

THE SEARCH FOR IRONY: A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE LYRICS OF IRONIC BY ALANIS MORISSETTE

Andrew Boon
bromleycross@hotmail.com

Abstract

This article provides a textual analysis of the lyrics of “Ironic” by Alanis Morissette (Morissette, 1995) to determine how a reader utilizes the linguistic devices within the lyrics while activating and employing schemata to make inferences and achieve a coherent understanding of the text-as-presented. It examines the relationship between cohesion and coherence in each section of “Ironic” and includes think-aloud data collected from groups of students who were asked to read and process the song lyrics and discuss the ‘irony’ in them. Findings from both the author’s analysis and student data suggest that the irony in “Ironic” is located in the reader and not in the text itself. The article concludes by linking the role of schema theory to implications for reading instruction and comprehension.

Introduction

A written text is the culmination of a process that begins with the reader’s initial contact with the words on the page. The reader recognizes the words as known language and deals with this incoming data by “anticipating and predicting as (he or she) seeks order and significance in sensory input” (Goodman, 1988, p. 16). The reader is involved in two simultaneous levels of processing. At the level of bottom-up processing, predictions are generated by the reader’s interaction with the ‘text-as-presented’; the words, grammar and rhetorical organization of a particular text. This interaction sets up cohesive relations which serve as signals to how the reader should read the text. At the level of top-down processing, the reader attempts to instantiate relevant schematic slots; mental constructions of the reader’s previous experience or background knowledge of the world which enable him or her to fill in the gaps left implicit in the text-as-presented (Anderson and Pearson, 1988; Ajideh, 2003). In this process, the reader generates predictions and checks for verification with the ‘text-as-presented’, making necessary corrections to modify inconsistencies with his or her interpretation. Carrell and Eisterhold state: “every input is mapped against existing schemata and all aspects of this schemata must be compatible with the input information” (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1988, p. 76). A successful reader may terminate the process when he or she has made sufficient inferences to construct and impose a final coherent interpretation on to that which can now be termed a “text”.

This article provides a textual analysis of the lyrics of “Ironic” by Alanis Morissette (Morissette, 1995) to determine how a reader may utilize the linguistic devices within the lyrics while activating and employing schemata to make inferences and achieve a coherent understanding of the ‘text-as-presented’. It examines the relationship between cohesion and coherence in each section of the song lyrics and includes student voices within the analysis to provide evidence for schemata and illustrations of the reading process in action. The

argument advanced is that the irony in “Ironic” is located in the reader and not in the text itself. Finally, the role of schema theory is linked to implications for reading instruction and comprehension in the language classroom.

Research Procedure

In order “to understand how and why the text means what it does to the reader” (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 328), it is important to observe readers in the process of reading. I conducted and recorded four lessons at a private English language school in Japan with High-Intermediate to Advanced level Japanese students of various ages and backgrounds (Appendix 1) to determine how they would go about processing “Ironic”. Casanave (1988, p. 289) states: “the difficulty for teachers... is that their students’ problems, judgments, and decisions are invisible - they take place inside the black box”. The aim, therefore, was to uncover some of these invisible processes to discover how students established cohesive ties and instantiated relevant or irrelevant schemata to facilitate comprehension. By using think-aloud techniques whereby students verbalize their thoughts during the reading process (Casanave, 1988; Barnett, 1989; Barnhardt, 1997) and specific comprehension questions to encourage student reflection and prediction (Casanave, 1988), I was able to collect data and compare the results with my own analysis of “Ironic”.

Textual Analysis of “Ironic”

“Ironic” - Lyrics by Alanis Morissette:

Verse 1:

- 1] An old man turned ninety-eight,
- 2] He won the lottery and died the next day,
- 3] It’s a black fly in your Chardonnay,
- 4] It’s a death row pardon two minutes too late,
- 5] And isn’t it ironic....dontcha think?

