« Big Mouth Strikes Again »

Do you ever put your foot in your mouth and want to take your words back again? Do you often say something and then immediately regret it? Do you sometimes get the wrong end of the stick and make it obvious? Do you forget to think before you speak?

Stéphanie, you are often on the telephone to clients and you must have to think on your feet. Does this mean that sometimes you make mistakes and say the odd tactless thing.

For most of us it's hard enough un every day conversation not to make the occasional blunder but when you had cultural differences and a whole different language then it's a minefield out there!

So this lesson is designed to help you dig your way out again when your wires get crossed or back-peddle to safety!

Activity One – high-light and explain the idioms in the above paragraph.

Activity Two – expressions

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What I meant was
- I didn't really mean that
- Don't get me wrong
- In actually fact I meant that
- I think you may have misunderstood me
- What I meant to say was
- I was only joking…
- Sorry, I think that must have come out wrong
- That came out all wrong, what I meant was
- Sorry I really didn't want to offend you
- I'm sorry I had no idea
- I don't want you to think that…
- Don't misunderstand me…
- That's not what I meant
- Sorry, it's hard for me to say that in English but….
- Let me re-phrase that…
- Let me explain…
- I must explain…
- To clarify that…

Activity Three – gap fill

Listen to the song and fill the gaps in the lyrics.

BIGMOUTH STRIKES AGAIN

Artist(Band):The Smiths.

Sweetness, sweetness I was only ……
When I said I'd like to smash every tooth
In your head

Oh ... sweetness, sweetness, I was only ……..
When I said by …….. you should be
Bludgeoned in your bed

And now I know how Joan of Arc felt
Now I know how Joan of Arc felt
As the ……. rose to her roman nose
And her Walkman started to melt
Oh ...

Bigmouth, la ... bigmouth, la ...
Bigmouth strikes again
And I've got no right to take my place
With the …….. race

Oh, bigmouth, la ... bigmouth, la

Bigmouth strikes again
And I've got no right to take my place
With the ……... race

And now I know how Joan of Arc felt
Now I know how Joan of Arc felt
As the flames rose to her roman nose
And her ……... aid started to melt

Bigmouth, oh ... bigmouth, la ...
Bigmouth strikes again
And I've got no right to take my place
With the Human race
Oh ...

Bigmouth, oh ... bigmouth, la ...
Bigmouth strikes again
And I've got no right to take my place
With the Human race
Oh ...

- Questions: What is the tone of the song?
- What is the singer really saying?

Activity Four – Role Plays. There are idiomatic expressions in each paragraph which you must point out.

1. You are in a meeting listening to a manager from another department talking about his performance last month. Seeing his slide you immediately react by saying that he must be disappointed by the results but in fact he is really proud of what he has achieved in view of the difficulties he has had. You try to retract your statement gracefully!

2. You meet a senior staff member from the Swedish Travel Office in the corridor but you don't recognize him and start to reprimand him for not wearing his yellow IKEA shirt after ten am. As the truth dawns on you, you must find a way out.

3. You are reviewing the new software programme for the hotel bookings in a meeting and when you see a new function you laugh out loud and say 'that's stupid!'. Unfortunately the designer of the programme is sitting right near you as another colleague immediately points out to you. You then try to explain away your comment.