SPEAKING ENGLISH

LEARNERS’ LIVES AS CURRICULUM ©

THEMATIC UNIT

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OPENING STORY

Alla’s Story

People speak very fast. People don't speak clearly. I don't know how to pronounce many words. I don't know what many words mean. When I speak English, I feel nervous and forget many words that I know. Sometimes I remember English words, but I forget the meaning.

-Alla is from Russia

Questions for discussion:
How does Alla feel when she speaks English?
Do you feel the same way?
Do you think it’s easy to speak English? Or is it difficult?
PLAYING WITH LANGUAGE
Work with a partner. One person reads the story. The other listens and writes the missing words. Change readers and repeat.

People ___________ very fast. People _________________ clearly. I ______________ how to pronounce many words. I _________ ___________ what many words mean. When I ___________ English, I _______ nervous and ___________ many words that I know.
Sometimes I _____________ English words, but I _______________ the meaning.

Affirmative and Negative Sentences

Affirmative Sentences
I talk a lot in English.
You study English everyday.
She/He understands what I say.
We listen to American music.
They read the paper every Sunday.

Negative Sentences
I don’t talk a lot in English.
You don’t study English everyday.
She/He doesn’t understand what I say.
We don’t listen to American music.
They don’t read the paper every Sunday.

Read Alla’s story again. Find the affirmative sentences. Change them to negative. Find the negative sentences, and change them to affirmative.

For example:
People speak very fast. - People don’t speak very fast.
GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER

Julian and Tam do partner work together

Talk to 3 people in your class. Ask them the questions and fill in the chart. Think of another question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Do you live in Lancaster?</th>
<th>Do you have any children?</th>
<th>Do you work?</th>
<th>Do you think English is easy?</th>
<th>______</th>
<th>______</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Nicole</td>
<td>Chad</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Nicole</td>
<td>Chad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Now write sentences in affirmative and negative about the people in your class.

For example:
Nicole lives in Lancaster. Candida doesn’t live in Lancaster.

1.
2.
3.
MORE STORIES FROM OUR STUDENTS

Brissel’s Story

I work as a bartender at Christina's Restaurant. I serve drinks and food. I feel bad and sad when I can't taking the order from the people. Then I call the other people for helping. I don't know in English the menu, like rice, water, juice, beer, what meats they wants. I don't like to call some people for helping with the English. I hate that, ok. For me it is very easy to write English but not to speak.

-Brisell is from the Dominican Republic

Jennifer’s Story

When I started this class in September, I was nervous and I was scared. I didn’t understand very much and I never spoke. Everyday I learned something. If you know and don’t speak and don’t practice you don’t learn. In December I was worried because I planned to go to Puerto Rico for a month. In my family nobody speaks English. I said, “I will forget English!”. But when I was here again I knew I learned English. I did not forget. Now I can speak a little bit and read and write much better.

-Jennifer is from Puerto Rico

Make a list of the new words. Write them here:

I don’t know what these words mean:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

I don’t know how to pronounce these words:

__________________________
__________________________
__________________________

Use your dictionary to find the meanings. Ask other students or the teacher, “How do you pronounce _______?”
VOCABULARY: EMOTIONS

Look at the pictures. Write the emotion word that matches the picture.

relaxed  worried  happy
scared    angry   confident
nervous  sad    frustrated
DOING IT IN ENGLISH
Finish the sentences. Read the sentences to a partner.

1. When I lived in my first country, I felt ________________________
2. When I moved to the United States, I felt ________________________
3. When I started English class, I felt ________________________
4. When people understand my English, I feel ________________________
5. When people don’t understand me, I feel ________________________
6. When people speak English very fast, I feel ________________________
7. When I forget how to pronounce a word, I feel ________________________
8. When I talk on the phone, I feel ________________________

MORE PRACTICE
Write 2 more sentences and read them to your partner.

When I ________________________, I feel/felt ________________________

When I ________________________, I feel/felt ________________________

BRAINSTORM
Can you and your partner think of more emotion words?
Write them here:

__________________________  _______________________
__________________________  _______________________
__________________________  _______________________

__________________________  _______________________
__________________________  _______________________
__________________________  _______________________
MORE STORIES

Adriana’s Story
When I need to speak English, I feel timid and I’m not sure. Then I prefer not to talk sometimes.
-Adriana is from Colombia

-Do you ever feel like Adriana?