Chorus 1:

- 6] It’s like rain on your wedding day,
- 7] It’s a free ride when you’ve already paid,
- 8] It’s the good advice that you just didn’t take,
- 9] Who would’ve thought.....it figures.

Verse 2:

- 10] Mr. Play It Safe was afraid to fly,
- 11] He packed his suitcase and kissed his kids goodbye,
- 12] He waited his whole damn life to take that flight,
- 13] And as the plane crashed down he thought; “Well isn’t this nice...”,
- 14] And isn’t it ironic...dontcha think?

Chorus 2:

- 15] It’s like rain on your wedding day,

- 16] It's a free ride when you've already paid,
 17] It's the good advice that you just didn't take,
 18] Who would've thought.....it figures.

Break:

- 19] Well life has a funny way of sneaking up on you,
 20] When you think everything's okay and everything's going right,
 21] And life has a funny way of helping you out,
 22] When you think everything's gone wrong and everything blows up in your face.

Verse 3:

- 23] A traffic jam when you're already late,
 24] A no-smoking sign on your cigarette break,
 25] It's like ten thousand spoons when all you need is a knife
 26] It's meeting the man of my dreams and then meeting his beautiful wife.
 27] And isn't it ironic...dontcha think?
 28] A little too ironic.....and yeah I really do think...

Chorus 3:

- 29] It's like rain on your wedding day,
 30] It's a free ride when you've already paid,
 31] It's the good advice that you just didn't take,
 32] Who would've thought.....it figures.

Break Reprise:

- 33] Life has a funny way of sneaking up on you.
 34] Life has a funny, funny way of helping you out, helping you out.

(Morissette, 1995)

The Title "Ironic"

Johnson (1982, pg.512) states "recognizing a text is about a specific topic seems to make possible the processing of cohesive elements or semantic continuity in the text". In this respect, the title "Ironic" enables the cohesive relationships within the text to become more explicit for the reader. It sets up the principal lexical link from which the reader refers back to throughout the reading process. At the level of the text, the lexical item "Ironic" is referred to its semantic meaning; "expressing irony" (Quirk, 1987, p. 558) and "irony" defined as:

1: use of words which are clearly opposite to one's meaning in order to be amusing or to show annoyance.

2: a course of events or a condition which has the opposite result from what is expected (Quirk, 1987, p. 558).

The title also provides the best directions for the reader as to how the text should be read by acting as a constraint on potential interpretations or schemata instantiation. Carrell

and Eisterhold (1988) categorize two types of schemata. Content schemata is concerned with the reader's background knowledge of the specific content area whereas formal schemata is concerned with the reader's knowledge and expectations of the structure of a text. The title triggers a content schematic slot regarding the reader's particular experiences of irony. The reader begins to make inferences about the content of the lyrics. These inferences are instances of slot instantiation which can be checked against the text-presented knowledge. In the "Ironic" lessons, before assigning the task of reading the lyrics, the teacher wrote the title of the song on the whiteboard and asked students:

Teacher: *From the title, what do you think the song is about?*

Students were able to predict that:

Student 6: *The song maybe sad*

and that the irony may be associated with the particular writer's own experiences:

Student 4: *Why does the singer feel ironic.....I want to know*

During the reading process, the reader also instantiates a formal schematic 'titles' slot. The reader knows that lyrics have a title and a title usually refers to the general content of the lyrics. Thus, the teacher began the "Ironic" lessons by asking the students:

Teacher: *Why does a song have a title?*

Students were able to utilize their prior knowledge of song titles to answer:

Student 7: *It is a kind of theme*

Student 1: *To let people know the meaning*

Verse 1

The cohesive properties in a text express continuity that exists between the different parts (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). In verse 1, lines 1 and 2 are linked by a cohesive tie of personal reference. "He" anaphorically refers to the "old man." The conjunctive item "and" marks a relationship of addition to the first clause of line two. Nominal ellipsis occurs in the second clause, "and....died." The reader must refer back to the "old man" to retrieve the subject of the second clause. Thus, the reader is guided through the process of establishing the "old man" as the winner of "the lottery".

