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Teaching French Language and Culture by Means of Humor

by Jean-Pierre Berwald

THE USE OF HUMOR in teaching has been a component of this profession since its inception. We consider humor to be important for obvious reasons—to enliven our classes, to establish and maintain rapport, to create the appropriate ambiance for learning, and to enhance student acquisition and retention. In foreign language teaching humor has been written into textbooks in the form of humorous dialogue lines and, more recently, by means of situations abroad resulting in cross-cultural confusion. One early display of humor in a first year A-LM text (Lutz 53) includes the following dialogue between Daniel and Robert. Daniel informs Robert that he has a sister who is “vraiment pénible.” They continue:

Robert: Moi, j'ai deux frères et un chien.

Daniel: On fait l'échange?

Robert: D'accord, mais je garde le chien.

Daniel: Ah non. Alors, garde tout.

There are also other instances of textual humor, mainly in the form of dialogues. At the university level the text *Mise en train* by Benamou and Ionesco, used during the 1970s, incorporated dialogues that were humorous and outlandish. They felt that textbook dialogues were stilted and silly anyhow, so why not create some lines that were totally nonsensical.

Recently published texts have incorporated humor based on one's normal, American expectations in another culture. In the 1987 text *French in Action* many gaffes result when the main character of the story, a young American student in France, makes one cultural faux pas after another, even though his spoken French is perfectly fine. During a shopping experience, he is surprised to find he must purchase size 44 shoes (Capretz 232) and an item of underwear known as “un slip!” (240). The humor caused by the clash of cultures serves as an excellent teaching device since it not only points out useful vocabulary but prepares one to function in another setting as well.

If the language and cultural experience of American foreign language textbooks reflect more and more the area being studied, it is natural that authentic materials would do the same. The proficiency movement, with its focus on spoken communications and its concomitant use of mass media, has introduced students to language often too familiar or too new to be

found in textbooks. Along with articles and features in these media are examples of a culture's humor in the form of jokes, cartoons, comic strips, and headlines, the last of which often makes use of a pun or double meaning. Broadcast media, especially in the form of videotape, has been a valuable source of authentic speech as we view news broadcasts, special features, and television commercials. Of all the possibilities existing on French television, perhaps the one that has been exploited the least is that of stand-up comics. They are particularly difficult to understand because their humor is often based on current topics and concerns and because their language is often contemporary and replete with double meanings. Those capable of understanding these performers would certainly have a good knowledge of the culture and the language. It is the thesis of this article that foreign language teachers may be in an excellent position to select humorous material from various sources and to prepare it for student appreciation and instruction. With appropriate help students can truly be on the road to understanding the humor and perhaps even the cultural background behind that humor. This is an important consideration since it is often the key to understanding humor even when language is easily understood. One has but to compare cartoons in the *New Yorker* and *Punch* to see how material may be understood and appreciated in one English-speaking culture but not in another. It is with these factors in mind that this article attempts to concentrate on the elements of language and culture that make for humorous *and teachable* situations.

One of the most remarkable qualities of humor is that reaction is virtually instantaneous. If students laugh at a cartoon or groan disdainfully at a pun, the teacher need not ask whether they have understood; the feedback is indicative. There are times, also, when the humorous material presented is clearly over the students' heads for cultural or linguistic reasons. It is then the instructor's task to explain the intended humor in the material presented—vocabulary, double meanings, plays on words, or cultural factors. The material may lose its humor at *that particular time*, but it may be funny at a later time in a different context on an individual basis. Furthermore, students will most definitely have learned something about language or culture.

The selection process is a key factor. Teachers must look for illustrative material. If newspaper headlines, photo captions, and articles can reinforce vocabulary and grammar normally found in textbooks, humor has that added dimension of causing laughter, a somewhat stronger reaction than mere acknowledgement that material has been understood. One rather significant aspect of French humor is something known as "gallic wit," which ties in well with the history and development of the French national character. Even in Roman times, the residents of Gaul were described as "quarrelsome, egotistical, quick-witted, lively and bon-vivant" (Baudin et al. 53). Through the years gallic wit has satirized almost everyone in a position of power: judges, lawyers, doctors, the clergy, and the establishment, often

with jokes on sex and adultery. French humor, with its bawdy references, combines the quick-witted gallic spirit with a traditional fondness for irreverence (Baudin et al. 55) Yet, as clever and entertaining as these bawdy aspects of French humor may be, they may be inappropriate and premature for use at the secondary level. On the other hand, advanced students of French at the university level may be able to appreciate the tie-in between various characteristics of gallic spirit and the fields of literature, theater, and music.

