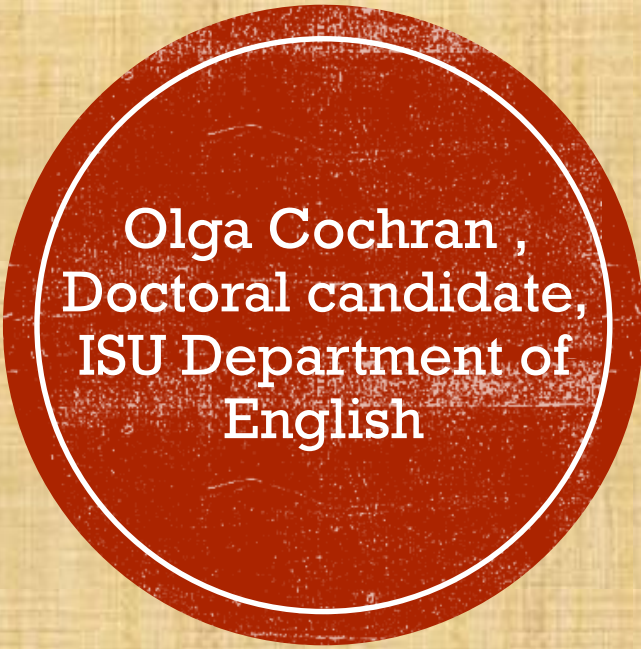


**STAND-UP COMEDY AS A TEACHING TOOL
IN THE COLLEGE
LINGUISTICS AND COMPOSITION
CLASSROOMS**



**Olga Cochran ,
Doctoral candidate,
ISU Department of
English**

WHY STAND UP COMEDY?

- Shameless self-promotion:
 - I love stand-up comedy
 - I enjoy edutaining my students
 - I agree with Oscar Wild,
“Life is too important to be taken seriously”.
 - I can handle being funny or being made fun of.

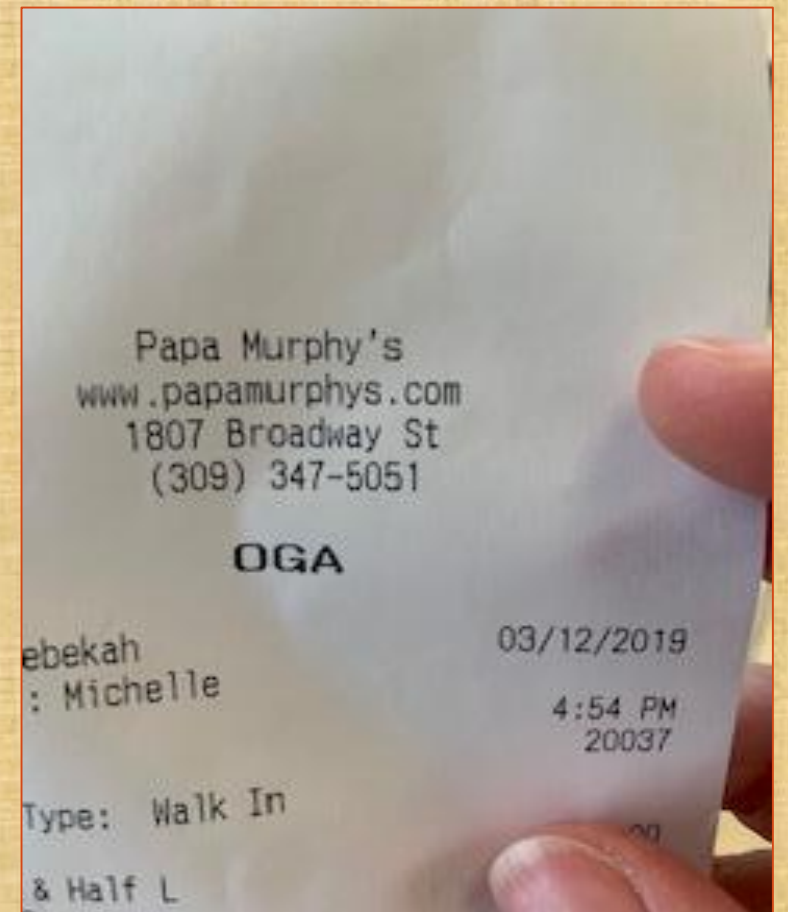


My face in goofy fake glasses.
The picture was taken at an
attic sale in Normal, IL.
I use this picture for my
syllabus so the students can put
the face with the name. The
name also has humor in it...



