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Through the Looking Glass

Below are excerpts from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass* that might be useful for language teaching, even if just as comic relief here and there.

Alice didn't like being criticised, so she began asking questions. 'Aren't you sometimes frightened at being planted out here, with nobody to take care of you?'

'There's the tree in the middle,' said the Rose: 'what else is it good for?'

'But what could it do, if any danger came?' Alice asked.

'It says "Bough-wough!"' cried a Daisy: 'that's why its branches are called boughs!'

'How is it you can all talk so nicely?' Alice said, hoping to get it into a better temper by a compliment. 'I've been in many gardens before, but none of the flowers could talk.'

'Put your hand down, and feel the ground,' said the Tiger-lily. 'Then you'll know why.'

Alice did so. 'It's very hard,' she said, 'but I don't see what that has to do with it.'

'In most gardens,' the Tiger-lily said, 'they make the beds too soft--so that the flowers are always asleep.'

'And then there's the Butterfly,' Alice went on, after she had taken a good look at the insect with its head on fire, and had thought to herself, 'I wonder if that's the reason insects are so fond of flying into candles--because they want to turn into Snap-dragon-flies!'

'Crawling at your feet,' said the Gnat (Alice drew her feet back in some alarm), 'you may observe a Bread-and-Butterfly. Its wings are thin slices of Bread-and-butter, its body is a crust,

and its head is a lump of sugar.'

'And what does IT live on?'

'Weak tea with cream in it.'

'I mean, what IS an un-birthday present?'

'A present given when it isn't your birthday, of course.'

Alice considered a little. 'I like birthday presents best,' she said at last.

'You don't know what you're talking about!' cried Humpty Dumpty. 'How many days are there in a year?'

'Three hundred and sixty-five,' said Alice.

'And how many birthdays have you?'

'One.'

'And if you take one from three hundred and sixty-five, what remains?'

'Three hundred and sixty-four, of course.'

Humpty Dumpty looked doubtful. 'I'd rather see that done on paper,' he said.

Alice couldn't help smiling as she took out her memorandum-book, and worked the sum for him:

365

1

—

364

—

Humpty Dumpty took the book, and looked at it carefully. 'That

seems to be done right--' he began.

'You're holding it upside down!' Alice interrupted.

'To be sure I was!' Humpty Dumpty said gaily, as she turned it round for him. 'I thought it looked a little queer. As I was saying, that SEEMS to be done right--though I haven't time to look it over thoroughly just now--and that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents--'

'Certainly,' said Alice.

'And only ONE for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!'

'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't--till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"'

'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean--neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master--that's all.'

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. 'They've a temper, some of them--particularly verbs, they're the proudest--adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs--however, I can manage the whole lot of them! Impenetrability! That's what I say!'

'Would you tell me, please,' said Alice 'what that means?'

'Now you talk like a reasonable child,' said Humpty Dumpty,

looking very much pleased. 'I meant by "impenetrability" that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life.'

'That's a great deal to make one word mean,' Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra.'

'Oh!' said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

'Ah, you should see 'em come round me of a Saturday night,' Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side: 'for to get their wages, you know.'

(Alice didn't venture to ask what he paid them with; and so you see I can't tell YOU.)

'You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,' said Alice. 'Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called "Jabberwocky"?''

'Let's hear it,' said Humpty Dumpty. 'I can explain all the poems that were ever invented--and a good many that haven't been invented just yet.'

This sounded very hopeful, so Alice repeated the first verse:

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

'That's enough to begin with,' Humpty Dumpty interrupted: 'there are plenty of hard words there. "BRILLIG" means four o'clock in the afternoon--the time when you begin BROILING things for dinner.'

'That'll do very well,' said Alice: 'and "SLITHY"?''

'Well, "SLITHY" means "lithe and slimy." "Lithe" is the same

as "active." You see it's like a portmanteau--there are two meanings packed up into one word.'

'I see it now,' Alice remarked thoughtfully: 'and what are "TOVES"?''

'Well, "TOVES" are something like badgers--they're something like lizards--and they're something like corkscrews.'

'They must be very curious looking creatures.'

'They are that,' said Humpty Dumpty: 'also they make their nests under sun-dials--also they live on cheese.'

'And what's the "GYRE" and to "GIMBLE"?''

