

ASOCIACION EX ALUMNOS DEL PROFESORADO EN LENGUAS VIVAS "J.R.FERNANDEZ"
DEPARTAMENTO DE ALUMNOS LIBRES



Teachers' Centre

AEXALEVI *Forum*

Issue VI - September 2010

AEXALEVI *Forum*

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C o n t e n t s

A Round of Applause for Prof. Marta Moure3

Prof. Myrian Casamassima writes a journal entry about the cocktail party held on August 20.

Guest Writer: Music in the classroom 5

Prof. María Angélica Quevedo suggests bringing music into our lessons.

Ideas Worth Sharing: An Internet-based Project 7

Trad. Gustavo Sevilla outlines the steps to carry out a project based on the Internet, which brings humour and culture together.

The Importance of Postmodern Intertextuality in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* ... 10

Lic. Carla Montoya develops the concept of intertextuality in relation to Caryl Churchill's play.

Portfolio Assessment 12

Prof. Viviana Pisani discusses Portfolio Assessment and its implementation.

Activities on the Go: Simple Post-reading Activities 16

Prof. Florencia Insua provides four simple activities we can do with any reader at the post-reading stage.

A Round of Applause For Prof. Marta Moure

By Prof. Myrian Casamassima

August 20th. 7 p.m. The cocktail party begins. It is not easy to say goodbye to someone like Prof. Marta Moure, who has been the Head of “Departamento de Alumnos Libres” for so long and who is so dear to all of us. Instead, I thought of it as giving her a big round of applause.



Prof. Angela Edelmann de Abregó, President of the “Honorable Comisión Directiva” during her speech in the cocktail.

Members of the “Honorable Comisión Directiva”; Prof. Liliana Luna, Head of “Departamento de Alumnos Regulares”,

Prof. Viviana Pisani, Coordinator; our teachers at the Asociación; “Profesores Adscriptos”, friends and family. And of course, what a great cocktail party

should have: excellent food, champagne and a band that played and sang bossa nova. There were moments for us to feel moved by words filled with emotion and unforgettable memories. There were also moments for us to cheer up and enjoy chatting and listening to the music. The Teachers' Centre edited a video which aimed to show Prof. Marta Moure's participation in several events since the Teachers' Centre was born and a big round of applause from all the people that worked closely to Marta at the Asociación. That round of applause certainly spread among the people in the cocktail party. As Prof. Angela

Eldermann de Abregó said in her speech, "Come back, soon".



Prof. Marta Moure and Prof. Liliana Luna



The concert. Just the way Marta always liked it as Head of Department.
Great music for great moments.

Guest Writer

Music in the Classroom

By Prof. María Angélica Quevedo

Music is a manifestation of culture and of the human need to communicate. Because it is inextricably associated with language, using music in foreign language teaching is a good way of promoting speaking and of encouraging students to create mental fantasies. Music has been used in classes in many ways and for different reasons, particularly in Suggestopedia, (Lozanov, 1978) through which music creates a relaxed learning environment for students. Music stimulates the inner eye, even in students who claim to have no imagination..Music promotes conversation because listeners may interpret the same piece of music differently. Music makes people act spontaneously, not only on the dance floor but also in the classroom.

The above words from *English Teaching Forum* have paved the way for me to tell you how I feel about music. Music has always been in my first-aid kit for emergencies as a very effective stimulus to engage students in different activities, to add variety to lessons, to foster imagination and creativity, to activate vocabulary, tenses, intonation, diction and even to socialize. Since those who are usually reluctant to speak, never hesitate to join in the singing of a popular song. Music is close to the heart of the young, they feed off its energy and there is food for thought in most songs. Why not make the most of it, then?

Personally, I believe music can help us to set the students thinking and reflecting .Thus, it enhances and fosters productive skills.

I have used songs as pre-writing tasks and as a springboard to trigger discussions or debates while dealing with supplementary readers and to give students insight into a wide range of topics.

For instance, songs such as” Pipes of Peace” and “Imagine”, when it comes to dealing with war, brotherhood, the world as a single nation, the absence of material riches, etc. “Father and Son” or “The Living Years” for generational conflicts, misunderstandings between

parents and children, “Another Day in Paradise” to create awareness about homeless and social indifference and even a song like “New York, New York” to set the scene for the description of a city from a bizarre approach.

Songs create an atmosphere and provide students with a source of information which is closely related to their sensitivity. Music goes straight to the heart. Therefore, we may have a wide range of opinions after listening to a song depending on how deeply it has moved our students.

