Teachers notes

Step 1. Introduce the idea of euphemistic speech. English speakers often use euphemistic speech when talking about a third party to avoid being insulting or creating an awkward situation. It's much more polite to say someone is *mature* or *creative minded* rather than *old* or *crazy*.

Step 2. Students match the euphemisms to their hidden meaning. Go through the answers and add any others that occur, maybe equivalents in the students L1 spark further ideas.

Step 3. Look at the four sentences and ask students to try and decode the euphemism. This is to show that often the hidden meaning behind a euphemism is not difficult to get at.

Step 4. Negative euphemisms. Euphemisms can be made by saying that something is not the opposite of what it really is. E.g. *Not the most fascinating meeting.* Go through the examples together then ask students to use *not/no* euphemisms in the follow-up situations.

Step 5. Divide students into pairs and give each student the left or right half of the roleplay cards. Give students a minute or two to jot down some ideas for their B scenarios. Then have them roleplay the situations. At the end get them to swap halves with their partner and then find another partner to do the roleplay again.

Homework. Try and find other examples of euphemistic speech on the internet, in corporate emails etc.

Euphemisms

she's between jobs	he's in the toilet	
she's a bit tipsy	he's lying	
he likes his food	she's drunk	
he's a bit thin on top	he's crazy	
he's getting on a bit	he's going bald	
he's in the gents	she's lazy	
she's passed away	she's unemployed	
he's stretching the truth	she's dead	
he's a few sandwiches short of a picnic	he's fat	
she's a bit unmotivated	he's old	

What are they really saying?

- The television interviewer accused the politician of being economical with the truth.
- The manager had an inappropriate relationship with the new intern.
- Jenny's dog Bowser went to the great doggy park in the sky.
- The pop-singer was clearly tired and emotional as she exited the nightclub at 3am.

We often make euphemisms using negative words like **no**, **not** and **doesn't**
for example.

He's not the sharpest tool in the box
She's not the most organised person
He doesn't have the best voice but he makes up for it in enthusiasm
He's no Einstein
I'm not as young as I was
It wasn't the most interesting meeting
he doesn't work as hard as he could

How might you describe someone:

- who is rather unattractive
- who gives boring presentations
- who wears very strange or unfashionable clothes
- who smells bad
- who writes bad code

1.A	1.B
1.A You bump into an old workmate. Ask about your ex-colleague John	**1.B** John died
2.B Nathan is fat, bald and not very clean	**2.A** You have to meet Nathan in a cafe, ask your colleague to describe him.
3.A You're new in the office. One of your co-workers Nancy is not very friendly, ask your colleague for advice	**3.B** Nancy is completely crazy.
4.B Sarah lies a lot.	**4.A** You're worried about something that your new co-worker Sarah said. She told you the company was going to fire the sales team. Ask your colleague her opinion.