

# ***JOKES***

## ***for SPANISH CLASS***

*Telling Jokes as Stories to Have Fun and Enhance Acquisition*

*By Bryce Hedstrom*  
*Edited by Candace Medina*

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## **TELL IT AGAIN!** **STUDY SAYS SPOILERS DON'T RUIN STORIES**

We often get mad when a news report or a friend spoils a movie by revealing the plot before we have had a chance to see it, but maybe we should reconsider that response.

A study at the University of California at San Diego indicates that knowing the ending may actually increase the enjoyment, even for suspenseful stories and films. In the study, which involved different types of stories and the works of many popular authors, readers “preferred versions with a spoiling paragraph written into the story.” This was surprising to the researchers, but readers liked the “spoiled” versions of stories more than the originals which lacked the spoiling information inserted into the story.

The conclusion was that the plot twists by themselves are not all that critical. A book or a movie can be seen multiple times and still be enjoyable, in fact viewers often want to see a movie again and again to spot the parts that they did not perceive as meaningful the first time they saw it.

For teachers, especially those of us that like to tell jokes in class, this is wonderfully affirming news: It is OK to tell it again. We can tell a good story or joke again and it will still be worthwhile for most students.

We also need to remember Stephen Krashen’s Affective Filter Hypothesis, which states that students are able to acquire language best in a low stress environment where they feel safe and welcome. Telling jokes is one way that has worked for me to establish the kind of light-hearted tone in my classroom that gets students primed to learn.

So don’t hang back from telling a good story or joke again—especially if *you* like it! The jokes that follow in this book have been favorites in my classroom for years. They are student tested for comprehension and that elusive humor factor—students could understand them and they mostly thought that the jokes were funny.

Let me know how it goes.

Bryce

Study source: [Article by Bernd Debusmann Jr. | Reuters – Fri, Aug 12, 2011](#)

## JOKE SKILL #1: Choose the Right Joke

Tell a joke that your students can get without too much trouble. The number of unknown words needs to be minimal and the vocabulary in the punch line needs to be instantly understood.

### ¡ME DUELE!

Level:	Spanish 1 or 2	
Grammar Emphasis:	<b>doler</b> ; usage of indirect object pronoun "le"	
Focus Structures:	<b>parece que</b>	it seems like
	<b>me duele</b>	it hurts me
	<b>roto</b>	broken

This joke was written for my level 2 students, but it could be told to level 1 if the meaning of each of the vocabulary items was established and if it were told slowly enough.

The story is based on an old joke. It may take a good 45 minutes to set it up before you begin to slowly tell the story. During that setup time have students practice telling parts of it to one another. When the whole joke has been told, have students tell it to one another for another 5 minutes or so at the end of class.

You can also work on changing it to the first person (now YOU are the man) for another 10 minutes. To set up the first person activity, have them re-tell the original story to you as you write the original verbs on the board. Then change the verbs or other parts of speech to the first person. The changes to point of view from 3<sup>rd</sup> person to first person for this story are minor, and everyone, including the newbie Spanish students, will get it if you go slowly. All together it may take about an hour and a half to get it told satisfactorily, although you could go on and on with it.

During the entire time you tell the joke keep a close eye on three "barometer students" to make sure they are getting it. Ask them frequently what phrases meant, and listen in while they are retelling certain parts of the story as you go through the lesson.

Write all of the words below on the board, but mainly work on getting meaningful, interesting repetitions with the words in **bold print** below—those are the most important ones for the joke. The other words are less important and also more easily acquired since they are concrete nouns.

doler	to hurt		
<i>(Tell them that doler is a verb that is used like gustar. This is an FYI piece. No more explanation, just start using it.)</i>			
		le dolía	it hurt him
<b>parece que</b>	it seems like	parecía que	it seemed like
<b>le duele</b>	it hurts him		
<b>me duele</b>	it hurts me	te duele	it hurts you
<b>el dedo</b>	finger	brazo	arm
el hombro	shoulder	el ombligo	belly button
la pierna	leg	el pie	foot

**roto**                      broken

The most important words to get the joke are **le duele, me duele, dedo** and especially, **roto**; so spend most of your time repeating those in various and fun ways by both asking questions and in the actual telling of the joke.

Gesture the words **le dolía, le duele, parecía que,** and **roto** for a very short time; only about two minutes, if that.

