TALKING ON THE PHONE

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HIGH BEGINNING THEMATIC UNIT

LEARNERS LIVES AS CURRICULUM©
Larysa (right) is a student at the Employment Skills Center in Carlisle Pennsylvania. She has been studying English for one year. Larysa is from the Ukraine.

Bela (left) is also a student at the Employment Skills Center. Bela recently had a baby boy named George. She named him after her home country, The Independent Republic of Georgia.

- Do you have problems talking on the phone?
- Write about a specific time you had problems talking on the phone.

**LARYSA’S STORY**

I have a problem with telephone conversation. People speak fast and I understand only some words, but I don’t understand what people talk to me about. I am nervous when I have a telephone conversation, and forget words. Telephone conversations are difficult for me.
Playing with Language:

Listen to the story again and fill in the blanks.

I ___________ a problem with telephone conversation. People ___________
fast and I ______________ only some words, but I _________ understand
what people __________ to me about. I _____________ nervous when I
___________ a telephone conversation and _____________ words. Telephone
conversations ______________ difficult for me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak</td>
<td>spoke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand</td>
<td>understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>talk</td>
<td>talked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>forget</td>
<td>forgot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t</td>
<td>didn’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>add your own</td>
<td>_______</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listen and repeat the verb pairs. Practice the verb pairs with a partner.

With your partner, change the story to the past tense.

I __________ a problem with telephone conversation. People ___________
fast and I ______________ only some words, but I ___________
understand what people ______________ to me about. I ___________
nervous when I ____________ a telephone conversation and ____________
words. Telephone conversations ______________ difficult for me.
Write five new sentences changing the verbs listed to past tense. Read your sentences to the class.

1. forget ________________________________
2. have ________________________________
3. talk ________________________________
4. understand __________________________
5. speak _______________________________

Write your own sentence in past tense, if you wish ________________

Doing it in English: Using the Phone

Read the story. Answer the questions with a partner. Share your answers with the class.

I have a problem with telephone conversation. People speak fast and I understand only some words, but I don’t understand what people talk to me about. I am nervous when I have a telephone conversation, and forget words. Telephone conversations are difficult for me.

**Who** wrote this story? ______________________________________________

**How** does she feel? _____________________________________________

**What** was Larysa’s problem? _____________________________________

**What** happened when she got nervous? ____________________________
Picture Dictionary

- Calling Friends
- Ambulance
- Doctor
- Dentist
- Fire Department
- Hospital
- Hotel Reservations
- Paying Bills
- Ordering Pizza
- Police Department
- Restaurant
- School
the things that you use the phone for. Use the picture dictionary to help you.

_____ Calling friends    _____ Calling for pizza    _____ Calling the doctor
_____ Calling the school  _____ Hotel reservations  _____ Restaurant reservations
_____ Calling the fire dept. _____ Calling an ambulance  _____ Calling the dentist
_____ Calling the police    _____ Paying bills    _____ Calling the hospital

Other things you use the phone for ________________________________

the things you have problems with. Ask your partner what they have problems with.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Me</th>
<th>My partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can't hear very well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm nervous using English</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People talk too fast</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only understand some words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know what to say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I forget what I want to say</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know what they want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't know enough English words</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Other things you have problems with on the phone ________________________________
|                                                      |
Learning about each other: Find someone who…. 

Name: _______________ uses the phone to make an appointment.

Name: _______________ has an answering machine.

Name: _______________ gets nervous if they can’t understand on the phone.

Name: _______________ thinks people talk too fast on the phone.

Name: _______________ uses the phone to order food.

Name: _______________ uses the phone to make a reservation.

Name: _______________ uses the phone to ask about a job.

Name: _______________ uses the phone to call their friends.

Name: _______________ never uses the phone.

Name: _______________ does not have a phone in their house.

Name: _______________ uses a cell phone.

Write something else you learned about a classmate ________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________
BELA'S STORY

I have problems talking on the telephone because some people talk very fast. But if I say “Please speak slowly”, I’m able to understand some words which help me, but I need practice.

I had one experience when my husband was in Hawaii. I received a letter from Carlisle Medical Center. They asked me to pay money for medical bills. I called trying to see what to do. It was difficult to understand when they explained what was needed. I could not explain in very good English why I was calling, so I hung up.

Match the problem with the solution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I can’t hear well</td>
<td>Please speak slower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. People talk too fast</td>
<td>Please repeat that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. I forget what to say</td>
<td>Please speak louder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. I don’t understand</td>
<td>Speak slower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. I’m nervous using English</td>
<td>Use my notes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Idioms

I'm sorry     repeat that.
I don't understand    speak slower.
I'm learning English  explain.
I can't hear you    speak up.
He/She is not here,    call back later.