YOUR ENGLISH TEACHER IS WHAT???

- Every class in the beginning of the semester starts with introductions, everyone's least favorite part.
"Teach, can we just skip the ice-breakers, PLEEEEEEASE." Sure, but let me tell you something about myself first, you are going to like it.
- I am originally from Russia. "What? Our English teacher is Russian? That's funny." And this joke became popularized in one of my students' stand-up routines.
- Please call me Olya, you say it /Olia/ because so many times I was mistaken for Oglá, Oga, and a big old German lady.



OGA went to get a pizza



WHY STANP-UP COMEDY, SERIOUSLY?

- As a student I would always remember professors who were very mean or those who were funny.
- Mean ones were easy targets to be made fun of. This is our good old Release Theory hard at work.
- Funny ones were, hands down, wonderful, not always comfortable, because they could start making fun of you, so you have to be prepared to either suck it up or exercise your wit on the spot.
- *Humorous* is a trait desired of a teaching professor. Students consider “*humorous*” as one of the characteristics of an effective teacher (Delaney, Johnson, Johnson, & Treslan, *Perception of Effective Teaching in Higher Education*, 2010)
- Once I started teaching I chose to be the humorous instructor, for personal and professional reasons.

THE FUN OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM AKA PREP TIME AND RESEARCH

- Self-edutainment: I watch and listen to a lot of comedy, read and listen to books written by comedians, watch documentaries about comedians, go to comedy clubs, when I can.
- I edutain myself purposefully. I hunt for good examples that would fit into my lesson plans and learning outcomes. I have developed an obsession: when I watch a stand-up act I cannot stop thinking about how and when can I use bits of it in my teaching.

For example, while I was sick this winter, I had a luxury of binging “Marvelous Mrs. Meisel”(a story of a female comedian whose story is based on Joan River’s life). I got so sucked into the show that one day I locked the bedroom door so my kid and my dog could not disturb me. They would not have believed me that I am doing research anyway. After I was done, I figured I could teach the concepts of socio-cultural contexts in composition, the role of observation in the process of crafting a story, and the role of audience’s response.



My sassy comedians:
daughter LEAH and her buddy ELLA.
I use my daughter’s jokes and
creativity with language in my
teaching too.



EDUTAINMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION (OVERVIEW)

- Using humor in teaching Statistics (Roland Berk, 2010)
- Stand-up comedy and science
- Stand-up comedy and social science; comedian as a social observer
- Stand-up comedian uses his comic persona to bring academia closer to general public (REALLY interesting talks)
<http://www.herewearepodcast.com/>
- Stand-up comedy for standing-up, dialogism and engagement during seminars (K.McCarron,)
- Teaching with Dave Chapelle: Exploring Critical Understanding of Culture through Comedy (Particelli, 2016)



Accesible: Youtube, Netflix, Podcasts, E-books, Comedy clubs (more for an instructor). Bloomington has a comedy club and plenty of comedians you can run into in a pub. I once invited a local comedian to my classroom to talk about his creative process and his agenda as a comic.



Relatable (favorite reason for any millennial)

Topics
Language
Culture
Genres



Makes good assignments, who wouldn't want to watch a stand-up acts on Netflix as part of the research project? Great linguistic material to explain linguistic phenomena.



Provoke critical thinking (or at least I hope so 😊) and provide for a good in-class discussion.



Makes students laugh, which makes the course overall more attractive

BENEFITS OF STAND-UP COMEDY AS A TEACHING TOOL



HOW DO I DO THAT?

- **Open almost ever class with something funny I have observed, overheard, or watched that is relevant to the subject matter of the class.**

E.g.: I like talking about my dog. It is my first dog in my whole life. I ask my students, “Do you have pets?” They would talk about the pets they currently have or about the pets they have growing up. In response I tell them my story, how my childhood was siblingless and petless. (Read the story under the picture☺)

- **Assign stand-up comedy act as a writing project in my composition classrooms:**

And then I tell my students that comedians use family as material for their stand-ups pretty frequently, so you better start observing your family members and write things down.

