



CONNECTING THROUGH LANGUAGE AND OUTREACH

Relationship-building in ministry requires good communication and, as Anita Yoder shares, words are not the only way to communicate. The message of love and friendship can be conveyed across language barriers and cultural differences. Anita recently left Poland after serving five years as an English teacher and personal worker.

Lessons in Language

Anita Yoder

One of the major aspects of my time in Poland was language. I went to teach English, but also needed to learn Polish, which, according to some linguists, is in the top ten most difficult languages.

For three weeks at the beginning of our term, my co-worker Gideon and I took the train to Warsaw to take intensive Polish lessons. Our teacher was a veteran at her job of teaching beginners, and she believed in me and made me feel that I was her pet. Beyond basic words and grammar, I also learned from her how to conduct a class with authority and heart.

A past-time for all AIM mission workers is to rehearse and guffaw over all the old legendary language blunders from years gone by, plus add the newest stories. I'll always cringe at how I went to a bakery on my way

to Polish class and bumbled through the transaction of buying a pastry. My intensive Polish lessons had made me feel competent for this. Back on the street, it occurred to me that I'd used the wrong verb form and told the lady she doesn't speak Polish. I wouldn't even have had to try to explain to her that I don't speak Polish, because it was so obvious.

It seems that the best way to respond to one's horrendous and embarrassing language mistakes is to laugh and not take it too seriously. But that was really hard for me to do because I care so much about communication and connection with people, and I often felt like a failure when the words that came out were not the words I needed. I was my own worst critic, because with very few exceptions, the locals were far more gracious than was their duty.

I remember chuckling all the way home after buying butter at the village store, and the man behind the counter commented kindly that I can

say "butter" very nicely. Never mind that it's one of the easier words to say—it was sweet of him to praise me so generously!

The language barrier kept me from freely making easy, friendly comments to passers-by on the street or in a store. I could smile and touch a baby sometimes, which helped me feel more connected to the world around me, but the aged ladies usually regarded me with wary faces when I appeared too friendly to them. It was probably the combination of language and culture that divided us. They'd grown up in communism where they couldn't trust anyone, especially not a foreign stranger.

Besides learning how to carry a basic everyday conversation in Polish, I learned that words are not the only communication. Some people were more adept at this than others, but I came to have friends in the church who only spoke Polish to me, and we communicated on deep levels without words. It seemed that our

spirits could understand each other's hearts without needing verbal explanation. Ela, whom I called my Polish mom, especially had that sensitivity, and both of us could tell what the other was thinking and feeling just by looking at each other. We often shared both laughter and tears together in a deep kind of communication.

The fellowship of the spirit was especially a treasured memory and I learned in a beautiful way how God's kingdom reaches all over the globe in many forms and languages. With Hope Singers, we would go to churches and Polish believers were encouraged and touched by God, not through words we had in common, but through the ministry of the Spirit and song that transcended verbal communication.

In another dimension, fighting with the language gave me empathy for my students who worked hard to master English. I could identify with the women who would shake their heads and acknowledge their frustration when they felt blocked even though they'd known the words to say.

Because of this, the biggest goal I had in my interaction with my students was that they would feel safe and relaxed. Language is so complex, and especially with emotional women, there is far more than only vocabulary and syntax for them to conquer. They also needed to learn to hear themselves say the right words in the right order in a happy, affirming atmosphere so that they wouldn't doubt whether they had it in them to speak English.

Being safe and relaxed meant that often the lesson morphed into a mini counseling session, and I heard many hard, heart-breaking stories about their families and loved ones. I felt honored with their trust and was glad for the chance to tell them I'm praying for them. Thus, there were many times when I was looking for tissues for their tears, but there were often peals of laughter bouncing around us too.

I loved the challenge of meeting each student at their level of ability and finding a way to make them more confident. For children, it meant playing games and acting. They could make a finger puppet talk when they

couldn't make themselves talk. For adults, sometimes it was the same games the children played that relaxed them enough to laugh and enjoy the learning process. I will never look at Memory, Go Fish, or Taboo in the same way again! Every age loves stories more than grammar exercises, so I used all the stories that I could find, which made lessons more fun for me too. But I completely wore out "The Grinch Who Stole Christmas!"

