

AN ENGAGING ENGLISH TEXTBOOK TO IMPROVE SPEAKING SKILLS!

Compelling Conversations

Questions & Quotations for Advanced Vietnamese English Language Learners—Volume 1

WRITTEN, COMPILED, AND EDITED BY
Eric H. Roth and Toni Aberson



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English Language Learners – Volume 1

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CHAPTER 15

What Do You Think?

BRIDGING DIFFERENCES

Harmony is often important, but sometimes we still find ourselves disagreeing with loved ones, close friends, and co-workers. Therefore, we have to find ways to resolve the conflict in a respectful way. Sometimes we just listen and postpone an awkward discussion. Sometimes we try to find agreement and focus on where we agree. And sometimes we need to identify and express our disagreement so we can solve problems together.

The following phrases let you state your position clearly while keeping the conversation friendly. Read all phrases aloud.

Expressing agreement

Expressing disagreement

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--|
| That's right. | Sorry, I disagree. |
| Absolutely. | I partially agree. |
| That's true. | That doesn't seem completely true. |
| I believe that. | Sorry, I don't share that belief. |
| That's a good idea. | While that sounds good, it may not work. |
| This explains A, B, and C. | What about X, Y, or Z? |
| That's right on point. | That seems a bit off point. |
| I concur. | Sorry, I can't completely agree. |
| I agree. | I don't agree. |
| That's valid. | That's invalid. |
| I accept that. | I reject that. |
| I support that. | I don't support that idea. |
| That's a good idea! | Here's a better idea! |
| I definitely agree. | I'm not sure I agree. |
| You should agree with me. | We agree on some points. |
| That sounds logical. | Is that really logical? |
| It's simple. | Or is it complicated? |

EXPANDING VOCABULARY

accept	acceptance	agreement	disagreement	assume
assumption	concur	consequences	solve	solution

Accept verb: to say yes, to agree, to concur.

- Thuy accepted the invitation to dinner.

Acceptance *noun*: the act of agreeing, the act of receiving something offered.

Her acceptance of his marriage proposal made everyone smile.

Agreement *noun*: the act of agreeing, a contract.

- The agreement was fair so we signed it.

Disagreement *noun*: the act of disagreeing, having different ideas and emotions.

- The disagreement seems silly now, but we were very upset at the time.

Assume *verb*: to accept without evidence, to believe without question.

- Let's assume that all parents love children, and always want the best for them.

Assumption *noun*: the act of taking something for granted, an unquestioned idea.

- The assumption that "newer means better" can sometimes be wrong.

Concur *verb*: to agree with, to support.

Hong concurred with his co-workers that they were lucky to have good jobs.

Consequences *noun*: the result or outcome of something.

Thich's decision to move to Hanoi had many consequences.

Solve *verb*: to find the answer, to work something out.

- Engineers solve problems by examining facts, considering alternatives, and making calculations.

Solution *noun*: the act of solving problems, finding answers.

- The simplest solution is sometimes the best solution, but sometimes the simplest solution doesn't really solve the problem.

ASKING QUESTIONS

A. Select five vocabulary words in this chapter, and write a question for each word. Remember to start your question with a question word (Who, What, Where, When, Why, How, Is, Are, Do, Did, Does, etc). You also want to end each question with a question mark (?). Underline each vocabulary word.

Example: Is that assumption reasonable?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
5.

B. Take turns asking and answering questions with your partner or group members.

“Nobody minds having what is too good for them.”

—Jane Austen (1775-1821), English novelist



DISCUSSING PROVERBS

Do you agree or disagree with the following proverbs? Why? Discuss with your partner.