How can we use humor in the classroom?

At the simplest level, the humor that comes to mind is clearly verbal. One can take simple, culture-free jokes from one's childhood, translate them into French, and try them out in class. I have done this successfully with the following joke: Two youngsters attend a classical music concert featuring the music of Bach. The young neophyte asks his sophisticated friend "s'il compose toujours." "Ah non, répond l'autre, maintenant il se *décompose*." The cognates make the joke easy to understand at even the earliest level, and the reflexive form of "se décomposer" need not be stressed or exploited. The punch line is so obvious that students understand easily and are equally proud of their listening comprehension abilities. French language children's magazines have been a good source of jokes. As juvenile as they may be, jokes can be rather challenging at the intermediate and advanced levels. They have another great advantage in that they often provide an excellent opportunity for vocabulary development. Since they are short, tightly-constructed stories, they provide context for understanding familiar words and expressions which are often good synonyms for more formal language ordinarily found in textbooks.

In the 1970s the French teen publication *Salut* included jokes in every issue. Some were the same type that children hear the world over, such as: "Pourquoi l'éléphant porte-t-il des chaussettes vertes? Parce que les bleues sont sales." This can certainly be tried to test listening comprehension. Others were specifically French and very useable for reasons of language and culture. Two examples follow:

Question: Quelles sont les plus vieilles lettres de l'alphabet?

Réponse: A. G.

Question: Quelle est la différence entre un ascenseur et une cigarette?

Réponse: Un ascenseur fait monter et une cigarette fait des cendres.

One can show the opposition of *monter* and *descendre*, the universal notion that elevators were originally intended to bring passengers *up* (allowing them to walk down), reinforcing the grammatical forms of the causative *faire* and the partitive construction *des cendres*. This riddle can serve as a lesson in phonetics for those who wish to differentiate /de sā dr/ from /de sā

dr/. These jokes are useful for introducing vocabulary and for testing listening comprehension. For those interested in a complete collection of jokes, Lamy recommends Hervé Nègre's *Dictionnaire des histoires drôles* (49). This Livre de Poche contains over a thousand good, fair, and bad jokes, all of which are categorized and indexed by topic. Instructors do need to peruse the collection to find jokes appropriate to the age and level of their students. Lamy suggests a few very serviceable jokes in his article:

Une fillette: Papa, tu connais la dernière?
 Papa: Non.
 Fillette: Eh bien, c'est moi.

The joke resides in the double meaning of *dernière* which means "the latest joke" as well as "the last one" (in the class) in this context.

Lamy's article includes the following joke, which is excellent for level one classes since it makes use of basic possessive adjectives as well as family members. It is also a commentary on recent times:

Deux personnes se parlent.
 —Regardez ce jeune homme. On dirait une jeune fille.
 —C'est une fille. C'est *ma* fille.
 —Excusez-moi. Je ne savais pas que vous étiez son père.
 —Je ne le suis pas. Je suis sa mère. (49)

Besides being a good joke, it is also a good vehicle to teach the expression "on dirait."

At a more advanced level, there are jokes, riddles, and puns available in various publications in francophone countries. One of these is Bondiork's *Encyclopédie officielle des calembours*, guaranteed to make comprehending students groan. The following examples illustrate my point:

Question: Quelle est la monnaie préférée des écrivains?
 Réponse: La livre. (12)

Question: Quel est le dieu des chasseurs?
 Réponse: Pan! (33)

There are certainly vocabulary words to be learned as well as the double-meaning of the god Pan and the onomatopoeic sound of a gun report.

Students might recognize an expression common to both French and English in the following riddle:

Question: Les félins domestiques sont-ils plus rapides que les bovins?
 Réponse: Bien entendu, les chats ruent avant les bœufs. *Ruer* is synonymous with *se précipiter* and the expression "Mettre la charrue avant les bœufs" is just a slight variation of "putting the cart before the horse" (39).

The *Encyclopédie* gives many examples which can be used not only to teach language and culture but also to add to the students' repertory of jokes. The following is a modification of another well-known expression:

Question: La pisciculture (production et élevage des poissons) attire-t-elle des capitaux?

