Comic strips in the English Classroom

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Comic strips in the English Classroom

- Problem of language teachers: constantly searching for new innovative and motivating authentic material to enhance learning in the formal classroom
- Publishers already put a lot of effort into their compilation of the material they call authentic

- But: a textbook is made of material that has been altered and simplified for the learner.
- Students should be exposed to authentic material whenever possible
- One authentic material that has been explored over the past few years is the comic strip

- In the past it was believed that „comic books were so educationally unsound that their use would lead to mental stagnation" (MacGregor, 1996, p. 7)

- Nowadays teachers and publishers have realized that comic strips have a widespread appeal to all age groups and levels of society because they reflect authentic language and culture.

☐ Comics are the most widely read media throughout the world – especially in Japan.

Inherent characteristics that make comics so attractive as an educational tool

- a built-in desire to learn through comics

- easy accessibility in daily newspapers

- ingenious way in which this authentic medium depicts real-life language, people and society

- variety of visual and lingustic elements and codes that appeal to students with different learning styles

Comics can be used….

- to practice describing characters using adjectives (e.g., Garfield is a very troublesome cat)
- to learn synonyms and antonyms to expand vocabulary
- to introduce culture-specific onomatopoeia words that imitate what they represent (e.g. 'Drip, drip' for the sound of falling rain or leaking pipes,
'Bang' representing the sound of something crashing, etc.);

- to practice writing direct speech (e.g., 'Hey, move your car!') and reported speech (The man told him to move his car.)
- to introduce paralanguage (lexical items without a written correlate)

  (e.g., '*Uh-oh*, you're in trouble now for lying to Mom ';

  '*Pssst*. What's the answer to number five on the test '; ' *Uh*, let me see… ').

(Paralanguage is perhaps the most used, yet most pervasive, language form, and many teachers are slow to introduce them because they are not aware of how much these items permeate everyday language. Fortunately, comics are rich in paralanguage content.)

- to practice formation of different verb tenses (i.e., changing the present tense of the action in the strip to the past tense)

- to practice telling the story of a sequentially-ordered comic strip that has been scrambled up;

- to reinforce the use of time-sequence transition words to maintain the unity of a paragraph or story (e.g., First, the boy left for school. Next, he . . .)

source: Davis, Randall S. Comics. A Multi-dimensional Teaching Aid in Integrated-skills Classes. *Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3/ 1997.

Workshop „picture story and comic strips" – worksheet I

The suspect
- lesson plan-

pre-reading activity (motivation, activation of prior knowledge: pair work, class discussion)

- *Put the jumbled pictures of the story back in the correct order. Work with your partner. Afterwards we will discuss your results in class.*
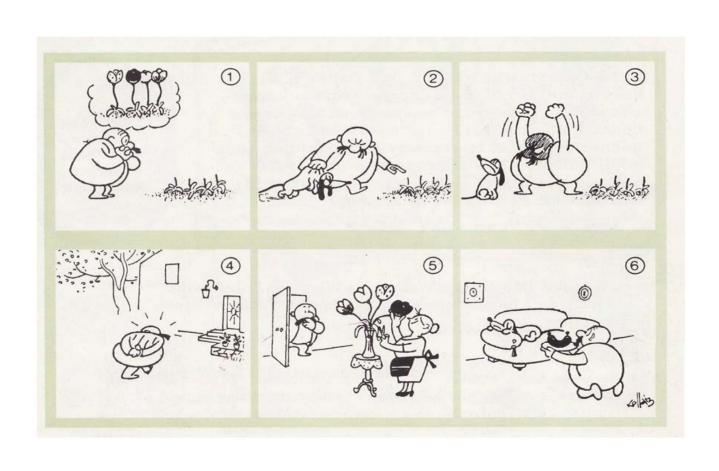
While-reading activity: Oral story telling (presentation and application I)

individual work, class discussion, pair work)

Task I: Compare your results with the story on your worksheet II.

