

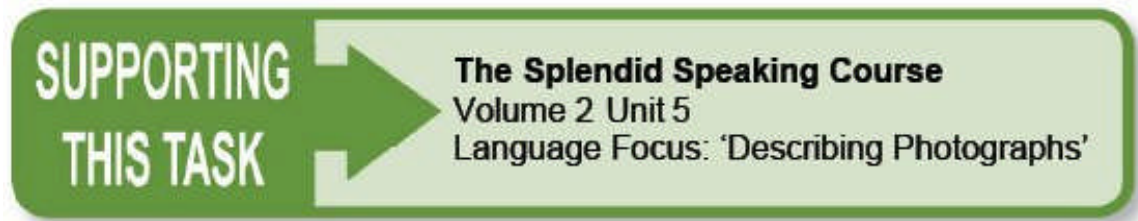
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# Splendid Speaking Podcasts

Topic: Describing Photographs  
Interview 20: (March Archives)

This show can be listened to at the following address:

<http://splendid-speaking.com/blog/?p=21>



## Transcript

### Introduction

Do you need to improve your skills in describing pictures or photographs? It may be that you have to speak on a subject and need help how to structure a short talk.

This podcast features an interview with Andrzej from Poland. Before we listen to Andrzej, a reminder that transcripts of all recordings including this one are available to subscribers of our mailing list. You can sign up to the newsletter from [www.splendid-speaking.com](http://www.splendid-speaking.com). Also, you may have heard about our new subscription service, 'Splendid Expressions', our three-stage approach to learning colloquial vocabulary. Find out more at [www.splendid-speaking.com](http://www.splendid-speaking.com)

In this task Andrzej had to speak for about 1 minute, commenting and reflecting on the collection of photographs he was given. A link to these photographs on the Cambridge ESOL website is available from this podcast entry on the Splendid Speaking website. **(Please note: these do not now seem to be available)**

The photographs show people in different educational settings and Andrzej was asked to compare or contrast the atmosphere in some of these scenes and the benefits of those he describes. Quite a lot to think about, and Andrzej only had one minute to speak!

Before listening, look at the photos yourself and decide how you would approach this question. Then, as you listen, decide how well Andrzej managed to keep to the time limit

of 1 minute and in particular, how successfully he answered the question. Finally, make a note of Andrzej's use of English, which we'll look at in the feedback section. Let's listen to Andrzej.

Well all these pictures are similar as they all show people learning in some way. The settings however, are completely different in each of them. The one for instance showing a teacher talking to a class full of students. The atmosphere is rather formal, serious. The students are listening in silence with a ... with a look of intense concentration I would say on their faces. Such atmosphere certainly helps to concentrate on what the teacher is saying ... and to get the most of the lesson. The picture beneath emanates as it were a quite different atmosphere. The group of students sitting on the ground on a warm sunny day ... they are also learning something from the books they are holding but they seem very relaxed I guess they are chatting as well, smiling perhaps joking even ... they are obviously having a good time learning socializing and being out in the sun at the same time.

First of all a big 'Thankyou' to Andrzej for agreeing to be recorded. Why not comment on his talk at the Splendid Speaking website. Now time for some feedback.

This was an excellent example of how to approach this task. Having a time limit of one minute can make this activity very challenging and the first thing you need to do is listen carefully to what the question asks you to do. In this case Andrzej had to make a decision about which photographs to describe as he was only asked to look at 2 or 3.

Your choice of photos will depend on the question. You are often asked to compare or contrast and in this case you should quickly select two or three pictures that in some way are similar or contrast. For example a serious compared to a lighthearted scene, an indoor or outdoor setting, individual compared to group shots. Alternatively, there might be two or three photos that share the same things in common.

Andrzej was asked to comment on the atmosphere within these educational settings and chose two photographs that enabled him to contrast the scenes in terms of their formality. Focussing on only those photos in this way simplified the task as he only then needed to concentrate on contrasting these two settings in the context of the question.

He started with a great introduction - giving a clear overview of the theme of all the photos represented and the main feature that differentiated them .... and he did this

quickly and efficiently in only 10 seconds! In an examination situation this can sometimes be done by paraphrasing the question, which will often give such an overview.

*“Well all these pictures are similar as they all show people learning in some way. The settings however, are completely different in each of them.”*

He then went on to describe his two choices of photograph, describing the atmosphere and how each benefited the learning process. He also managed to speculate on how the students were feeling in these settings. And all this was done in just over 1 minute. A very successful long turn I'm sure you'll agree!

Approaching the task with a clear idea of what you are asked to do like this enables the speaker to concentrate more on what they are going to say and how to say it. Andrzej's use of English was very accurate and I could only identify a few minor errors:

*“...Such atmosphere certainly helps to concentrate on what the teacher is saying ...”*

Not 'such atmosphere' but 'such an atmosphere'

*“... To get the most of the lesson ...”*

Not 'to get the most of the lesson' but 'to get the most from the lesson'.

*“... The picture beneath emanates as it were quite different atmosphere...”*

Yes, the same mistake here again. Not 'quite different atmosphere' but 'quite a different atmosphere'.

OK, that's the end of this podcast. It's 'bye' from me Pete Travis. Make sure you come back soon for another episode of Splendid Speaking. Until next week 'Bye bye'.

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