In lines 1 and 2, there are no distinct examples of lexical cohesion. Lexical items can occur in collocation with one another by regular occurrence or association in language. However, the linking of lexical relations may also occur within the reader's instantiation of schemata. As Brown and Yule (1983, p. 198) argue: "the source of formal cohesion is, in a sense, outside the text and should not be sought in the words-on-the-page". The reader expects meaning to be contained within the 'text-as-presented' and actively seeks to establish the necessary connections between words supplying the information necessary to generate meanings and interpretations for him or her. In this respect, lexical cohesion is

created by the text's coherence as an effect of the reader's particular interpretation of that text. In line 1, the reader may instantiate an 'ages' schematic slot to process information about the "old man." This creates a lexical link between "old" and "ninety-eight" which is coherent as it complies with the reader's knowledge of the world. In the "Ironic" lessons, for example, whilst discussing her thoughts about verse 1 with her partner, one student stated:

Student 8: *So he got REALLY old*

The term "turned" not only generates a 'birthday celebration' slot for the reader but also provides a time reference that connects with "the next day." The reader may infer that the events are causal and therefore the turning of an age, lottery win and death occur in close proximity to one another. This builds the ironic climax.

The definite article in "the lottery" has exophoric reference to guide the reader to a familiar world outside the text and provides evidence of reader-generated schemata. The reader does not ask "Which lottery?" but retrieves the reference of "the lottery" from his or her knowledge of the universal existence of lotteries. The reader may instantiate a 'lottery' slot containing ideas of; jackpots, dreams, spending, winning, being happy and so on. The 'lottery' slot provides a contrast with the instantiation of a 'death' slot (sadness, loss, unfortunate and somewhat unexpected event). As one student expressed:

Student 4: *The story is ironic*

Teacher: *Why is it ironic?*

Student 4: *Because he got big money - maybe his future and happiness start at that time but the next day he lost all of that because he died*

The additional information of the "old man" winning a jackpot is provided by the reader to make sense of the situation as "ironic" and therefore links with his or her previous expectations from the title-generated schemata. The reader uses his or her background knowledge of "old", "win", "the lottery" and "died" to create lexical links to process the 'text-as-presented' and locate the irony.

In line 3, "It" may be an anaphoric reference to the title "Ironic" however the reader must supply an additional term; "An Ironic situation is..." or change the referent to "Irony is...". In the "Ironic" lessons, the teacher asked:

Teacher: *In lines 3 and 4, what is "It"?*

and students processed "It" as referring to:

Student 2: *An unexpected situation*

Student 8: *It is an ironic situation?*

This provides evidence of formal schemata as the reader fills in the grammatical gaps by expecting and contributing a referent for "It". Another example is the possessive pronoun "Your" which has no prior referent and is therefore not a cohesive item. It may have

exophoric reference and function to bring the reader into the world of the text. “Your” may refer to people in general or the specific reader.

Certain lexical items in line 3 act as a trigger for the reader to make inferences and establish continuity and coherence. “Chardonnay” should trigger a ‘wine’ slot (expensive, special occasions, luxury item, served in a glass or bottle) and “black fly” an ‘insect’ slot (unhygienic, in summer, lands on food or in drinks). In the “Ironic” lessons, after the teacher asked students to explain the irony in line 3, one student determined:

Student 4: *This means a good expensive wine, try to taste that, at that time in the wine glass, black fly in it, you don't want to drink*

In this example, accessing the relevant schemata that the wine is desirable; the fly is undesirable and inferring the existence of a drinker and a glass allows the reader to create the context for an ironic situation.