The Suspect

■ *Task II (worksheet III): Choose the right sentences to tell the story. Compare your results in class and then read out the correct sentences to your partner. Take turns.*

Find the right sentences and compare your results in class.

(More than one sentence is correct per picture.)

Picture 1:

- Charles is looking for his tulips.
- The flowers are not there anymore.
- Charles is very glad about this fact.
- Charles is staring at the tulip stalks.

  Adverbs of time:_____

Picture 2:

- Charles is very relaxed.
- Charles is taking Lenny for a walk.
- Lenny is happy.
- Charles is showing Lenny the tulip stalks because he suspects Lenny to have eaten the flowers.
- Adverbs of time: _____
  [...]

While-reading activity: creating cohesion with adverbs of time (presentation and application II: class discussion, individual work, pair work)

- *Think of adverbs of time that can be used to link elements at he beginning, in the middle and at the end of the story. Then fill in the gaps on your worksheet with correct adverbs.*

- *Afterwards retell the story in the simple past to your partner. Try not to use your worksheet, but use the correct adverbs of time. Your partner has to make sure that your are using the simple past and the correct adverbs of time.*

Post-reading activity:
Turning the picture into a comic.
(transfer I: class discussion, individual work)

- *Discussion: What are the differences between picture stories and comics?*

- *Task: Change the picture story on your worksheet into a comic strip, using speech and thought balloons (for Charles and Lenny) captions (using adverbs of time) and sound words.*

Post-reading activity:
Telling the story in writing
and comparing it with the comic
strip)

- Homework:

Write down the story (using the new adverbs of time) in the simple past and find a title. Compare your written story and your comic. What are important differences between the two for the reader?

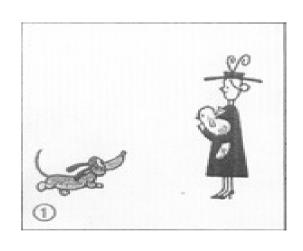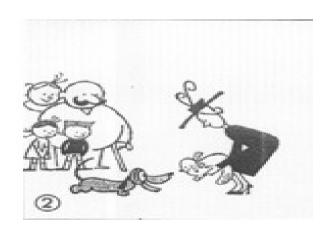# Lesson Plan: The surprise

1.) Motivation:

- task*: Describe the message this advertisement wants to convey.*

- oral background information: *The picture story deals with dogs, too.*

Presentation I (pictures 1 and 2): Predicting the story (individual work, pair work, group discussion)

- task: *Look at the two pictures and describe them to your partner. Predict what might be in the next pictures. Let´s then discuss your ideas.*

Presentation II (pictures 3 -6): Spontaneous reactions (pair work, group discussion)

- task: Look at the pictures and talk about them with your partner. Compare your ideas from step one with this story.

Application I: Building up vocabulary for (each picture of) the story (pair work, group discussion)

- worksheet and task: Look at the pictures again and fill in the grid. Work with your partner. Compare your results in class.

Picture	Who? What? (characters/ things)	What happened? (actions)	Where? (places)	How? (mood/ behaviour)	When? (time)
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					

Application II: Creating a story by answering questions
(individual work, pair work)

- Worksheet (containing some questions for each picture and task)

- Additional task: *Afterwards retell the story to your partner. Start with „One day…". Use the worksheet only if necessary. While you are talking, your partner has to make sure that you use the simple past.*

Transfer: Writing the story and checking it carefully (individual work)

- homework: Write down the story and check whether…
  - each picture is represented in your text
  - It's written in the simple past
  - there's an introduction and an end to the story
  - there are thoughts, expectations, feelings expressed in your text.

□ there's direct speech included to make it more lively.

□ it's a story that can be understood without pictures.

adapted from: Doff, Sabine; Wanders, Mona. Stories with and without words. *Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* 73/ 2005, 9-17.