It goes without saying there are songs which lend themselves better than others for classroom use. The list is endless and in keeping with our needs. Yet, some like “Blowing in the Wind” which is a musical icon, can be used with multiple topics: war, environmental problems, lack of sympathy, inequality, the wrongs in the world to put it short. “Eleanor Rigby” is a short story itself which synthesizes loneliness in society, how people do certain things just to follow social patterns they do not believe in.

Undoubtedly, music is powerful and so can be our teaching if we make wise use of it and of the many tools that are available for us nowadays.

To end this article on a musical note, I’ll include the lyrics of a wonderfully sweet song, one of my favourites.

Somewhere over the rainbow

**Somewhere over the rainbow
Way up high,
There’s a land that I heard of
Once in a lullaby.**

**Somewhere over the rainbow
Skies are blue,
And the dreams that you
Dare to dream
Really come true.**

**Somewhere I’ll wish upon a star
And wake up where the clouds are
Far behind me
Where troubles melt
Like lemon drops
Away above the chimney tops
That’s where you’ll find me.**

**Somewhere over the rainbow
Blue birds fly.
Birds fly over the rainbow.
Why then, oh why can’t I?**

**If happy little bluebirds fly
Beyond the rainbow
Why, oh why can’t I?**

Ideas Worth Sharing

An Internet-based Project Trad. Gustavo Sevilla

In my opinion, understanding the combined role of the Internet as a source of information and communication is vital to define a suitable Internet-based project for students. Learners should feel that they are acquiring new knowledge and, at the same time, that they will be able to apply it to true-to-life situations. Based on this principle, I think that humour could be a good choice. It is definitely an intercultural issue. The project would entail learning about humour (information) and using it (communication). The research could be entitled 'Classifying and Comparing British (or American) and Argentine Types of Humour/Jokes.' At a high level, cartoons could be dealt with as a graphic as well as written and perhaps more elaborate way of making humour.

Aim

To engage in research in order to classify and compare different ways of dealing with humour or different types of jokes (according to subject-matter, protagonists – jokes involving children, animals, different kinds of people, etc., techniques used to arouse laughter, linguistic mechanisms – jokes based on repetition, play on words, mispronounced words, etc.), as well as find out in which cases jokes are or are not susceptible to translation, how far humour is related to the culture and idiosyncrasy of the people, and so on.

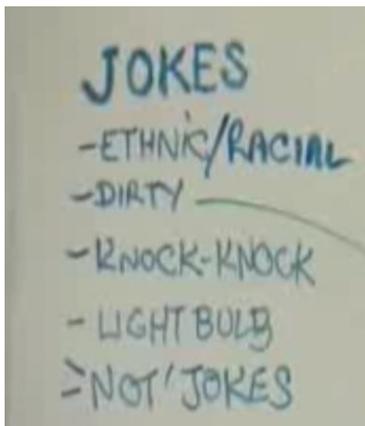
Technical Requirements

Google could be used as a search engine, but considering the broadness of the subject and the large number of sites that may be encountered, some rules should be provided for students to focus on certain pages while avoiding others.

Preparation

A list of types of jokes could be improvised on the board as it appears

in the picture below, prepared by an English humour coach in a film. The teacher should attempt to prepare something similar for Argentine humour. An effective prompt could be explaining the parallel between 'not jokes' and the popular 'ah, re' among our teenagers. As explained in a part of the film – which can be shown to students on a PC as a listening exercise – a 'not' joke is when we are trying to make fun of something and what we do is making a statement that we pretend is true but saying at the end 'not' (overdoing the vowel sound) to mean it is not actually true but merely a joke. Students will then understand that this is one of the most frequent uses of 'ah, re,' that is, to mean that what has just been said is a lie or an exaggeration.



Procedure

After writing the preliminary list above, students could be invited to surf the

Internet to find more material so as to make English and Argentine humour comparable. Important: the teacher should explain to students that dirty or vulgar jokes ("chistes verdes") will not be allowed as they are beyond the scope of this research. Ethnic/racial jokes could be used only to check cultural differences between both countries (we Argentines laugh at *gallegos*, while the British mock Belgians), but at the same time laying stress on the importance of avoiding discriminating and hurting other people's feelings.