Line 4 introduces the grammatical parallelism device that structures the rhetorical organization of the lyrics. The repetition of “It’s a ...” has cohesive force via its connection with line 3 and subsequent lines in the ‘text-as-presented’. It can be argued that each repetition of “It” share the same referent as that of line 3. The function of the parallelism is to signal a new example of an ironic situation to the reader while maintaining the rhythm of each verse and the chorus.

Apart from the collocational relation between the items “death” and “row”, there are no other clear examples of cohesion in line four. The occurrence of ellipsis “pardon...that is...two minutes too late” must be retrieved from the reader’s individual knowledge of relative clauses. “Death” in line 4 has no cohesive tie to “died” in line 2 as they share different referents. The absence of lexical repetition marks the sentence as separate to lines 1 and 2.

Readers may interpret line 4 by instantiating schemata such as a ‘death row’ slot (prison, capital crime, electric chair, execution, prisoner), a ‘pardon’ slot (governor, phone call, stay of execution) and a ‘late’ slot (consequences of being late, something happens after a specified time). The reader brings together the schematic slots to determine the importance of time creating the unexpected and ironic result of the prisoner’s execution. This can be seen during pair discussion of line 4 by Students 7 and 8 who stated:

Student 8: *You were supposed to have the, you were in prison and supposed to be killed*
 Teacher: *Executed*
 Student 8: *Executed, right...but you got some permission because of something, you didn't have to die*
 Student 7: *If two minutes earlier you could have lived*
 Student 8: *It's very ironic!*

Line 5 contains lexical repetition of “ironic” and invites the reader to confirm his or her interpretation of ironic with the writer; “donta think?”. The additive conjunctive “and” ties the previous lines to line 5. “It” may have anaphoric reference to the prior ironic situations, cataphoric reference to “ironic” in line five or exophoric reference to “life in general”. In the “Ironic” lessons, the teacher asked students to consider what “it” refers to

and they argued:

Student 3: *'It' is situations one to four*

Student 2: *'It' is fate*

In a sense, the reference of “it” lies outside of the text as ultimately, the reader must make the necessary choice.

Chorus 1

With respect to cohesion in the chorus, the repetition of “it” and “your” or “you” parallels the structure of Verse 1. There is a slight deviation in line 6 from metaphor to simile to maintain the overall rhythm. The parallelism sets up an identity chain in which each instance of “it” refers back to the other, signaling an addition to and continuation of the discussion of irony. The “it” in line 9 may have anaphoric reference to “advice” or may be part of the identity chain. The terms “free” and “paid” in line seven share a cohesive relationship as near-antonyms. In line 8, “Take” and “advice” appear to collocate but as “take” can enter into relationships with a number of items, it has little cohesive force.

Link triangles function to organize multiple relationships and can organize central ideas or patterns in the ‘text-as-presented’ (Hoey, 1991). An example is the adverb “already” in line 7. It links to its repetition in line 23, “..already late”. “Late” also has lexical repetition and occurs in line 4 and 23. A further antonymous link can occur between “already” (line 7) and “too late” (line 4) as one is used to refer to an action earlier than expected and the other later than expected. The link triangle helps to establish the prominent themes of time, fate and the unexpected.

As with verse 1, the chorus contains lexical triggers to stimulate reader-instantiated schemata. In line eight and nine, it is possible to infer the “advice” not taken “figures” by having ironic significance in the future. In line 6, “Wedding day” activates a ‘wedding’ slot (church, ceremony, bride, groom, guests, invitations, sunshine as the preferred weather). The mention of “rain” in line 6 increases the probability of the reader instantiating and linking several appropriate schemata (wedding-weather-irony slots) to identify rain as undesirable and to infer that the weather may have been fine prior to this wedding. For example, in the “Ironic” lessons, during pair discussion of the chorus, one student decided when getting married:

