



It sounds kinky to chat with yourself but I guess that's one of the most effective techniques of improving the thought process and language too! Talk to yourself, rehearse conversations and explanations; play back in your mind, language that you just heard, mimicking intonation, emphasis and rate of speech. This will help you to think in English, improve your fluency and reduce your anxiety about speaking the language.

Try joining a sports, recreational group or field-trips on weekends and holidays. By totally immersing yourself in the language, you will soon notice improvement and perhaps get some much needed rest and space. If you are not passionate about acquiring the requisite skill and taking time out for it, you will not make significant progress. **Communication is a skill much like swimming where you can't swim if you are unwilling to get into the water for fear of drowning.**

Ask an eloquent speaker, someone whose speech you admire to record the pronunciation of key terms in your field; then work on the tape at home. When you don't understand certain expressions or slang in conversations, say, "I didn't catch that, what does it mean?" People will be pleased to explain it to you.

If you think you are too busy studying to make contact with your surroundings, you might not be working efficiently at all.

A few helpful strategies

▶ **Join in class discussions no matter how intimidated you feel**

I learned to interrupt a discussion by saying, "Excuse me, do you mean . . . , or "I can't follow you, would you explain that in another way?"

▶ **Pay attention to the language and customs; when in Rome, do as the Romans . . .**

I feel everybody is closer to me when I use the right phrases during conversation. I have started to pick up expressions frequently used by students, such as: "kinda like," "stuff like that," "piece of cake."

▶ **Try to mix with the eloquent speakers so you can get more chances to practice English**

▶ **Don't worry too much about making mistakes**

If you are too sensitive about making mistakes and trying to convey information perfectly, most likely your efforts will only frustrate your partner in conversation.

▶ **Ask a few good speakers to help you** You could ask one of your friends to pay attention to your problems in spoken English. This will complement the class because of more contact compared to the class as the topics varied extensively and were more spontaneous.

▶ **Pay attention to your mistakes but do not over monitor**

It is better to focus on one or two typical mistakes in a particular period of time. When I only concentrate on one or two problems, I am not troubled by other problems and do not lose fluency.

A lighter vein

A Plan for Improving English Spelling

The European Parliament has commissioned a feasibility study in ways of improving efficiency in communications between Government departments. European officials have often pointed out that English spelling is unnecessarily difficult - for example, cough, plough, rough, through and thorough. What is clearly needed is a phased programme of

changes to iron out these anomalies. A committee staff by participating nations at top level would ofcourse administer the programme.

In the first year, for example, the committee would suggest using 's' instead of the soft 'c'. Certainly, sivil servants in all sities would resieve this news with joy. Then the hard 'c' could be replaced by 'k' sinse both letters are pronounsed alike. Not only would this

clear up confusion in the minds of clerical workers, but typewriters could be made with one less letter.

There would be growing enthusiasm when in the second year, it was announced that the troublesome 'ph' would henceforth be written 'f'. This would make words like 'fotograf' twenty per cent shorter in print.

In the third year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling can be expected to reach the stage where more complicated changes are possible. Governments would encourage the removal of double letters which have always been a deterrent to accurate spelling.

We would all agree that the horrible mess of silent 'e's in the language is disgraceful. Therefore we could drop these and continue to read and write as though nothing had happened. By this time it would be four years since the skem began and people would be receptive to steps such as replacing 'th' by 'z'. Perhaps even the function of 'w' could be taken on by 'v',

with is, after all, half a 'w'. Shortly after this, the unnecessary 'o' could be dropped from words containing 'ou'. Similar arguments and of course be applied to other combinations of letters.

Continuing this process year after year, we would eventually have a reliable sensible written style. After twenty years there would be no more troubles, difficulties and evasions and you would be able to understand each other. The dream of the Government would finally have come true.

How Mark Twain would have it.

For example, in Year 1 that useless letter "c" would be dropped to be replaced either by "k" or "s", and likewise "x" would no longer be part of the alphabet. The only case in which "c" would be retained would be the "ch" formation, which will be dealt with later. Year 2 might reform "w" spelling, so that "which" and "one" would take the same consonant, while Year 3 might well abolish "y" replacing it with "i" and Year 4 might fix the "g/j" anomaly and for all. Generally, then, the improvement

would continue year by year with year 5 doing away with useless double consonants, and years 6-12 or so



modifying vowels and the remaining voiced and unvoiced consonants. By year 15 or so, it would finally be possible to make use of the redundant letters "c", "y", and "x" – by now just a memory in the minds of old dodderers – to replace "ch", "sh", and "th" respectively. Finally, after a sum of 20 years of orthographic reform, we would have a logical, coherent spelling in its rawest English-speaking world.

