



## THE HANDBOOK

LOL is a project funded by the Erasmus+ program. This handbook will empower your teaching skills with humor and comedy, it will bring fun into your classroom!

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# INTRODUCTION

This handbook is aimed at summarizing what we have learned and covered throughout this project, providing teachers and educators with practical tools that they can immediately use to make their lessons more engaging, rewarding, and effective.

## CONTENTS

- The first chapter is devoted to the description of a few activities aimed at integrating improv and stand-up comedy techniques into foreign-language teaching.
- The second chapter guides readers on how to better learners' wellbeing by improving their environment physically, psychologically, and emotionally. Teachers are provided with 6 ideas that can be easily implemented in any classroom, with any kind of student.
- The third chapter is designed to support teachers and educators dealing with mixed language levels.
- Finally, the fourth chapter explains how to develop a training course for adult educators, trainers and language teachers based on the LOL methodology. Readers will find 6 activities explained with their purpose, and a few final recommendations for those who want to reproduce a similar training event.

## WHAT WAS THE AIM OF THE PROJECT?

Nowadays, being able to communicate in a foreign language is essential for a growing number of people, and in the framework of a common European identity, multilingualism is a fundamental target for EU citizens and institutions. Nevertheless, according to a [Eurostat survey from 2016](#), over one third (35.4 %) of the working-age adults (defined here as 25–64 year-olds) in the EU-28 reported that they did not know any foreign languages. The educational systems all over Europe are evolving to address this challenge starting from primary schools, but reaching adults with language educational tools is often harder. As teacher training organisations and language schools, we embrace the challenge of keeping adults and young adults motivated in learning.

Mastering any new skill takes effort, and this is particularly true for learning a foreign language, a task that requires a lot of commitment, discipline, and time.

To help adult learners remain focused, engaged and motivated, it is important to create a learning environment that feels safe, as well as fun and rewarding. Promoting learners' engagement and a student-centred approach is especially important when teaching a language, as learners' confidence has such a big role in this process. Indeed, especially in these cases, the teacher must build a relationship of trust with their students, and humour is one of the most immediate ways to do this. That is why during this project we focused on transferring stand-up comedy and improvisational theatre strategies and techniques into language teachers' skills. Every communicator should have comedy and humour in their toolkit, and adult educators are especially well-suited to using these techniques.

To do this, we created a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) about [Comedy and Humor in](#)

[the Classroom](#) that can be completed by anyone for free at your own pace.

As students grow older, their personal experiences become more and more important, so when a teacher deals with a group of adult learners, they have to take into account an even greater amount of variety concerning their backgrounds. Hence, a common challenge for teaching a language to adults is creating an inclusive, safe, and supportive environment that fully engages everyone in the classroom, taking into account and valuing their diverse perspectives. Teachers must promote students' willingness to cooperate and collaborate with each other, to learn together and develop into a cohesive group.

To adapt a lesson for students of all ages from different cultural and economic backgrounds, each with distinct learning needs and styles, is not easy. During this project, we developed the MOOC [Wellbeing, Inclusion & Creativity Free Online Course for Teachers \(teacheracademy.eu\)](#) to provide teachers, trainers, and educators with ideas, inputs and ready-to-use activities to make their classrooms inclusive and safe spaces for learning. By "inclusive", we mean an environment that values each person regardless of their background and personal characteristics. As we acknowledge the benefits of diversity, both the school setting and the educators' mindset should be centered on students' diverse needs. By "safe", we mean a learning environment in which everybody feels free to express themselves without pressure or judgement, and where anyone can achieve their results following their own learning style and pace. Unfortunately, Adult Educators are often selected only on the basis of their knowledge of the subject, rather than on their specific knowledge about inclusion strategies or teaching and learning styles for all students. Too often, they are not trained in how to foster a creative space where students "do good and feel good" or where the experience of study, fun and self-development are integrated in a positive school environment. That is why we decided to create this project results, to provide teachers with up-to-date tools for making their lessons more rewarding and effective.

## REFERENCES

Eurostat survey 2016 [Foreign language skills statistics - Statistics Explained \(europa.eu\)](#)

Williams Marion, Burden Robert. Motivation in language learning : a social constructivist approach. In: Cahiers de l'APLIUT, volume 16, numéro 3, 1997. Stratégies d'apprentissage. pp. 19-27.

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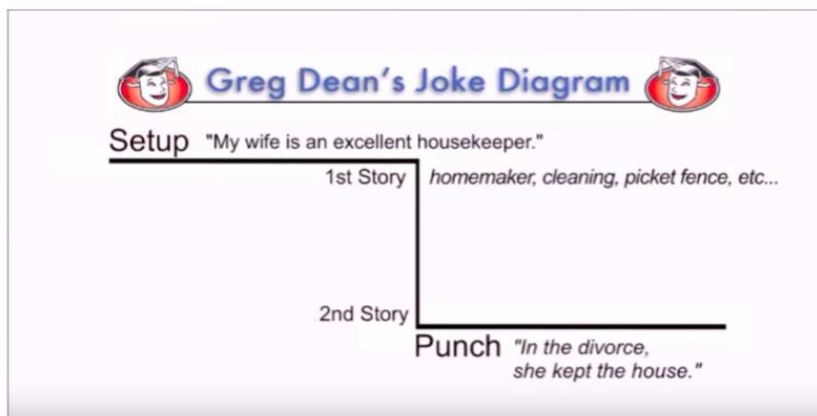
# Chapter I: Adopting Improvisation Theatre, and Stand-up Comedy Techniques for Language Teaching

This chapter provides you with 16 activities from comedy and improvisation theatre that you can use to improve your students' language skills.

