

# GRETA

**ELT 2003: TEACHERS DO IT IN THE  
CLASSROOM**

## **EDITORES**

SIMON ANDREWES

M<sup>ª</sup> MERCEDES GARCÍA GUERRERO

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SOFÍA SOCORRO RUIZ MOLINA



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ASOCIACIÓN DE PROFESORES DE INGLÉS DE ANDALUCÍA

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# "BRINGING HUMOUR INTO THE ENGLISH CLASS: IS IT POSSIBLE?"<sup>1</sup>

Antonio Vicente Casas Pedrosa  
Universidad de Jaén

*"After twelve years of therapy my psychiatrist said something that brought tears to my eyes.*

*He said, 'No hablo inglés'" (Medgyes, 2002: 130).*

## 1. Introduction

As can be seen, the title of this paper poses a question: is it possible to bring humour into the English class? Probably you may now be thinking of your experiences with humour as second language learners, as second language teachers or both. An answer will be provided at the very end. For the time being, just bear in mind how you reacted when you read the joke at the very beginning.

Meanwhile, it may be a good idea to start by putting the reader in the picture. This paper is partly based on a one-hour English session I prepared for the practical module in the Teaching Proficiency Course also known in Spanish as C.A.P. (*Curso de Aptitud Pedagógica*).

When teaching not only English but any subject, we consider it essential to try to place ourselves in the students' position.<sup>2</sup> After studying English for many years, I have realized that the sort of sessions most students enjoy most are those

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Jesús Manuel Nieto García (Universidad de Jaén) for his help in editing this paper and for his invaluable suggestions and comments. All remaining errors are mine.

<sup>2</sup> According to Edge (1993: 9), "Into class, they [learners] bring with them their names, their knowledge, experience, intelligence, skills, emotions, imagination, awareness, creativity, sense of humour, problems, purposes, dreams, hopes, aspirations, fears, memories, interests, blind spots, prejudices, habits, expectations, likes, dislikes, preferences, and everything else that goes with being a human being, including the ability to speak at least one language". As can be seen, Edge (1993: 20) adopts a humanistic approach. "It [humanistic ELT] is also connected with the idea that learners must be involved as whole human beings in their language learning".

- What's the difference between the Prince of Wales and a tennis ball? One is heir to the throne and the other is thrown into the air (Ross, 1998: 48).

- I wouldn't say she was pretty and I wouldn't say she was ugly – just pretty ugly (Ross, 1998: 55).

- A man and a woman are sitting at home in front of the fire. The man gets up and says, 'I'm off down the pub. Get your coat on'. 'Oh', says the woman surprised, 'are you taking me out for a drink?' 'No. I need to put the fire out' (Ross, 1998: 60).

## GRADED READERS, GRADED VIEWERS: TODAY'S SPECIAL!

M<sup>a</sup> Mercedes García Guerrero

Colegio Caja de Granada

*Am I going to use a Graded Reader this year? Is it worthwhile? Should I give it to my students as extra-material? Am I going to be willing to hear parents' complaints about extra expenses? Maybe you are familiar with some of the questions we have asked here. If you are, this reflection aloud, –not exactly an article or a chapter in a book–, can be somehow useful to help you decide about this topic.*

During my first years as a teacher, I usually included one graded-reader for every level, (it was EGB at that time) in the list of books you have to give parents in June. After several years trying to make my students get some advantages and benefits from their reading of this added *extra* material, I started to wonder if it was worth it,

1. *struggling with children*, since they did not want any extra material at all.

2. *struggling with parents* complaining, as usual, that these books were very expensive and suggesting that, since they were not compulsory in any syllabus, I was probably doing something... we could even say *illegal!*

3. *struggling with neverending catalogues* with thousand of titles. The main problem was always *choosing*, not just the title but the publishers because many of these adapted novels and plays are repeated. Most of the times you feel you have to choose one title from one particular publisher because you already have your textbook with another one, and so you think you should be fair by recommending the other publisher's graded reader. We are talking about establishing a balance among publishers in your selection, but this fact is worth a second thought. Most of the *classics* are, as we have said before, repeated in every catalogue, *Frankenstein*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *Dracula*, any of Shakespeare's published, *Huckleberry Finn*...as well as other fiction readers, but the truth is that some of them are rather better than others depending on every publisher's style, so you should not choose on the base of

*I have the "official" textbook from A, some graded readers from B, dictionaries from C and an extra-grammar resource pack from D.*

It is very diplomatic, but it is not the most advisable thing to do.