

---

Title	The use of audio and visual materials to stimulate oral communication
Author(s)	Talbot, D. C.
Source	<i>Teaching and Learning</i> , 2(1)42-44
Published by	Institute of Education (Singapore)

---

This document may be used for private study or research purpose only. This document or any part of it may not be duplicated and/or distributed without permission of the copyright owner.  
The Singapore Copyright Act applies to the use of this document.

# THE USE OF AUDIO AND VISUAL MATERIAL TO STIMULATE ORAL COMMUNICATION

D C TALBOT

Many pupils have trouble expressing themselves orally in English. One of the ways of helping them is by providing numerous interesting situations in which they are motivated to communicate by having a *reason* to talk, frequently in the solving of some type of problem. Often the more emotionally involved the pupils feel about a problem, the greater the chance that true communicative interaction – rather than mechanical teacher-dominated oral exercises – will take place. Thus, for the learners there will be a more definite need to express their views, ask questions and generally participate. Group and pair work will be the norm for such pupil-to-pupil interaction. To a large degree, therefore, the teacher's role will be that of a consultant remaining as much in the background as possible.

Of course, communicative situations need not, and should not, always be created using the written word alone. Instead audio and visual material may be used to advantage. A *variety* of different media should increase motivation by lessening the chances of boredom.

A rewarding field using a tape recording (or TV video) is "jig-saw" listening where, say, two groups listen to or view different versions of the same event – a traffic accident, for example. The differing versions could cover any two of a number of possible slanted points of view – those of witnesses, victims, news reporters, police or insurance companies. Later the groups would come together, perhaps in a simulated courtroom situation, to piece together a complete report based on discussion and comparison. The necessary interaction could form the oral part of a chain of learning activities involving listening, speaking and, later, writing, about the incident: It is worth emphasising that one of the most reliable techniques for making people communicate with one another is the use of divided information or an information gap such as that suggested by this technique of "jig-saw" listening.

A tape recorder or record player may be used to play songs, which create an enjoyable and real link with the outside world. If contrasting or complementary ideas (eg, *Eleanor Rigby* – “All the lonely people/Where do they all come from?” and *I am a Rock* – “And a rock feels no pain/And an island never cries”) are given, groups may discuss the meanings of the songs and explore the theme (of loneliness, in this case) which could be related to the participants at a personal level. (“Do you know any lonely people?”)

Songs can also be used as supplementary material to a topic otherwise presented visually. Thus, other material on the same theme of loneliness might include a picture montage of various people, possibly elderly and alone, to stimulate discussion. (“What do you notice about all these people?” “What problems might they have?” “What can society/you do to help them?”) Pupils may be motivated enough to prepare various types of questionnaire or, with the teacher’s assistance, make contact with a home for the aged to arrange visits to talk with and perhaps “adopt” an elderly person for a short time every week. Thus the original audio-visual theme (song and montage) used within the classroom may expand to worthwhile social interaction outside it. However, even if the activity remains at a classroom level, it should still help the learners improve their oral fluency by stimulating interesting discussion, for example, about the designing, in groups, of the layout and facilities of a complex for old people. (“What special needs do they have?”)

Naturally, pictures, diagrams and maps will feature prominently in any visual materials used, some of which could be produced for an overhead projector. Pupils could be asked to explain, to groups or the class, details and steps of a scientific experiment as illustrated by pictures or by an OHP transparency. With some pupils, groups could be organised to sketch their own (fantastic) invention (eg, an ingenious shoe-cleaning machine) and explain how it works and answer questions from other groups.

Other potentially stimulating visual aids could be found in the use of a number of pictures attached to a magnet or flannel-board, or mounted on a sheet of cardboard, to elicit the response of groups to questions such as: “Which of these items would you need if you were marooned on a desert island?” “Have any important things been left out?” This type of group activity can be further, and perhaps more purposefully, developed if it becomes a ranking or ordering exercise. The need to establish a priority for

survival items (in a war, aeroplane crash, etc) should lead to some lively discussion. In other lessons, the visual element in a group examination of horoscopes, lottery tickets, and newspaper photographs of happy winners when the theme is "luck" might be linked to an audio effect on tape where a person is talking about his winning. (Questions to consider later would include "How would *you* feel if ...?" "What would *you* buy if ...?") A lively and natural exchange of personal, or even cultural, viewpoints should be aimed for.

**Some suggested references:**

Byrne, Donn. *Teaching Oral English* (Longman, 1976).

Moorwood, Helen (ed). *Selections from "Modern English Teacher"* (Longman, 1978).

Wright, Andrew. *Visual Materials for the Language Teacher* (Longman, 1976).