Fill in the blanks. Use “Would” for polite questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don’t understand you.</td>
<td>Would you please explain?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t hear you.</td>
<td>W_____ you please ______________________?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can’t understand you.</td>
<td>W_____ you please ______________________ that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are speaking too fast.</td>
<td>W_____ you please ______________________?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I don’t understand I say ……

☑️ your answers.

☐ Would you please repeat and speak slowly?
☐ My English is not very good. Would you please repeat again?
☐ I’m sorry, I’m not interested. I already have the service I need.
☐ I’m sorry, you’ve called the wrong number.
☐ I’m sorry, where are you calling from?
☐ I’m sorry, what is your name again?
☐ How may I help you?
☐ Please call again and leave a message on the machine.
☐ I’m sorry they’re not available. May I take a message please?
☐ Would you please speak louder?

Other things you would say when you don’t understand ___________________________
Shinobu is a student at The Learning Center. She is from Japan and has been in the United States for many years. She is married and has one son.

**SHINOBU’S STORY**

Someone called from the telephone company to change my service. They talked too fast. They used words I didn’t understand. Maybe because I get too nervous when I talk to strangers, I signed up for long distance I do not want. I already have a long distance company. Now I must cancel one.

**Think about it – Talk about it with your partner:**

What is Shinobu’s problem?

How did she solve the problem?

Do you have problems talking on the phone?

How did you solve the problem?
Irina is a student at The Learning Center. She is from Russia and has been in the United States since 2004. She is married and has one child.

**IRINA’S STORY**

I had problems speaking on the phone when I was in America only five months. Somebody called me and offered some books for my daughter, but I didn’t understand what he said. I said to him, “I’m not interested”. He spoke very fast and asked me about my address. I did not give it to him. He told me my address and I said, “Yes, that is it.” In a few days, I received some books and I had to pay for them. It was confusing, because I didn’t want to buy anything. My husband solved the situation. I didn’t know how to correctly answer the questions.

**Think about it – Talk about it with your partner**

Do you like talking on the phone? Why or why not?

Has something like this ever happened to you or someone you know? Tell your learning partner what happened.
Journal Writing

Please write to your teacher about a problem you had on the phone. Ask your teacher if he/she has had a problem talking on the phone:

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Listening in: Your teacher

Listen as your teacher tells about a problem he/she had on the phone. Take notes below. Ask questions when you don’t understand.

Teacher’s name ____________________________________________________________

Teacher’s problem: __________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

How your teacher solved the problem: __________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Tell your partner what you understand about your teacher’s phone problem.
Bringing the outside in: Interview results

Interview three (3) friends. Ask your friends if they have problems talking on the phone. Ask what they do when they have problems on the phone. Fill in your friend’s information below. Discuss your answers with your class.

Friend’s name ______________________________

Write about your friend’s problem.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Friend’s name ______________________________

Write about your friend’s problem.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Friend’s name ______________________________

Write about your friend’s problem.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Ideas for action:

Talk as a group. What other problems do you have on the phone? What would make it easier for you to talk on the phone? Write your group’s ideas.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

13
Collaborations (Working Together)

Work with your group. Make a list of important phone numbers to have near your phone. Add your own important phone numbers at the end of the list. Write a few phrases to use when talking on the phone.

Make a chart with the important phone numbers and phrases. Some sample phrases might be: Please speak up. I can’t hear you. I don’t understand.

Use the picture dictionary to help you. Use the phone book to find the numbers.

Some important numbers might be:

- Ambulance (____)
- Fire Company (____)
- Police (____)
- Doctor (____)
- Your child’s school (____)
- Dentist (____)
- (____)
- (____)
Options for learning.

How do you want to use English on the phone?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Already do</th>
<th>Want to learn</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make appointments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Order food</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make reservations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call for help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add your own ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Looking back:

1. In this unit I learned _____________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________

2. The activity I liked best was ___________________________________________
   because _______________________________________________________________

3. The activity I liked least was __________________________________________
   because _______________________________________________________________

4. Add your own thoughts _________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________
Checklist for Learning

Vocabulary: ☑ the words you know. Add more if you wish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nouns</th>
<th>Verbs: Check the verbs you know. Write the past tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>telephone</td>
<td>Present tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>phone</td>
<td>Past tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conversation</td>
<td>have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>answering machine</td>
<td>speak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cell phone</td>
<td>understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police</td>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>school</td>
<td>forget</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appointment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ambulance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others

I can:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Idioms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Idioms</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>calm down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slow down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sit down</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speak up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>call back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language: ☑ what you can do in English. Add more ideas if you wish.

I can:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Others</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>