The teacher will also guide students to select jokes according to their degree of complexity so as to suit students' level. It is a good idea to go over those materials when you have free time, and classify the ones that interest you according to their topic or how you might use them. Applied to this case, the teacher might direct the students' attention to certain pages selected by the teacher beforehand, so that they will then expand their search to other pages, always following the guidelines set by the teacher. I would strongly recommend looking for 'serious' pages about humour by inserting combinations of words that renders the search more scientific, so to say. Googling phrases like "types of humour", "kinds of jokes," or the like could pave the way for a successful

search allowing students to organize their information.

Publication

Students will be divided into groups and asked to publish a poster showing similarities and differences between one or two kinds of jokes in each language. They will be required to explain to the rest of the class the components of the joke and how their features have a cultural origin of a particular or universal nature. A discussion may also be held about the global or national/regional scope of humour.

Follow-up

Students can be encouraged to play some jokes on chat pals abroad or even join a student list and see how their peers respond to them, or to ask chat pals what kind of humour they prefer in their country, or to invite chat pals to tell them some joke they know and assess what impression it makes on them and whether there is anything similar in Spanish.

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The Importance of Postmodern Intertextuality in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*

Lic. Carla Montoya

In general terms, *intertextuality* is a device intended to engage the interest of the audience by appealing to their prior knowledge. However, intertextuality seems to have another focus too: on the one hand, it calls our attention to the importance of prior texts, but on the other hand, following a more postmodernist view, it seems to participate in the discursive space of a culture. Thus its relationship between the text and different languages and/or practices of a culture and its connection to those texts. Following this concept, the postmodern use of intertextuality in Caryl Churchill's play, *Top Girls*, appears to be paramount. This play, written in 1982, is considered post-modern and highly recognised worldwide. Its fragmentation of time, the use of the pastiche and its simultaneity in the rhetoric constitute some of the most relevant post-modern characteristics. Above all these post-modern features, it is my view that intertextuality plays a significant role as it is a component which seems decisive in the analysis of themes.

Let us consider the term briefly. Intertextuality, which derives from the Latin *intertexto*, meaning to intermingle while weaving, is a term coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 to "denote the interdependence of literary texts (...) the way texts echo each other (...) so that meanings in one kind of discourse are overlaid with meanings from another kind of discourse"¹ Considering Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895-1975) theories on the dialogical nature of speech, the "carnavalesque" popular culture, and his notion of the web of cultural discourses, "the social speech

diversity"², we can apply these elements to the themes in the play, which are both dialogical and intertextual. In addition to this, it is worth emphasizing the fact that intertextuality in this play seems to be used in a post-modern way following the idea that intertextuality is described nowadays as (...) a model for *intermediality* (all media, beyond intertextuality): art making and art interpreting in contexts of prior work, traditions, codes, and values assumed by an interpretative community"³ Consequently, intertextuality is not just the investigation of sources as

traditionally conceived; it seems to have a wider scope which reaches discursive practices, cultural codes and different values in a given culture. Following this post-modern concept of intertextuality, the understanding of the themes in *Top Girls* can be enriched.

As far as the play is concerned, intertextual references (in view of the concept above-mentioned) are put forward from the very the first scene as five historical and successful women gather together with Marlene, the main character, to celebrate her job promotion. In the last scene, the allusion to Margaret Thatcher's government and her accession to power in 1979, provides an important insight on the time of the play. Such references contribute to emphasize the

themes of the play as it questions whether it is possible for women in society to combine a successful career with a family life as well as the issue of motherhood. The idea of a "modern superwoman"⁴ is stressed, women who work and want to succeed but need to leave something behind to achieve their goals in a men's world. In addition to these themes, the question of appearances emerges as an important topic as well as the connection between women across cultures and generations.(...) All in all, *Top Girls* is about contemporary women who face hard times at any moments of their lives. It is a play in which struggles and accomplishments as well as choices and sacrifices go hand in hand.

NOTES

¹ Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary terms and Literary Theory*. England: Penguin Books, 1992. Page 454

² Baxtin, Mikhail "Discourse in the novel" in: McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. London and New York: Routledge, 1987. Page 167

³ University of Georgetown at: <http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/visualarts/art-theory-intro.html>

⁴ Goodman, Lizbeth with Thompson Burk, Juli. Chapter 8. "Contemporary Women's theatre" in: Goodman, Lizbeth, editor. *Literature and Gender*. London: Routledge in association with the Open University, 1996. Page 243

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<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/visualarts/art-theory-intro.html>

Portfolio Assessment

Prof. Viviana Pisani

At present the word 'portfolio' is commonly associated with different English teaching contexts. Portfolio assessment is being implemented in countries such as the USA and the UK as an alternative to standardised and multiple choice tests. But what exactly is portfolio assessment and how can it be implemented in an Argentinian school of English? These are the questions this article intends to answer.

