Bringing humour into the English classroom with ‘the IT Crowd’

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Duration: approximately 2 hours

Topics tackled in this lesson:
Safety at work
Numbers
Effective email writing (formal/informal)

Lesson plan:

A. Introductory PowerPoint slide show: “Fire!”
   • What should you do in case of a fire?
   • Emergency telephone numbers
   • What are the main parts of a fire extinguisher?
   • What are the various types of fire extinguishers?
   • How should you use a fire extinguisher?
   • The P.A.S.S. method

B. 2 extracts from the British TV sitcom 'The IT Crowd'

Context: The office is set on fire because of Moss’s negligence in using the soldering iron; however, he cannot remember the new number used to call the emergency services (01189998819991197253). Failing that, Moss sends an email to the fire brigade.

C. Follow up: oral work

   • Student A: You are the company safety officer. Be ready to make a 5 minute presentation to a group of employees about the appropriate use of fire extinguishers.

   • Student B: You are attending a presentation in your company about the appropriate use of fire extinguishers. Prepare some questions to ask the safety officer.
Has this... ever happened to you?

Newsreader: From today, dialling 999 won't get you the emergency services. And that's not the only thing that's changing. Nicer ambulances, faster response times and better-looking drivers mean they're not just "the" emergency services - they're "your" emergency services. So, remember the new number:
[singing number] 0118 999 881 999 119 725... 3

Old lady: Hello? I've had a bit of a tumble...

Moss: Well that's easy to remember!
0118 999 881 999 119 725......3!
Roy: I don't know why they just couldn't keep it as it was!
How hard is it to remember 911?
Moss: You mean 999...
Roy: I mean 999!
Moss: That's the American one!
Roy: Yeah!
Moss: You berk!
Moss:
Oh four! I mean five! I mean fire!
Now let's see what we have here. [bends over to read fire extinguisher]
"Stand upright." [stands upright]
Now, I can't read it... Oh, not me! I am a giddy-goat! Okay.
"Remove safety clip."
- Don't look at my feet!
- Fire?
- Fire... No...?
"Aim nozzle at base of fire."
Oh, that is typical!
Why has it done that? [Made in Britain]
I'll just put this over here, with the rest...of the fire.
011 53... No. 011 huh...0118 999......3!
Hello? Is this the emergency services?
Then which country am I speaking to?
Hello? Hello?
I know! Yep.
Okay.
"Subject: ...fire!
Dear Sir, stroke, Madam.
I'm writing to inform you of a fire which has broken out at the premises of..."
No. That's too formal.
[deletes text, starts again]
"Dear Sir, stroke, Madam. Fire, exclamation mark. Fire, exclamation mark.
Help me, exclamation mark.123, Carendon road.
Looking forward to hearing from you.
All the best,
Maurice Moss."
Find a title for this scene:

Complete the following:
__________ this... ever _________________ to you?
______ today, _________________ won't get you the ________________________________.
And ________________________ that's changing.
_________________ ambulances, _____________ response times, and ___________
___________________ drivers mean they're not just ______ emergency services, they're
______ emergency services.

What is the new number?
What is Moss’s reaction to the change?
Roy: I don't know why they just couldn't ____________________________!
How ________ is it to remember _____?
Moss: You mean ______...  
Roy: I mean _____!
Moss: That's the ____________________ one!
Roy: Yeah!

Find a title for this scene:

Complete the following:
__________ this... ever _________________ to you?
______ today, _________________ won't get you the ________________________________.
And ________________________ that's changing.
_________________ ambulances, _____________ response times, and ___________
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______ emergency services.

What is the new number?
What is Moss’s reaction to the change?
Roy: I don't know why they just couldn't ____________________________!
How ________ is it to remember _____?
Moss: You mean ______...  
Roy: I mean _____!
Moss: That's the ____________________ one!
Roy: Yeah!
Find a title for this scene:

Moss: Oh _____! I mean _____! I mean _____!

What are the instructions on the fire extinguisher?

What happens to the fire extinguisher?

Why has it done that?

Where does Moss put the fire extinguisher?

What does he do next?

“Hello? Is this the _______________________________?
Then __________________________ am I speaking to?”

What does he decide to do after that?

Write the beginning of his message down:

Why does he delete the text and start again?

What’s the final version of his message?