Rejoinders

Rejoinders are comments we make in response to what someone else says. We use rejoinders all the time in normal conversation. Examples are:

“Sure is cold today!”

It’s supposed to warm up next week.

El señor Conner always gives us tests on Friday.

He must love grading papers!

I hope Fred calls me tonight!

What do you see in that guy?

I wonder if we’ll have a snow day tomorrow.

I sure hope so!

Since conversation is rarely just questions followed by answers, we need to teach our students the skill of participating with rejoinders. The following activity can be structured as a test section. However, the real fun is using rejoinders in an oral class activity.

Before class:

1. Prepare one list of comments and another of “matching” rejoinders. You’ll need enough so that half the students have a comment and half have a rejoinder. If there’s an odd number of students, it works better to have a student in the “comments” group have two.

2. As you prepare the lists, try to make sure there’s only one appropriate rejoinder for each comment. Pay attention not only to meaning, but to mood and tense. The comments and rejoinders should not only be logical, but sound natural.

3. When your lists are complete, type them up: comments on one color of paper, rejoinders on another color. This will help greatly in passing them out, collecting them to use in the next class or saving them for next year. Cut your papers into strips so that each strip has one comment or one rejoinder.

In-Class Procedure:

1. Explain what rejoinders are and give a few examples. (See above.) Solicit a few more from the students. Tell students they’ll be divided into two groups and that you’ll give out the slips of paper. Students must not show their paper to anyone!!! Make sure everyone understands that the rejoinder must not
only make sense in a general way, but it must “match” in tense and mood. If your students don’t yet use the subjunctive, omit the reference to mood.

2. Divide the class in half and have them stand in two rows or sit on opposite sides on the room. Physical separation is helpful! Have the students in one group face the students in the other group.

3. Pass out the slips of paper. Remember that in a class with an odd number of students, you’ll give two comments to one person.

4. Give students a minute to look up a word if necessary, but they can’t ask anyone for help.

5. Make sure students know which group they’re in (comment or rejoinder)!

6. Explain that students in the first group will take turns reading their comments. After each comment is read, the rejoinder people will silently read their papers to decide if they have the best rejoinder.

7. Encourage all students to listen carefully, since you’ll not declare a rejoinder correct or incorrect. You’ll ask the class for comments, letting them figure it out. In the beginning, you may have to coax them to offer opinions.

8. Allow for questions.

Then...

9. First student in the “comment” group will read his/her comment.

10. All students in the rejoinder group must listen especially carefully, then silently read their papers to see if their rejoinder would make sense. Hopefully, one student will realize he/she has the appropriate rejoinder and read it aloud.

11. Ask all students to evaluate the pairing of the comment and rejoinder. Does it make sense? Is the tense appropriate? Does it sound logical and natural?

12. If the best rejoinder is read, most students will recognize it and say it’s good. If a student ventures the opinion that it’s not a good rejoinder, ask why. That student will justify his answer. Encourage others to join the debate until the class comes to a decision. Try not to enter into it unless there’s no consensus or certainty. A good strategy in that case is to put that comment on hold until all the others have been read.
To Consider as You Plan

This activity can be adapted to any level, even first year.

Comments and rejoinders should reflect the grammar and vocabulary you want to stress.

Do not use material that’s so new most students won’t recognize it. This is a culminating activity, not a practice activity.

Remember that since this is a teaching/learning tool, the more discussion, the better.

If you use this as a test, have the students match the original comment in the left-hand column to a rejoinder in the right-hand column.

Whether you use this as a written activity or an oral activity, it’s a great way to determine if your students understand not just vocabulary, but the intricacies of conversation.

In the beginning, you may have to coax students to offer opinions. With a little practice, it will become easier.

From start to finish, all levels of Bloom’s Taxology of Learning are employed. The most exciting of these are the analysis and synthesis the students employ to pair comments with the best rejoinders. The class as a whole then participates in the evaluation: Why (or why not) is one rejoinder better than another? Why won’t one not work at all? (Remember that while context may be appropriate, the tense and mood might not be correct.) What are other possibilities?

After the first time my students did this activity, I liked to announce future “rejoinder” days in advance. Knowing that they’d be “performing” publicly was a good motivator to come to class prepared!

This was a popular activity with students and a useful learning tool. When we as teachers can combine utility with fun, we’re doing our best!
Spanish Rejoinders

Tengo quince años hoy.  Pues, ¡feliz cumpleaños!

¡No tengo ninguna tarea esta tarde!  ¡Qué suerte tienes!

¡Ojalá que Susana vaya a la fiesta esta noche!  No puede; está enferma.

Mis padres me critican todo el tiempo.  ¡Lo siento, amigo!

¡Ana va a estudiar en España este verano!  ¡Su familia debe tener mucho dinero!

¡Todos mis maestros son aburridos!  ¿De veras?  Los míos son interesantes.

¡Mi hermana me vuelve loco!  La mía, también.

El equipo de fútbol juega bien este año.  ¡El entrenador nuevo es fantástico!
Spanish Rejoinders Using ¡Ojalá!

1. Mis padres no saben a qué hora llegué a casa anoche.
   ¡Ojalá que nunca lo sepan!

2. Anoche cuando yo conducía el coche de mi padre, tuve un accidente. El me dijo que tengo que pagar los daños.
   ¡Ojalá que no sean muy caros!

3. ¡Qué lástima! Planeamos un pícnic para esta tarde, pero ahora está lloviendo.
   ¡Ojalá que cese (stops) pronto!

4. Tengo un examen de física hoy, y no tuve tiempo para estudiar anoche.
   Pues, ¡ojalá que sea fácil!

5. Esta competencia de tenis es la más importante del año.
   ¡Ojalá que Uds. jueguen bien y que ganen!

6. Hoy es mi cumpleaños! Tengo diez y siete años.
   Pues, ¡ojalá que tengas un día excelente!

7. He oído que el señor Martínez es un profesor difícil y antipático.
   Entonces, ¡ojalá que tengamos otro!

8. Los «seniors» tienen solamente un día más de clases.
   ¡Ojalá que terminen todo su trabajo para entonces!

9. Tengo ganas de comprar un coche nuevo.
   Entonces, ¡ojalá que encuentres un buen trabajo muy pronto!

10. ¡Caramba! Creo que se me perdió mi cartera.
    ¡Ojalá que alguien honrado la encuentre y que la devuelva a la oficina!