

# TEACH THEM TO CONVERSE WELL

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Undoubtedly no other art is more useful to man than the art of conversation: as a child, he becomes conscious of his membership in the family group when he begins to learn to talk, and from that time forward talking becomes to him an absolute necessity, a part and parcel of his earthly existence. In society or in the world of leisure the most sought-after members and the members who contribute most to the gaiety and the savor of life are usually those who have acquired the ability to converse fluently and effectively. In the professional, business, or political world, too, such persons often meet with success where their less skilled companions or associates lick the dust or have the worst of it.

## CONVERSATIONAL SKILLS TO DEVELOP

- In order to become a truly effective conversationalist, a person must learn:
- To be a good listener.
- To talk neither too much nor too little.
- To overcome self-consciousness or timidity.
- To develop self-confidence.
- To develop poise of mind and of body.
- To develop graciousness.
- To develop tact.
- To develop thoughtfulness and consideration for others.
- To acquire pleasant address or manner in conversation.
- To speak with clear utterance.
- To speak readily on topics of general or special interest.

- To think and talk in terms of the other person's interest.
- To bring in a person who is being left outside a conversation.
- To use correct forms of language.
- To clothe his thoughts in appropriate words and phrases.
- To arrange his ideas in good order.
- To contribute his share to a conversation.
- Never to be sharp, curt, or sarcastic.
- Never to become too inquisitive.
- Never to indulge in gossips or idle talks.
- To change the topic of conversation when it is becoming unpleasant to others.
- To avoid heated arguments.
- To avoid becoming a bore by always talking about himself.
- To avoid loud talking.
- To avoid contradicting others.

## SUBJECT-MATTER

Any topic which is within the comprehension and experience of the pupils is fit to use for a conversational lesson, but naturally some topics or subjects have greater appeal and more widespread interest than others. The following are examples:

*Timely Topics.* Timeliness, the fact of occurring at the proper or opportune moment, is an important consideration in choosing a topic. People like to talk about the latest events, the most recent news, the newest ideas, and the things that have just happened, because by discussing such topics they get a feeling that they are abreast of, and not behind, the times.

*Animals.* Animals, whether wild or domestic, because they are so much a part of the living world and so full of interest, make a very strong appeal to practically everyone. What normal persons do not like dogs, cats, chickens, horses, cattle, pigs, fish, birds? What children wouldn't like to keep a pet animal of some kind or other if they have a chance to do so? Therefore, the various forms and phases of animal life may be counted good subjects for conversation.

*Amusements.* People, young or old, are generally interested in pastimes and entertainments, and so there will be no dearth of zest in talking about such things as motion pictures, games, parties, excursions, fiestas and festivals, picnics, dancing, special days and holidays, theaters, athletic sports, playthings.

*Hobbies.* We know that in these exciting times there is hardly a person whose interest in life is centered solely on his daily occupation. Most of us like to work at or study something which is not our main business but which makes our lives happier and fuller; moreover, everyone likes to talk about his particular hobby, whatever it may be—perhaps stamp collecting, gardening, raising poultry, cooking, fishing, making gadgets, huntings, or what not.

*Adventures.* Adventures are always stimulating and thrilling subjects to talk about, and what school boy or girl has had no adventures in this day of crowded and surprising events? In every youth's life there is usually an adventure connected with a week-end trip or holiday, an outing or camping expedition, or a difficult undertaking. Even our most commonplace experiences may not be without their moments

of excitement or moments of fun, unless we have become completely callous or indifferent in our attitude towards life.

*The Familiar.* Persons, places, and things with which we are quite familiar need not become threadbare or colorless topics of conversation because even in an old thing we can somehow find something to admire, love, or appreciate. An old man in a community may be a favorite or an outstanding character because he is a great storyteller and dispenses words of wisdom. A stretch of clean beach may have always attracted people to it mornings, afternoons, and evenings because of the beautiful things they see and the pleasant times they have there. Familiarity does not have to breed contempt.

#### CLASSROOM PROCEDURE

Having decided on the specific aim or aims and on the particular subject-matter of instruction, we must plan our teaching procedure in such a way as to attain the highest degree of success possible.

The first step in a conversational lesson is the motivation by means of which the teacher endeavors, with all the ingenuity and persuasive power of which she is capable, to arouse the will to learn on the part of the pupils. Unless such an inward desire has been actively stimulated and kindled, any method which the teacher may use is bound to meet with disaster.

The second step is the selection of the specific method or methods through which the pupils are given opportunities to practice conversation in accordance with the rules of good address and good manners. Dramatization, dialogue, group discussion, club meeting, question-and-answer, story-telling and story reproduction, interview, informal debate, conference, impersonation, puppet show, marionette show—all these

are effective devices whereby pupils and students can be trained in the art of conversation. Whatever device the teacher may choose, the important thing is to make the spirit of the game enter into the class exercise and put life into it.

The third step consists in the actual conduct of the conversational lesson. As soon as the pupils are ready for the game the teacher should start it, not with too much fuss and formality but with a great deal of enthusiasm. Timid pupils should be encouraged to participate in the game early and get into the spirit of make-believe. Efforts should be exerted to make the exercise a cooperative undertaking by many rather than a monopolistic affair by a few. Criticism is the teacher's prerogative, and so good work should be fittingly praised and unsatisfactory attempts sympathetically criticized by her.

The fourth step may be termed the instruction phase of the lesson. After the pupils have played the game a number of times, the teacher may proceed to give instruction on the skills to be acquired by them, as, for example: Give attention to the person who is talking to you.

Avoid loud talking.

Don't interrupt a person who is speaking.

If you have to contradict a person, do so politely.

Don't boast of your good deeds.

