TEACHING GRAMMAR THROUGH HUMOR

BRANDY SHOOKS & WHITNEY SCHARER
Having difficulty getting your students interested and excited about grammar? Participants in this session will gain tools to present grammar in a funny, yet informational method. Examples of utilizing jokes, intonation, group collaboration, along with all four skills will be provided, as well as information on how these concepts can be adapted for multiple age groups and proficiency levels.
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  - B.A. - Management and Marketing: Rochester College
  - B.A. - Secondary Education - English and Earth Science: University of Michigan
  - M.A. - American Culture Studies: University of Michigan
    - M.A. - TESOL: Cornerstone University
- Brandy began working in secondary public school education in 2006, in both rural and urban areas. During that time, Brandy has taught English, study skills and theater. In 2013, she created the TESOL program at Great Lakes Christian College, in addition to teaching writing, theater and working as the Director of Student Success. Brandy studied under Dr. Michael Pasquale, author of “Every Tribe and Tongue” and “An ESL Ministry Handbook.”
WHITNEY SCHARER

- Assistant Director of Student Success - Great Lakes Christian College
  - B.A. Bible Theology, Great Lakes Christian College
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- Whitney designed the curriculum and facilitated English class for ELLs in the Lansing community. She is also the Teaching Assistant for the TESOL Program at Great Lakes. Whitney is planning to move to the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico and begin teaching there within the next five years.
My friends and I put on a performance on puns…

…it was basically a play on words.
USING JOKES TO INTRODUCE LESSONS
What do you call Santa’s Little Helpers?

Subordinate Clauses
SILENT LETTERS

Why can’t you hear a Pterodactyl go to the bathroom?
Because the P is silent
SLANG

Did you hear Oxygen and Magnesium are going out?
I was like OMG!
What is ET short for?
So he can fit on the spaceship
What is the difference between a cat and a comma?
One has claws at the end of its paws, the other is a pause at the end of a clause.
DOUBLE MEANING
& PUNS
• When I found out my toaster wasn’t waterproof, I was shocked!

• When my boss told me to attach two pieces of wood together, I totally nailed it!

• What are the strongest days of the week? Saturday and Sunday, the rest are week (weak) days.

• Did you hear about 2 antennas that got married? The ceremony was kinda terrible, but the reception was awesome!

• What did the shy pebble wish? Just that she was a little
INTONATION
INTONATION

• What is Beethoven’s favorite fruit? BA NA NA NA

• An Irish Setter and Golden Retriever go on vacation. The Irish Setter says to the Golden Retriever, I just met two Brazilian dogs. The Golden Retriever says, How much is a Brazilian?

• What did the bar gain? A Bargain.

• What did the Nacho say to the man who knocked him over? It’s nacho fault!
COMMAS
Let’s eat Grandma. Let’s eat, Grandma.

Some people enjoy cooking their families and their dogs. Some people enjoy cooking, their families, and their dogs.

I shot an elephant in my pajamas. I shot an elephant, in my pajamas.

We’re learning to cut and paste kids. We’re learning to cut and paste, kids.
KNOCK KNOCK JOKES

• Knock Knock. Who’s there? Interrupting owl? Interrupting owl...WHO!
• Knock Knock. Who’s there? Interrupting cow? Interrupting cow…MOOO!
• Knock Knock. Who’s there? A little old lady? A little old lady who? I didn’t know you could yodel. (Standard vs.
TECHNIQUES FOR EXPLOITING JOKES IN CLASS:
Groups compete to match the two halves of a number of jokes. The first one to match them all correctly wins.
Divide a number of jokes (preferably two-line jokes) in two halves and give one half to each student in class. Students then walk around the room trying to find their matching half.
Take a joke that involves different characters. Give different characters to different students. Then they act the joke out. This can be planned/discussed beforehand or improvised. They can take it even further by continuing the dialogue.
Translation. Ask students to think of some jokes in their mother tongue that lend themselves to translation and some that don’t. Students then provide a translation of the first and an explanation of why they think the latter can’t be translated.
Do not mention the relationship between the characters in the joke (doctor-patient, policeman-driver, etc.) and get students to guess.
SAMPLE LESSON

Commas Around Nouns of Direct Address
Objective- To teach students the importance of correct comma placement.

Age and proficiency level- Middle school, intermediate level

Materials needed- Informational Handout on Let’s eat, grandma, explaining what commas are used for and the specific rule for that comma.

Activities and procedures-
- Start by putting the “Stop clubbing, baby seals.” meme on the projector and discuss as a group the meaning of the picture, and the comma placement.
- Go over the informational handout with students.
- Do the group activity game.
STOP CLUBBING, BABY SEALS

Once again, punctuation makes all the difference ...
BREAK OUT ACTIVITY- TAKE THE JOKE YOU ARE GIVEN AND IN YOUR SMALL GROUP CREATE A MINI LESSON INCLUDING:

- Joke
- Objective
- Age and proficiency level
- Materials needed
- Activities and procedures
- Assessment