

Docking, K., Jordan, F.M., and Murdock, Bruce E. B.I. (1999). Description of language functioning in the interpretation of linguistic humor and brain injury. Journal of Brain Injury, 13, (12), 953-972.

Abstract / Excerpts

[LANGUAGE CONNECTIONS](#)

1. Variability: Reduced humor abilities with below average language skills [953]
Comprehension of humor cited as a "developmental ability" [Ref. 19: Bernstein, D.K. 1986]
 - a. "Figurative language is the basis for many forms of linguistic behavior. For example, lexical items, such as multiple meaning words, and phrase structure items such as idioms, are figurative language forms used as linguistic devices of humor." [Ref:20: Hamersky, 1995]
 - b. "... humor involves understanding multiple meanings of words, metaphors and idioms, detecting ambiguity, perceiving incongruity, and appreciating the possibility of a sudden or unexpected shift of perspective." {ref 19]
 - c. Hamersky reported that "children and adolescents with language disorders experience difficulty in identifying language incongruity, developing a resolution and explaining it." [20]
 - d. "... the essence of humor relies on intact cognitive communication skills, ..."

Language Connections

1. The typical L2 student is unlikely to have the level of language communication skills to successfully understand what Bernstein d\refers to as "multiple meanings for words", to detect ambiguity, perceive incongruity or appreciate sudden shift of perspective. At least, not to be able to do these things without reference to English.
2. In order to develop cognitive capabilities in the second language, teacher can try:
 - a. Practice activities with examples of a single category of humor, such as sudden endings wherein variations in the context could be practiced by students providing possible endings to a story that they understood.
 - b. Practice with a few idioms in terms of various contexts in which any one idiom is appropriate; i.e., the expression for being hungry in a number of languages is idiomatic. It is frequently expressed as [having hunger]: French and Spanish, for example. The idiom, such as Spanish tener hambre could be practiced with a variety of adverbials modifications: qualification ("very"- "much hambre", "not very" - "no ____ "much hambre"), time (days of the week and other relevant times, such as times of the day or while doing various activities.

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