Using Comics in the English Language Classroom

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Questions

• Do you like comics?
• Have you used comics in your own classroom?
Outline of Presentation

• Why Use Comics
• Classroom Uses
• Pragmatic Intelligence
• Cultural Competence
• Assessment
• Resources
Why Use Comics: Affect

• Fun
  – Similar to using games or music
  – Positively impacts motivation
  – Lowers affective filter

• Allows for creativity – with language and art

• Target-language culture
Why Use Comics: Language

• Higher levels of linguistic competence – pragmatic intelligence

• Expandable – role plays, writing, etc.

• Small chunks of language

• Grammar and vocabulary in context

  – Particularly good for colloquial language and register
Why Use Comics: Pedagogy

• Promotes target language through student-centered work

• Negotiation of meaning: target-language practice through groupwork

• Promotes use of higher-level thinking skills
  – Analysis (comparing two panels) and Synthesis (creating a comic) in Bloom’s Taxonomy
Vocabulary & Grammar

- In context
- Accompanied by visual support
  - Visuals promote meaning
- Colloquial language
- Idiomatic speech
- Reduced speech
- Slang
Vocabulary and Grammar Cloze Activities

• Excellent way to highlight or practice specific grammar or vocabulary items

• Remove words from one or more panels
  – Connected to specific grammar and/or vocabulary being taught
  – Advanced levels: remove a sentence or group of words
  – Less-advanced students: provide choices of potential words
Fill in the three blanks with appropriate vocabulary.
Garfield Vocabulary Cloze

Garfield

OH BOY IS IT CHILLY THIS MORNING

GARGLE GARGLE GARGLE

SPLASH SPLASH SPLASH

SIP

THAT FEELS SO WARM

GULP

AHHH

YOU REALLY ENJOY YOUR COFFEE, DON'T YOU, GARFIELD?

http://garfield.com/
I DON'T WANT TO CATCH THE BUS. I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL. I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE AT ALL.

I'M SICK OF EVERYONE TELLING ME WHAT TO DO ALL THE TIME! I HATE MY LIFE! I HATE EVERYTHING! I WISH I ______ !

... WELL, NO, I DON'T. NOT REALLY.

I WISH EVERYONE ELSE ______.
Calvin and Hobbes: Grammar in Context

I DON'T WANT TO CATCH THE BUS. I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL. I DON'T WANT TO BE HERE AT ALL.

I'M SICK OF EVERYONE TELLING ME WHAT TO DO ALL THE TIME! I HATE MY LIFE! I HATE EVERYTHING! I WISH I WAS DEAD!

...WELL, NO, I DON'T. NOT REALLY.

I WISH EVERYONE ELSE WAS DEAD.
Class Activities: Jigsaw

• Cut comic strip apart
• Ask students to put it back in “correct” order
• Student justify their ordering
  – Higher-level thinking skills (Analysis, Evaluation, Synthesis)
• Promotes reading and vocabulary skills
• Sequencing
• Use of target language if done in groups
  – Negotiation of meaning
Jigsaw
Put the Comic in the Correct Order

1. WURF! WORF! WURF! WORF! WORF!
2. WHAM!
3. THERE YOU GO! IT WON'T BITE! IT'S A GARDEN TOOL!
4. AND GARDEN TOOLS CAN'T HURT YOU!
Jigsaw

3

4

AND GARDEN TOOLS CAN'T HURT YOU!

2

WHAM!

1

WURF! WURF! WURF! WURF! WURF!

http://www.gocomics.com/bignate/2014/10/19
Jigsaw Variation

• Variation for more advanced students
  – Each student gets one part of a comic and describes it to their groupmates but does not show it
  – After members describes their section, the group, still without looking, agree on the sequence
  – Promotes directed target-language usage – student-directed speech with visual guide
  – Can be done with comics that have only images, or with images and words
Classroom Activities

• Remove one character’s dialogue from a panel

• Students fill in this bubble
  – Can be done individually, in pairs, or as a group

• Can promote pragmatic intelligence
  – Appropriate response
IF YOU COULD WISH FOR ANYTHING, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

__________________________

__________________________
Calvin and Hobbes

Pragmatic Intelligence

• Comics can promote the acquisition of L2 pragmatic intelligence as students discuss “appropriate” responses
Pragmatic Intelligence:
Politeness & Sarcasm
Pragma oc
  
Intelligence:

Politeness & Sarcasm

Pragmatic Intelligence: Politeness & Sarcasm

http://garfield.com/comic/2007-03-12
Pragmatic Intelligence

• What makes the previous slide funny, or not?
  – Unexpected response, outcome or behavior