- 1. The best things in life are free.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 2. Children should be seen and not heard.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 3. Spare the rod and spoil the child.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 4. Money is the root of all evil.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 5. Honesty is the best policy.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 6. It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 7. Behind every successful man there's a woman.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 8. The end justifies the means.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 9. Winning is everything.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 10. Better to be a live dog than a dead lion.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 11. Persistence pays.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 12. There is no good war and no bad peace.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 13. Your best friend is yourself.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 14. Never judge a movie by its preview.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 15. You can't keep a good man down.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 16. A closed mouth catches no flies.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 17. The best defense is a good offense.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
- 18. Money makes the world go round.
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?

MAKE NOTES AND ASK QUESTIONS

Choose a proverb from the previous section about which you and your conversation partner disagree. Spend five minutes thinking of situations to support your point of view. Then discuss your opinions in a friendly, respectful way. Use some of the phrases at the beginning of this chapter to keep the conversation flowing. Write down the proverb that you will discuss.

SEEKING CLARIFICATION

Sometimes we need more information to better understand each other, and reach an agreement. Read each of these phrases aloud to your partner.

- Can you clarify that?
- Can you explain your ideas more?
- So?
- What do you mean?
- Can you rephrase that?
- Why do you say that?
- Can you give another example?
- Have you considered?
- What if the situation were a bit different?
- What if?
- How far would you go?
- Are you sure? Why are you so sure?
- What's your source for that bit of information?
- How do you know?
- Can you imagine some alternatives?
- Is there another possibility?

DISCUSSING PROVERBS PART II

Consider each of the following common statements, attitudes, or proverbs. Which statement of agreement or disagreement best expresses your reaction?

1. Seeing is believing.
2. Appearances are deceiving.
3. Beauty promises happiness.
4. Be good and you will be happy.
5. No pain, no gain.
6. No pain, no pain.
7. The bigger, the better.
8. Less is more.
9. The unexpected always happens.
10. The sun rises every morning.



ON YOUR OWN

Learning to politely discuss and solve problems is a vital workplace skill. We should, for instance, always carefully listen to make sure we understand a problem before we express our opinion. Write five other guidelines that people can follow to have productive, positive conversations when they disagree about something. Be prepared to explain your answers.

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

 **REMEMBER...**

- Make notes.
- Ask questions.
- Find solutions.

11. You get what you pay for.
12. A penny saved is a penny earned.
13. Two can live as cheaply as one.
14. Bad news travels fast.
15. Liars should have good memories.
16. Life is not a popularity contest.
17. Counting your money is how you keep score.
18. You can't take it with you.
19. Time heals all wounds.
20. Never forget; never forgive.
21. Don't throw your pearls before swine.
22. A donkey prefers hay to gold.
23. Honesty is the best policy.
24. The early bird catches the worm.
25. Two heads are better than one.

ASKING QUESTIONS WITH PROVERBS

We've studied proverbs throughout this book. Ask five questions using a proverb.

Example: Do you agree that time heals all wounds?

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

DISCUSSING QUOTATIONS

Take turns reading these quotations out loud, and discuss them with your partner. Do you agree with the quotation? Disagree? Why? Mark your answer.

1. "True love is like ghosts, which everybody talks about and few have seen."
—Francois Duc De La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680), French writer
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
2. "Do not anticipate trouble or worry about what may never happen. Keep in the sunlight."
—Benjamin Franklin (1705-1790), American statesman/scientist
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
3. "Nobody minds having what is too good for them."
—Jane Austen (1775-1821), English novelist
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
4. "Nothing is so dangerous as an ignorant friend; a wise enemy is much better."
—Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695), French poet
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
5. "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."
—Antoine de Saint-Exupery (1900 – 1944), French writer and pilot
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
6. "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."
—Charles Dickens (1812-1870), English novelist
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
7. "If two ride on a horse, one must ride behind."
—William Shakespeare (1564-1616), great English playwright
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
8. "Experience is the name everyone gives their mistakes."
—Oscar Wilde (1854-1900), Irish playwright
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
9. "Always do the right thing. This will gratify some and astonish the rest."
—Mark Twain (1835-1910), American writer
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?
10. "A problem is a chance for you to do your best."
—Duke Ellington (1890-1974), Jazz composer and band leader
☐ Agree ☐ Disagree Why?