Student 6: *You expect a fine day*

However the reader has to choose from a multitude of possible schemata in an attempt to locate irony. In line 7, the reader’s background knowledge or experience may lead him or her to infer the protagonist has bought a ticket to a certain destination and subsequently a friend offers him or her a “free ride”. In contrast, certain students selected a ‘taxi’ slot or ‘amusement park’ slot to achieve a possible interpretation. By checking and revising interpretations against the incoming information it was possible to confirm or discard them. Student 4 stated:

Student 4: *We ride, when I get a taxi and usually pay at the destination when I arrive I pay the money but this is already paid*

After teacher-supplied information, the student discarded the interpretation and decided:

Student 4: *I want to ride in friend's car but already paid money but ticket non-refundable so the money is wasted*

Student 8 interpreted the line to mean:

Student 8: *In the amusement park and you get a free ride, it's a special day ticket*

Such examples illustrate the diversity of the interaction between the text-based information offered by the writer of the lyrics and the utilization of students' individual experiences and background knowledge to achieve comprehension during the reading process.

Verse 2

In contrast to verse 1, verse 3 and the chorus, verse 2 contains just one example of an ironic situation which is marked by a higher concentration of cohesive ties to link each clause to "Mr. Play-It-Safe". To illustrate, there are six personal anaphoric references; "he" and "his", two additive conjunctive ties; "and" as well as a demonstrative anaphoric reference; "this" which refers to "the plane crash". In addition, there is an example of nominal ellipsis between "and" and "kissed". Complex repetition (Hoey, 1991) occurs between the lexical items "fly" and "flight" as they share the same morpheme and both refer to the subject; "Mr. Play-It-Safe". The presence of this link may accommodate the inclusion of "plane" in line 13 to establish a link triangle. However, the reader must create the context that places "Mr. Play-It-Safe" on the crashed plane. The verse contains a number of exophoric references that require the reader to utilize his or her knowledge to be able to process the 'text-as-presented'. Firstly, the reader has to contribute "everything in one's life" for the referent of "it" in "Mr. Play-It-Safe". As one student articulated during pair discussion:

Student 6: *A person who don't do risky thing*

Secondly, the demonstrative reference; "that flight" refers to the reader's expectation of the consequence of packing a suitcase and saying farewell to his or her children. The reader instantiates appropriate schemata to infer that "Mr. Play-It-Safe" is taking a trip by airplane. For example, during pair discussion, one student was able to clarify:

Student 8: *Second sentence says he kissed his kids so going to ride a plane, right?*

The constraints of the theme of irony combined with an inferred knowledge that "Mr. Play-It-Safe" suffers from aviophobia should allow the reader to process line 12; "he waited his whole damn life" and line 13; "isn't this nice..." as ironic rather than literal comments. As one student stated during pair discussion:

Student 1: *The ironic means sarcastic - I think whole sentence is like that*

The reader should infer that “Mr. Play-It-Safe” has been procrastinating rather than waiting to fly and it may be his first flight as one student expressed during pair discussion:

Student 5: *He was afraid to fly because maybe crashed, always afraid so he want to avoid that*

The final exophoric reference is “the plane”. The reader resolves the question of reference to which plane by retrieving the information from the assumption that “Mr. Play-It-Safe” has gone to the airport, got his boarding pass and sat down on “the plane”. The instantiation of ‘plane’ schemata reconciles with the reader’s previous inferences and results in a coherent ironic interpretation. This can be seen in the culmination of student 8’s pair discussion of verse 2:

Student 8: *Ah! So he usually try to be safe but he got plane. It crashed so dead. It is ironic*

Verse 2 concludes with the reiteration of line 5. The grammatical and lexical repetition sets up a cohesive tie to reinforce and link themes. Also, by paralleling the pattern of verse 1 it signals the change from verse to chorus.

Chorus 2

The reader is aware a chorus usually repeats, in his or her knowledge of the rhetorical organization of lyrics. In lines 15-18, the reader’s expectation is confirmed by the reiteration of lines 6-9 which help to establish the identification of both sections of the lyrics as the chorus. In the “Ironic” lessons, students were able to refer back to their previous discussion of Chorus 1 to facilitate their continued reading of the lyrics.