For a theoretical introduction we refer to the first module of the online course [Comedy and Humour in the Classroom](#) "*Basic Joke Structure and Reasons for Laughter*".

Make your audience laugh by creating a surprise, an unexpected twist: "by making the audience think that you are going to say or do one thing (create assumptions), then do another."

💡 Example from Greg Dean's "*Step by Step to Stand-up comedy*"



## 👉 Exercise: Assumptions!

Students practice their writing and comprehension through interpreting texts.

- Instructions for students: You will each be given a 2-3 sentence story. Write a list of assumptions based on what is said (or not said) in this story.
- Notes for teachers: The assumptions can be made as a result of pronouns, articles, plurals etc. This can be a good opportunity to teach specific grammar.
- Example:
  - Story: I took a bus to the castle to meet a friend. When I arrived, I got a message

to say they can't join me because something came up.

- Possible assumptions: The speaker rode on a bus (discuss meaning of 'take a bus'). There is only one castle (discuss using 'the' vs 'a'). The message is from the same friend (discuss if we know they have more than one friend - they do because of use of 'a').

### **Exercise: Debates**

Students practice arguing different sides of a funny topic. This helps them build confidence when speaking, learn how to generate ideas that are not necessarily intuitive or close to their opinions for them to practise their speaking.

- Instructions for students: You will receive a topic and a piece of paper that will say 'agree' or 'disagree.' You will then go through 6 rounds of arguments with your opponent and the class decides who is the winner.
- Notes for teachers: Tell students that what they say doesn't need to be the truth. In comedy, many people will exaggerate or embellish their content for comedic purposes.
- Examples of topics:
  - Pineapple belongs on pizza, a taco is a sandwich, tomato sauce is wonderful on ice cream, round cakes are better than square cakes, burgers should only be eaten by hand, Harry Potter is better than Lord of the Rings, TikTok is better than Instagram etc.

### **Exercise: Reframing - Negative to positive**

Students practice finding the funny in things that are negative.

- Instructions for students: Choose one thing you don't like about yourself/your country/your school. Now write 5 positive things or advantages about this.
- Notes for teachers: This is a great strategy for finding relatable content but it can also help the students change their own mindsets on things they might be ashamed of or angry about.

### **Exercise: Writing the simile joke structure**

Students practise writing jokes based on creating connections between two seemingly unconnected things. e.g. "A **woman** is like a **tea bag**; you never know how strong it is until it's in hot water." by Eleanor Roosevelt

- Instructions for students: You will have two piles of nouns or two lists of words, try to create as many jokes as possible by connecting two things in this format: A/An

\_\_\_\_\_ is like a \_\_\_\_\_ ...

- Notes for teachers: Create two lists of words or two piles of nouns that students can compare. Choose objects, people and characters that the students will be familiar with.

### **Exercise: Different meanings**

Students practice creating alternative meanings for everyday words. This helps them get into the mindset of finding the funny and positive in everything.

- Instructions for students: Use this list of random words and create at least five different meanings for each word.
- Notes for teachers: Create a list with common, everyday words
- Example from [Breaking Comedy's DNA - Jerry Corley](#):

*Fly:*

*To fly a kite.*

*The common house fly.*

*The flywheel on an engine*

*As a jet flies. (It's different than flying a kite)*

*A "fly boy" is what they used to call pilots in the Airforce.*

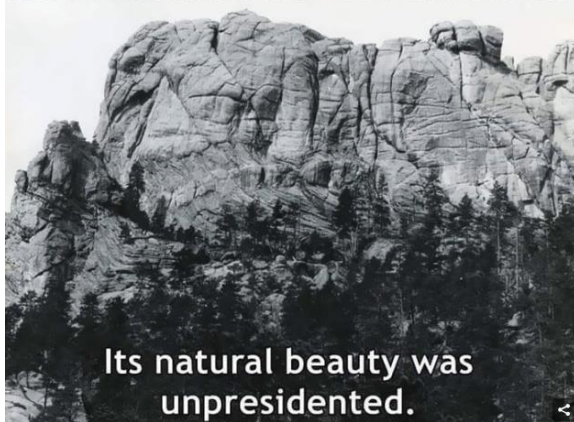
*"You buy, I'll fly" meaning if you provide the money, I'll drive to the store and buy it.*

For a more extended explanation we refer to the 10th module of the online course [Comedy and Humor in the Classroom](#) "Social Media and Meme Humour".

Memes are short texts paired with graphics that can be used to help memorisation, encourage imagination and a deeper understanding of content learnt in the classroom.

 Example from [r/HistoryMemes on Reddit](#)

MOUNT RUSHMORE BEFORE IT WAS CARVED



lord of the flies, chapter 1:  
ok guys, let's all work together  
to get off this island!

lord of the flies, chapter 9:



### Exercise: Making memes

Students practice their writing skills and may gain deeper understanding of text by creating memes based on historical figures or historical scenes or characters from literature that are being studied in the classroom. At the end of the week, students can vote which meme is the best and get a small reward (chocolate etc.). Instead of memes, teachers can also use comics and ask students to fill in the text.

- Instructions for students: Create a meme on the topic of [insert content studied during the week].
- Notes for teachers: Allow students to use an [online website](#) to write texts on existing graphics or you can print out images and encourage students to write the text. [The New Yorker](#) also has a weekly contest to write captions for images that could be used in the classroom.

