

Old Age

Utter Wisdom Extension Activity

Having an old person at home is like having a treasure.
Chinese proverb

Rationale: Attitudes to old age vary round the world. For some it is a time of weakness and debility, for others a time of wisdom and sharing past experiences to help future generations. This extension activity is a debate and is quite a high-level activity; lower-level learners could focus on the problems and blessings that come with old age.

Materials: Whiteboard and pen

1. Lead in

Draw a (quick) stick figure of an old person and ask who it is? (See examples below.)

2. Pre-teaching vocabulary

Ask the learners what words come to mind when they think about old age. Write the words around the stick figure. Adjectives might include wise, frail, lonely, respected or nouns such as experience, wisdom, income, relatives, Care Home, carer, retirement. You can add a few words that might be needed later.

3. Introducing the activity

Ask the learners to look at the sentences in the table. Which sentence best reflects the attitudes to ageing in your country?

4. Preparing for a collaborative debate

An election is coming up. You have a budget of X (you decide the amount). What would you promise to do to make life easier for old people? Divide the learners into two groups. Suggest some headings they might consider; you could use Anna Dixon's comment as a first step: *"We must improve our workplaces, our housing, our health and our communities to enable more of us to age well. Changing our own and society's attitudes to later life is an essential first step."* In the same two teams, learners must suggest 6 areas they will focus on and rank them in order of priority.

5. Running the activity

Debate/election hustings. Introduce and explain the meaning of hustings. Keep the same two teams. Put two chairs opposite each other. One person from each team sits on the chairs with the rest of the team around them. Only the person on the chair can speak. Present the topic – e.g. "My government's priority would be...." (you might need to pre-teach or explain the meaning of 'government' or 'priority'). Give each of the two (chair) speakers a short time to speak. Team members can help them by whispering arguments but cannot intervene directly. After a short time (one minute) change the person on the chair.

6. After the Debate

With the learners, review the language they have used. Pick out some examples of good language and a few errors to address.

An elderly person at home [is like] a living golden treasure.” China
“Those who respect the elderly pave their own road toward success.” Africa
“Japan’s low birthrate and ageing population pose an urgent risk to society.” Fumio Kishida (Prime Minister of Japan)
A growing number of people are experiencing poverty, discrimination and poor health as they get older. (UK)
Old people almost always live with their family members. (Turkey)
Grandparents are likely to take care of their grandchildren and stay in their home. Younger people are under great financial pressure, they have too many working hours to take care of their child. (China)
An old man has no admirers (Kenya)



Drawings by CELTA Trainees and Grant Swainston-Harrison. Produced with permission.

More information on the subject

<https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/global-study-finds-high-levels-concern-about-ageing>

<https://www.research.colostate.edu/healthyagingcenter/2022/01/28/aging-around-the-world/>

<https://www.ageukmobility.co.uk/mobility-news/article/what-is-the-best-country-to-live-for-older-people#infographic>