"In the middle of a difficulty lies opportunity."

—Albert Einstein (1879 -1955), Time Magazine Man of the 20th Century

Problem-Solution Worksheet

The English proverb “two heads are better than one” is often true. Solving problems can often be difficult. Working with your partner, focus on a problem—at school, at work, or in the local city—and find a reasonable solution together. Please follow this classic problem-solution method widely used in engineering and the sciences to solve problems. Be ready to share your process and conclusions in a short presentation next class.

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

Background

Problem

Short-term effects.....

Long-term effects.....

FIND THE BEST SOLUTION

Possible solution

- Advantage.....
- Disadvantage.....

Possible solution

- Advantage.....
- Disadvantage.....

Possible solution

- Advantage.....
- Disadvantage.....

Possible solution

- Advantage.....
- Disadvantage.....

Best Solution

Reasons:

1.
2.
3.

[illegible]

About the Authors

ERIC H. ROTH

Eric H. Roth teaches international graduate students the pleasures and perils of academic writing and public speaking in English at the University of Southern California (USC). He also consults English language schools on communicative methods to effectively teach English.

Given a full scholarship as a Lilly Scholar, Roth studied philosophy and American history at Wabash College (1980-1984), and received his M.A. in Media Studies from the New School (1988). Since 1992, Roth has taught English to high school, community college, adult, and university students. Highlights of his career include: teaching the first Saturday morning citizenship class in Santa Monica (1994); directing the CES Adult Education Center (1995-1998); working with international students in summer IEP programs at UCLA Extension (1997-2000, 2003-2005); teaching USC engineering students in Madrid, Spain (2007) and Paris, France (2008); and directing the APU International High School in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam (2009).

Roth co-authored *Compelling Conversations: Questions and Quotations on Timeless Topics* in 2006 to help English language learners increase their English fluency. Recommended by *English Teaching Professional* magazine, the advanced ESL textbook has been used in over 40 countries in English classrooms and conversation clubs. *Easy English Times*, an adult literacy newspaper, has published a monthly column, "Instant Conversation Activities," based on the book since 2008. The first specific version for a particular country, Vietnam, was published in 2011. Future versions for Japan, Korea, Israel, Mexico, and Romania are anticipated.

A member of the USC faculty since 2003, Roth is a member of numerous professional organizations including: California Association of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CATESOL); the International Communication Association (ICA); the International

Professors Project (IPP); and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Roth has given several CATESOL conference presentations and led many teacher training workshops.

Roth first visited Vietnam in 2000, and has returned three times to consult and teach. He looks forward to learning more about Vietnam and engaging in many compelling conversations with Vietnamese in the future.

TONI ABERSON

After 35 years of teaching English and supervising English teachers, Toni Aberson (M.A. English; M.A. Psychology and Religion) believes that a lively classroom is the optimal learning environment.

"If people are thinking, sharing, and laughing, then they're learning," notes Aberson. "The mere fact that those adults are in an English classroom attests to their courage and their determination to learn."

"Adult English students bring a wealth of interesting experiences with them," continues Aberson.

"They bring the world into the classroom. The challenge for English teachers is to put students at ease and encourage them to practice English. What better way than to ask students about their lives? I love teaching English."

Aberson has launched a new Chimayo Press series for ESL students. *Lively ESL Lessons: American Idioms and More* focuses on real life expressions and situations.

"The key in a classroom is engagement," Aberson says, "and people become interested and excited when they're learning about the daily stuff of life. When they are thinking and writing and talking about their real lives—food, jobs, family, homes, sports, movies—that's when they learn the language. Learning English is not easy. It can be a real challenge, but it can also be fun and stimulating. That's what I'm aiming for—the real life and the fun that stimulates ESL students so they want to learn more. They want to jump in."

P.S. Eric Roth calls Toni "mom."