For a more extended explanation we refer to the 13th module of the online course [Comedy and Humour in the Classroom](#) *"ImprovTechniques and How to React to Your Audience"*.

Improv games can be used to practice speaking, listening, comprehension and so much more. All of the following games are taken from ['The Improv Handbook: The Ultimate Guide to Improvising in Comedy, Theatre and Beyond.'](#)

### Improv Game: Interview experts

Students practice asking and answering questions while exercising their creativity.

- Instructions for students: You will each be assigned a job title. You need to tell people what you do in your job and why you love it. Afterwards, your classmates will ask you questions about your job.



- Notes for teachers: Collect any grammar mistakes (to be discussed afterwards) while the students are talking or correct them immediately if it doesn't break the flow of conversation too much. Students need to build confidence speaking and the unusual or funny job descriptions can help this.
- Examples of job titles: Football coach for dogs, Art teacher for elephants, Hairdresser for squirrels, Dance instructor for giraffes.

### **Improv Game: Pointing at things**

Students practice recalling, pronouncing and memorising specific vocabulary.

- First Instructions for students: Point at what you see (in the classroom or on a given picture) and say what it is e.g. point at a desk and say 'desk.'
- Second instructions for students (after 5 minutes): Point at what you see (in the classroom or on a given picture) and say what it is NOT e.g. point at a desk and say 'chair.'
- Notes for teachers: Students can do this at the same time as a warm up to lessons OR you can make it competitive - each student gets a chance to point and speak, when they make a mistake it is the next students turn. The student that can speak the longest without any mistakes is the winner.

### **Improv Game: What are you doing?**

Students practice acting, asking and answering questions while exercising their creativity.

- Instructions for students: The first student says to the second student 'what are you doing?' Second student says 'I'm brushing my teeth' or 'I'm flying a plane.' The first student now acts out the activity named by the second student. Then the second student asks 'What are you doing?' and the first person, while continuing their activity, names another activity which the second person then acts out.
- Notes for teachers: This game can be played in groups of 2-4 students. Suitable as a warm up or it can be a good way to confirm comprehension when new verbs have been taught.

### **Improv Game: Greetings**

Students practice power dynamics, role-playing, vocabulary, awareness and empathy.

- Instructions for students: Everyone marches around the room introducing themselves to other people by shaking hands. Then the teacher shouts different styles and you have to change your behaviour according to it.
- Notes for teachers: After the activity, ask students to reflect on how their behaviours,

bodies, voices, feelings changed according to the different styles.

- Examples of styles: Too enthusiastically, as if you are at a funeral, flirtatiously but without touching, if you are hyperactive children, if you are enemies trying to be polite, as if you think you are better than other people, etc.

### **Improv Game: Props from 'Whose Line is it Anyway?'**

 Example from [Whose Line is it anyway?](#)



Students practice imagination, creativity, role-playing, and speaking using props.

- Instructions for students: Your teacher will give you random props and you have to think of as many uses for them as possible.
- Notes for teachers: Show the video for inspiration. You can also give more specific examples if necessary e.g. 'Explain what else this object can be used for.' - you give them a toothbrush and maybe they describe it as a 'shoe cleaner' or a 'moustache brush' etc.

### **Improv Game: Party Quirks**

 Example from [Whose Line is it anyway?](#)



Students practice imagination, creativity, role-playing and speaking.

- Instructions for students: One student needs to guess the characters/actions. The teacher will give a description of who/what the other students should act as during the 'party.'
- Notes for teachers: Depending on the language level of the students, you could make this activity simple by asking them to act out a certain verb (e.g. bake a cake, write a letter, sing a song etc.) or if you want them to revise characters from history or literature you could assign a more challenging prompt (e.g. Romeo or Juliet, Harry Potter, John F. Kennedy, etc.)

For a more extended explanation we refer to the 14th module of the online course [Comedy and Humour in the Classroom](#) "*Make Your Audience LOL*".

### **Exercise: Speak with attitude**

Students practice improvised speaking on a topic, critical thinking through speaking about that topic from different perspectives and releasing emotions.

- Instructions for students: Students stand in a circle and choose one attitude (strange, scary or stupid). Each person has a different topic (e.g. hospitals, secondary school, snow, etc.) and we let one person talk about their topic in the selected attitude for one minute before moving to the next person. Students should hopefully feed off the energy/attitude of the other people even if they are talking about different topics.
- Notes for teachers: Encourage students to show or release their emotion and not to focus on being funny. When they discover what topics they are most passionate about,

they can potentially turn these into comedy material later.

- Example:
  - e.g. Running is hard because..., running is weird because..., running is scary because..., running is stupid because...

### **Exercise: Present with confidence**

Students practice speaking and reacting to content through short surprise presentations.

- Instructions for students: Pretend you are giving a tedtalk on the most amazing job/idea/research in the world. You will see the topic of your talk on the first slide of the presentation and then you need to connect what you are saying to the content on the following slides. Afterwards, take questions from your classmates and answer with confidence.
- Notes for teachers: Create short 10-slide presentations about funny topics. The first slide should have the topic and the other slides should have images like graphs or relevant photos. Encourage the students to speak with confidence - they don't have to be funny, they just need to get comfortable with speaking in front of an audience.
- Examples of topics:
  - "10 things I learnt from being a dog-food tester" or "A day in the life of a squirrel impressionist."