Réponse: Oui, car le *thon* c'est de l'argent. (Variation on le *temps* c'est de l'argent) (16)

Puns, plays on words, and deviations from well-known expressions are often found in advertisements. These are found in great abundance in newspapers, magazines, and billboards as well as in specialized scholarly studies such as one by Blanche Grunig. In the ads one's knowledge of language and culture, traditional and popular, allows for an appreciation of the message. Grunig's text gives and analyzes many examples of well-known expressions and proverbs that have been modified in order to sell products. Several examples follow:

1. Certains l'aiment Kool. (Deviation of a well-known film title used to sell cigarettes). (125)
2. Hansaplast, tout nouveau, tout bobo. (Band-aid ad which is a corruption of the expression "tout nouveau, tout beau"). (126)
3. En attendant Godiva. (Chocolate ad using a slight deviation from the title of a Beckett play). (134)
4. Tirée à 4 X 4 épingles. (Renault ad for a four-wheel drive vehicle that deviates slightly from the expression, "tiré à 4 épingles," to be dressed in one's Sunday best). (139)
5. Votre dodo, c'est mon dada. (A good title to introduce children's language for the words *sleep* and *concern*. It also plays on the similarities of sounds). (200)
6. Rowenta, Le savoir fer. (An electric iron ad uses a slight deviation of a well-known expression). (14)

Magazine and newspaper ads are a constant source of humorous possibilities and make for excellent lessons on words, expressions, and culture.

Another source of humor is billboard advertisements. They are an interesting way of teaching language and culture to students at all levels of instruction. The advertising message must convey a great deal of information in a relatively short period of time. This is done with either a striking photo, a catchy statement, or both, if an impact is to be made. Often these ads can reveal some interesting aspects of a culture by the very nature of the product advertised. One very creative and rather provocative ad for underwear showed an attractive woman wearing a bra; the caption read: "Regarde-moi dans les yeux quand je te parle." The caption was excellent since it referred to the type of language used by parents to their children and also reviewed the grammatical notion of the definite article with parts of the body.

Some ads, clever though they may be, would be considered sexist and/or politically incorrect within the North American context but could still be used in class to point out the comparative levels of sensitivity and acceptability on both sides of the Atlantic. Recently there was a national campaign for Colles Perfax, a heavy-duty glue often used around the home. The billboards consisted of a series of double meanings whose literal meaning had something to do with installing wallpaper and carpets. The double

meaning is assured by the use of the pronoun *le/la/l'* which means both *it* and *him/her*. The ads, found mainly at bus stop shelters, featured only a picture of the glue and one of several headlines. Among these were the following:

"Trois minutes plus tard, j'étais près à l'étendre." Three minutes later and I was ready to spread the glue/I was ready to flatten him/her out!

"Je l'ai collée au mur pour qu'elle fasse tapisserie." I glued it (the paper) to the wall so it could be wallpaper./I pasted her one so she could be a wallflower. (This pun really does lose its humor in translation). *Tapisserie* literally means *wallpaper* but in the expression *faire tapisserie*, it means to be a wallflower. The humor lies in seeing the expression "faire tapisserie" used in its denotative sense.

"Quand je l'ai plaquée elle s'est tenue à carreau." When I glued it, it adhered to the tiles./When I broke up with her, she remained calm.

"Ça s'est passé, bien fait, vite fait, sous la moquette." It (the glue) was applied, well and quickly, to the under part of the rug (so it could adhere)./"It" was well done and quickly done under the rug (instead of "under the covers").

One of the best billboard ads for pointing out language and culture was an ad for the French National Railroads, the S.N.C.F. The picture in the ad shows a flying airplane; the caption on the ad is "Ce n'est pas du vol." The double meaning is perfectly applied: the first implication is that the ad is not concerned with flying, and the second that it (unlike flying) is not robbery—not too expensive. From a grammatical point of view, it can be used to show the partitive *du* in a negative statement with the verb *être*.

Billboard ads can be shot on slide film during one's travels or copied from the French professional journal *Stratégies*, which reproduces many prize-winning posters. Some of the better known billboard ads are published and sold in postcard format, which can easily be made into slides for class presentations.

