

I Love Lucy: Laughter as Stress Release Lesson

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Intention:

To engage students in the stress-reducing activity of laughing, while focusing on the development of the English language skills of speaking, listening, and reading.

Population: Advanced beginners (ESOL).

Materials:

- Video clip of “Lucy and Ethel at the Candy Factory” from the “I Love Lucy” show. It is only three minutes long and can be found on videocassette or DVD of the Lucy show or on YouTube on the Internet at www.youtube.com/watch?v=SdsLZ80RPI
- The technology to show the clip (either a computer with projection beam or a TV with VCR or DVD player)
- Script of dialogue from clip (attached)
- Roll of paper towels, bag of chocolate “kisses,” aluminum foil cut into squares large enough to wrap the kisses, two hats, a rectangular table

Preparation:

- Facilitate discussion of “funny things” that happen in our lives, even at work. Distinguish between “fun” and “funny” by writing the two words on the board and discussing the difference in meaning. Also write the word “laugh,” a word that is not spelled like it sounds. If students have the language skills to describe funny experiences, then write them down and use as a Language Experience activity.
- Introduce the candy factory clip by saying that here is an example of a funny situation at work. Explain that there are three characters, Lucy, Ethel, and the boss.

Implementation:

1. Play the clip.
2. Check comprehension. The dialogue is fast so students may not have understood much of what was said, but they should be able to describe the basic action of the story if you provide prompts.
3. Play clip a second time after first asking students to focus on the dialogue.
4. Ask students what, if anything, they understood of what was said.
5. Hand out script and read it aloud slowly. Discuss meaning.
6. Play clip a third time and ask students to follow along in the script.
7. Ask three students to play three roles. Work on pronunciation.
8. Break students into groups to practice the dialogue with each other. Encourage them to use as much expression as possible (this is especially important for the boss). Check in with the different groups to help with pronunciation.
9. Ask everyone to gather around the rectangular table. Explain that two people will be needed to operate the conveyor belt using the roll of paper towels. Ask for volunteers.

Ask for another volunteer to be the candy “dropper” (the person to place the chocolate kisses on the conveyor belt). Ask for volunteers to play Lucy, Ethel, and the boss. Set Lucy and Ethel up behind the table, as in the clip, with a pile of foil squares in front of them. Give them each a hat to wear. (There may be more students than there are parts. The extras can be the audience and have roles in the next round.)

10. Once everyone is in place call “action” and let the scene play out as it will. Lots of laughs are guaranteed! Repeat to give roles to those students who did not have one the first time.
11. If some students are absent, assign parts to three of those present and ask them to practice for a performance for the absent students at the next class meeting.
12. Following the performance, break class into groups of two or three. Hand out the action sheet that consists of out-of-sequence sentences describing what happens in the skit. Ask students to work together to decide the correct order and number the sentences accordingly.
13. At the next class meeting, show the clip again for the sake of those who were absent the previous class. Then arrange for a repeat performance of the seasoned actors.
14. To close, ask how everyone is feeling. If it doesn’t come up, inquire if people are feeling relaxed. Remind everyone that watching something funny can help relieve stress.

Classroom Snapshot:

My students enjoyed this immensely. Performing the skit was so fun and funny that we all laughed very hard. Laughing like that together strengthened the sense of community within the class. Even the shyest members of the class let go and clowning around a bit. And at the end we all feasted on chocolate kisses!

I actually used time from three separate class meetings to do all of the steps (no single class was devoted to it completely), but it could be done in one (if no one is absent). It is easy to extend this lesson by using the students’ own experiences as subjects for script writing and performance.