### **Exercise: Mind Mapping for revision**

As described on slide [7 Module 14](#), this is a great exercise to generate material for stand-up comedy. This same technique can also be a way for students to revise content and/or practise vocabulary and speaking in a fun way.

Step 1: Choose a topic and write down the first 10 things that you think of associated to that topic.

Step 2: Choose one of the words from your first list of 10 things, circle it and then write 10 things connected to this new topic.

Step 3: Choose one of the words from your second list of 10 things, circle it and then write 10 things connected to this new topic.

Step 4: When you have at least four lists of 10, start with the original topic and try to write a funny story or joke.

Notes for teachers: Make the original topic the country they are learning about or an era in history. This exercise can be done collectively as a class with the teacher as the writer or you can make it competitive by dividing the class into teams.

 *Example from [Module 14 slide 8](#)*

### **Exercise: The simple truth**

As described on slide [e 24 of Module 14](#), reexamine words and phrases to create a more literal meaning. This can be a great way for students to learn and practice using phrasal or idiomatic words which often don't have obvious meanings.

- Instructions for students: Describe or draw two different meanings for the sentence.
- Notes for teachers: This would work best as a revision exercise after the students have already learnt and used the target phrasal verbs.
- Examples of possible sentences to use:
  - With phrasal verbs: John cleaned up the living room. I can count on my friends. I can't wait to dive into the new movie. I'll call around to see who is home. Let's go over the homework together.
  - Without phrasal verbs: Are you free tonight? We don't serve women in this restaurant.

## **References:**

### Books:

- [Step by Step to Stand-Up Comedy - Greg Dean](#)
- ['The Improv Handbook: The Ultimate Guide to Improvising in Comedy, Theatre and Beyond.'](#) by Tom Salinsky and Deborah Frances-White
- [The New Comedy Bible - Judy Carter](#)
- [Breaking Comedy's DNA - Jerry Corley](#)

### Websites:

- [r/HistoryMemes on Reddit](#)
- [Meme Generator](#)
- <https://www.newyorker.com/cartoons/contest#thisweek>

### TV shows:

Whose Line is it Anyway?

## Chapter II: Creating a Safe and Inclusive Learning Environment

In [Wellbeing, Inclusion & Creativity Free Online Course for Teachers \(teacheracademy.eu\)](https://teacheracademy.eu) (subunit 2 *How can we achieve Wellbeing in the classroom?*) we have seen how the learning environment can be influenced by many factors, which come together to form an atmosphere that will hopefully influence student learning for the better. Now it's time to reflect on your own teaching environment by answering the following questions.

- Physical environment
  - How is your classroom or learning space designed? What are the layout of desks, tables and chairs? Is there additional furniture in the space? What other equipment is there for the teacher to use? Do you have specific learning areas or corners in the classroom? What is on the walls?
  - How does your physical environment influence student learning? What do you like about your classroom space? What would you change (if anything)?
- Psychological environment
  - How do you build trust in your classroom with your students? What kinds of strategies or techniques do you use to encourage students to take interest in the curriculum and interact with classmates?
  - How else can you encourage students to actively participate in the lessons? Think about how to support students to ask questions, take risks and receive feedback.
- Emotional environment
  - What kinds of routines do you carry out in your classroom and how do you celebrate student achievements?
  - How do you create opportunities for diversity in your classroom by helping students to express their individuality and emotions?





## Classroom Routines

A well-thought out classroom routine helps to support a positive learning environment by helping students feel safe through familiarity with what happens in the classroom, by reducing their anxiety and by giving the teacher opportunities to create more inclusivity. You can consider introducing the following activities in your lessons and reflect on how to adapt them to improve the atmosphere in your class.

### The Lesson Introduction

Teachers can set the tone for the class by taking into account several factors when beginning the lesson. Think about your own routines and actions when it comes to these moments of the lesson entrance and take notes on these questions about what you already do and what you could adapt in the first phase of the lesson, the entrance.

- **Meet and Greet:** Where do you usually stand when students come into your room? How do you greet them? Or do you enter the classroom where students are already waiting for you? What could you change in order to be more consistent and start the lesson off in a positive way?
- **Start-off Routines:** What routines do you use to start off every lesson? Some teachers elicit the date or weather. Some teachers make sure students are ready to get going by taking out or putting away materials or backpacks. The main thing is to make sure your students are centred as you start your class and a start-off routine gives students a few minutes of adjustment time for this. Could you use visual, auditory or kinaesthetic prompts to help with this? A slide, a song or a clap of hands can also get students' attention.
- **Personalised Warm Ups:** What do you say or ask at the beginning of your lesson? Is there an opportunity for you to connect with the students by asking them appropriate personal questions to find out how they feel or what they've been doing? What can you do during the first few minutes of class to strengthen the feeling of community and connection in your classroom?

Remember, it takes time to establish routines and time to bring students back to routines that have been interrupted by special activities or holidays. Consistency and patience is key!

### Classroom Roles & Jobs

Students can contribute to the smooth running of your classroom by taking on a role or a job. They will feel part of the environment and build their self-esteem by taking on small responsibilities. If you have a lot of students, these roles can rotate every week or month. Here are some tips on how to set this up:

- Brainstorm all of the jobs that students could take on (make sure they are age-



appropriate). Examples: cleaning the board, handing out supplies, tidying materials, leading the warm-up etc.

- Create a calendar of students + roles. You can ask for volunteers the first few times (more confident students can show how it's done). Make sure to display the calendar and names on your classroom noticeboard.
- Demonstrate how to carry out the jobs and give lots of encouragement as students step into their new roles.

