

LPF Speaking Exemplar

Telling Lies Is Wrong: Always, Sometimes or Never?

Task Description

Students, in groups of three, participated in a public speaking contest in which they had to argue whether telling lies is wrong. Each of them was assigned a task to complete, with one introducing the topic, the other discussing and expressing her views about the topic, and the last extending her vote of thanks.

Preparation

Students researched the topics on the Internet, collected relevant information and organised their ideas in a mind-map. When drafting their speech, students made use of what they learnt previously about how to write a persuasive speech, including opening a speech with a story or anecdote, using rhetorical questions, etc.

Learning Outcomes: CVO 8

The following annotations illustrate the learning outcomes of Fiona, who plays the role of the guest speaker expressing her views on lying.

Content, Organisation & Communication Strategies	Language	Pronunciation, Stress, Rhythm & Intonation CVO
<p>CVO 8 Organising, presenting and exchanging information, ideas, personal experiences and opinions on familiar and less familiar topics with elaboration clearly, and using a wide range of communication strategies to achieve desired effects CVO</p>	<p>CVO 8 Using a wide range of language forms and functions generally appropriately and accurately</p>	<p>ATM8 Speaking English accurately and fluently, and with a high degree of appropriateness in the use of stress, rhythm and intonation</p>
<p>The student can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • present persuasive views with supporting evidence from philosophical ideas and theories, e.g. ‘This is known as Deontology. This theory says that we are required to perform certain moral duties regardless of the consequences.’ • justify her arguments with elaboration and convincing examples, e.g. ‘Some lie by omission to deliberately leave with a misconception like how Japan left out certain historical facts out of textbooks. Obviously, these lies are to be condemned.’ • skilfully use a wide range of presentation strategies to achieve 	<p>The student can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance the vividness of the speech by using direct speech, e.g. ‘...he responded, “I cannot tell a lie. I cut down the cherry tree.”’ • stimulate thinking by using rhetorical questions, e.g. ‘Do you tell the truth? Is lying always wrong?’ • use metaphorical language to connect an abstract idea with an image, e.g. using ‘a slippery slope’ to refer a potential danger • use well-chosen vocabulary which vividly describes a person’s reaction and appearance, e.g. ‘Your date... blushing and offering his arm to you. He looks 	<p>The student can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • speak English with clear and accurate pronunciation, e.g. ‘truthfulness’, ‘deontology’, ‘utilitarianism’ • produce long utterances naturally using appropriate stress, rhythm and intonation, and use strategic pausing after questions to allow time to think, e.g. ‘Your date... looks absolutely horrendous and in an ill-fitting suit and overdone hair. Do you tell him the truth? Is lying always wrong?’

<p>desired effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - arousing the audience's interest by opening her speech with two thought-provoking scenarios in which lying can be justified, e.g. '...Nazi Party...demanding to know if there were Jews hiding in your basement.', 'Your date...looks absolutely horrendous in an ill-fitting suit and overdone hair.' - adding force to her arguments by appealing to famous philosophers, e.g. 'John Stuart Mill... argue that you can find the right thing to do by determining exactly who'll be affected by your choice and determining which choice will make everybody happy.' - establishing a link between the opening and the ending by raising questions at the beginning and providing her answers to the questions at the end, e.g. 'Do you tell him the truth?', 'I would tell my date that he was great because he actually bothered to dress up for me.' 	<p>absolutely horrendous in an ill-fitting suit and overdone hair.'</p>	
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Transcription

F: Fiona **S: Student**

S1: Good afternoon, everyone. Today our topic is 'Telling Lies Is Wrong: Always, Sometimes or Never.' Is it ever okay to lie? Is a lie ever morally required? If the answer to either of these questions is 'yes', then what are we to make of the ninth biblical commandment, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness', or the rule that we often hear from our parents or teachers that 'Honesty is the best policy'. First, let me define what lying is. To lie is to state something one believes is false so that it'll be taken for the truth by someone else. The intention is to deceive, to maintain the secret or reputation, or to avoid punishment. Our parents always teach us that lying is wrong. But have you ever considered that lying is not always wrong? Instead, it might only be sometimes wrong only. In fact, it just depends on how people judge in different situations. For example, when one of your beloved relatives is about to die and he asked about his health, would you tell him the truth that he is going to die? Or would you tell a lie so to relieve his worries and to make him feel better? Now, may we have the honour to invite Ms Fiona Chong to tell us how lying may not always be wrong. Ms Chong, please.

