Lesson plan: *Indirect communication in English through conversational implicature*

**Time:** 80 minutes

**Intended audience:** High-proficiency adult learners of English as a foreign language.

**Goal (communicative):** The communicative goal is to improve students' ability to understand and appropriately use indirect and non-literal communicative strategies in English, and to understand English-language humor.

**Goal (linguistic):** To draw students' attention to the types of conversational implicature that appear in English and when they are used.

**Activities:**

- Collaborative brainstorming warm-up (5 minutes)
- Lecture & discussion (20 minutes)
- Discussion (10 minutes)
- Examining authentic texts in small groups & discussing (15 minutes)
- Small-group presentation & discussion (30 minutes)
Outline:

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| Collaborative brainstorming          | 5 minutes| Write on board:                               | - Ask the class: What is B saying?  
- How do we know that B is saying this? (Answer: because we assume that B's statement is relevant.)  
- What are some other ways B could say he doesn't want to go to the movie?  
- Conclusion: Native speakers often communicate by implying, rather than saying. |
| warm-up                              |         |                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Lecture and discussion               | 20 minutes| 1 example of each type of implicature in natural conversation, focusing on those implicatures identified as difficult by Bouton (1994):  
Quantity: indirect criticism  
Quality: ironic speech  
Relation: vacuous responses ("Is the Pope Catholic?")  
Manner: sequence implicatures  
*Handout: Grice's maxims* | - Define "implicature" and the Cooperative Principle. (Notion: "implicature depends on CONTEXT and WORLD KNOWLEDGE.")  
- Introduce the idea that advanced ESL learners sometimes have trouble with English language implicatures.  
- Introduce the examples described and invite students to analyze it (where does the implicature come from?) and suggest other examples.  
- summarize students' observations in a list on the board.  
- *Then, give students a handout with examples.* |
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<tr>
<th>Discussion</th>
<th>10 minutes</th>
<th>Guide students in discussing: <em>why</em> might we choose to implicate something instead of saying it?</th>
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|                            |            | Anticipated responses: - To be funny  
|                            |            | - To be polite  
|                            |            | - To save time  |

| Examining authentic texts in small groups & discussing | 15 minutes | *Comic section from a newspaper*  
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<td>Introduce: Now you're going to practice finding implicatures 'in the wild', and then produce some of your own.</td>
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<td>One place implicatures often appear is in humor. Ask students to spend 8-10 minutes in small groups identifying as many examples of implicature as possible. Then have each group describe 1-2 examples they found, explain why they count as implicature, and explain how this contributes to the humor.</td>
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| Small group presentation | 30 minutes | In small groups, have students come up with a short dialogue with at least two examples of implicature. Handout and comics are a resource. (10-15 minutes)  
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<td>Then have them perform it for the class (they can remain sitting, this is low-key) and ask the class to identify the implicatures. (15-20m)</td>
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