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Disruptive Incongruity: comedy and pedagogy






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Key Questions:

- ▶ How can dynamic and creative performance strategies employed by stand-up comedians enable teachers to challenge students in ways that enhance their learning experience?
- ▶ How can games and exercises used by comics to generate material be used by students in ways that challenge, inspire, and motivate new ways of thinking?

Structure of the session

- ▶ The disruptive pedagogic potential of stand-up
- ▶ Connections between Stand-up comedy and teaching
- ▶ Getting the audience involved
- ▶ Games and exercises used to generate stand up material and their use in the classroom
- ▶ The attitudes exercise.



“It’s comedy that disrupts normal thought processes: everyday objects are seen in an extraordinary new light; old sayings are reversed and words moulded into new shapes,”

Double, O (2014) *Getting the Joke: the inner workings of stand-up comedy*, London: Bloomsbury.

Disruptive potential



CHALLENGE



RULE OF THREE –
WARM UP EXERCISE



SHIFTING PATTERNS OF
THINKING



MAKING THE UNUSUAL
ACCEPTABLE

Connections between Stand up Comedy and Teaching

- ▶ Direct Address
 - ▶ Simply the act of speaking directly to your audience, acknowledging their presence and directing your comments at them,
- ▶ Here and Now
 - ▶ “The stand-up comedian is duty-bound to incorporate events in the venue into the act: (Double 2005: 19)
- ▶ Reading a Room
 - ▶ Judging the extent to which the audience is with you, how they are responding, are they unified or divided, what can you do with that unity or division
- ▶ Persona/Personality
 - ▶ The importance of being engaging, turning up the volume on aspects of your personality.

Getting the Audience involved

- ▶ How do these techniques work over Teams?
 - ▶ Direct Address
 - ▶ Here and Now
 - ▶ Reading a Room
 - ▶ Persona/Personality

Games and exercises used to generate material

The Furniture Game

- ▶ A really simple exercise that is used frequently to teach school children about metaphor

If her eyes were sweets they'd be chocolate Minstrels

If he were a dog he'd be a Jack Russel

Brownjohn, S, (1980) *Does it Have to Rhyme? Teaching Children to Write Poetry*.
London: Hodder Education

Not The Furniture Game by Simon Armitage

His hair was a crow fished out of a blocked chimney
and his eyes were boiled eggs with the tops hammered in
and his blink was a cat flap
and his teeth were bluestones on the Easter Island statues

The Furniture Game – Attitude

Most modern comedians don't tell 'jokes' as such. They share their ideas with the audience. They talk 'to' rather than 'at' the audience allowing free reign to some of the more extreme aspects of their personality in the hope that this 'voice' will generate funny ideas. Their attitude informs what they talk about and how they talk about it and it is this attitude that generates humour

Murray, L (2007) *Be a Great Stand-Up*, Ontario: McGraw-Hill.

If modern stand-up is often about sharing a worldview with the audience, it helps to know what your opinions are.

Double, O (2005) *Getting the Joke: the inner workings of stand-up comedy*, London: Bloomsbury.

Afterthoughts are almost always the reason we laugh at a comedian's routine

Set up

- ▶ If Boris Johnson was a dessert he'd be a trifle

Afterthought – or punchline

- ▶ thick, sickly and soaked in sherry

Student examples

Set-up


- ▶ Alternative comedy was like a bad motorway driver
- ▶ If alternative cabaret was a person it would be my ex boyfriend
- ▶ If traditional comics were conversations they'd be chats with my family

Afterthought - punch

- ▶ It stuck vehemently to the left because it was scared of the right
- ▶ Both intimate and hostile
- ▶ Tedious from the start and full of sexist rubbish

The Attitudes Exercise

▶ Your turn...



'Compering and comparing:
Stand-up comedy and pedagogy'

Follow up discussion

- ▶ Did that exercise encourage you to respond differently to the material you were given?
- ▶ Does it encourage you to take a stronger position in relation to the material you were given?
- ▶ In what ways might it help students engage differently with academic material?

Conclusions

- ▶ Performance strategies used by stand-up comedians can be used in the classroom to challenge both teachers and students alike in ways that enhance the overall learning experience
- ▶ Are there equivalent strategies that can enhance synchronous online learning?
- ▶ Games and exercises used by comics to generate material can be used by students in ways that challenge them to become more effective performers and encourage them to engage in new ways of thinking

Sources

- ▶ Brownjohn, S, (1980) *Does it Have to Rhyme? Teaching Children to Write Poetry*. London: Hodder Education
- ▶ Double, O (2014) *Getting the Joke: the inner workings of stand-up comedy*, London: Bloomsbury.
- ▶ McCarron, K and Savin Baden, B. (2008) 'Compering and comparing: Stand-up comedy and pedagogy', *Innovations in Education and Teaching International* , 45 (4), pp. 355-363.
- ▶ Murray, L (2007) *Be a Great Stand-Up*, Ontario: McGraw-Hill.