- compiled by Mary Thomas

On the eve of the final examination in archery, Arjuna went up to his master Dronacharya and said to him, "I know I am good, I have worked very hard for this test and I am definitely a better marksman than my brothers and my cousins. But how do I prove that in a one off archery competition? Is it fair to be given only one chance to prove one's worth? Tell me master, how do I maximise my performance and use my skills to the optimum?" Dronacharya

Through goal setting you can choose where you want to go in life

smiled and said, "Come with me, boy, I'll show you something." He took Arjuna deep into the forest. Pointing out to a monkey who was jumping restlessly from one branch to another, he said to Arjuna "Do you see that monkey, my boy, see how aimlessly he hops and jumps from one tree branch to another, he has no direction,

only energy and agitation. He is attracted to whatever he sees, hears or smells. His five senses constantly keep pulling him in all directions and he cannot resist them." Then Dronacharya drew Arjuna's attention to a lioness that was stalking a deer. She was absolutely still and completely focused on the animal she was stalking. Then all of a sudden in one fluid motion, she sprang onto the deer and brought it down in one swipe. Dronacharya said, "Can you see the difference now? The lioness is completely immersed in whatever she is doing. Her attention is focused on her goal. It does not wander because she is not ruled by her senses, she rules her senses and therefore she is successful."

Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward. Today's goals should be derived from larger goals that you may wish to achieve say ten years from now.

The Prescription For Success: Just Three Tablets

The Prescription For Success

Arjuna had learnt his lesson well. Next day was the day of the archery competition. A wooden bird was set high atop a tree and all the disciples were expected to hit the bird's eye. Dronacharya called all of his disciples one after the other and asked them a single question before giving them the bow and the arrow. "What do you see?" he asked them. All of them answered almost similarly "we see the tree, the branches, the bird and the bird's eye." None of them could hit their mark accurately. Then it was Arjuna's turn. Dronacharya asked him the same question. Arjuna replied, "I see only the bird's eye." "Then shoot my boy," said the Acharya. Arjuna took aim and hit the bird's eye right in the middle.

also able to gather that self-discipline is the only way to achieve goals.

But by far the most important lesson that Dronacharya taught Arjuna was that:

if you base your goals on personal performance or skills or knowledge to be acquired, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals and draw satisfaction from them.

The lioness depends on no one for getting her work done but on her own skills and instincts. So did

Arjuna. He knew what he wanted and worked hard to polish his skill and acumen to get towards that goal. His was both a performance goal as well as an outcome goal. He wanted to perform well and emerge as the best marksman of the lot.

Thus by setting sharp, clearly defined goals, like Arjuna you too can measure and take pride in the achievement of your goals. You can foresee progress in what might previously have seemed a long pointless grind. Working without a set goal and direction is futile. The Greek hero Sisyphus was made to learn this in hell. Having been condemned to hell for his misdeeds, Sisyphus's punishment was to haul a huge rock up a steep hill. Each time he was seen to be reaching his goal, the rock would roll down the hill and the whole grind of hauling it up would have to start again. This is what life could become if you don't set goals in life- a long, pointless, unceasing burden.

However small or big your dream may be, it becomes achievable if you set reasonable short term goals and stick to them. That brings us to the second ingredient in the formula for success, **PERSEVERANCE**. Once goals have been set, they have to be pursued relentlessly and determinedly. Obstacles will be aplenty and you will come across many naysayers in your journey towards your goal. But if you plan to eliminate negative attitudes that hold you back and surround yourself with positive people, your journey will be a lot easier and gratifying.

Now what is the third ingredient in our formula for success? **POSITIVE THINKING!** We shall take up two constituent

elements in the formula for success in the next couple of articles. For now it will suffice to say, will help you achieve more, improve your performance levels, increase your motivation to achieve, enhance your pride and fulfillment in your accomplishments, improve your self-confidence.

GS+2P=S, where G=Goal setting, 2P=Perseverance and Positive thinking and S=Success.

Dronacharya's formula of success is indeed a successful formula used by high achievers in all spheres of life.

It is the mantra of **GOAL SETTING**.

You may have heard this word being used often enough around you. What does it really mean? Well, to me it means everything Dronacharya taught Arjuna on the eve of the archery test. Let us take a look at some of the lessons that we can draw from what Dronacharya taught Arjuna. At its simplest level Dronacharya led Arjuna through the process of setting goals and targets which allows one to focus on one's cherished goals in life.

Arjuna knew what he wanted, but was not sure how to go about getting it. Dronacharya showed him the way by showing him how a lioness stalks her prey.

You have to be so focused on your goals that you cease to see anything except that goal. You also need to get your priorities right. That will save you from being disappointed when you set goals that are unrealistic or unachievable

Arjuna, the smart pupil that he was, kept his operational goals small. He knew that if a goal is too large, then it could seem that one is not making progress towards it.

Arjuna's immediate goal was to do well at the final exam. For he knew that it was a small step in being recognised as the best marksman ever and as we all know, he did achieve that long-term goal too.

Arjuna, the good pupil that he was, learnt his lesson well. Not only was he able to clarify his long-term vision but he was

By knowing precisely what you want to achieve, you know what you have to concentrate on and improve, and what is merely a distraction.

Goal setting gives you long-term vision and short-term motivation and helps you to organise your resources.