Key Question: Do you use roles and jobs with your students? How consistent with them are you?

Try it Out: If you've never used roles and jobs, start simple with two or three jobs. If you use them regularly, try asking your students for feedback. Can they suggest other classroom roles?

### **The Classroom Setting**

You may not have much control over the furniture, layout or lighting in your classroom. Nevertheless, it's important to work with what you have.

- Make sure you can move around your classroom easily in order to monitor and encourage students as they work.
- Try to keep aisles free of bags.
- Classroom collaboration is supported by seating students at tables or in groups but make sure they can see the board as necessary.
- Tables can also work as specific learning centers for different activities.
- Some students can become easily-distracted so if there is an easily-accessible place to put books and other materials (such as inside a desk or under a chair in a basket) that they don't need.
- Likewise, can you help them focus by allowing them to fiddle or doodle as they work and listen?
- Finally, consider your seating plan to support those students with specific needs, such as proximity to the board or to the teacher desk. Would it be better for you to adjust the seating plan periodically or keep students in the same seats for a longer time? Will you choose where they sit or will you take requests from students?



**Key Question:** What can you adjust in your classroom to help with monitoring, focus and inclusion?

**Try it Out:** Build a visual timetable that takes into account the needs for your classroom and students. What routines and phases of your class would be useful to make visible?

### **Pre-learning and Overlearning**

Pre-learning and overlearning techniques help students to access and become engaged with your teaching content. How aware are you of these techniques for your own classroom? Consider these ideas:

- review key words, skills and ideas from the previous lesson(s).
- have students create personalised learning notebooks in different modalities (a picture dictionary, an audio recording etc.).
- end the class with a preview of the following lesson content
- incorporate technology to improve accessibility (video, immersive readers etc.).
- be creative with homework assignments for pre- and overlearning (e.g. flipped classroom techniques).

**Key Question:** Which idea would you implement in your classroom and what do you need to do in order to adapt it to your students?

**Try it Out:** Choose one of these ideas and put it into action in your next class.



## Effective Communication

Become aware of how you speak to students, not only the words you say but the intention and the tone of voice you use. When we are intentional about how we communicate with students, we begin to observe how they respond to instructions, praise and feedback. Put a tick next to these communication strategies if you do them with your students:

- ask the whole group to respond or demonstrate an answer.
- ask confident students to model a response.
- have students work in pairs to check their answers together before answering in front of the class.
- give short, clear step-by-step instructions.
- ask the class to repeat instructions to you before starting an activity to check their understanding.
- use body language and other visual support when you give instructions.
- give specific feedback and praise to students rather than general phrases like 'well done', which can become meaningless if overused.

**Key Question:** Observe your students when you give instructions and feedback. What do you notice about their response?

**Try it Out:** A great phrase for giving personalized feedback to students is "I really like the way that you ...". For example: *I really like the way that you chose such bright colors for your painting!*

## Ending the Lesson

Ending a lesson is an important part of the classroom routine, too. How do you end your lessons? Do you have a routine? You could try these ideas to help the class finish on a positive note:

- a song or a visual indication that it is time to wrap up the class time.
- Your classroom helpers can help to indicate that it is 'tidy up' time.
- use the board or other visuals to tell students what to do for the next day.
- ask students for their 'takeaway' (one thing that they learned / enjoyed / remembered about the class).
- give a preview of the next class.
- personalise the goodbye in the same way as you do the greeting.

Key Question: Observe your students. What do you notice about their energy level or mood at the end of the class or as they're leaving? What could you do to boost this?

Try it Out: Choose one of the ideas above and try it with your students. After a few days or a couple of weeks, ask them how they feel about it.

Now you have some clear ideas and tips to help your classroom become more positive and inclusive for students by considering the classroom setting and establishing clear routines.

## Chapter III: Language Teaching Activities for Groups with Mixed-language Levels

In this chapter of the handbook, we will outline exercises and practical activities to assist language teachers in effectively handling classes with mixed-language levels. Since the purpose of the LOL project is to incorporate humour into lessons, we have focused particularly on funny activities or activities that can be used combining humour effectively.

The purpose of these humour-related activities is to create a positive and inclusive learning environment, thereby increasing student motivation. Most of these activities are group or class activities. This is because using group activities brings several benefits to the learning process:

- Students have the opportunity to mutually benefit from each other's skills.
- They have the opportunity to practise the target language more frequently.
- They get to build mutual trust and a growth mindset that will greatly enhance their learning abilities.

These goals are best achieved by forming groups of students with mixed levels. Therefore, we suggest building groups and pairs composed of students with different language levels and abilities. This will make learning more inclusive and enjoyable, allowing students to become more aware of their own strengths. By using mixed-ability groups it is also possible to carry out differentiated activities without students with greater difficulties falling behind in the learning process.

Below you will find a series of practical activities explained and with examples that you can easily integrate into your lessons. For more detailed information, please see the online course [Wellbeing, Inclusion & Creativity Free Online Course for Teachers \(teacheracademy.eu\)](https://teacheracademy.eu), subunit 5 of the module about Inclusion, and the references at the end of the chapter.



### Warm up activity: the Joke of the Day

A great idea to introduce humour in the classroom is to start the lesson with a language-related joke or a funny play on words. The teacher proposes a joke to the students, and they should try to guess and explain the humour behind the joke in the target language.

Here it is important to allow mistakes and let students express themselves freely. An effective way to correct them is just to repeat their statement correctly.