At the most advanced level of French language study, we have the *contrepèterie*, one of the most sophisticated forms of verbal humor reserved for teachers and students of French who have a good knowledge of culture and slang and who have a great interest in and talent for solving word puzzles. A *contrepèterie* is very much like the English language spoonerism, which entails inverting consonants, vowels, or parts of words in order to derive new expressions and spellings based on sound rather than traditional orthography. Martin has authored a volume with examples, exercises, and instructions for discovering the *contrepèteries* in the sentences given. Some of his examples include the following:

Père est gai. (Guerre et Paix) (52)

Maudit bic. (Moby Dick) (52)

Quel champ de coton. (Quel temps de cochon!) (15)

Contrepèteries are to be found in the section entitled "Sur l'album de la

comtesse" of the weekly satirical newspaper *Le Canard Enchaîné*, which has been published since 1915. In every issue the reader is invited to find the *contrepèts* in what appears to be a series of ordinary looking sentences such as "Ce roc est plein de confort" (Ce con est plein de roquefort) (Martin 47). Most of the *contrepèteries* have either a scatological or sexual reference; they become easier to solve with increasing knowledge of "key" words since one develops a sense for the inversions to be made. Rabelais may well be the one who developed this art form with the following well-known and oft-quoted examples from *Pantagruel* written in 1532: "femmes folles à la messe" (femmes molles à la fesse) and "à Beaumont-le-Vicomte" (à beau con le vit monte) (Martin 45). Although many books have been written to help *contrepètet* devotees make linguistic changes necessary for comprehension, correctly transformed sentences are *never* written out; solutions are always offered by embolding the letters and syllables to be inverted as in "Quel temps de cochon" and "Maudit bic." The reader makes the phonological changes and then the appropriate spelling changes to complete the process.

The Use of Visuals

At the simplest levels, we can show a number of visual items containing humorous situations; these may include magazine photos, ads, cartoons, or drawings. Items in the last two categories can be prepared by students and teachers to explain a point of grammar such as comparative adjectives (*Robert est plus beau que Thomas*) or dozens of other such grammatical possibilities. Photographs can be found in both American and francophone publications which show us whether humor differs from one culture to another. One has but to find advertisements in French or American magazines or newspapers to find humorous photos. In many photos the humor is readily noted either because of stereotypical or unusual situations. (One French underwear ad featured men in various walks of life dressed in their professional attire *from the waist up*, but all were wearing the same Jockey style briefs.) The ads are very amusing and can certainly be used to ask what these men do for a living. From a cultural point of view, they are excellent, since the professional costumes worn are those of Frenchmen in various professions.

Pictures need not be limited to francophone publications. American magazine ads often have humorous themes that can be used to encourage discussion. An American ad for Accutron features a bride- and groom-to-be looking at their watches in exasperation while the preacher arrives late. A series of questions asking students to comment on the picture works well here: *Que va faire le couple? Où est le pasteur/prêtre?* (one can differentiate between the two members of the clergy). Students laugh at the humor in the pictures and explain at the simplest level what is happening. For the policeman in the underwear ad, "voilà un agent de police." For the preacher,

"il est en retard." The culture lies in the setting or in the clothes worn. The unusual picture of the French policeman serves this purpose nicely. Not all pictures or drawings need a cultural or linguistic focus; some may be used for the sole purpose of encouraging reaction and discussion.

Comic strips are another medium whose humor is well-served in the language classroom. Some are American, such as *Peanuts* or *Hagar* that have been translated into French, and some, such as *Les Frustrés* and *Agrippine* by Claire Bretécher (*Le Nouvel Observateur*), are French. The American comic strips are useful because the situations depicted are familiar and the language is often easy to understand. They are not culturally authentic since the action does not take place in a francophone setting and the language is often a translation or reworking of familiar English expressions. The *Hagar the Horrible* strip, translated as *Hagard du Nord* (made to sound like *la gare du nord*), is of particular interest because the punch line accompanying the last panel of a comic strip often illustrates a point of grammar or an idiomatic expression. In one the bellicose Hagar flips a coin and exclaims: "Pile on envahit l'Angleterre; face on envahit l'Allemagne." This is useful for the appropriate form of the regular "ir" verb *envahir*, the spelling of various European countries being studied, and for the French expression that relates to *heads* and *tails*. These comic strips, while having limited value for cultural instruction, are useful for reading comprehension and grammatical review. Students understand a familiar set of characters speaking a foreign tongue and are pleased with their ability to comprehend the subject matter.