SEK II: Shakespeare comics in the English classroom

- Comics can be used as an appetizer
  - „Comics can serve as a conduit to heavier reading. […] It can help readers not only develop the linguistic competence for harder reading but can also develop an interest in books" (Krashen, 1993, p. 56)

Different approaches to work with Shakespeare comics

- Stand alone use: reading for enjoyment or as a basis for a presentation
- Reading aid
- Language practice: style, grammar, syntax, …
- Panel analysis: (4 steps: description, explanation, intention, evaluation)
- Inter- and intra-genre comparisons
- Jumbled panels

- Balloon filling
- Drawing
- Transformation of scenes into comics
- Spoof (parodies)

adapted from: Thaler, Engelbert. The Bard goes Cartoon. *Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* 73/ 2005, 37-43.

The Worker's (perhaps Teacher?) Soliloquy by Mike Miu

To work, or not to work, that is the question:
Whether it is better to stay at home with the television,
Munching on chips and gulping on root beer,
Or continue with the ever troublesome job,
An by opposing, get fired. To eat, to watch,
No more, and by working hard, we will earn that
Pleasing, satisfying, all-good paycheck
That will be spent in less than a week
Devoutly to all of the personal needs and wants.
To eat, to watch;
To watch; the minutes ticking before racing out of the house; ay, I am late;
Many insolent words from the Boss, not to be delayed again,
For who could endure the yells and screams of the little rascals,
The numerous demands from co-workers,
Aches and pains of marking hundreds of papers, cross and swoosh?
And that desperate grumble in my stomach, will finally met,
When the tasks have been completed, only one place left to go,
Which is my sweet home, where dinner will be waiting, television will be on.
With this tremendous day finally over,
Another will soon arrive. *(http://www.angelfire.com/oh/Pretzel/Parody.html)*

Aims

„Wenn Shakespeare mehr als zu verwahrendes Kulturgut wird und SchülerInnen persönliche Beziehungen zu ihm aufbauen können, wo doch schon Garfield oder Calvin and Hobbes sich mit ihm beschäftigen, kann ihre Bereitschaft verstärkt werden, sprachliche Barrieren zu überspringen und sich Shakespeare persönlich anzueignen." (Thaler, 2005, p. 42)

„Ein Unterricht, der sich durch Schülernähe auszeichnen möchte und die Schülerinnen und Schüler in ihrem Lebensumfeld abholt, sollte […] mit neuen Medien und Methoden neue Zugänge zu Shakespeare erproben." (Klose, 2000, p.4)

- „Dazu zählt ein Englischunterricht mit Comics, der das Denkmal von seinem Sockel holt, seine subjektive Valenz für den Lernenden vor Augen führt, dadurch seine universelle Bedeutung noch erweitert und somit das Fundament des Denkmals stabilisiert." (Thaler, 2005, p.42)
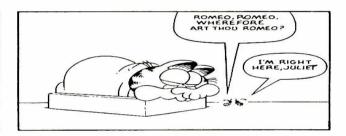
Garfield's Romeo and Juliet

(source: Thaler, Engelbert. The Bard goes Cartoon. *Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* 73/ 2005, 43.)

Romeo and Juliet (Original Text)

Romeo and Juliet (Quick Text)
with reduced dialogue for rapid, easier reading

Romeo and Juliet

(Plain Text: translated into plain English)

Romeo and Juliet (No Text)
with empty speech balloons to fill in the dialogue

Romeo and Juliet
(Teacher Resources)

source: http://www.classicalcomics.com/education/freedownloads.html

Bibliography

- Davis, Randall S. Comics. A Multi-dimensional Teaching Aid in Integrated-skills Classes. *Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3/ 1997.

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- Thaler, Engelbert. The Bard goes Cartoon. *Der Fremdsprachliche Unterricht Englisch* 73/ 2005, 37-43.

Free downloads of Shakepeare Comics with Teacher Resources

- http://www.classicalcomics.com/education/freedownloads.html