Set up a fun repetition chant for the expression "...roto" and "me duele". Model it a few times and they will get the hang of it and start saying the whole line when you point to a body part and make a bit of a grimace. The first one or two can go something like this:

<b>Una nariz rota... ¡me duele!</b>	<i>Grimace and put your hand to your ear to encourage them to say it.</i>
<b>Una cabeza rota... ¡me duele!</b>	<i>By this time they will start getting it and some will spontaneously repeat the "me duele" part.</i>
<b>Un hombro roto... ¡me duele!</b>	<i>Now almost everyone will say ¡me duele! before you can get to it.</i>
<b>¿Un brazo roto?...</b>	<i>¡Un brazo roto me duele!</i>
<b>¿Un dedo roto?...</b>	<i>¡Un dedo roto me duele!</i>

This **dedo roto** expression is used in the punch line, so be sure everyone really knows it so that they can instantly react to the humor at the end of the story, and so that you can all get a good laugh. Emphasize it by acting, making faces, repetition and chatting about how terrible a dedo roto is.

Just for fun **¿Un ombligo roto? ...** And on, and on with various other body parts

**Other key elements that can help to make this joke work:**

\* Get extra repetitions by reading the crowd. During the process of yelling **¡Me duele!** a couple of students will indicate by their overdone gestures that they can still feel the pain of the broken body part you have just mentioned. When that happens, stop and ask them about it. The class will get a few more repetitions because you are just chatting with a student and then "reporting" back to the class:

**Clase, ¡Jessica tuvo un brazo roto hace dos años!**

\* The students (Spanish 2) already know many high frequency words in the story like:

**fue,                      tenía,                      no sabía por qué,                      habló      and      le dijo.**

These are both high frequency vocabulary and important for understanding this particular joke, so the joke is a good fit for this level. If students are not familiar with much of the vocabulary, change it so that the joke is comprehensible to them.

\* Tell the story sloooooowwwly, particularly the first part, because this sets up the joke. Telling and chatting about the first short paragraph (four sentences) will take a good 10 minutes—and it will contain mostly words the students already know.

\* No one anticipates the ending! It is amazing to me that students rarely see the punch line coming. The whole class is focused on the story and they sense it is coming to an end, but there are not often knowing nods or side comments indicating that they get the joke beforehand.

Here is a short version of the joke: A guy goes to the doctor because every time he touches a part of his body it hurts him and he doesn't know why. The doctor says he has a broken finger.

# **¡ME DUELE!**

## *It Hurts Me!*

Un día un hombre fue al doctor. Fue al doctor porque tenía un problema. Parecía que le dolía todo el cuerpo y él no sabía por qué. El hombre habló con el doctor y le dijo:

—Doctor, tengo un problema. Es un problema muy grande. Parece que todo el cuerpo me duele.

—¿Dónde le duele? —le preguntó el doctor.

—Pues ¡todo el cuerpo me duele! —el hombre le dijo.

—¿Cuándo le duele? —le preguntó el doctor.

—Bien, no me duele todo el tiempo, pero a veces me duele mucho —le respondió el hombre.

—Dígame específicamente cuándo te duele —el doctor le pidió.

—Bien, cuando me toco la cabeza, me duele. Cuando me toco el brazo, me duele. Cuando me toco la pierna, me duele. Cuando me toco el pie, me duele. ¿Qué pasa? ¿Cuál es el problema? ¿Por qué me duele todo el cuerpo? ¡Ayúdame, doctor! ¡Ayuda, ayúdame, doctor!

El doctor le escuchó y lo examinó. Por fin, le dijo:

—Yo sé cuál es su problema, señor. Yo sé por qué le duele cuando te tocas diferentes partes del cuerpo.

—¿De veras? ¡Fantástico! ¡Entonces dígame por qué me duele tanto! ¡Necesito saber! —le gritó el hombre.

Así que el doctor le dijo:

—¡Usted tiene un dedo roto!

## Word Cloud of the Vocabulary in ¡Me Duele!

This level of analysis is a bit of overkill for everyday use in the classroom, but this word cloud can show us how this joke works as a teaching tool for new structures and vocabulary. Notice how many of the words are high frequency (top 500 words). Almost the only ones that are not common are the words that are needed to tell the joke (**le dolía, me duele, le duele and roto**). Other less common words appear in the joke, but they are cognates (like **fantástico, doctor, examinó and específicamente**) and therefore relatively easy for students to recognize. The word **roto** does not appear a lot in the text of the joke, so it must be drilled with TPR beforehand and commented on a lot. This must be done before the end of the joke is told because it is a crucial part of the punch line. Some students may not yet know **dedo**, so it should be drilled too, as it is also part of the punch line. The words used in the joke are found below. The number of times a word is used is represented by the size of the print. The frequency of the word in the Spanish language is noted by the number in parentheses.

The word cloud program sorts the words by size—more often used words appear in larger print. I added the frequency numbers in parentheses based on A Frequency Dictionary of Spanish by Mark Davies. The highlighted words are those that are not high frequency (over #500) and therefore possibly less valuable to beginning learners.