An important development in the history of comic strips took place in Belgium in the late 1940s. Hergé, the author of *Tintin*, and a group of French and Flemish language cartoonists known as the Belgian School began to produce comics characterized by "a caricatural propagation of Flemish middle class values and heavily stereotyped cultural allusions" (Am Zhenhof and van Noppen 42). The group was to produce such works as *Tintin*, *Lucky Luke*, and, eventually, the *Smurfs*. Perhaps the best known character of the Belgian school was the French comic *Astérix* created by Goscinny and Uderzo in 1961. Goscinny had also been involved with the creation of *Lucky Luke* and *Le Petit Nicholas*. As Pinet writes, *Astérix* humor involves more than gags and puns. He draws on a number of the most basic and prevalent myths and stereotypes concerning such topics as the French love for food, individualism, the spirit of resistance in the face of great odds, cleverness, ruse, the sense of Frenchness (in opposition to other cultures), and the love of verbal ingenuity (150). The authors of *Astérix* have taken dialogues of contemporary French society and applied them to the France of the Roman era: "Lutèce est belle mais très dangereuse"; "j'aimerais bien visiter Lutèce mais je ne pourrais pas y vivre." The humor lies not only in the treatment of stereotypes but with "the familiarity of complaints and rejoinders that makes them funny" (Pinet 155).

Since the development of the Belgian school, comic strips have become

an important art form in France and Belgium, especially in album format. One has but to visit any bookstore in these countries to see the quantity of albums available and the number of readers examining them. On the other hand, newspaper comics, though they exist, do not have the popularity or the interest in francophone countries that they do in the United States, where certain comics are followed daily with great interest.

The French *Agrippine* comics are rather sophisticated, as they concern adults and their social problems and the manner in which they cope with daily life. The language here is up to date and contains a good deal of slang—ideal for teaching vocabulary and reviewing grammar such as the use of definite articles with parts of the body (i.e. “*Agrippine, cesse de te gratter les fesses! Ne te cure pas les dents avec cet air de duchesse!*”). From a cultural perspective, these comics are useful because they touch on problems that are similar in most western societies.

Comics by Jacques Faizant and Georges Wolinski, published on a regular basis in newspapers, magazines, and albums, are intended for native French speakers who are in touch with current events in their country. Among Faizant’s “regulars” are a couple of elderly women who comment on the passing scene:

Il a développé un monde férocement poétique, celui de ses Vieilles Dames. Dans notre culture, les vieilles dames doivent être de peu d’intérêt, sans grande vitalité, effacées, résignées, rendues par l’âge un peu radoteuses. A ce cliché attendu, Faizant oppose des vieilles dames pleines de vie, joyeusement agressives, capables des plus grandes folies, pour le plus grand désespoir de la famille. (Borgomano 43)

Like Faizant, Wolinski (*L’Humanité*) has created individuals who discuss current social problems. They are two men seated with a glass of wine at a café, the older one “denunciator of the age and florid in his nostalgia for the good old days” (Zeldin 62). They both hate change, are appalled by the antics of the young, hate trade unionists, ecologists, Marxists, unmarried mothers, and nude bathers. Theodore Zeldin states that Wolinski has spent his life attacking the average, petty-bourgeois Frenchmen depicted by his cartoon characters (64).

Cartoons are certainly among the most useful media for transmitting humor in both captioned and uncaptioned forms. The non-captioned cartoons can portray situations that are considered amusing to *all* cultures, such as a Belgian drawing of a man being propelled through the roof of a manufacturer of springs in a building marked “*fabrique de ressorts.*” Although there is no cultural content to speak of, students can still describe the event using the vocabulary word *ressort* found in the cartoon itself. Everyone can understand this cartoon; students will only differ in their ability to explain it in French.

The humor in captioned cartoons depends more on one’s ability to read. Some depict an incongruous situation; others rely on puns or double mean-

ing such as a youngster's comment as he accompanies his mother to her driving lesson: "Tâche d'avoir une bonne note en conduite." Not only is the role reversal amusing, but this also entails the double meaning of *conduite* which means both *driving* and *conduct*.

One cartoonist whose works can easily be understood in classes of intermediate French is the Belgian Philippe Geluck (*Le Soir*), whose principal character is a cat. "Le chat," usually dressed in a jacket and a tie, assumes various poses and makes "weighty" pronouncements in one, two, or three bubbles, for the most part. The cat's humor resides in his punch lines or his double meanings. One three-panel, three-bubble cartoon includes the following statements:

- 1) Il paraît qu'au Japon
- 2) un chef dirige son orchestre
- 3) avec un couteau et une fourchette

The humor in this cartoon is very subtle. One must know that *baguette* in addition to meaning bread, means a conductor's baton and chopsticks as well!