- **My students and I watch a lot of comedy acts and documentaries about comedians to familiarize ourselves with the notion of comedic persona and what comedians do to keep the audience engaged and entertained.**
- **We use genre analysis approach to look at what we are working with and what are the affordances for us as authors.**
- <https://youtu.be/MmTVBEsPVV4> - George Carlin’s advice to aspiring comedians.
- https://youtu.be/l_btHPpVO4I?list=PLXcT8SaJ4hBatOZAxtjKxMHWuTJgAujag – Robin Williams: Stand-up comedy is great therapy.



“The fact of the matter is that I was raised by a strict single woman who happened to be a surgeon. Everything should be organized, sterilized, and rationalized. Mom, may I have a baby brother? No, the store where they sell babies is closed. Mom, may I get a pet? NO, I ALREADY HAVE YOU!”

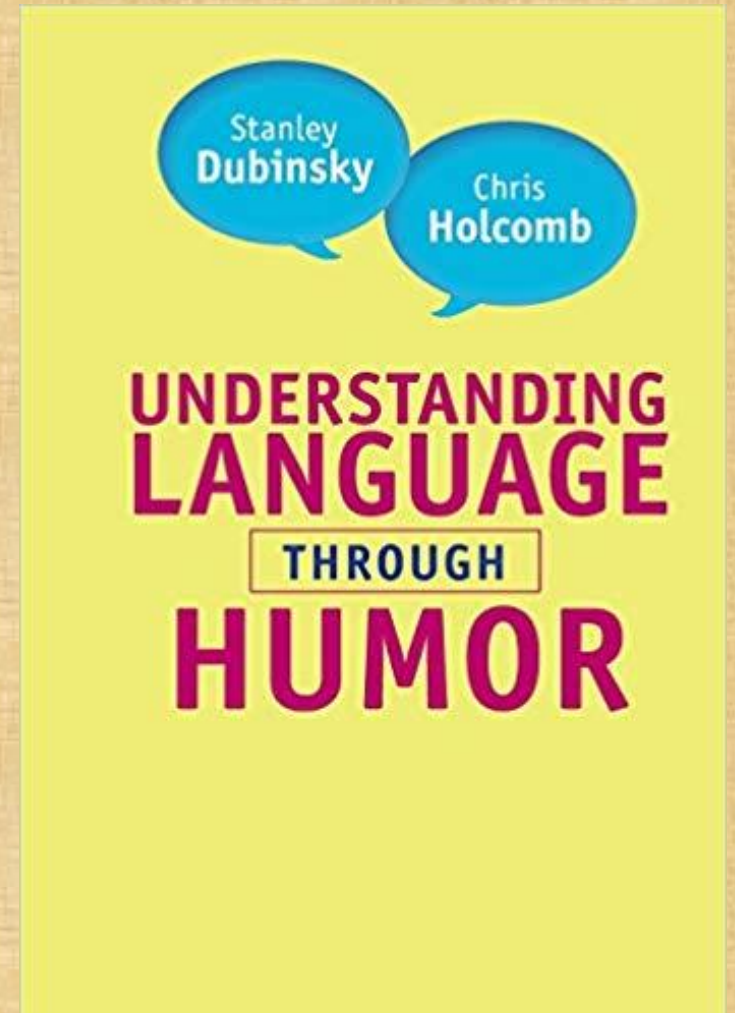


“UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE THROUGH HUMOR”

- Using Dubinsky’s “backwards method”, I collect stand-up acts which have representations on certain linguistic phenomena we are discussing in class.

For instance:

- Acts for teaching language variety and variation:
 - Elon Gold, Accents and Languages from “Chosen and Taken” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oDjrvIqeIs>
 - Karen Mills, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ti9lSTyRF5I>
- *And let me now tell you about the study I conducted testing the effects of stand-up comedy on students’ perceptions of American regional dialects.*



The text I used for teaching an introductory course to Linguistics. It inspired me to use more comedy in my classroom.



MY MOST FAVORITE COMPOSITION ASSIGNMENTS. CANNOT CLAIM THEM AS THE MOST POPULAR SINCE THEY ARE ASSIGNMENTS 😊

- **Linguistics Autobiography:**

Students are asked to tell a story about their experiences with language(s). Reflecting on how exposure and use of language shaped your perspectives and personality.

- Trevor Noah, Live at Apollo

- <https://youtu.be/vi7SeBI7z9A?list=RDvi7SeBI7z9A>

- **A Stand-Up Act** written like a script, with the bio of the comedian and the description of the venue they are performing at.



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THANK YOU!

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, ROTTEN TOMATOES!

