

### **Figurative Language in Naturalistic Conversation**

Instructor	Mindy Medrana
Class/Level	Advanced English language learners in the 18-22 adult age range. Learners are preparing for careers in an English-speaking country.
Time	~60 minutes
Topic	Idioms and Figurative Language
Skill(s) in Focus	Writing – roleplay scenarios/scripts using figurative language Speaking – using idioms in naturalistic conversation with peers
Goal(s)	Students will be able to follow and engage in conversation with native English speakers by learning how to identify, decipher, and use idioms. Students will also be able to recognize other types of figurative language such as metaphors.
Objectives	By the end of the lesson students will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Match the type of figurative language to examples provided.</li><li>2. Write their own example of a figurative phrase commonly used in their home culture.</li><li>3. Write their own roleplay script using at least 2 examples of figurative language in naturalistic conversation.</li></ol>
Materials	Figurative vs. Literal Language (Appendix A) Figurative vs. Literal Language Answer Sheet (Appendix B) Figurative Language Handout (Appendix C)

## **Class Description**

### **Warm Up (5 minutes)**

*Participation Framework: Pairs*

*Objective #1*

1. T hands out a worksheet (see Appendix A) to each S and asks Ss to pair up.
2. T explains to the class that T will read each phrase out loud to the class and ask Ss to determine together whether the phrase is literal or figurative. Ss write next to the phrase “L” if they think it is literal and “F” if it is figurative.

### **Figurative Language (25 minutes)**

*Participation Framework: Whole class*

*Objective #1*

1. T gives each S a handout (Appendix C) and explains the distinction between figurative language and literal language and instructs how to identify figurative language in a novel text or conversation.
2. Reviewing each of the phrases from the warm up activity, T asks for S volunteers to share their answer (L or F) and why they think their answer is correct.
3. T either confirms or explains the correct answer, restating why each phrase is either literal or figurative (see Appendix B). When discussing figurative phrases, T introduces the different categories of figurative language outlined on the handout, namely idioms, metaphors, onomatopoeia, alliteration, hyperbole, personification, and oxymorons as the relevant examples are discussed. For instance, for the first phrase (“Give ... medicine”; Appendix A/B) T will explain why the phrase is figurative and also how it fits into a subcategory of figurative language called idioms.
4. T explains the context in which each figurative phrase is commonly used and at each idiom example, asks Ss to discuss out loud with the class what they think the idioms mean.
5. T provides necessary feedback to confirm or redirect Ss in their idiom translations.

### **Culture in Figurative Language (10 minutes)**

*Participation Framework: Individual*

*Objective #2*

1. T asks Ss to translate 1 example of a figurative phrase used in their home culture into English. Ss should also write down their definitions, in what context they can be used, and what subcategory of figurative language they would be classified under.
2. Ss are allowed to use their devices to find an example and/or aid their translation if needed.
3. After allowing ~5 minutes of quiet individual work time, Ss are asked to share their examples before submitting their papers to T.

**Original Roleplay (15 minutes)**

*Participation Framework: Pairs*

*Objective #3*

1. T instructs Ss to work with their partner to write 2 scripts on their own piece of paper. Each script must set up the context in which at least 2 learned figurative phrases (from Appendix A) are used in naturalistic conversation. Each script should integrate different learned figurative phrases. Scenarios must be realistic but creativity is encouraged.
2. T walks around classroom providing guidance and feedback when necessary.

**Wrap-Up (5 minutes)**

*Participation Framework: Pairs/Whole class*

*Objective #3*

1. Ss are asked to volunteer performing 1 of their scripts in front of the whole class.
2. After a few original roleplay scenarios are shared, T collects all scripts to be reviewed and assessed after class.
3. T reflects aloud with the class the skills they practiced and the materials they learned, focusing on the positive aspects and achievements of the class before dismissing.

## Appendix A: Figurative vs. Literal Language

F = Figurative; L = Literal

\*Figurative phrases will have an additional description of their subcategory

\_\_\_ Give someone a taste of their own  
medicine

\_\_\_ Virtual reality

\_\_\_ Beat a punching bag

\_\_\_ How are you

\_\_\_ The fire sizzled and cracked

\_\_\_ Could you give me some advice

\_\_\_ Black sheep of the family

\_\_\_ Nice to meet you

\_\_\_ Excuse me

\_\_\_ Cut you some slack

\_\_\_ Cost an arm and a leg

\_\_\_ What do you mean

\_\_\_ Take pill twice daily

\_\_\_ My fault

\_\_\_ The wind howled

\_\_\_ Fireworks exploded with a boom

\_\_\_ That cookie is calling my name

\_\_\_ Drowning in work

\_\_\_ Thank you

\_\_\_ Humble house

\_\_\_ Picture perfect

\_\_\_ Please repeat that

\_\_\_ Storm off

\_\_\_ The deafening silence stunned him

## Appendix B: Figurative vs. Literal Language Answer Sheet

F = Figurative; L = Literal

\*Figurative phrases will have an additional description of their subcategory

F Give someone a taste of their own  
medicine

Idiom

F Virtual reality  
Oxymoron

L Beat a punching bag

L How are you

F The fire sizzled and cracked –  
Onomatopoeia

L Could you give me some advice

F Black sheep of the family  
Metaphor, Idiom

L Nice to meet you

L Excuse me

F Cut you some slack  
Idiom

F Cost an arm and a leg  
Hyperbole, Idiom

L What do you mean

L Take pill twice daily

L My fault

F The wind howled  
Personification

F Fireworks exploded with a boom  
Onomatopoeia

F That cookie is calling my name  
Personification

F Drowning in work  
Hyperbole, Idiom

L Thank you

F Humble house  
Alliteration

F Picture perfect  
Alliteration

L Please repeat that

F Storm off  
Metaphor

F The deafening silence stunned him  
Oxymoron

## Appendix C

### Figurative Language Handout

**Figurative Language** is the use of words or phrases with an indirect meaning to effectively express complex ideas or emotions.

**Literal Language** uses words to mean exactly what they describe.

**Alliteration** – the repetition of sounds in closely connected words

EXAMPLE: Peter piper picked some pickles

**Hyperbole** – an over-exaggeration used to emphasize a point

EXAMPLE: *everything* went wrong

**Idiom** – a common expression that has gained cultural significance and is used non-literally

EXAMPLE: it's raining cats and dogs

**Metaphor** – a comparison of two things without using “like” or “as”

EXAMPLE: time is money

**Onomatopoeia** – the use of words that mimic the way something sounds

EXAMPLE: little feet pitter pattered on the floor

**Oxymoron** – contrasting ideas being used to describe an event or thing

EXAMPLE: the coffee was awfully good

**Personification** – describing an inanimate object as if it were a person

EXAMPLE: my heart sang