F: Good afternoon, everyone. Let me begin with two scenarios. First, imagine members of the Nazi Party knocking at your front door and demanding to know if there were Jews hiding in your basement. There were in fact five of them hiding in your basement. But if you tell the SS officers that, they would most certainly be killed. Do you tell them the truth? Second, let's think about something closer to us. Your date for the Christmas ball turns up at your front door, blushing and offering his arm to you. He looks absolutely horrendous in an ill-fitting suit and overdone hair. Do you tell him the truth? Is lying always wrong? Today, I would discuss this with reference to two philosopher...philosophical theories. Truthfulness is a virtue. Nobody can deny that. We admire the first American President, George Washington, because as the story goes, when asked by his father whether he had cut down the cherry tree on a family property, he responded, 'I cannot tell a lie. I cut down the cherry tree.' Some philosophers, like Immanuel Kant, condemn all lying. They say one should stick to the rules and remain inflexible at all times. They say the results of an action is not relevant that lying would be sinful at all times. Morality is based on rights and duties. This is known as Deontology. This theory says that we are required to perform certain moral duties regardless of the consequences. Some lie to avoid punishment for mistakes, like how I told my mother my sister had broken the teapot when actually I did it some years ago. Some lie by omission to deliberately leave with a misconception like how Japan left out certain historical facts out of textbooks. Obviously, these lies are to be condemned. However, are things always so clear-cut? I believe not as the two scenarios earlier illustrated. Lying may sometimes be the right thing to do. This is called utilitarianism. This is centred on the idea that the moral worth of an action depends on its results. John Stuart Mill, a scholar and a supporter of this idea, argue that you can find the right thing to do by determining exactly

who'll be affected by your choice and determining which choice will make everybody happy. White lies or emergency lies are usually considered benign sins, which means they are forgivable sins. A white lie would cause no discord if uncovered and offer some benefits to the liar or the hearer or both. An emergency lie is a different kind of white lie, which is employed when the truth may not be told, because for example, harm to a third party would come of it. I am not here to preach about how we should never lie, or to advocate lying. I am here to present the idea that maybe sometimes lying is not wrong, that maybe sometimes we have to bend the rules to suit different situations. However, we do have to be very careful when considering telling noble lies which may lead to a slippery slope. The lying between cleverly calculated moral justifications and empty excuses for selfish behaviour is exceedingly thin. People often poorly estimate the consequences of their actions are specifically undervalued or ignore the harmful consequences to society. Therefore, we have to take everything we say very seriously because there may be consequences. Now remember the situations I mentioned earlier. I personally would lie to save the Jews were for the greater good, and I would tell my date that he was great because he actually bothered to dress up for me. Am I wrong? If I have made you think twice about that, then I consider my jobs today well done. Thank you.

S2: Ladies and gentlemen, it is my honour to extend my deepest gratitude to those who have contributed to make this programme a success. My special thanks to Ms Fiona Chong, our speaker, for giving us a stirring speech concerning lies. I am sure the audience, as well as I, now understand that not all lies are wrong. Thank you once again for sparing us your precious time to share your knowledge and experience to us. I would also wish to thank the audience for paying attention to our speakers' speech and for giving us appropriate responses. Before concluding, we will always remember that we are not living in a world of black and white but a real world where lies are not always false. Instead, lies can be acceptable. Lies are judged as wrong when a person lies with ill intentions, and as right when a person lies with good intentions. Thus, depending on the motives behind and the seriousness of the situation, lies can be both good and bad. Finally, ladies and gentlemen, please accept my sincere gratitude for giving us this golden opportunity to test and enhance our ability and skills in public speaking. Thank you.

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