

Communication strategies by Lucy Angelier

Age:	Teenagers/Adults
Level:	Pre-intermediate–intermediate
Time:	90–120 minutes
Objectives:	To improve oral fluency; to practise using the relative pronouns <i>who</i> , <i>that/which</i> and <i>where</i>
Key skills:	Speaking
Materials:	One copy of Level 1 cards OR Level 2 cards for every pair or every four to six students (cut up as indicated)

Procedure

1. Draw a basic sketch of two people talking on the board. Stick people will do.
2. Explain that the people in the sketch are speaking English but that it is not their native language; it's just the language that they are using to communicate.
3. Next draw a big barrier, such as a wall, between the two people and explain that one of them is stuck on how to say something in English (or the other person doesn't understand) and that communication has therefore broken down.
4. Stop talking for five seconds, maybe counting this silently on your fingers. This draws the class's attention to how long five seconds of silence can be in a conversation.

5. Ask students to suggest solutions: what can the person who has stopped talking do? Write their ideas on the board and add any that they might have missed. Here are some examples:

- mime
- use gestures
- draw pictures
- draw a diagram
- think of a synonym
- think of an antonym
- think of an example to illustrate
- define the word
- translate the word
- paraphrase the idea
- point to the object if it is close by
- spell the word
- repeat the word

6. (Optional activity) Ask students to think about the advantages and disadvantages of the different strategies. Depending on class size, this can be done in groups. If time is short, you could assign different strategies to different groups for discussion.

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Key (suggested answers):

Strategy	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. mime	good for verbs, narratives	not very accurate
2. gestures	good for directions, instructions	can be misinterpreted
3. pictures	pretty universal	need to be able to draw
4. diagrams	good for directions, instructions	need pen and paper
5. synonyms	good if it's the other person who doesn't understand	need a good level of vocabulary
6. antonyms	good for adjectives	not always an available opposite
7. examples	no breakdown in communication	need to find a universal example
8. definition	no breakdown in communication	not always precise
9. translation	good for precision, technical language	slow, need a dictionary
10. paraphrase	good for communicating ideas	difficult so need a good level of English
11. real objects	quick and easy	object might not be around
12. spell the word	a quick solution to a pronunciation problem	other person needs to know alphabet
13. repeat the word	might be that the other person just didn't hear you	no use just repeating the word if other person doesn't know it

- Explain that in this lesson, the students are going to work on developing some of these strategies.
- Write the following phrases on the board (or adapt to your students):
It's a place _____ you learn.
It's a person _____ makes bread.
It's a thing _____ you kick.
- Ask students to fill in the blanks (*where, who, that*). Then ask them to say which word is defined (*school, baker, ball*).
- Ask students which communication strategy is being used (*define the word*).
- Ask students to work alone to write their own definitions for three to six words, depending on time. For example: *supermarket, dog, coat*. Monitor and get students to check each other's work.
- Put students either in pairs or small groups. Hand out one set of Level 1 or Level 2 cards to each pair or group, which students should put face down on the table. Students take it in turns to define the word on a card. With the Level 1 cards, they mustn't

say the word on the card, but the Level 2 cards offer a greater challenge because students must define the word without saying any of the words on the card.

- Monitor to check that students are using the target language correctly.

Extension activities

- For early finishers, ask them to write the definitions of the words on the cards.
- Get students to mime the words on the cards.
- Set up a game of Pictionary using the Level 1 cards.
- Repeat the original activity at the end of a course. This will allow students to see how their ability to communicate in English has developed. If you used the Level 1 cards the first time round, you might like to introduce the Level 2 cards this time.

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Define *weather*.

Define *personal assistant*.



Define *taxi driver*.

Define *canteen*.

Define *classroom*.

Define *diary*.

Define *manager*.

Define *clown*.

Define *cinema*.

Define *business card*.

Define *smartphone*.

Define *bank*.

Define *calendar*.

Define *bottle*.

Define *office*.

Define *police officer*.

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Define *weather*.
Don't say: *sun, wind, rain*.

Define *personal assistant*.
Don't say: *telephone, message, letter*.



Define *taxi driver*.
Don't say: *car, money, journey*.

Define *canteen*.
Don't say: *food, dessert, eat*.

Define *classroom*.
Don't say: *desk, learn, lesson*.

Define *diary*.
Don't say: *meeting, date, month*.

Define *manager*.
Don't say: *employee, boss, office*.

Define *clown*.
Don't say: *funny, laugh, silly*.

Define *cinema*.
Don't say: *film, actor, actress*.

Define *business card*.
Don't say: *name, address, telephone*.

Define *smartphone*.
Don't say: *mobile, call, message*.

Define *bank*.
Don't say: *cash, money, payment*.

Define *calendar*.
Don't say: *date, appointment, month*.

Define *bottle*.
Don't say: *liquid, wine, glass*.

Define *office*.
Don't say: *work, desk, employee*.

Define *police officer*.
Don't say: *traffic, emergency, criminal*.