In O'Malley and Valdez Pierce's words,

“A portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work that is intended to show progress over time. The portfolio may include samples of student work, usually selected by the student or by the student and teacher to represent learning based on instructional objectives.” (1996: 14)

That is to say, portfolios are intended to reflect student achievement and improvement.

The benefits of portfolio assessment are plentiful and varied. While building up their portfolios, students can be assessed at regular intervals during the year. Therefore, their final mark will not depend on limited evidence. Moreover, students are

encouraged to take an active role in both the learning and assessment processes. As classwork really matters, they will probably become more autonomous and responsible for their work. Ideally, there should be a shift from the learner being passive to becoming proactive.

Although student participation is usually regarded as a key factor in collecting portfolios, some writers allow for portfolios to have tightly specified contents (Freeman and Lewis 1998: 271), or content determined by teachers (Cunningham 1998: 145; O'Malley and Valdez Pierce 1996: 35). One way of solving this issue is by dividing the samples of work into

two categories: core or required and optional entries (Smith 1995: 3; Gottlieb 1995: 13). While students can still choose part of the content of their portfolios (optional entries), teachers or school administrators may decide to include instances of more formal assessment such as tests and particular kinds of exercises or activities as compulsory components (core entries). Two important issues have to be remembered, though. If tests are included, they cannot be considered the only evidence of achievement, and both the core and optional entries must show student progress. Teachers can agree to include, for example, a piece of writing every month and let students select the one they like best. In this way, both teacher and student participate in building the portfolio.

Student discussion of goals and objectives is an important feature of portfolio assessment. A discussion of the goals that the institution has for each group of students in the light of the students' own objectives is very useful indeed. Students become aware of what is expected of them, and at the same time, select the objectives that are more

meaningful to them, while adding others of their own. This talk can take place at the beginning of the school year as the students and their teacher are getting to know each other. In the conferences in which teacher and student discuss portfolios, those goals and objectives can be adjusted or renewed according to the particular needs of each student.

Portfolio conferences can be time-consuming activities. Can teachers afford to spend time on them within their classes of three or four hours a week, the usual class span in schools of English in Argentina? Genesee and Upshur suggest that teachers "set aside time ... during which three or four conferences are conducted with individual students while other students in the class work on their own or in small groups" (1996:113).

Project work, lab work and reading workshops are useful activities that can be carried out alongside portfolio conferences. Each institution and teacher will probably find other activities that easily lend themselves to this purpose. The conferences are essential to raise

students' awareness about their progress, the work they have done so far, and what they can do in the future. They should lead to self-assessment and self-reflection, making the learning process more meaningful to the student, and not just the pursuit of a final mark or test result. If teachers understand the relevance of the conferences, they will surely find plenty of opportunities to include them in their schedule of work.

As to the assessment of oral skills and their inclusion in students' portfolios, the best suggestion is the use of audio and videotapes. However, if we are to be realistic, we must admit that many teachers and even managers may consider this hard to implement. What teachers can do is to complete continuous assessment sheets or checklists and, ideally, write student profiles, which will be included in each student's portfolio.

Finally, we have come to the issue connected with decision-making. Some of the decisions involved in the implementation of portfolio assessment can be taken by both the school administrators and

members of staff, such as what to include in the core and optional entries, in self-assessment sheets and so on. School managers can also ask teachers to volunteer to pilot the new assessment scheme in their courses. This will give those members of staff who are enthusiastic about portfolio assessment the opportunity to try it out, and ideally it will encourage their colleagues to follow suit. As regards private teachers, they are fortunate enough to have the freedom to take their own decisions so there is nothing that can prevent them from embarking on this new experience.

In my view, the idea underlying any method of implementation is that portfolio assessment will ideally adjust itself as time passes and more radical changes are introduced. Meanwhile, the first steps can be cautious and gradual. Boud's reflection on autonomous learning fits portfolio assessment perfectly.

"[It] is not an absolute standard to be met, but a goal to be pursued; what is important is the direction towards student responsibility for learning, and not the magnitude of the change in that direction." (1981: 24)

Student responsibility for learning is the main goal behind portfolios. As long as this purpose is not neglected, portfolio assessment is

worth adapting to the reality of each workplace.

