)

Cut up cartoons or comics into single pictures. Try to reorganize them into the correct order. For more fun, mix up the pictures, then turn them over and place them in a line. Create your own dialog for the cartoon. You can also use a series of photos, related or unrelated. You must create the dialog that joins the pictures in a logical order.

Pronunciation Grammar Games

These games allow you to practice your pronunciation and grammar while having fun. Some preparation is needed initially, but they can be used many times.

Old Timer and Newcomer (for two or more people)

In this game you create a road map with places for shops etc. One map is needed for each person. The streets can be permanently named or written in pencil so they can be changed. Use street names of words that you have difficulty pronouncing or hearing clearly, i.e. Leaf Street and Leave Street, Wide Street and White Street. One person labels the shops on her map. Without showing the other person or pointing she then tells the other person the location of each shop. Directions may not be given, only street names and N, S, E, and W may be used. Raise Drive is the North direction. When the second person thinks she has her map labeled correctly, check with the original map.

Road Map

Give directions on where to go using the above map. This time practice using directions as well as the street names, i.e. If you are at the corner of White Street and Sink Lane, go one block south to Wide Street. Turn left onto Wide Street. Walk straight for 1 block to Place Drive. Turn right, the bookstore will be the second shop on your left.

Word Bingo (for two or more people)

Give everyone a sheet of paper. Have them draw a grid five squares by five squares on their paper. From a list of grammar words, have them choose 25 words. Mix up the order of words and write one word in each square of the grid. This creates a bingo card. Cut out the grammar words separately before hand. Mix up the words and turn them over one at time, calling out each word as you do. Keep them separate from the unused words. If you have the word on your paper, check it with a *pencil*. The first person to get five words in a straight line, across, down or on the diagonal, is the winner. Check the words with the ones you have turned over to make sure the right words were checked. If you want to use the card more than once, erase the checks and begin again, or give everyone some “Go” stones, or small pieces of paper to cover the squares, rather than writing on the paper. You may also find all the words on the paper (a blackout), the words on the four corners, in a ‘T’ shape, an ‘X’ shape, or a ‘+’ shape, for variety.

Telegram (for two or more people)

Send someone a telegram, using only the important words in your message. See if the other person can understand your message.

i.e. No mon, no fun. Your son. Answer: Too bad, so sad. Your Dad.

If you can figure out the important words you then know which words to stress when speaking. This will improve your rhythm, and understandability. You can also use this game to improve your dictating ability. Try to fill in the missing words in a way that makes sense, i.e. Go park tomorrow 1:00 picnic swimming come. This then becomes: We will go to the park tomorrow at 1:00 pm. We will have a picnic and then go swimming. Please come.

Running Dictation (for two or more people, best with groups)

Choose an interesting story of around 15 sentences. Make a copy of the story for each group. Tape the stories up outside the room. One person from each group runs outside, learns the first line of the story, runs back in and dictates it to the writer in their group. After the line is written down the next person runs out, learns the next sentence, returns and dictates it. This continues until all the sentences have been written down. The first team to finish wins the *Speed Award*. The written stories are then exchanged and corrected for mistakes. The team with the least mistakes wins the *Precision Award*.

Photo Mania (for one or more people)

Find some interesting photos, pictures, etc. Use a specific tense to describe what is happening in the picture. Present continuous tense: "Two children are standing in front of a house. They are wearing funny costumes. One child is dressed as a dog, the other as a pumpkin." Past Tense: "Two children stood in front of a house. They wore funny costumes. One was dressed as a dog, the other was a pumpkin." Another option is to put yourself somewhere in the photo. Describe the event if you were watching the event. You can also use the photo as a beginning for a story. On Halloween I helped dress my children in costumes so they could go trick or treating. Taalan wore a funny dog costume and Tariqa was a pumpkin. There were many other children also dressed up in costumes...

Task Oriented English**Create an English Environment Using Real Life Situations** (for one or more people)

After you have learned the basic dialogs from the text it is time to put them into your own words. This enables you to use the sentences out of context. If you can use the words in sentences you created you truly know what the words mean and they become useful to you. This is important both for dialogs and for learning vocabulary. If you cannot use the words, the time you spent learning them is wasted.