Break

The lexical item ‘Well’ can be considered to be cohesive as it introduces an explanatory comment (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). It follows that in line 19, “Well” generates the expectation of an approaching explanation for the reader. “Well” also introduces a shift in the rhetorical organization of the lyrics. The lexical and grammatical parallelism of lines nineteen to twenty-two function to structure a break from the established pattern of the lyrics. The repeat of the exophoric references “you” and “everything” also signal a change by inviting the reader to provide his or her own explanation for what constitutes “everything” in his or her personal world. The lexical synonymous (“okay” and “going right”) and antonymous (“gone wrong” and “going right”) reiteration triggers the reader’s instantiation of a ‘personal experiences’ slot. During pair discussion, one student explained:

Student 5: *I always forget umbrella at my office but when it’s a rainy day there’s no umbrella for me*

Here, the student was able to supply an example from his own ‘personal experiences’

schemata whereby the experience of forgetting the umbrella and it subsequently starting to rain represents “everything gone wrong”, illustrates the irony of the unpredictable nature of “life” and helps the student achieve comprehension of that part of the text.

Verse 3

On the whole, verse 3 parallels the cohesive and referential patterns of verse 1 and the chorus. The re-introduction of an environment of ironic metaphors and similes requires the reader to repeat the process of finding relations between lexical items by making inferences which can be confirmed against text-based knowledge and accumulated reader knowledge to establish coherence. For example, in line 23, student 5 was able to activate a ‘traffic jam’ slot and ‘appointments’ slot to infer the existence of a person in a hurry linked with the knowledge that traffic jams are unexpected and cause delays:

Student 5: *She wants to hurry but she meets a traffic jam, you can't hurry,
you'll be more late*

In line 24, student 6 contributed the presence of a smoker who has limited space available but has the strong desire to smoke. This combined with the students’ knowledge that no-smoking signs function to prohibit smoking in restricted areas:

Student 6: *Someone's break-time and he or she wants to smoke but
no-smoking sign, you've got nowhere to go*

Also, in line 25, student 5 utilized the reiteration of cohesive sub-classes “spoon” and “knife” to establish a schematic superordinate ‘cutlery’ and link to a universal ‘needs’ slot:

Student 5: *Now I need things but I can't get but want*

Line 26 contains a number of cohesive ties to aid the reader. There is lexical repetition; “meeting” linked by the additive conjunctive; “and” the anaphoric reference; “his” and the temporal conjunctive; “then”, which functions to delay the second clause to heighten the irony of the second “meeting”. The reader locates the irony in the instantiation of a ‘fairy-tale dream relationship’ slot reconciled with the implications of a person who is married.

There is a slight but significant change in the pattern in line 26 and 28. The line seems to parallel the predominant structure however the second person references “you, your” shift to the first person “I, my”. This marks an intertextual reference to the writer’s preoccupation with unsuccessful relationships in her lyrics. It could be argued by claiming ownership of this particular ironic situation the writer has supplied the decisive referent for ‘Ironic’; “and yeah I really do think” (Morissette, 1995).

Chorus 3 and Break reprise

“Ironic” concludes with a repeat of the chorus and reprise of the break. The reader is given the opportunity to reflect on processed information. At this stage, the reading process ends with the construction of ‘text’ which is the term to be taken as referring to the final product of the reading process (Halliday, 1994). In other words, the successful reader

will have decoded the linguistic devices and incorporated his or her particular background knowledge into the reading process to determine the relations that make “Ironic” a coherent, unified ‘text’.