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Portfolio Assessment

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Activities on the go

Simple Post-reading Activities

Prof. Florencia Insua suggests four simple activities we can carry out with any reader.

Compare book covers

Students generally have different editions with different book covers. One starting point of analysis could be to discuss what these different book covers represent. It helps students to become acquainted with the fact that the non-text can also be an instrument of analysis and can help understand different interpretations of the same story.

Procedure

Pre task: Ask students how they choose their books when there are different editions available. This will give students a chance to discuss to what extent design, letter size, book size, etc influence their choice.

Task:

Ask students to lend you their books and give everyone a chance to see them all.

Students work in mini groups and answer these questions:

1. How are the book covers similar or different?
2. How do they represent the story?
3. What colours do they have? Why do you think these colours were chosen?
4. Are there any characters? Who? Why were they chosen for the book cover?
5. Is there any symbol present in the story which is represented in the book cover?

6. In your opinion, which book-cover represents the spirit of the story best?

Report: Students report what they have discussed in their mini groups and exchange their ideas as a class. Finally they vote for the best book cover for this book!

Follow-up: tell students they have been asked to design a new book cover for this reader by a new publishing house which is launching a new edition of this book.

Rearrange the pictures

Very frequently readers bring pictures which illustrate the main events in the story. Also, students enjoy interpreting stories from pictures. This activity gives them the opportunity to build up a story from visual stimuli.

Procedure

Pre task:

Select a cartoon (with little or no dialogues) and ask students to interpret what the story is about. The cartoon might or might not be connected to the topic in the reader. By doing this, students will be able to reconstruct the story from what they see in the different

frames and use their imagination as well.

Task:

Make a set of copies of the pictures in the story and give them to the students in disorder.

Ask them to work in mini groups and rearrange the pictures.

Report:

Check the order of the pictures and let students discuss their choices. This is an excellent way of revising the main events of the story.

Follow-up: Students can take the pictures and make bubbles with what the characters are thinking at that time!

Busted by paparazzi

Procedure

Pre task:

Ask students what paparazzi do for a living and what kind of pictures they tend to take. Also, how famous people react to the attitude paparazzi have.

Task:

Ask students to work in groups and choose a character of the story to work with. Then think of a picture representing a moment in the story taken by paparazzi which he/she would never want to be seen published in a

famous magazine. Think about the setting, what he/she is doing, who he/she is with, and what reaction they have had in connection with the incident. You can even ask students to make a sketch of what the picture would be like!

Report:

Students report to the rest of the class what they have discussed and show their sketch.

Follow-up: Students can design the magazine in which the picture will be published. They can think of a title for the story and a summary of the scandal.

Characters' costume party

This activity gives the students the chance to imagine a situation in which characters will be able to disguise their true nature.

Procedure

Pre task:

Ask students if they have ever been to a costume party. Ask them these questions:

What costume did you wear?

Why did you choose it?

What other costumes have you worn for parties?

Why do you think people like going to costume parties?

Task:

Tell students that the characters in the story have been invited to a costume party. Tell them to imagine which costume each of the characters would wear. Students can choose costumes which represent the characters' nature or they can choose costumes which will hide the characters' true colours.

Report:

Once they have decided on the costumes characters would wear, they report to the rest of the class and explain their choice. Finally the class votes the best costume for each character.

Follow-up: Students can make a selection of songs played at the party. They should choose songs which are connected in some way to the characters' personality, feelings or situation in the story!

We would like to invite you to join us in
a whole-day teacher training session.

On the Convergence of Language, Texts and Projects: Exploring Tasks and Resources.

Date: Saturday October 23rd, 2010 from 9:00 a.m. to 6 p.m.

**Venue: Asociación Ex alumnos del Profesorado en Lenguas Vivas
"J.R. Fernández". Paraguay 1935. Buenos Aires.**

This training session is aimed at teachers at the Asociación and Member Teachers (Profesores Adscriptos al Régimen de Exámenes Libres).

We ourselves will be in charge of the workshops, thus ensuring that theory and practice will be totally integrated with the reality of our classrooms. This session will also be an opportunity for meeting and sharing as members of the Asociación community.

Join us!

Limited vacancies. Certificates of attendance will be issued.



Prof. Liliana Luna and some of the Asociación teachers at the Exhibition by the Teachers' Centre on Teacher's Day. From left to right: Fernando, Beatriz, Liliana, Marta, María Magdalena, Diana, Cristina, Vanesa, Mariana, Cecilia, Sofía and Myrian.