Another clever cartoon has the cat wearing a sandwich board which carries the following message: "Ecrivain raciste et analphabète cherche nègre." This statement looks bizarre and humorless until one learns that the word *nègre*, besides being a derogatory term for a black person, also has the non-racial meaning of *ghost-writer*. It is then that the humor based on the double meaning becomes evident.

Sempé's captioned and non-captioned cartoons are excellent for class use, both for the language and for the humorous situations which they describe. It is not always easy to find elements of culture in cartoons, except, perhaps, for physical descriptions of houses, certain forms of transportation, and street scenes. One cartoon where culture is evident is a six-panel sequence that shows a wine connoisseur going through the various rituals of tasting from a newly opened bottle until he finally dies or conks out in the last panel, much to his "patient" wife's relief.

The Humor of Stand-up Comedians

One of the more difficult forms of verbal humor to appreciate is that of stand-up comics. Not only is the pace rapid and the language usually rather contemporary, but the topics often concern themselves with the current scene, including politics. For those unfamiliar with current events the humor is often missed.

The French tradition of stand-up comedians can be traced to the "chansonniers" of the eighteenth century who wrote and performed political satire to the popular music of the time (Baudin et al. 67). French political satirists enjoy great popularity and their skits and shows are readily available on audio and videotape in such stores as *La Fnac*. Furthermore, their

presentations often concern themselves with some of the most salient aspects of present-day culture as well as with the history and tradition of the French national character. "L'initiation au 'comique français' va de pair, en effet, avec une certaine connaissance et compréhension de la société, de la civilisation française et de la France telle qu'elle rit d'elle même. Dis-moi de qui tu ris, je te dirai qui tu es" (Stourdzé, Davoust and Hongre 49). Due to the relative difficulty of the material, the instructor's preparation is essential, especially for pointing out vocabulary, double meanings, puns, and cultural referents.

One of the greatest present-day comedians is Raymond Devos. He is perhaps easier to comprehend than others because his humor relies considerably more on verbal play than on cultural references. His humor consists predominantly of one rapid-fire form of word-play after another as he takes advantage of multiple meanings and homonyms. One of his best known "sketches" concerns a vacationer who wishes to visit the Norman city of Caen. His use of homonyms and the resultant misunderstandings takes place in a dialogue that confuses *Caen* with *quand*, *Troyes* with *trois*, *Sète* with *sept*, and *car* with *quart*. The vacationer asks the bus dispatcher for the departure time and is told, "On part à 19; mais avec le chauffeur ça fait 20" (20 personnes ou 20 heures?). The same type of word-play takes place in another dialogue, this time in a bicycle store. It is a marvelous opportunity to focus on the grammatical forms *celui/celle* during an imaginary dialogue with a salesperson who asks: "Quelle bicyclette voulez-vous, cette bicyclette-ci ou cette bicyclette-là?" Exasperated, the customer finally replies: "Donnez-moi cette bicyclette-ci avec la selle de celle-là" (Devos 108-11). Devos's skits are not only available on tape, but they are published as well, making it far easier for the instructor to locate good material and to prepare it for class. Although students may not understand all the subtleties of Devos's humor, they do enjoy his appearance, his facial expressions, his antics, and the audience reaction. Follow-up exercises can include vocabulary work as well as a few questions on the comedian's message, the double meanings and the humor.

Audiotapes and videotapes of Devos are to be found in bookstores all over France. The audiotapes can be replayed on any cassette recorder; videotapes must be shown on tri-standard playback decks. For using videotapes I recommend copying the sound track onto audiotape and then copying the audiotape onto yet another blank audiotape by breath groups allowing a 2-3 second pause between each. This can be done, of course, by manipulating the pause button. One can introduce breath groups to audiotape sketches the same way by copying one audio tape to another. Students should find these taped sketches with pauses easier to understand. Once instructors have used vocabulary sheets and audiotape performances with pauses, students should be ready to understand the uncut audiotape versions.

Instructors who sift through various print and broadcast media to find

appropriate, understandable humor may be enhancing their students' foreign language experience in many ways. They may enliven the class, improve student's knowledge of vocabulary and culture, and may discover in the process a stimulating and creative way to test listening and reading comprehension.

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