• Higher-level thinking skills (Analysis and Evaluation)
Classroom Activities: Sequencing & Prediction

• Give students a sequential comic strip with a panel missing
• Ask them to write the missing panel
• Can be done in a group to promote target-language use
Sequencing and Prediction

- Have you been using my crayons?
- Why, yes... I borrowed them yesterday to draw some pictures.
- Well, what happened to the blue? The blue is gone!
Sequencing and Prediction

http://www.peanuts.com/search/?keyword=have%20you%20been%20using%20my%20crayons&type=comic_strips#.VE_WLfnF-So
Added Panel: Sequencing and Prediction
Target-Language Culture

- Comics offer way to bring in target-language culture – Comics are often culturally contextualized
- Opportunities for collaboration with other content-area teachers
- Editorial cartoons for higher-level students
Target-Language Culture

[Image of a cartoon showing a person asleep while watching a soccer match labeled "World Cup" with signs around the TV reading "Not a football player," "Not a football," and "Not a football goal." The person is wearing a USA jersey.]
Target-Language Culture

Classroom Activities: Student-generated comics

• Students draw and write their own comics
  – A childhood memory, for example

• Small group or pairs write and draw together
  – Retell a story, visually, that they have read
  – Students work in illustrator-writer pairs
Student-Generated Comics, part II

- Students act out the comic
- Retelling a comic – with and without the visual aid of the strip
  - Compare the retelling with the actual comic
- Prediction skills – what’s coming next, after the last panel
  - Negotiating this with partners
  - Writing out and/or drawing the predictions
Why Use Comics: Four Skills

• Comics can help develop improved skills in:
  
  – Reading – often small chunks of language
  
  – Listening
    • Listening to themselves, their classmates and teacher read and discuss a comic
  
  – Speaking
    • Reading the comic aloud, acting the comic out, discussing and explaining
  
  – Writing
    • Writing their own comics, finishing existing comics
Why Use Comics: Print Literacy

- Sequencing left to right
- Thought bubble, dialog bubble, onomatopoeia
- Punctuation marks
- *Italicizing*, boldfacing, underlining, *fonts*, etc.
Assessment

• Oral assessment
  – Look at comic and explain what you see (also past and future) – no reading or writing – needs to be a comic without text

• Listening (dictation)

• Focused written assessments
  – Cloze for grammar or vocabulary
Adaptable for varying ages and abilities

- Wordless books (add dialogue and text)
- Cartoons
  - Single panel
  - Multiple panel
- Follow a daily comic strip in class
- Comic books
- Graphic novels
- Animation and gifs
Advantages Summarized

• Fun, interesting and motivating for students
• Opportunities to incorporate target-language culture and pragmatic intelligence
• Student-directed and student-centered
• Real world and authentic language
Advantages Summarized

• Promotes
  – L2 negotiation and communication
  – All four skills
  – Creativity
  – Independence of thought
  – Diversity of opinion
  – Higher-level thinking skills
Potential Drawbacks

• Not perceived as serious
  – Pushback from parents, administration, colleagues, or students themselves

• Requires buy-in

• Others?
Resources

• Make Beliefs Comix
  – http://www.makebeliefscomix.com/

• Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
  – http://nieonline.com/aaec/cftc.cfm

• New Yorker Caption Contest
  – http://contest.newyorker.com/
Make Beliefs Comix

Welcome to Make Beliefs Comix. Create your own comix strip - it's easy and fun! Created by Bill Zimmerman - Art by Tom Bloom - Comic strips by you! Copyright © 2014.

RIVIT, RIVIT! NO WORDS COME TO MIND. I NEED HELP!
I JUST NEED TO THINK SOME GOOD THOUGHTS!
MAN, I CAN'T REMEMBER MY NAME!

Click me to view a demo.

Write in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Portuguese or Latin!
Make beliefs comix is a terrific site. It's loaded with great free resources for the language classroom.

there are dozens of characters to choose from. It's lots of fun.

you can color and use lots of other fun features.

students enjoy it so much they forget they're using English. Check it out and see for yourself.
Association of American Editorial Cartoonists
New Yorker Caption Contest

THE NEW YORKER CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

(Your caption here)
New Yorker Caption Contest

THE NEW YORKER CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

THE FINALISTS


3. "It says here that service is not included." Submitted by Alexandra Ezra, New York, N.Y.
Selected Literature

Literature

Your thoughts?
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