Practice creating an English environment where ever you go. Any time you do an activity; see if you can do it in English, either in reality or in your imagination. When working on enlarging your vocabulary, learn words that you will use every day. That way you will remember them. Practice the situations with your roommates, buying clothes or food, buying a train ticket, going to a concert, returning something that doesn't work, renting a hotel room. The situations are endless. Of course if you act out the situations, as skits or role plays, and create dialogs, you will retain what you practice much better, or use the board game below to review everything you have learned.

Board Game (for two to six people)

Create a board game for your group. Paste brightly colored paper in a curving line, onto a stiff board, using different overlapping shapes. Number the squares; beginning with Start (1), and continuing to the end, labeled Finish. 25 to 30 squares is a good amount. Each player needs a marker to move around the board. Take turns asking and answering questions you will use in everyday life. If the question is *answered correctly*, to the satisfaction of the other players, then the player *can move*. Use either a spinner with 1 through 6 on it, or a dice, or different slips of paper with numbers written on them.

The number spun, rolled, or picked, decides how many squares the player moves. If the question is not answered correctly, the player does not move. The first person to land exactly on the final square wins. If the roll is too high you must count to the final square and then count back the extra amount. You may use any kinds of questions. They can be written down on slips of paper, read from textbooks or band four exam papers, or made up by the other players. They can relate to specific situations or lessons practiced in class. Have fun. Don't make the questions too hard or the answers too long. Worry about grammar only if the object that day is to review a specific grammar rule. After all how often do you think of English as nouns, verbs, or tenses except in class? You can begin with simple one word answers, e.g. What time is it? 8:00 o'clock, and then work up to complex answers, stating opinions, reasons, etc.

Using the Arts

Skits, Drama and the Performing Arts

Bring in several props to use as the foundation of your skits, or use specific situations that you have studied. When doing a skit, you may begin by just acting out the dialog. As you gain confidence though try to get away from the book situations. This is the time to have fun, give your imagination room to create and react or respond to the situation as it happens. In life you do not know what is going to happen next, so try to get away from planning every word you are going to say. Instead plan the events that will happen and then create the dialog as you go along. Be creative and have fun. Now is not the time to worry about grammar; just try to express your thoughts and feelings.

Commercials

Create a radio or TV commercial. Focus on creating an image about a product. Use actions, words, catchy slogans or music. Draw attention to what makes that product better than others. Again allow your imagination free rein and have fun.

Visual Arts

Often people find it very difficult at first to speak. Using the visual arts is one way to overcome this problem. If you need to introduce yourself or your group, a visual aid such as a poster will help you overcome shyness. Not only do you have something to look at that helps you remember what to say, but you have also created something and that creation is something you want to share and explain to others. In the pride of sharing something with others, people tend to forget to be afraid. Also as you create the visual aid, you are constantly practicing the vocabulary without being aware of it, and those words will always be associated with the project you created. This also lets those with poorer speaking skills shine in other ways, such as drawing, organizing and improving people's abilities to work together. All of these are special gems that may otherwise be left undeveloped.

Conclusion

I hope this gives you some ideas for alternative methods of teaching and learning oral English. Hopefully this will simply be a starting point. Use these ideas to create your own activities and games. If you come up with other ideas or games, please share them with me. I am always looking for new ways to encourage my students to improve their English skills. Remember if you really want to learn oral English well, use it often. Use your own words to express your own ideas, and concentrate on meaningful exercises, with useful outcomes. Involve as many senses as you can. Have fun while you are learning. Above all find those talents, abilities and interests that make you uniquely you, and develop them for the benefit of the entire world, not just for your self, your community or your country. Finally, remember that there is only one you. No one else can do what you are meant to do if you work on reaching your full potential. Whatever job you find in the future, do it well, to the best of your ability, and always strive to improve yourself and your abilities. If you have to dig ditches, make sure yours are dug the best, think how you can make the work easier, quicker, etc. Use all of your talents. You are unique, you are special!