Schema Theory and Implications for the classroom

In the classroom it is difficult for teachers to be aware of students ‘online’ cognitive processes during reading comprehension. The “Ironic” lessons provided an important insight into the processing needs or difficulties for selected students. For example, some students were unable to process items such as “Chardonnay” (line 3) and “death row pardon” (line 4). Consequently, these students were unable to activate appropriate schema, ignored the information and could not process the sentence. In the lessons, as soon as the teacher supplied the relevant cultural information concerning expensive wine or the prison system and the possibility of a stay of execution granted by a governor, students were able to then comprehend the irony in the situations.

In addition, students projected inappropriate schemata to process verse 2. For example, student 4 attempted to impose a ‘suicide’ slot on the ‘text-as-presented’:

Teacher: *Okay. What do you think?*
 Student 4: *Err. I don’t know the reason but the man wanted to escape from the damn life. He want to fly somewhere and do something. He want to release the damn life, its maybe happy because he was released by his death*

Carrell (1988, p.105) states:

ESL readers will overrely on text-based processes and try to construct meaning from textual input... they will substitute the closest schema they possess and will try to relate the incoming textual information on to that schema.

The student may have processed “isn’t this nice” in line 13 as a literal rather than ironic comment. The persistence of the idea of suicide led to a mismatch between the writer’s intention and the reader’s interpretation.

Also, students brought to the ‘text-as-presented’ their individual cultural experiences and assumptions which influenced their interpretation. During pair discussion of verse 3, several students’ assumptions that the writer was male led to processing difficulties of line 26:

Student 6: *First he met beautiful woman he could marry her then after that he meet his wife*

A reader should modify his or her assumptions to match the information available in line 26; “it’s like meeting the man of my dreams”. However, the preservation of a dominant schema and dismissal or reinterpretation of text-based clues can lead to miscomprehension.

The textual analysis of “Ironic” has shown that successfully locating the irony of the lyrics involves the reader in a process of interaction with the linguistic devices of the

'text-as-presented' whilst simultaneously instantiating relevant schemata. The cohesive ties in "Ironic" guide the reader through the reading process however coherence is achieved via the reader linking items to individual schemata which contain the background knowledge required to make inferences about and understand what is being conveyed. As the writer of "Ironic", Alanis Morissette provides the reader with the necessary means to construct the irony from his or her own experiences. However, in order to facilitate the reading of the lyrics for learners of English, it may be essential for the teacher to provide the relevant cultural background so that students have the opportunity to access relevant schemata. Classroom activities such as previewing content by presenting potentially difficult and culturally-loaded vocabulary and discussing relevant topics should maximize student comprehension. Also, by utilizing think-aloud techniques, observing and listening to students whilst they read and asking questions to elicit comprehension, it is possible for the teacher to assist with specific processing problems as they occur and to guide students in their construction and final coherent interpretation of the 'text'.

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Andrew Boon completed a Masters degree from Aston University, England in 2003. His research interests focus on teacher development and action research in the classroom. He is currently working at Takushoku University, Tokyo, Tokyo Woman's Christian University, Tokyo and Toyo Gakuen University, Chiba, Japan. He can be contacted at: bromleycross@hotmail.com

Appendix 1**Student Profile****“Ironic” Lesson 1: (Group Lesson)**

	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Occupation:</u>
Student 1:	Hiroko Wada	63	Retiree
Student 2:	Kenji Takeuchi	37	Business Person
Student 3:	Rikako Kasai	28	Business Person

“Ironic” Lesson 2: (Private Lesson)

	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Occupation:</u>
Student 4:	Masahiko Nishikawa	42	Dentist

“Ironic” Lesson 3: (Pair Lesson)

	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Occupation:</u>
Student 5:	Shigeru Suzuki	35	Business Person
Student 6:	Kiyoko Ono	54	Researcher

“Ironic” Lesson 4: (Pair Lesson)

	<u>Name:</u>	<u>Age:</u>	<u>Occupation:</u>
Student 7:	Gizo Kadaira	47	Business Person
Student 8:	Takako Tokumaru	26	Business Person