'To "GYRE" is to go round and round like a gyroscope. To "GIMBLE" is to make holes like a gimlet.'

'And "THE WABE" is the grass-plot round a sun-dial, I suppose?' said Alice, surprised at her own ingenuity.

'Of course it is. It's called "WABE," you know, because it goes a long way before it, and a long way behind it--'

'And a long way beyond it on each side,' Alice added.

'Exactly so. Well, then, "MIMSY" is "flimsy and miserable" (there's another portmanteau for you). And a "BOROGOVE" is a thin shabby-looking bird with its feathers sticking out all round--something like a live mop.'

'And then "MOME RATHS"?' said Alice. 'I'm afraid I'm giving you a great deal of trouble.'

'Well, a "RATH" is a sort of green pig: but "MOME" I'm not certain about. I think it's short for "from home"--meaning that they'd lost their way, you know.'

'And what does "OUTGRABE" mean?'

'Well, "OUTGRABING" is something between bellowing and whistling, with a kind of sneeze in the middle: however, you'll hear it done, maybe--down in the wood yonder--and when you've

once heard it you'll be QUITE content. Who's been repeating all that hard stuff to you?'

'I read it in a book,' said Alice. 'But I had some poetry repeated to me, much easier than that, by--Tweedledee, I think it was.'

Alice was glad to see that it revived him a good deal. 'There's nothing like eating hay when you're faint,' he remarked to her, as he munched away.

'I should think throwing cold water over you would be better,' Alice suggested: 'or some sal-volatile.'

'I didn't say there was nothing BETTER,' the King replied. 'I said there was nothing LIKE it.' Which Alice did not venture to deny.

Nimboran (Papua New Guinea)

ngeduo -man -se -d -am

draw 1.du.incl. 7loc fut. incl.

'You and I will draw from here to there'

- 4 tenses (future, present, recent past, distant past)
- agreement with subject and object
- distinguishes 14 person/number combinations (3 numbers (singular, dual, plural), 4 singular persons, 5 plural)
- 15 locative suffixes (above, below, there, from there to here...)
- 2 aspects (repeated, not repeated)

$4 \times 14 \times 14 \times 15 \times 2 = 23,520$ forms for a transitive verb

$4 + 14 + 14 + 15 + 2 = 49$ (ish) suffixes

bound vs. free

English Tagalog

big banana-**s mga** malalaking saging

PL big banana

'big bananas'

English Passamaquoddy
my **friend** n- **itap** (*itap)
my friend

lexicon contains **morphemes**, with information on:

- sound
- meaning
- bound vs. free
- prefix vs. suffix
- what kind of morpheme they can attach to
- what kind of category they create

In fact, sometimes the information about what a morpheme can attach to isn't just information about categories:

sincere -ity
chaste -ity
scarce -ity
curious -ity
deep -th
wide -th
warm -th

And there can be idiosyncratic information about what happens when the morphemes combine, too:

electri[k]-al

electri[s]-ity

hum humm-ed

leap [lep]-t

go [wen]-t

sing sang

• **-i[k]** and **-i[s]**,

leap and **[lep]**

-[d] and **-[t]**

are **allomorphs**; different forms that a single morpheme takes in combination with other morphemes.

Word structure

What does *-ment* attach to? What's the resulting category?
government, treatment...

***bodyment**, **powerment**...

How about *em*-?

embody, **empower**...

So why is there this contrast?

***bodyment**, **powerment**...

embodiment, **empowerment**...

N

+

V Aff

+ *ment*

Aff N

em power

- *em*: 'sister' is an N, 'mother' is a V
- *ment*: 'sister' is a V, 'mother' is an N
- industrialization
- re-industrialization
- unlockable

A A

+

V Aff Aff A

+ *able* *un* +

Aff V V Aff

un lock lock able

'able to be unlocked' 'impossible to lock'

morphemes:

- *-able*: takes a V, yields an A meaning 'possible to V' (*readable, understandable*)
- *un-#1*: takes a V, yields a V meaning 'reverse the effects of V' (*untie, unwrap*)
- *un-#2*: takes an A, yields an A meaning 'not A' (*unlikely, unhappy*)
- *lock*: here, a V (though there is also an N 'lock'. Is one of these derived from the other, via an unpronounced affix?)