*Example: The teacher enters the classroom and sees two students having a heated argument.*

*The teacher asks: what are you arguing about?*

*One of the two students: we found a €10 bill and decided to give it as a prize to the person who told the biggest lie.*

*The teacher is stumped and replies: you two should be ashamed of yourselves! At your age I had no idea what a lie was!*

*Then the two give the 10€ bill to the teacher.*

This activity is a stress-relieving and funny way to introduce the lesson and can be used as a routine.



### Group Activities: Comedy role-play

An effective and funny way to get students to practice the language by connecting it to real-life situations is by role-play.

Students can figure out real situations by combining them with absurd, fantastic elements, misunderstandings and more. There is no limit here to the range of possible situations. Assign them roles and give them funny scenarios and situations to play in the target language.

Here are just a couple of examples:

*The store clerk: one student plays a store clerk who wants to convince customers-another two students-to buy the most absurd products.*

*The job interview: a candidate applies for a position that is completely different from what is required but tries to convince the interviewer that he is still suitable for that role.*

To best carry out this activity we provide here some useful tips:

- Before the activity, provide students with some background information, grammar, specific vocabulary, etc. This will help them stay focused and feel more confident.

- Then divide students into small groups (3 or 4) and have them develop a written plot. This



will help them look for suitable words and expressions, memorise them better, and improve their written expression in a meaningful and funny context. In the writing process support them by giving them advice on both plot and expressions to use.



### Comic Subtitles

Adding subtitles to silent videos is a great way to practise language at all levels.

This activity is useful for improving expression skills, vocabulary, reading and writing. In addition, it can be a very fun and engaging activity, as well as easy to put into practice. Here are a few tips on how to carry it out:

- Divide the class into small groups (3 or 4 students) and show short funny videos with the sound turned off. Let students create humorous subtitles in the target language by having them create the comic jokes. You can also have the students suggest the videos.

- Have them create the subtitles in the target language. You can use a free program to create subtitles such as [Flixyer](#) or [Clideo](#).

- The subtitled videos are then shown to the whole class.

Alternatively, for more advanced students you can have them act out the voiceover in front of the rest of the class while the video is being played in the background.

### Think Pair Share

Think Pair Share (TPS) is a cooperative learning technique in which students briefly reflect on a topic or definition and try to find a solution. It is a very simple activity that can be done in pairs:

- The teacher asks a question or poses a problem.

-In pairs, students briefly discuss with each other (1 to 2 minutes), listing possible answers or solutions.

-Pairs take turns reporting their answers/solutions in front of the whole class. It is important that students give reasons for their statements.

-The teacher gives his/her answer.

This activity is also useful for starting a discussion, so it works well even when there are for more than one possible answer.

Here is a short example with a riddle:

*If I have it, I don't share it.*

*If I share it, I don't have it.*

*What is it?*

One possible answer could be: *The secret*



### Two-line Jokes

This activity is based on two-line jokes, which are mostly questions and answers. The questions are almost always funny, and they require funny answers. The learners have to match a question with an appropriate answer.

The teachers can prepare some separate options, one with the question and the second with the answer, and give them to the students who are divided in pairs.

For this activity, the teacher can set a time-limit, and then check vocally with the whole class by getting one pair to read out the first part of the joke and another pair to suggest the correct response.

This type of activity enables students to correctly construct sentences in the L2 language, and familiarise with daily conversation.

Here are some examples of two-lines jokes:

1) What's the new baby's name?

I don't know. We can't understand a word he says.

2) You smell good. What have you got on?

Clean socks.

3) What did the traffic light say to the driver?

Don't look now, I'm changing

4) What is worse than finding a worm in an apple?



Finding half a worm.

You could also consider involving your students in a pre-activity, by having them guessing and writing such two-lines jokes.

### **Desert Island Activity**

This activity is very good to foster debates, communication and to train oral language skills.

Have every student draw an item (any item) on a piece of paper. Do not reveal anything about the desert island at this stage; they'll have to deal with it later...

Then collect the drawings and pass them out again. No student should receive their own drawing.

And now it's time to set background context: tell the students that they have been stranded on a deserted island, but only half of the class can survive and continue to inhabit the island. Every student has only one thing, which is exactly the one item depicted in the drawing given to them. Their goal is to convince the class that they should survive based on that item.

For example, they can illustrate why their item is fundamental for everybody's survival, list their item applications, and so on.

This exercise helps students develop their ability to debate and their dialectic. By speaking for themselves they also gain more self-confidence and esteem.

### **Writing prompts**

This activity incorporates humour and pictures in class, through humorous advertisements that contain cultural and pragmatic information. Actually, strange or funny pictures help students remember the image better.

Picture activities that can be used in class include writing and speaking prompts; something like "Caption This!", where students have to describe or write the caption of photos or advertisements, which are funny and humorous.

This activity enables students to utilize target vocabulary or grammar points to communicate a humorous, meaningful message.

The teachers select a few images, from already existing commercials, or images that could be turned into commercials, and distribute them among students, who can work in groups to find the best caption.

You could think about using social media and memes in this activity as well. Having your students re-interpret memes, with new caption and new meaning.

Here are some examples of pictures for this activity:



**Bonus:**

Why don't you ask your students to create their own funny commercials/memes?

Challenge them to take humorous photos, minding which message they want to convey.

Which caption fits it better?

## **References**

For further insights and references we refer you to the MOOCs.

