

# LANGUAGE THROUGH LAUGHTER

## CARTOONS

- **Appetisers** - cartoons can be used - like any other picture - to introduce a topic.
- **Grammar** - they can be used for structural practice, eg continuous forms, 'going to' future...
- **Vocabulary** - many cartoons are platforms for vocabulary development.
- **Listening comprehension (1)** - learners have a cartoon which T describes, deliberately making some mistakes, which they have to spot.
- **Listening comprehension (2)** - learners have a number of windows from a cartoon strip which they put in order as T tells the story of the strip.
- **Spot the differences** - learners have similar but not identical cartoons and work in pairs to describe their cartoons to one another without showing them and have to find the differences.
- **Spot the similarities** - similar but the cartoons are completely different and they have to find as many similarities between them as they can.
- **Picture dictation** - either T describes a picture to learners, which they have to draw according to the instructions, or they can do it in pairs.
- **Oral storytelling** - T gives individual windows from a cartoon story to learners, who describe them and order the story without seeing one another's pictures.
- **Picture composition** - learners have to order the windows of a cartoon story and then produce a written or oral composition.
- **Matching** - learners are given a number of word balloons or captions and a number of cartoons and have to match them.
- **Writing** - learners have a cartoon story with the words removed and have to write them.
- **Culture focus** - cartoons can be a way in to various aspects of culture, both from the learners' own culture and culture associated with the target language.

## JOKES AND COMIC VERSE

- **Grammar work** - jokes, either in written or spoken form, are a good source of texts for grammar presentation and practice.
- **Vocabulary** - just like any other text, they can be exploited in a wide variety of ways.
- **Pronunciation** - jokes can be the basis for work on both segmental and suprasegmental features.
- **Comprehension** - jokes can be used with a wide variety of exercise types as texts both for listening and reading comprehension.
- **Dictation** - because of their length, many jokes make ideal dictation passages.
- **Cohesion and coherence** - learners have the various sentences of a joke in jumbled order and have to put them together, using their knowledge of cohesive devices.

- **Text reduction** - T puts a joke on the board. Learners can remove one word or two or three consecutive ones. They cannot add any. They can add, remove, or change punctuation as required. After each deletion the learner responsible must read it as it now stands. It must still be grammatically acceptable and have a meaning, though not necessarily the original one.
- **Text expansion** - T writes a short joke on the board and asks a volunteer to come and add a word (or two or three words together). This can be anywhere in the text but it must make grammatical sense. Another volunteer repeats the process. It continues until the learners find it hard to go on. This can also be done as a game or team competition; learners can be given the chance to indicate, before sitting down, where the next word should go (but should be able to put one there themselves if challenged).
- **Complete cloze** - T puts up a series of blanks, one for each word in the joke. Teams of learners compete to fill in the blanks. They gain points for each word guessed correctly. The winners are the team with the most points.
- **Vanishing text** - T puts a joke on the board and learners read it. T rubs part of it out. Learners read the full text again. T rubs more out and they read again. The process continues until they are 'reading' from a blank board.
- **Interruptions** - T (or a learners) tells a long joke. Learners interrupt with questions which have to be answered before the teller can continue.
- **Retelling jokes** - learners have to either retell a joke in their own words or write it either in class or for homework.

## **BRIEF BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Cook, G (2000) Language Play, Language Learning Oxford: OUP

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Hill, D A (1990) Visual Impact Harlow: Longman

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Medgyes, P (2002) Laughing Matters Cambridge: CUP

Morgan, J & M Rinvulcri (1985) Once Upon A Time Cambridge: CUP

Ur, P (1984) Teaching Listening Comprehension Cambridge: CUP

Ur, P & A Wright (1992) Five-Minute Activities Cambridge: CUP

Wright, A (1989) Pictures for Language Learning Cambridge: CUP

All the above contain useful bibliographies for further reading on the subjects they cover.

*Simon Gill, 2004*

## **COMPLETE CLOZE – THE MAN ON THE TRAM**

A girl got on a tram in Vienna. She asked a man if he would give her his seat.

“Why?” he asked. “You look young and healthy.”

“Yes,” she answered, “but I am pregnant.”

The man was embarrassed and gave her his seat. He tried to make conversation.

“How long have you been pregnant?” he asked.

“Only about twenty minutes,” she answered, “but it makes me terribly tired!”

## **TEXT REDUCTION – THE BOTTLE OF BEER**

Some years ago, when I was enjoying living in the city of Banska Bystrica, in Central Slovakia, I was very thirsty indeed and so accordingly I went to the local general store and there I bought myself a delicious bottle of what was my favourite beer at that time. To my surprise and horror, it tasted absolutely disgusting and so I immediately took it to the nearby government laboratory for expert analysis. The team of experts who worked there performed a number of standard tests on it. After doing so they told me: “Congratulations, Mr Gill. Your horse is very healthy.”

## **DICTATION AND TEXT EXPANSION – THE MAN AND THE DOG**

A man was walking down a road. He saw another man sitting outside a house.

There was a dog sitting next to him.

“Does your dog bite?” the first man asked.

“No,” the second man replied.

The first man bent over and patted the dog. It bit him savagely.

“You said your dog didn’t bite,” he howled.

“That isn’t my dog.”

*Simon Gill, 2004*

## A JOKE FOR SEQUENCING

- a. "This isn't enough," she said.
- b. He drank his wine and called for the bill.
- c. "You'll be able to drink it quicker."
- d. After walking round for a while, he felt very thirsty.
- e. He walked into the first one he saw and ordered a glass of wine.
- f. Then she went away and left the poor man standing there.
- g. A man from the countryside went to Vienna for a visit.
- h. "Never mind," said the waitress.
- i. He decided to go to a wine cellar and have a drink.
- j. She came back and picked up the money.
- k. The waitress brought it over and put it on the table.
- l. "This glass isn't full enough," the man complained.
- m. The same waitress came over and gave it to him.
- n. "Never mind," said the man.

*Simon Gill, 2004*