[ayuda](#) (#345)

[ayúdame](#) (#345)

[bien](#) (#73)

[brazo](#) (#620)

[cabeza](#) (#298)

[cuerpo](#) (#232)

[dedo](#) (#1,248)

[diferentes](#) (#365)

[le dijo](#) (#28)

[dime](#) (#28)

[doctor](#) (#778)

[le dolía](#) (#2,037)

[le duele](#) (#2,037)

[me duele](#) (#2,037)

[entonces](#) (#76)

[escuchó](#) (#360)

[específicamente](#) (#4,492)

[examinó](#) (#1,780)

[fantástico](#) (#2,360)

[por fin](#) (#156)

[grande](#) (#62)

[gritó](#) (#1,597)

[habló](#) (#92)

[hombre](#) (#80)

[necesitó](#) (#229)

[parece](#) (#81)

[parecía](#) (#81)

[partes](#) (#86)

[pasa](#) (#67)

[pidió](#) (#204)

[pie](#) (#386)

[pierna](#) (#1,201)

[preguntó](#) (#323)

[problema](#) (#169)

[pues](#) (#103)

[respondió](#) (#456)

[roto](#) (#601)

[saber](#) (#46)

[sabia](#) (#46)

[señor](#) (#240)

[tanto](#) (#79)

[tengo](#) (#18)

[tenía](#) (#18)

[tiempo](#) (#68)

[tienes](#) (#18)

[tocas](#) (#325)

[toco](#) (#325)

Notice that the word **doler** (#2,037) is not a high frequency word. As such, it may not be all that valuable for a beginning learner. Maybe, maybe not, but becoming more familiar with this structure using **le**, which is similar to a verb like **gustar** (#353) is extremely valuable. Picking up the use of indirect object pronouns in Spanish is valuable.



## **JOKE SKILL #2: Tell it again at a higher level**

# **EL HOMBRE MATERIALISTA**

### **Teacher Notes**

VOCABULARY FOR A LEVEL 1 OR 2 VERSION OF THE JOKE:

<b>abrió</b>	<i>opened</i>
<b>de repente</b>	<i>all of a sudden</i>
<b>camión</b>	<i>truck</i>
<b>chocó con</b>	<i>crashed into</i>
<b>se la quitó</b>	<i>it took it off</i>
<b>materialista</b>	<i>materialistic</i>
<b>te quitó</b>	<i>it took off your</i>

***Tell the story on different levels, levels of increasing difficulty that answer more and more questions.***

VOCABULARY FOR LEVEL 3 OR 4 VERSION OF THE JOKE:

*(This version uses language that focuses on **past participles**)*

<b>abogado</b>	<i>lawyer</i>	<b>había tenido éxito</b>	<i>he had had success</i>
<b>había estacionado</b>	<i>he had parked</i>	<b>quería mostrarlo</b>	<i>he wanted to show it</i>
<b>compañeros de trabajo</b>	<i>co-workers</i>	<b>camión</b>	<i>truck</i>
<b>al salir de</b>	<i>as he was getting out of, upon getting out of</i>		
<b>al ver</b>	<i>when he saw, upon seeing</i>		
<b>lo que había pasado</b>	<i>what had happened</i>		
<b>había visto</b>	<i>had seen</i>		
<b>enfadado</b>	<i>angry</i>		
<b>no le ha dado cuenta de que</b>	<i>you haven't even realized that (darse cuenta, se da cuenta)</i>		
<b>le quitó</b>	<i>it took off your</i>		

***At all levels we are still working on basic grammar, because WHEN WE THINK THEY KNOW IT (and even when THEY think they know it) THEY STILL DON'T KNOW IT like they need to know it.***

# **EL HOMBRE MATERIALISTA**

*The Materialistic Man*

LEVEL 1 OR 2 VERSION OF THE JOKE:

Había un hombre que tenía un carro nuevo. El carro era muy bueno y le costó mucho. Al hombre le gustaba su carro mucho.

Un día el hombre llegó a su oficina y estaba saliendo de su carro. Abrió la puerta, y muy rápido, un camión chocó con la puerta del carro y se la quitó.

Así que el hombre gritó:

—¡O no! ¡Mi carro, mi carro! ¡Mi bonito carro!

Una mujer, que lo vio todo, le dijo:

—No lo creo. ¡Usted es tan materialista!

—¿Por qué dice que soy materialista? ¡Es normal estar enojado en esta situación! ¿No puede ver que mi carro está arruinado? —el hombre le dijo—.

—Sí, pero yo todavía digo que Ud. es materialista porque Ud. está pensando solamente en su carro pero... ¡el camión también le quitó el brazo!

Entonces el hombre gritó: —¡O no! ¡mi *Rolex*, mi *Rolex*!