Additional useful resources:

Examples of jokes to use in the classroom:

<https://educationtothecore.com/2021/08/180-jokes-for-the-classroom/>

<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/educator-english/classroom-jokes-in-english/>

<http://iteslj.org/c/jokes-short.html>

Examples for role-play scenarios:

[https://games4esl.com/role-play-ideas/?utm\\_content=cmp-true](https://games4esl.com/role-play-ideas/?utm_content=cmp-true)

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/teaching-resources/teaching-secondary/activities/pre-intermediate-a2/using-plays-language-class>

## **Other references:**

<https://www.edutopia.org/discussion/12-fun-speaking-games-language-learners>

Wirya Ahmed Ameen, Humor as a Technique in English Language Teaching (ELT), International Journal of Teaching and Education

Jolene Jaquays and Sara Okello, Humor in the Language Classroom: 3 Ways to Let Them Laugh

## Chapter IV: Blueprint for Training Adult Educators and LOL-Method

The Learning Out Loud course (LOL) consisted of a total of 50 hours, 25 hours of self-paced learning via the online LOL MOOC and 25 hours of training delivered onsite at Europass Teacher Academy, Dublin. The onsite training took place in a blended capacity with both in-person and online participants.

The learning outcomes for the LOL course state that by the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Apply their authentic comedic style to enhance their presentation skills;
- Integrate comedy into their teaching materials to increase student engagement;
- Use humor in the classroom to foster inclusivity, build trust, and reduce student anxiety.

The schedule below reflects these desired outcomes. The Monday sessions focused on why humor in the classroom is beneficial and how to gradually introduce it in a way which doesn't intimidate students. Tuesday was devoted to improvisation as a teaching tool to reduce anxiety, build trust and encourage spontaneous, playful group humor. On Wednesday, we began to explore the participants' individual comedic preferences and style and to craft original jokes to develop a comedic presentation. Thursday's sessions shifted focus from the teacher to the materials as the participants explored comedic writing tasks, discussed the role of dark humor in the classroom and revitalized dull texts to create fun and engaging teaching materials. Finally, on Friday, the participants prepared and delivered short comedic presentations and received feedback from their peers.

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9.00 - 10.30	Course introduction What makes me laugh-presentations	Yes, and...Introduction to improvisation (ppt)	Types of humour: what's your style? Joke ranking activity	Comedic writing: 20- word script Renoir painting speech bubbles	Preparing comedic presentations
10.30-10.45	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
10.45-12.15	Comedy in the Classroom: the science behind laughter	Improv games to develop language skills	What makes a joke a joke? Set up and punchline matching activity	The Bright Side of Dark Humour (ppt)	Comedic presentations and feedback.
12.15-12.30	Break	Break	Break	Break	Break
12.30-2 pm	How we say it: Communication games	Discussion and planning: how can we use and adapt these activities?	Joke writing session: Find your Funny	Liven up a dull text: Prepare and present.	Certificates and closing

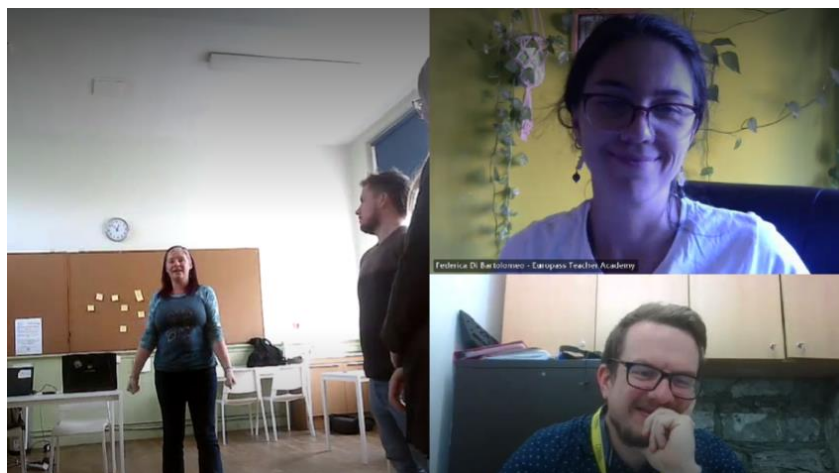


## Communication Games for Voice Awareness

### Tense and Relax

- Invite students to stand in a circle, explain that you will make a sound while tensing and relaxing your body and ask them to listen to see if they can hear a difference.
- Tense and relax your body while making a continuous sound, e.g. “Ahhhh...”
- Ask students if they heard a difference. Invite them to do it and **feel** the difference.
- Explain that when our bodies are tense and stressed, our voice has less space and gets squashed. A relaxed body = a full, healthy voice.

***Purpose: build awareness of voice and body, emphasise importance of reducing stress. Exaggerating tension leads to true relaxation- we can feel the contrast clearly.***





### Conductor

- Model with the whole class first. Give them something simple to say, e.g. “Red leather, yellow leather”. Explain that they will change how they say it by following your gestures as you “conduct”.
- Introduce each gesture individually, then combine them. You can also add emotions, e.g. bored, happy etc.
- Volume: Move hand close to students for loud, back to yourself for quiet.
- Pitch: Point up for high, point down for low.
- Speed: Move your finger in a circle slowly or quickly.
- Split class into small groups (4 or 5) and let them take turns to conduct each other using challenging sounds from their own languages.