Fernando’s Story
I always speak English at work. Sometimes my partner does not understand me. I often practice pronunciation. This happened to me. One time I was looking for ‘alcohol’. I pronounced “al-ko”. I forgot to say the last sound. For ten minutes my partner did not understand what I wanted. We laughed a lot and I tried to find a way to tell him what I wanted. This seldom happens to me. I was frustrated, but it was also funny. My partner is always very patient with me.
- Fernando is from the Dominican Republic.

-Do you speak English at work? Did you have an experience like Fernando?

Nobuko’s Story
I live in a townhouse. Three neighbors talk to me. Two of them are a couple. Before, they told me many stories that they have Japanese relatives and they have a grandchild who is in sixth grade. But I almost never understood their stories. Their English is very fast.
- Nobuko is from Japan

-Do you talk to your neighbors?
In my first country, I talked to my neighbors everyday. I always talked to my neighbors.

She reads the newspaper almost every morning. She usually reads the newspaper.

We go to the library 2 times a week. We often go to the library.

He volunteers in his son’s class once a month. He sometimes volunteers in his son’s class.

She only answers the phone if nobody else is home. She seldom answers the phone.

I didn’t study English in my first country. I never studied English in my first country.

Listen to your partner read the stories on page 6. Circle the correct word in each sentence.

1. Adriana always/sometimes feels shy when she speaks English.
2. Fernando seldom/always speaks English at his job.
3. Fernando never/often practices pronouncing English words.
4. Fernando’s partner is sometimes/always patient.
5. Nobuko seldom/usually understood her neighbors.
PARTNER INTERVIEWS

Ask your partner these questions.

1. Do you often use English outside of class?
2. Do you usually talk to people at the supermarket?
3. Do you always ask questions when you don’t understand someone?
4. Do you often ask your family to talk for you?
5. Do you sometimes speak English on the phone?
6. Do you usually leave messages on answering machines?

Reporting it to the class

Tell the class what your partner said.
ASKING FOR REPETITION

Willow’s Story
Some of my friends speak Spanish. Sometimes they call me and speak Spanish on the phone. If they talk too fast, I don’t understand, and I have to say, “Could you say that more slowly?” Sometimes they leave me messages on my answering machine, and I can’t understand them. I play the messages again and again until I understand what they said.

Discussion Questions:
Do you think people talk too fast on the phone?
Do you think it is difficult to understand phone messages?
What does Willow say when she doesn’t understand?
What do you say when you don’t understand?

Listening Activity

The teacher will read a conversation. Listen to the conversation and answer these questions. (*Conversation script at end of unit for teacher)

Who is talking?
What are they talking about?
What do they say if they don’t understand each other?

The teacher will give you the conversation. Practice it with your partner.
PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE: 
Asking for repetition

The Blah-Blah Activity
Practice these conversations with your partner.

1
Yomaira: Hi, I’m calling from blah-blah about blah-blah.
Odalis: I’m sorry. Could you say that again?

2
Pierre: Hi. Could I leave a message for your mother? Can you tell her blah-blah?
Ozoda: I don’t understand. Could you talk more slowly?

MORE PRACTICE
Read these conversations with your partner. What do you say when you don’t understand?

3
Kalbillah: Hi. This is blah-blah. Is blah-blah there?
Amie: _________________________________

4
Edline: Hi, could I talk to blah-blah?
Marika: _________________________________

5
Nicole: Hi, could I talk to Mr. Nguyen? This is blah-blah.
Thao: _________________________________
COLLECTIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

Kalbillah, Thanh, Nezha, and Alla work together

Talk to the people in your group about these situations:

What do you say if...
1. you call your friend and her brother answers the phone?
2. you call your cousin and the answering machine picks up?
3. somebody calls you and you don’t understand?
4. somebody calls you and they have the wrong number?

