

# Talk a Lot

## Problems

### Role Play with Non-Literal English

1. Practise the role play with a partner. Find and underline **nine** examples of non-literal English\* and match each one to a category below:

1. puns	2. phrasal verbs	3. non-standard grammar
4. cultural references	5. idioms	6. politically correct (PC) language
7. hints	8. slang	9. catchphrases

\* For more information about each category, please see pp.37-39.

Three teenage girls are at school watching a boring netball match:

Tracey: Have you seen that new girl? What's her name?  
Mandy: Susan Jacobs.  
Tracey: Do you know who she reminds me of? What's her name? Marjorie Dawes from *Little Britain* – "Fat Fighters".  
Mandy: Oh, I love that show! (*Putting on a funny voice*) I'm a lady!  
Tracey: Look at her running. She's such a whale.  
Lena: Tracey!  
Tracey: What?  
Lena: You can't say that!  
Tracey: Why not?  
Lena: You shouldn't pick on her because of her size. She told me that she's been fighting a losing battle with her weight recently.  
Tracey: So what would you call her then?  
Mandy: Lena would probably say that she's horizontally-challenged.  
Tracey: (*Laughing*) Ha ha! That's a bit better than whale, ain't it?  
Mandy: Personally I think that Susan is fat-*tastic*!  
Lena: I wouldn't call her anything. Why don't you two just be nice to her?  
Tracey: OK, Lena. Forget it. OK? Listen, next week it's my birthday, and I'm not saying I really want earrings but... Well, I'm not going to say any more. (*She winks*)

2. Replace each example of non-literal English with one of the literal words or phrases below. Practise the role play using only literal English, then using non-literal English. What differences do you notice? Which version sounds more natural? Why? Which do you prefer?

a) putting on weight, despite trying not to	b) I want you to buy me some earrings	c) fat person
d) isn't	e) bully	f) a fictional character from a popular TV comedy series
g) I know a famous line from that TV programme	h) a person that I can ridicule because of her weight	i) overweight

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Answers:

Feature of Non-Literal English:	Example in this Text:	Literal Translation:
1. puns	fat-tastic	h) a person that I can ridicule because of her weight*
2. phrasal verbs	pick on	e) bully
3. non-standard grammar	ain't	d) isn't
4. cultural references	Marjorie Dawes from <i>Little Britain</i> – “Fat Fighters”	f) a fictional character from a popular TV comedy series
5. idioms	fighting a losing battle with her weight	a) putting on weight, despite trying not to
6. politically correct (PC) language	horizontally-challenged	i) overweight
7. hints	I'm not saying I really want earrings but...	b) I want you to buy me some earrings
8. slang	whale	c) fat person
9. catchphrases	I'm a lady!	g) I know a famous line from that TV programme

\* There is no literal translation for “fat-tastic”. It is simply a combination of two words: “fat” and “fantastic”. The pun works because “fat” sounds very similar to “fan”, sharing two out of three phonemes (individual sounds) – /f/ and /æ/. By making this joke, Mandy is showing her contempt for Susan: “a person that I can ridicule because of her weight”.

Note: in general, using non-literal English will help students’ spoken English to sound more natural, because native speakers of English often favour non-literal forms – such as idioms, phrasal verbs, and slang – over the more literal, “dictionary definition” words and phrases that they replace.