***Purpose: To explore and expand the range of our voices, experiment with different sound combinations, and empower the learner as expert- conducting their own sounds***



### Banana Banana!

- Each student gets a card which has a message they must convey (apologise for being late, compliment someone’s hair, ask the time etc.)
- They must express the content of their message by saying only the word “Banana” and using intonation, facial expression and gestures to make it clear.
- The students mingle until everyone has said their message to everyone else.
- Discussion questions: which messages were easiest to understand? Which were hardest? Why?

***Purpose: focus on intonation, build awareness of body language, highlight importance on non-verbal expressiveness to convey meaning***



## Improvisation Activities to Develop Confident, Creative Communication

### Mirror Me

- In groups of 3 or 4. Three-sentence improvisation. A, B, A.
- Person A says something to Person B, e.g. "What time is the bus?" in character (old man, drunk, moody teenager etc.)
- Person B answers and mirrors the body language and voice of Person A.
- Person A responds with a final sentence in the same body language and voice.
- Person B changes body language and voice to something different and says a line to Person C- chain continues.

***Purpose: Gentle introduction to improvising dialogue. Build awareness of body language and tone, experiment with range of voice, gestures, facial expression.***

### Meet my Friend

- In groups of 3 or 4. Person A introduces Person B by giving them a character and a motivation, e.g. "This is John O Reilly, he is a 97 year old Irish farmer and his hobby is carving vegetables into rude shapes".
- Person B answers in character "Yes, I especially love using turnips..etc." then introduces Person C, creating a different character.
- Chain continues until everyone has given and received a character.

***Purpose: Language practice- choose the motivation to suit the language you are working on, e.g. "Her hobby is...her secret is... her dream is..." Listening skills- your partner decides your character, you have to pay attention! Collaboration, yes and- agree and build on what your partner says, don't deny or block it.***



***Crystal from California describing her passion for making wax candles and her hopes for making a profit one day.***

### Ted Talks

- Two speakers are given a random topic, e.g. “Why bananas should be the new currency.”
- 3 people are their “slides, stand with their backs to the audience.
- Whenever the speakers say “next slide”, the 3 people turn around and pose.
- The speakers must connect the poses to what they are saying.

***Purpose: Develop confidence- no hesitation! Collaboration- speaker support each other. Non-verbal participation option-slides. Listening skills- people who are slides must pay attention.***





## Participant presentations

Prior to the course, participants were asked to bring something to show the group that makes them laugh or has a funny story behind it. They were each given 5 minutes on Monday to share their funny object or story as a way of getting to know each other.

The participants were given the following task for their final presentation on Friday.

### *Choose one of the following:*

1. A stand-up set with jokes you have written (2 minutes max)
2. A true funny story from your own life
3. A redo of your Monday presentation
4. A presentation for your students incorporating humour

By presenting the participants with a choice of presentation styles, we hoped to alleviate pressure, reduce anxiety, and allow the participants to focus on what would be most useful to them.



## Future Recommendations for the Learning Out Loud (LOL) Course

### Integration of Comprehensible Input Activity:

- Introduce a comprehensible input activity on Monday. This can be a simple, interactive exercise that encourages participants to communicate in a humorous context, ensuring that the humour is easily understood and relatable to all participants. Emphasising the importance of body language, facial expressions, intonation, realia etc.
- This method not only increases student comprehension but also fosters a more inclusive environment where everyone can feel involved and understood.

### Refinement of Dark Humour Example:

- It was observed that some examples, like the Daniel Sloss reference in the Dark Humour PowerPoint, might be challenging for participants to grasp due to the strong accent. It's essential to ensure that all materials are accessible and comprehensible to participants from various backgrounds.

### Incorporate Laughter Yoga as a Warm-Up Activity

- Introducing laughter yoga at the beginning of sessions can serve as an excellent icebreaker. It not only lightens the mood but also helps reduce anxiety and tension among participants.
- This practice combines laughter exercises with yoga breathing techniques, promoting health and well-being, which can be particularly beneficial before diving into more intensive comedic exercises.

### Re-structure Improvisation Sessions:

- Feedback suggests the need to divide the improvisation sessions into smaller, more focused segments. This can help ensure each improvisational technique is given ample time and attention.
- Breaking down these sessions can also allow for more personalised feedback and individual practice, which can be beneficial for participants in mastering the art of comedic improvisation.

## CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this handbook encapsulates the knowledge acquired throughout this project, serving as a valuable resource for teachers and educators. By offering practical tools, it empowers them to enhance the engagement, reward, and effectiveness of their lessons immediately.

The first chapter delves into integrating improv and stand-up comedy techniques into foreign language teaching, fostering innovative and interactive learning environments. The second chapter focuses on enhancing learners' overall well-being, providing educators with adaptable ideas to create positive physical, psychological, and emotional settings for diverse students.

The challenge of having a group with mixed language levels is addressed in the fourth chapter. It offers support for educators navigating varied proficiency levels among their students.

Lastly, the handbook outlines the development of a training course for adult educators, trainers, and language teachers using the LOL methodology. The chapter presents purposeful activities along with comprehensive explanations and concludes with essential recommendations for those interested in replicating similar training events. Together, these chapters equip educators with comprehensive insights and practical approaches to elevate their teaching methodologies and create impactful learning experiences.

We hope that you found some useful tools for engaging every one of your students, creating a more inclusive environment to lessen their anxiety and help them thrive. We know that if students laugh and have fun during their classes, they will feel less self-conscious and more empowered, hence they will improve their skills more easily. To be a good teacher one must prepare everything, while having to improvise something all the time.

We had fun testing out the LOL-method, we are sure that you will have fun as well if you try some of this with your students.

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