Finish these conversations:

1. Flor calls Monica.
   Monica’s brother: Hello?
   Flor: _________________________________

2. Dung calls her cousin, Tam.
   Answering Machine: Hi, I’m not here right now. Please leave a message.
   Dung: _________________________________

3. Luong: Hello?
   Camilo: Blah-blah.
   Luong: _________________________________

4. Nezha: Hello?
   Purita: Hi, I’d like to order a pizza.
   Nezha: _________________________________

Project Idea: Collect the conversations from all the groups in the class. Put them together in a book. Give this book to new students to help them talk on the phone.
TELEPHONE PARTNERS

The teacher will tell you who your partner is. Talk to your partner. Plan a time when you can call each other.

My partner’s name: ______________________
My partner’s phone number: _______________
I will call my partner at _______ on __________________.

Practice this conversation with your partner. When you call your partner, you can use this conversation if you forget what to say.

A: Hi, is __________there? This is his/her telephone partner from school.
B: Yes, this is____________.
A: Hi, _______, it’s__________.
B: Hi. How are you?
A: Good. And you?
B: I’m good. What did you do today?
A: I ___________________________. What about you?
B: I _____________________________.
A: Do you have any plans for the weekend?
B: Yes, ___________________________. What about you?
A: Yes, _____________________________.
B: It was nice talking to you.
A: It was nice talking to you, too.
B: I’ll see you tomorrow in school.
A: See you tomorrow.
STUDENT NARRATIVES

Here are some stories about telephone partners from students in other ESL classes.

Hang’s Story

I never pick up the phone because I feel nervous speaking English. When I went to school my teacher encouraged everybody in class and said, “Don’t worry.”

On Saturday, I called my partner. Her name is Purita. We talked about learning English. I asked her if her daughter was sleeping, because she comes home from work very tired. We talked about some things but sometimes I didn’t understand the words. I asked her, “Please, will you speak slowly so that I can understand you?”

When I talked on the phone with her, I felt confident, and so did she.

-Hang is from Vietnam

Ana’s Story

Before I called my partner, I felt strange, because my blood was HOT in my head. I felt nervous because I didn’t know who would answer me. Thao answered, and then I talked to her. I told her, “Hi, I’m Ana.” And she answered, “Hi, Ana. How are you?” and I said, “Good, and you?” She said, “I’m good, too.” Then we continued the conversation.

I talked to Thao about her apartment. We talked for 2 minutes and then we said, “Bye! I’ll see you tomorrow in school.” I felt relaxed.

-Ana is from Puerto Rico

Writing Activity

Writing Prompt: How did you feel when you talked to your telephone partner? What did you talk about? How did you feel after the conversation? Write at least 5 sentences.
MONITORING PROGRESS: CHECKLIST FOR LEARNING

In this unit, I learned how to:
___introduce myself
___have short conversations with people
___ask for someone on the phone
___leave a message on the phone
___write a short personal story

I learned these words:
___ relaxed ___confident ___seldom
___worried ___nervous ___sometimes
___happy ___sad ___often
___scared ___frustrated ___usually
___angry ___never ___always

I learned these phrases:
___Could you say that more slowly?
___Could you repeat that?
___Could you say that again?

REFLECTION/ FUTURE LEARNING

The activity I liked the most was ________________________

The activity I didn’t like was ________________________

I want to learn more about ________________________

Yomaira is from the D.R.
*Conversation script for the teacher (p. 10):*

Candida: Hi, is Roberto there?
Roberto: Yes, this is Roberto.
Candida: Hi, this is Candida.
Roberto: Hi, Candida. How are you?
Candida: I’m OK, but I have a problem.
Roberto: What’s the problem?
Candida: My car broke down. Could you give me a ride to work tomorrow?
Roberto: I don’t understand. Could you say that again?
Candida: Yes. My car broke down and I need a ride to work tomorrow.
Roberto: I’m sorry. Could you repeat that?
Candida: Can you give me a ride to work tomorrow?
Roberto: Oh, sure. What time do you work?
Candida: I work at 9:00.
Roberto: OK, I can pick you up at 8:30.
Candida: Thank you!
Roberto: You’re welcome. See you tomorrow.
Candida: See you tomorrow. Bye!