LEVEL 3 OR 4 VERSION OF THE JOKE:

Había un hombre que tenía mucho dinero. Era un abogado y había tenido mucho éxito en su trabajo. Un día él había estacionado su *Lexus* nuevo enfrente de su oficina. Quería mostrárselo a sus compañeros de trabajo. Pero al salir del carro, un camión pasó demasiado cerca y quitó la puerta del carro.

Al ver lo que había pasado, el hombre empezó a gritar —¡mi *Lexus*! ¡mi *Lexus*!  
¡Este imbécil en el camión arruinó mi carro!

Una mujer que había visto el accidente entero le dijo:

—¡Ud. es tan materialista!

—¿Por qué me ha dicho esto cuando Ud. puede ver que mi bello automóvil está completamente arruinado! —le gritó el hombre, enfadado.

—¡Porque Ud. no se ha dado cuenta de que el camión también le quitó el brazo!

Así que el hombre miró su brazo y empezó a gritar —¡mi *Rolex*! ¡mi *Rolex*!

## **JOKE SKILL #3: Use Student Actors**

# **LOS DOS PRISIONEROS**

### *Teacher Notes*

*Level:* Spanish 1 or 2

*Focus Structures:* Pre-teach with TPR or make sure they know:

<b>hizo</b>	<i>made</i>
<b>un sonido</b>	<i>a sound</i>
<b>techo</b>	<i>roof</i>
<b>seguía caminando</b>	<i>kept walking</i>
<b>de repente</b>	<i>all of a sudden</i>

<i>During telling because they are cognates:</i>	<b>prisioneros</b>	<i>prisoners</i>
	<b>prisión</b>	<i>prison</i>
	<b>el guardia</b>	<i>the guard</i>

*Here is the joke in English. Notice how it has been simplified and adapted for beginning Spanish:*

*Two prisoners were making their escape over the jailhouse roof when one of them dislodged a tile.*

*"Who's there?" shouted a guard.*

*The first prisoner replied with a convincing imitation of a cat's meow.*

*The guard went back to his rounds.*

*But then the second prisoner dislodged another tile. The guard repeated, "Who's there?"*

*"Another cat," answered the prisoner.*

# **LOS DOS PRISIONEROS**

## *The Two Prisoners*

Había dos prisioneros que estaban escapándose de una prisión. Estaban caminando silenciosamente en el techo de la prisión, cuando uno de ellos hizo un sonido.

Un guardia que estaban caminando abajo miró hacia el techo y gritó:

—¿Quién está allí?

El primer prisionero pensó muy rápido e hizo un sonido que era una buena imitación del *miau* de un gato.

El guardia pensó que no fue nada más que un gato en el techo, y seguía caminando.

Pero de repente, el segundo prisionero también hizo un sonido, y el guardia repitió:

—¿Quién está allí?

Así que el segundo prisionero respondió:

—Otro gato.

## **JOKE SKILL #4: Sequence Your Jokes**

### **UD. SE VA A MORIR**

*You Are Going to Die*

<i>Level:</i>	<i>Spanish 1 or 2</i>	
<i>Grammar Emphasis:</i>	<b>ir + a + infinitive; reflexive verbs</b>	
<i>Focus Structures:</i>	<b>¿Me voy a morir?</b>	<i>Am I going to die? I am going to die?</i>
	<b>Ud. se va a morir.</b>	<i>You are going to die.</i>
	<b>Se siente</b>	<i>feels</i>

*Keep in mind that the vocabulary here can be simplified even further. If students do not recognize the structure “sigue mirando” just substitute something that they know like “mira” instead.*

**Hay un hombre que no se siente muy bien, así que va al doctor y le dice:**

**—Doctor, no me siento muy bien. Me siento mal. Me siento muy mal. ¿Cuál es el problema? ¿Me voy a morir?**

**El doctor hace un examen del hombre y por fin le dice:**

**—Ud. está muy enfermo. Lo siento mucho, pero Ud. se va a morir y no tiene mucho tiempo. Ud. se va a morir muy pronto.**

**—¿Qué? ¿Me voy a morir? Pero, ¿cuándo? ¿Cuánto tiempo tengo? ¿Cuándo me voy a morir? —le pregunta.**

**El doctor mira su reloj y le responde:**

**—Ud. se va a morir en... diez...**

**El hombre lo interrumpe y le dice:**

**—¿Diez? ¿Diez qué? ¿Diez años? ¿Diez meses? ¡Oh no! ¿Cuándo me voy a morir?**

**El doctor sigue mirando su reloj y le dice:**

**—Nueve...**

**Ahora el hombre le grita:**

**—¿Nueve? ¿Ahora es nueve? ¿Nueve qué? ¿Tengo nueve semanas? ¿Nueve días? ¿Qué significa nueve?**

**El doctor continúa: —Ocho... siete... seis... cinco... cuatro...**