Be pleasant in speech and manner.

Be considerate of the feelings of others.

Look at the person you are talking to.

Express your thoughts clearly and well.

Pronounce your words correctly and distinctly.

Use good English.

## CONVERSATIONAL LANGUAGE

The teaching of conversation is closely bound up with the enrichment of the pupils' vocabulary and the improvement of their command of English. Conversation presupposes on the part of the speakers thoughts and ideas, which in turn presuppose appropriate words and phrases if such thoughts and ideas are to be well expressed. Therefore, in order to become proficient or skillful in the practice of the conversational art, a person must have thorough mastery of language.

Because of the power of example and the fact that spoken language is acquired largely through imitation, every teacher is duty bound to use only the best English at her command. The pupils reflect their teacher's address or manner of speaking as well as her speech habits.

English is rich in expressions of sociability which, if used with charm and propriety, do much to smooth conversation and add spice to it. Here are examples of such expressions: (It is certainly worth any teacher's effort to make her pupils or students learn to use them.)

With pleasure.

If you please.

I am pleased to know you.

Thanks!

Thank you.

Thank you very much.

Thank you kindly.

Yes, sir.

Yes, Mr. Damasco.

No, sir.

No, Mr. Ramos.

May I go now?

How do you do?—I am very well, thank you.

I am glad to see you.  
 Welcome!  
 Welcome home!  
 You will always have a welcome here.  
 You are welcome to pick the flowers.  
 I am sorry that you are sick.  
 I am sorry I can't come to the party.  
 I am very sorry to hear of your mother's illness.  
 I am sorry for that blind man.  
 It is so good of you to come!  
 I am so glad!  
 Have you met my sister?—No, I do not know her.  
 I beg your pardon.  
 Please excuse me.  
 Excuse me; I have to go now.  
 Please do me a favor.  
 Do you mind if I smoke?  
 May you be happy!  
 Take a seat, please.  
 I see what you mean.  
 I have seen so little of you.  
 I will see you to the station.  
 Make yourself at home.  
 I am charmed with your house—it is so cozy and attractive!  
 Are you comfortable in that chair?  
 Are you enjoying yourself?  
 Would you like a cup of coffee?  
 Would you like to go to the show?  
 What would you like to eat?  
 I should like to ask you to dinner.  
 How cleverly you do it!  
 I won't do it any more, I promise you.  
 Will you come in?  
 Shall I do this?—Yes, please.

Oftentimes it is necessary that before the conversational game starts the teacher should provide her class with a list of words and expressions that are essentially related to a given topic and that the students fully understand. For example, the following list should be built up cooperatively by both the teacher and her class before a conversation on airplanes is commenced:

*Airplane parts:* cockpit, propeller, landing wheels, wings, motor, fuselage.  
*aeronautics:* aviation, flying, aerial navigation.  
*aeronaut:* aviator, pilot, flyer, airman, airwoman, aviatrix.  
*aircraft:* airplane, aeroplane, landplane, seaplane, waterplane, amphibian, helicopter, glider.  
*airport:* aviation field, flying field, landing field.  
*air base:* airport and headquarters for military airplanes.  
*hangar:* a shed for airplanes.  
*runway:* a way or track for airplanes in landing or taking off.  
*air pocket:* any current or condition in the air that causes an airplane to drop suddenly.  
*airway:* route for aircraft from airport to airport.  
*air line:* a system of transportation by aircraft, or the company owning such a system.  
*air mail:* mail sent by aircraft, or the system of sending mail by aircraft.  
*air-minded:* having much interest in aviation.  
*air raid:* an attack by airplanes, especially for bombing a position or a city.  
*aircraft carrier:* a ship designed to carry aircraft and so built that aircraft can be launched from it and landed on it.  
*aerial transportation:* travel by air.  
*bureau of aeronautics:* bureau in charge of aviation or navigation in the air.  
*flight:* trip in an airplane; group of airplanes flying through the air together, as, a *flight* of ten airplanes.  
*to land:* to come to the ground, or, in the case of a seaplane, to alight on the surface of the water.  
*to take off:* to leave the ground or the water.  
*to taxi:* to run along the ground or on the water when starting or coming in after a landing. An airplane or a seaplane taxis to get into a position for rising.

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the school for the year 1947-1948. They did not provide funds for new classes. The Bureau of Education was merely authorized to use its savings to open additional classes. The savings will come from last school year's funds for the operation of elementary classes. The estimated savings will be about ₱3,000,000. At the rate of ₱1,700 per class, there will be about 2,000 new classes this year.

That is about all—not so wonderful a record!

The PPSTA was interested in two bills: One proposed to improve the salary allocations for teachers and other employees in the educational service of the Government. This bill did not go through. The other bill was the one which would have brought far-reaching reforms in the present educational system. The bill proposed to return Grade VII and to eliminate the double-single session program. The bill proposed to levy a school tax of ₱2 and to impose a tuition fee of not more than ₱20 if the school tax fund was not sufficient.

It seems that the legislators got scared by the tax proviso of the bill (election time is coming, you know), and they pigeonholed it. That is what happened to the bill that would have brought a better kind of education to thousands of children.

The whole thing leaves us a little sad but not disillusioned. We know that we 57,000 teachers are not yet organized enough. We need more unity so that those pathetic little voices can be heard. You out there in the various school divisions who have not replied to our call for membership—may we hear from you soon. With the results in the last session of Congress as they were, we have to work harder. May we hope to see more action from school divisions and local teachers' associations this year. May we be able to reach more of you through more subscriptions to the *Philippine Educator*? Congress is not exactly laughing at us, but certainly they are not noticing us much. Not yet. They are waiting for the time when we wake up to our possibilities as a united group.

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