

LESSON 33

Understanding Sarcasm and Irony

Objective

Students will understand and recognize the use of sarcasm and irony.

Performance Criteria

This skill will be *performed adequately* when the student:

1. Recognizes that a statement is sarcastic or ironic.
2. Is able to grasp the speaker's intention.
3. Responds appropriately.
4. If unsure, asks for clarification.

Materials Required

Comic strip illustrating situations of irony/sarcasm (see possible situations, Step 1).

Situation cards for role-play and practice steps.

Other Preparation

None for this lesson.

Special Considerations

None for this lesson.

Forms and Supplementary Materials (see CD)

None for this lesson.

Technology Resources

iPad/iPhone app: eTOM (Pragmatom); Comic Life software and app (Plasq.com);

Strip Designer app (www.mexircus.com/Strip_Designer/index.html)

Internet: Makebeliefscomix (www.makebeliefscomix.com/), ReadWriteThink

Comic Creator (www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/interactives/comic/),

StripGenerator (<http://stripgenerator.com/>), StoryCreator 2 (<http://myths.e2bn.org/create/tool527-story-creator-2.html>);

About.com grammar pages for examples of sarcasm (<http://grammar.about.com/od/rs/g/sarcasmterm.htm>) and irony

(<http://grammar.about.com/od/il/g/ironyterm.htm>)

Related Lessons

Lesson 32: Understanding Figures of Speech

Lesson 71, Volume 2, Volume 2: Recognizing and Responding to Jokes and Humor

Lesson 83, Volume 2: Recognizing and Responding to Teasing, Name Calling, and Bullying

PROCEDURES 7 STEPS

Step 1 Establish the Need

- a. Begin a class discussion about the topic; show students the comic strip depicting situations of irony/sarcasm, or relate a story, and discuss the “real” meaning behind the sarcastic/ironic comment, for example:
 - 1) Joe comes to work, and instead of beginning to work, he sits down and starts checking his e-mail or surfing online. His boss notices his behavior and says, “Joe, don’t work too hard.” Meaning: “You’re a real slacker! Get to work!”
 - 2) Juan is standing on the curb when his friend Dan walks by, trips, and drops his backpack. Juan says “You dropped your stuff.” Dan says “No!” After picking up all his stuff, while Juan stands by, Dan says “Thanks a lot for the help.” Meanings: “No” = sarcasm; “of course I did!” and “Thanks” = “I wish you had helped me pick up my stuff.”
 - 3) Amy’s father comes home from work. Being polite, she says “How was work?” To which he responds “As much fun as a root canal.” Meaning “I had a bad day.”
- b. Elicit through class discussion that understanding sarcasm and irony will help students *relate to other people* and *understand the real meaning of what people say*.

Step 2 Identify Skill Components

- a. Tell students there are specific steps to mastering the skill:
 - 1) Listen to the phrase.
 - 2) Does it make sense?
 - 3) If not, consider the surroundings of the phrase—does it make sense in that context?
 - 4) If you cannot figure it out, ask the speaker what he or she means.

Step 3 Model the Skill

- a. Either through class discussion or by presenting another series of comic strips, revisit the example(s) from Step 1, and model the thinking process for identifying the real meaning/sarcasm/irony, such as, for “Joe and His Boss”:
 - 1) Joe stops and thinks: He said don’t work too hard, but I’m not working hard.
 - 2) That doesn’t make sense.
 - 3) I’m at work, so I should be working hard. My boss was trying to tell me to stop relaxing and start working.
- b. With the assistance of another adult, use a variety of phases that include sarcasm or irony. One adult speaks the phrase and the other adult uses the thinking aloud procedure to model interpretation. For example: “That was nice of him.” Interpretation: it was not nice at all. Also use the same phrase with a different tone of voice and interpret.

Step 4 Role-Play

- a. Distribute situation cards to students. Have them role-play the process of decoding the meaning of the ironic/sarcastic statement.
- b. Observe students and provide feedback; have them assess their own performance and that of other students.

Step 5 Practice

- a. In the week following the lesson, revisit the phrases from the situation cards.
- b. A month after the lesson, introduce new phrases and challenge students to demonstrate the skill process.
- c. Have students keep track of and share examples of irony and sarcasm they encounter throughout a school week.

Step 6 Generalization

- a. Ask other school personnel (e.g., general education classroom teacher, librarian) to support the skills lesson by discussing figures of speech as part of their time with students.
- b. Ask other school personnel (e.g., school secretary, principal) to engage target students with conversations that incorporate figures of speech (e.g., “Boy, it sure is raining cats and dogs, isn’t it?”).
- c. Ask students to self-report on figures of speech they discovered people using in other settings.

Step 7 Evaluation

After a period of time it is necessary to determine if the skills taught are being sustained and generalized. The following practices are used to determine long-term success of instruction.

- a. Periodically observe the students in general education settings and rate their performance according to the performance criteria listed at the beginning of the lesson.
- b. Ask general education teacher(s)/other support staff to rate students according to the performance criteria.
- c. Collect data using progress-monitoring strategies.
- d. Design individual interventions for students not benefiting from small-group interventions (i.e., students who perform the skill inadequately or fail to generalize the skill to other settings).