



THE ART OF LYING

**A TALKING POINTS ENGLISH LESSON
FOR READING, SPEAKING, WRITING
AND VOCABULARY**

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Introduction

Do you tell lies?

What do people think about lying in your country/culture?

Do all people lie?

Telling Lies

Read Jade's account below:

I just can't help it — I lie about everything.

I get talking to someone and they might ask me something and then I can hear myself coming out with the most incredible stories. Things that simply are not true.

For example, I was on a flight to Hong Kong — my daughter works there — and this woman sitting next to me got talking to me. She was going to Hong Kong to meet her son who also worked there. I asked her what her son did and she said he worked in banking and I made some polite conversation about it. Then, of course, she asked me what my daughter does and I just didn't even think about it.

Quick as a flash I just said that she worked for the secret service.

The woman looked back at me with her eyes wide open. You could tell she was very surprised by my comment.

And she said: What does she do? Is she a spy?

And I just shook my head and said: Actually I don't really know what she does, it's all a bit hush-hush.

Which is pretty much like saying, yes she's a spy.

She's not a spy. She works at a kindergarten. I don't even know why I said it. And the rest of the flight felt a bit awkward as I knew I had just told this woman — a complete stranger — this whopping great fib.

Another time, I was in a coffee shop and I was drinking my coffee and writing down a list of things I wanted to buy for Christmas.

The waitress came over to clear the table and she surprised me. She apologised and said she was sorry for disturbing me. I said that it was okay, no problem.

Then in the next breath, I told her I was under a lot of stress as I was writing a book about global warming and the deadline with my publisher was looming. I said I was still doing some research and I was worried that I might miss the deadline.

I have no idea why I said it! It was such a silly thing to say.

The waitress looked impressed and said I was doing a good thing for making people aware of such an important issue. And then I had nothing else to say. I know absolutely nothing about global warming.

I do this all the time. I don't know why.

It's got to a point where I just come out with the most unbelievable nonsense. And I worry about things I say to people. I don't think I have ever been caught out but it's only a matter of time.

So I have taken things into hand. I have made an appointment with a doctor — a psychiatrist. He works in the city and he is actually very well known.

He worked with Freud when he was a student and knew him quite well apparently —

Oh my god! I've done it again! What is wrong with me?

Reading Comprehension Questions

What bad habit does Jade have?

What happens when someone asks Jade a question about something? What does she do?

What was the first story that Jade tells us?

Where did the story take place? Where was she going?

What did the woman tell Jade about her son?

What does Jade's daughter do there? What did she tell the woman that her daughter does there?

What was the second story Jade tells us?

Where was she when it took place? What was she doing?

What did she tell the waitress she was doing?

What did the waitress think of this?

Does Jade have any knowledge of global warming?

What actions does Jade say she has taken about her bad habit?

Where does this man work? Who did he work for?

Is this true or false?

Essential Vocabulary

incredible stories	on a flight	banking
polite conversation	quick as a flash	secret service
eyes wide open	shook my head	hush-hush
pretty much	kindergarten	awkward
a complete stranger	whopping great fib	surprised
apologised	disturbing	in the next breath
under a lot of stress	global warming	deadline
publisher	looming	research
silly thing to say	impressed	an important issue
unbelievable	nonsense	caught out
psychiatrist	in the city	well known
apparently		

Exercise

Write down all the words and phrases in your vocabulary notebook. Look in your dictionary and find the meaning of each word. Write the definition next to each word.

Then make up your own sentences using each word or phrase.

For example:

Notebook—*a small book with pages of blank paper that students use to make notes when studying.*

“I left my notebook at home so I was unable to make any notes in my English class.”

Discussion Questions

Why do you think Jade lies about everything?

Do you know what a compulsive liar is? Is this what Jade is?

Do you think Jade has a psychological problem? Can she receive help for this?

If you were the woman on the plane sitting next to Jade, would you believe her story about her daughter being a secret agent? Would you say anything? Why/why not?

Do you lie about anything? What lies do you tell?

If you said you don't lie – how can we be sure you are telling the truth?

What are the most common things people lie about in your country/culture?

Does everyone lie? If so, why?

Does our body language reveal if we are lying? How?

Is it acceptable to tell lies? Why/why not?

What is a white lie? Do you tell white lies? Give examples.

What is the worst lie you have ever told? Can you talk about it?

Are people who tell convincing lies very intelligent? Explain your reasoning.

Who tells more lies – men or women? Why?

What is the most hurtful lie someone told you? Can you talk about it?

Who lies more – farmers or politicians? Explain your reasoning.

Two Truths and a Lie

This is a game activity.

All the class should work individually. Each student should write three sentences:

- two should be true
- one should be a lie

One by one, the students come to the front of the class and write all their sentences on the board. The rest of the class then need to find out which sentence is a lie.

The class can ask the student any questions they like to find out which sentences are true and which sentence is a lie.

Debate: What is lying and when is it allowed?

This is a debate activity.

Work as one class together. Go through all the statements below and say whether you agree or disagree.

If you agree, give reasons.

If you disagree, also give reasons.

- People should never lie
- It's acceptable to lie to children
- Politicians often lie
- People should never lie in a court of law
- A man should never lie to his wife
- A woman should never lie to her husband
- The news always lies
- White lies are acceptable
- Advertising is the same as lying
- We lie to ourselves more than we lie to others
- Our body language always reveals the truth

- If a lie is told often enough, people will eventually believe it

Role Play

This is a role play activity.

There are two characters in this role play:

Jade

You are Jade from the story at the beginning of the lesson. You have told a lie to a good friend and the friend has caught you out.

You keep trying to convince the friend that your lie is the truth but your friend doesn't believe you.

This does not stop you from trying again and again.

Jade's Friend

You are Jade's friend. You have known Jade for many years. She has told you a big lie and you have caught her out. You have known for a long time that Jade lies about things, but you didn't say anything before. But now you have had enough.

What she has lied about is terrible. And you would like Jade to apologise and admit that she has a problem.

If not, then you cannot continue being friends.

The Situation

Jade and one of her dearest and oldest friends are having coffee together.

Then Jade starts talking about her life in Australia as a teenager.

The only problem is – she has never been to Australia in her life!

The friend knows this – she even knows where Jade was as a teenager, so she knows it is a big fat lie.

But Jade continues with the lie and tries to prove it with more lies.

The friend gives Jade an ultimatum – either admit you lied, apologise and get some help. Or the friendship is over.

In pairs, practice your role play.

When you are ready, show the class.

Writing

This is a creative writing exercise.

Write a short story about lying. Your story can have any kind of ending – good or bad – as it is your story.

***When you have finished your story, read it out in class.
Or give it to your teacher for review.***

Credits

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