The week I left Poland, I got an email from a student, a woman older than I. It made me cry and feel rich beyond words. This is her message, unedited:

Hello! I would like to thank you for:

*-your smile
-good words for me
-together spent time
-interesting exercises
-you listened about my family,
my problems, my life
-you are calm, warmly, kindness
-you was my english teacher*

I thank God so I met you.

I wish you only good days, good people and good experience.

Day Camp Minsk Mazowiecki

On July 6-10, an English Day Camp was held in Minsk Mazowiecki. Here Jonathan describes Day Camp.

There is a lot of excitement that stirs in the air as children begin to arrive. Day Camp is starting! The local Christian brothers took charge this year with all the organization. Shannon Lehman, Heidi Weaver, and David Glick, all from PA, along with mission staff here, played a supportive role in assisting with the program.

Day Camp registration opens each morning at 8:30 and by 9:00 the main meeting room is teeming with energetic kids! The program starts with fun



Day Camp staff, including workers from Agape Mennonite Fellowship and a local congregation.

interactive songs in English and Polish and is followed by a short skit teaching important values about living for Jesus. After a few instructions for the day the various age groups go to their assigned

stations. We'll follow the youngest group as they make their way through the day.

BIBLE STORY

The kids gather in a classroom and sit on the floor. Leroy and Ania Swartz did a super job telling Bible stories and making them come alive for the kids.

ENGLISH LESSON

Dervin Martin and Jewel Gingerich welcomed them into class for a fun time of learning new English words, playing word games, and making English exciting.



SNACK

Next the little lambs excitedly enter the snack room and take their places at the tables. It's food time! As they enjoy their snack the local staff works diligently to teach them Bible verses relating to the story of the day.

CRAFTS

It was great to see Heidi work together with the Polish ladies making crafts with the kids. The hands on experience and the opportunity to do something creative and constructive proved to be a highlight for many of them. Interacting with the kids doing activities like this transcends language barriers and builds relationships that we pray will make a difference for eternity.

SPORT

Marlin and David lead out with playing games and burning off as much energy as possible! The kids' highlight of their time in sport was the day they got to have their teachers stand under a bucket full of

water as they threw a ball at the release lever trying to soak them. Whenever someone would hit the target and the bucket would tip, they would shriek with delight as the frigid water poured over the teacher's head!

More songs, fun, and good byes.

The final period is spent singing, reviewing verses, etc. and the children are dismissed around 12:30. The staff sighs with relief. So much fun, yet quite exhausting.

Saturday evening after the week of Day Camp was over, all the staff who assisted with the camp got together for a cook out. The evening was full of meaningful conversations, great food, and fun games as Polish and American brothers mingled together both acknowledging that God is doing His work here in Minsk.

Mateusz and Wanda were there with their two sweet kids. Wanda first met AIM staff nearly fourteen years ago to take English lessons. It wasn't until a few

years later that Wanda believed in Jesus and turned whole heartedly to serving Him. Mateusz, her husband now, also became a believer through her testimony. He was the main leader for Day Camp this year and did an excellent job.

Jacek and Agnieszka were also there with their family. Jacek became a believer in the middle of an English lesson one day. His girlfriend at the time, now his wife, also became a believer as a result of God's work in their lives. Agnieszka was faithfully at camp every day working with the kids and sharing Jesus' love with them.

And there are others whose stories are still being written. Day Camp kids, English students, and contacts from town with whom we do business or interact in other ways. Sometimes we scatter seeds. Sometimes we are the ones to water. But God brings the increase. Jesus builds His church. And as for us, we strive to obey Jesus' command to make disciples.



Dervin teaching English



Let's make the teacher wet!



Singing in general assembly



David and Heidi prepping for the day



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AIM Financial Report
April 1, 2015—June 30, 2015

Available balance April 1, 2015.....	\$25,917
Income	
Unrestricted donations.....	\$21,528
Restricted donations.....	\$8,198
English lessons.....	\$7,865
Other income.....	\$1
Total income.....	\$37,592
Expenses	
Labor.....	\$18,104
Administrative.....	\$508
Facilities.....	\$2,600
Personnel.....	\$15,474
Public relations.....	\$58
Publications	\$3,123
Supplies.....	\$1,166
Utilities.....	\$1,424
Other expenses.....	\$ (192)
Total expenses.....	\$42,265
Net profit (loss).....	\$(4,673)
Assets released from restriction.....	\$7,311
Restricted funds June 30, 2015.....	\$3,637
Prior period adjustment.....	\$369
Available unrestricted funds	\$20,726