

EXAMEN TERMINAL D'ANGLAIS - EPREUVE ORALE – NIVEAU 3 - MAI 2024 – MME BOULIN

DATE : 27 MAI	HEURE DE PREPARATION :	HEURE DE PASSAGE :
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PREPARATION – 1 HOUR

1) Summary: Introduce the text (type, author, source, date and context, tone) and explain in your own words the main ideas presented in this text.

2) Commentary: Propose a structured and coherent answer to the following subject (use linkers):

"Humor can sometimes turn very, very ugly."

Can negative reactions to humour sometimes be justified? Explain why/why not with specific arguments and pertinent examples.

(Recommendation: prepare a detailed outline (= un plan détaillé) as this will help you make an effective presentation.)

ORAL EXAM – 15 MINUTES

1) Present your summary and commentary **without** reading your notes (10 mn).

2) Answer the questions of the examiner about the text or your presentation (5 mn).

Study: A bad joke could be dangerous

Aug. 22, 2008. Source: *The Associated Press*. By Nicholas K. Geranios

Research by a Washington State University linguist found that people who tell bad jokes often endure an astonishing outpouring of hostility from the listeners.

"These were basically attacks intended to result in the social exclusion or humiliation of the speaker, punctuated on occasion with profanity, a nasty glare or even a solid punch to the arm," said researcher Nancy Bell.

We're not talking about jokes that contain offensive material, or the type of insults unleashed by former "Seinfeld" star Michael Richards. The joke that Bell used in her research was:

"What did the big chimney say to the little chimney?

"Nothing, chimneys can't talk."

The responses to this childish riddle included insults, glares, silence or even blows.

"The predominant verbal reaction to failed humor in our study was oriented exclusively toward attacking the speaker," Bell said.

Talk about a tough crowd. There are several reasons for the strong responses. First, such canned¹ humor often disrupts the natural flow of conversation. And jokes that fail to deliver humor are a violation of a social contract, so punishing the teller can discourage similar behavior in the future.

Finally, a stupid joke insults the listener by suggesting that he or she might actually find it funny, Bell said. "Being selected as an appropriate audience for a stupid joke suggests that there is something amiss with the hearer's sense of humor," Bell said.

Bell wrote her doctoral dissertation at Penn on the use of humor by people for whom English is the second language (a source of much comedy in pop culture). Since then she has focused on failed humor because little research has been done.

Bell's findings would come as no surprise to most professional comedians, who know that humor can sometimes turn very, very ugly. The Internet contains clips of comedians Pauly Shore and Jim Jeffries being attacked on-stage by listeners. Even more terrifying is comedian-on-comedian violence, such as last year's brawl in which Jon Lovitz banged Andy Dick's head into a bar.

Bell, a tall, bubbly woman with a sharp wit, fortunately was not violently attacked during her research, despite the quality of the joke she chose from among thousands of bad jokes available on-line.

She recruited her students — "my minions" — to slip the joke into normal conversations and then record the results. "I told them, 'just go out and tell bad jokes, be a hero in the field,'" Bell said.

The chimney joke made it into 207 conversations. An astonishing 44 percent of the reactions were classified as "impolite," intended to deeply embarrass the joke teller. The toughest responses came from people who knew the joke teller well, she found.

"The younger you are and the closer you are in age to your failed humorist, the more likely you are to attack," Bell said. And, no surprise, children were especially hostile to failed humor by their parents.

Bell had her own painful exposure to failed humor when she lived in France, and found that many of her witticisms did not translate well into her second language.

¹Canned = prepared, not natural