



**Distance Learning and  
the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal**

by Jay Thompson, Ph.D., MBA

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During the past decades, distance learning has been a major benefit and blessing to students of all ages. Distance learning can be defined simply as learning outside or away from the traditional classroom, or at a distance from a classroom. It is usually achieved through use of some technology, such as the Internet. Distance learning has opened the doors to education and provided additional opportunities for learning to millions of people around the world. As technologies have advanced so have the opportunities to create more efficient, effective, and successful learning materials. The Ohana Foundation Learning Portal is an excellent example of creating outstanding learning materials to help meet the needs of students through the power and flexibility of technology and distance learning. And the Portal provides multiple facets of education, all in one location.

Through the Internet the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal provides students with immediate access to high-quality, highly interesting and motivating learning materials covering the areas of English as a Foreign Language, Basic English, Business, and Power Presentations. Thanks to distance learning and the Learning Portal students now have access to learning materials that bring the English language to life. Whether used by teachers to quickly help their students gain knowledge, speaking and listening skills for English, or by students who are working on their own in a self-paced fashion to quickly increase their mastery of the English language, the Portal provides a wealth of information and a broad look at Western culture. The materials are highly utilitarian; they develop knowledge and skills that people need to know in order to successfully interact with English speaking Westerners. And a major advantage of the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal is that it is not static--new destinations are constantly being built and new ways of learning are continually being created.

Fortunately, the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal breaks the old mold of dull, rote, repetitious memorization. Through the wise use of technology students quickly learn the meaning of words directly through viewing objects and actions; they are able to skip the unnecessary and wasteful step of internally translating each English word to their native word before understanding. This is achieved through the appropriate and effective use of the basic human senses of sight and sound, through moving and still images. It is clearly evident that these materials were developed through a tremendous amount of thought and care by instructional specialists/teaching professionals. A variety of learning modalities are utilized and learning is reinforced through different activities with a continual variety of subjects and activities to stimulate interest. You can download textbooks and workbooks, listen to the audio files and view the video files online. These are just some of the elements that make the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal so important, effective, and unique.

As I have traveled around the world visiting institutions of learning at all levels several things have become apparent. One observation involves motivation. Many students see English as just another required class that they have to take and having no relevance to their life. With only a textbook, it is hard for many teachers to motivate students and help them understand the importance of learning English. The Ohana Foundation Learning Portal provides teachers with a wide range of highly interesting and stimulating opportunities for students to learn. The materials are easy to use and the portal is easy to navigate. The real-life stories and interactions between English native speakers bring the language to life. The large number of well-designed modules covering a variety of topics provide students with many of the different, interesting aspects of some of the English-speaking Western countries. As students are brought into the stories

the range of emotions they experience go from the very serious to the humorous. With a newfound worldview, these students discover the value of learning to speak English. And for those already-motivated, independent learners, the portal provides immediate access to a wealth of information that has relevance -- real world applications. The Ohana Foundation Learning Portal is unique in providing this meaningful world-view perspective.

A second observation concerns listening and speaking/pronunciation skills. Teachers of languages know that students usually develop strong reading and writing skills and abilities first. Listening and speaking/pronunciation skills almost always lag behind. Students often times score high on English tests requiring reading and writing but then score low on listening comprehension and speaking/pronunciation. And students who are trained by an instructor who is not an English-speaking native are often at a major disadvantage. As I have listened to students who are learning English and are fortunate enough to have access to native English speakers, they usually have much improved listening and speaking/pronunciation skills. The Ohana materials provide students direct access to native English speakers. They are able to distinguish the small nuances in sounds in both listening and speaking. The Ohana Foundation Learning Portal thus becomes invaluable to non-native English speakers with limited resources.

A third area covers initially learning the information and then remembering it beyond the next test. The Ohana teaching professionals reinforce learning through a variety of different activities. They help students build a solid foundation in learning and understanding English and being able to communicate with others in English through listening, speaking, constructive exercises, writing, reading, and a variety of meaningful repetition. And several elements used to increase retention have been constructing interesting, enticing learning materials and showing the value of learning English. The Ohana Foundation Learning Portal gives easy, immediate access to these many reinforcing activities.

And for the business person the Business English section is priceless. The Ohana instructional specialists have carefully assembled a large group of modules covering a wide range of words, phrases, interactions, and expectations pertinent to businesses and business people in the Western world. A relatively few hours spent with the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal can greatly increase a person's ability to interact successfully in the Western business world. And the Power Presentation section is invaluable to both business and general students alike. You will find specific directions on how to create and deliver a presentation everyone will be proud of.

In summation I would like to congratulate the Ohana Foundation on their Learning Portal. Their professionals have

spent a substantial amount of time and money in careful planning and development of some very meaningful and beneficial instructional materials centered on learning, understanding, and communicating in English. Through the use of the Internet all people now have access to these very unique, special, valuable instructional materials. Whether used by a teacher as supplemental materials to a textbook or by a self-starting student for self-paced instruction, the Ohana Foundation Learning Portal will have a major impact on the quality and success of learning English.

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