

British humour

Lesson description

In this lesson you will choose which British comedy programme to show on TV in your country. You will also read about the difference between British and American humour and look at vocabulary of humour and success.

Aim

Summarising, discussing and coming to a decision.

Language

Vocabulary of humour and success.

Task

The task in this lesson is for learners to choose a British comedy programme to show on TV in your country.

Materials

Handout

Photocopiable (information cards for Task)

Suggested running order

Lead-in	Students discuss things that make them laugh. Vocabulary for different types of humour.
Input	Students discuss differences between UK/USA humour and read about the British comedy 'The Office'. Answer comprehension check questions and discuss difference between British humour and their own.
Language Focus	Work on expressions from the text related to humour and success.
Task	Students read about famous UK comedy shows and choose one to adapt and show in their country.

Lead-in

- 1 Ask students to think individually about what has made them laugh recently.
- 2 In pairs, students share their responses to the previous task.
- 3 Students match comedy types with definitions. Check answers in pairs.

1 *deadpan*

3 *a mockumentary*

5 *a farce*

7 *satire*

2 *a sitcom*

4 *slapstick*

6 *dark humour*

8 *a stand-up*

4 Ask students to work in pairs and name the type of humour in each example.

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1 a mockumentary | 3 slapstick | 5 satire | 7 a stand-up |
| 2 dark humour | 4 a farce | 6 deadpan | 8 a sitcom |

Input

1 In groups, students discuss differences between British and American humour and feed back to the class.

2 Students read the article to see if it agrees with their ideas.

3 In pairs or alone, students answer the true/false questions.

- 1 F (It is no longer an economic powerhouse.)
- 2 T (It immediately hit it big.)
- 3 F (The American remake did badly. The British version wasn't aired presumably.)
- 4 F (The British boss is thoroughly dislikeable, but the American boss is just slightly pathetic and viewers feel sorry for him.)
- 5 T (It is flourishing as a result of the show.)
- 6 F (It is a miserable concrete jungle.)
- 7 T (The show is more optimistic, with slapstick humour and romance.)

4 In groups, students discuss differences between British humour and humour in their own country and feed back to the class.

Language focus

1 Students look through the article to find synonyms for 'succeed' and 'fail'. They are presented in the order in which they appear in the text. Be ready to explain the exact meaning of the words/expressions.

Succeed	Fail
<i>thrive (paragraph 1)</i>	<i>be a (complete) flop (paragraph 3)</i>
<i>be well-received (paragraph 2)</i>	<i>fold (paragraph 3)</i>
<i>hit it big (paragraph 2)</i>	<i>fall flat (paragraph 4)</i>
<i>go down a storm (paragraph 3)</i>	<i>come to nothing (paragraph 5)</i>
<i>do well (paragraph 3)</i>	<i>go down badly (paragraph 6)</i>
<i>flourishing (paragraph 6)</i>	<i>bomb (paragraph 8)</i>
<i>blossom (paragraph 7)</i>	

2 Students look at the expressions to do with humour and decide if they mean 'funny' or 'not funny'. As with the previous exercise, you need to be ready to explain the exact meaning of the expressions.

Funny:

- I find it really funny.*
- I laughed myself silly.*
- She had me in stitches.*
- I nearly died laughing.*
- He makes me crack up.*

Not funny:

- It left me cold.*
- I just don't get it.*
- It didn't even raise a snigger.*

- 3 Students use the expressions from 1 and 2 above to complete the sentences. Point out they may need to make changes, e.g. change the tense. Check in pairs.

Possible answers:

- 1 *just didn't get it / the joke*
- 2 *be well-received / go down a storm / do well*
- 3 *a flop*
- 4 *laughed myself silly / was in stitches / nearly died laughing*
- 5 *go down a storm / do well*
- 6 *bombed / went down badly*

Task

- 1 Tell the students they work for a television company and need to choose a comedy show which they can adapt to be shown in their country.

Organise them in groups of up to five students and ask them to think about what comedy programmes are currently shown on TV in their country. What type of humour do they represent? Which do they think are the most successful? Set a time limit for them to discuss with their group.

- 2 Give each student in each group a task card describing a British comedy show from the photocopiable materials. Tell them to read it, then take turns to summarise it to their group. They should decide if they think each one would appeal to an audience in their country, and why or why not. They should try to decide which one they think would be best and decide what changes would have to be made for it to be a success.
- 3 Groups present their choice to the class and try to agree on one show.

Review

Feedback on language and review learning objectives.

Extra activity

There are some nice clips from the shows discussed in the task on the internet. Try searching for Fawlty Towers 'the rat hunt begins'.