

HUMOUR AS A PEDAGOGICAL TOOL

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Abstract .: Humor is the key which can bridge a mutual understanding from one culture to the other. In the West, kenyataresearcher believe that our superficial sense of individualism inclines us to forget that people in other countries are generally more easy-going and less worried about offending someone. More importantly, people outside of English-speaking countries love to laugh and be playful. Of course, they are serious about studying, but they expect the English classroom to be fun, energetic, open and engaging. For many students, the EFL classroom is a way for them to temporary escape from the stress, repetition and chaos of life. Therefore, it is creative job as a teacher to minimize discomfort, negativity and frustration in the classroom.

Keywords: Humour, Pedagogical tool, TEFL

Abstrak: Humor adalah salah satu kunci yang menjembatani pemahaman timbal balik antar satu budaya dengan budaya lainnya. Dalam budaya barat, peneliti yakin bahwa rasa individualisme yang kadangkala mengaburkan pemikiran kita mengenai orang-orang dari negara lain yang pada umumnya terkenal lebih santai dan tidak terlalu takut dengan pendapat atau prasangka orang lain. Namun lebih penting, orang-orang yang tinggal bukan di negara yang berbahasa Inggris lebih menyukai bermain dan tertawa. Tentu saja, apabila saat belajar mereka akan serius, namun mereka berharap suasana kelas Bahasa Inggris menjadi menyenangkan, bersemangat, komunikasi dua arah dan turut berpartisipasi. Bagi banyak mahasiswa, suasana kelas Bahasa asing adalah salah satu cara mereka melarikan diri untuk sementara waktu dari rasa stress, kebosanan, dan permasalahan hidup. Oleh karena itu, humor merupakan kreatifitas seorang dosen untuk mengurangi rasa tidak nyaman, fikiran negative dan frustrasi di dalam kelas.

Kata kunci:Humor, alatpedagogik, TEFL

INTRODUCTION

Humour is defined as differences in all individuals' habitual behaviours, experiences, feelings, attitudes, abilities in relation to amusement, laughing, joking and so on. There are four distinct humour styles: two of them are healthy or agreeable (Affiliative and self-enhancing humour styles) and two of them are non-healthy or non-agreeable (Aggressive and self-defeating humour styles).

Affiliative humour style: individuals use this humour style tend to say humour and laughing things, they try to amuse and attract others by saying humours and through this; by decreasing interpersonal challenges facilitate establishment and maintenance of

relations. To amuse and laugh others they attack and make fun of themselves insofar as don't hurt their acceptability. This kind of humour basically is non-inimical and is used in such a way that improves interpersonal cohesion and attraction.

Self-enhancing humour style: the individuals use this humour style have a general and special view toward life, conflicts of life are amusing and amazing to them and in facing harshness of life they make use of a humorous feedback. This humour style is defined as emotional-disciplinary and close opposition mechanism and is in congruent with Fiord advocates' definition of humour that is defined as a healthy defensive

mechanism that avoids negative emotions. In comparison to affiliative humour style. Using this style is more intra-psychological than interpersonal centered

Aggressive humour style: this humour style centered around others and is conducted by using biting utterances, scorn, ridicule and flouting others and in other words is an abusive humour. And also is used to manage and manipulate others. Themes of these humours are threatening but indeed it is introduced without considering nexus in others. Individuals using this style can't control saying oppressive humours and by using this humour style (like sexual and racial humours) attack others.

Self-defeating humour style: individuals use this humour style are trying to attract others and being accepted by others by making fun of themselves by saying weaknesses of themselves and flattery. These individuals hide their negative feelings by using humour (defensif avoidance) and avoid structural involvement in face of difficulties and although they may seemed as witty persons but in the basis of using this humour style, powerful elements of avoidance and low self-esteem has been concealed. (Doosti, Y, 2008: 159-169)

Humor is an important role in interpersonal relationships, as a method of enhancing positive interactions, facilitating self-disclosure and social probing, defusing tension and conflict, saving face, and so on. On the other hand, negative types of humor, such as aggressive teasing and sarcasm, may impact negatively on social relationships (). Thus, the judicious use of humor may be an important social skill in itself and may also contribute to other social competencies, such as the ability to initiate social interactions, provide emotional support, and manage conflict.

Ever since the educational paradigm shift from teacher-centred to learner-centred instruction in the last decades of the past century, there has been a continuous debate and dialogue among researchers, educators

and educational psychologists alike on how to enhance teaching and learning processes in order to make them more effective, i.e. more beneficial for student learning. Consequently, teachers have been urged to explore better and alternative ways of teaching to improve their practice and break away from traditional methods of instruction, which are commonly understood to be counterproductive for the development of skills and practices that enable learner autonomy and independence.

METHOD

Pedagogical Tool

There is a large body of literature devoted to the many sources and pedagogical tools that teachers can employ in order to improve teacher-student interaction and learning outcomes. In her study of pedagogical tools and their effects on learning, Chabeli (2008: 51), for instance, identifies "helping attitude, openness, willingness and an empathetic disposition on the part of the teacher" as one of these crucial factors which help to establish a classroom atmosphere conducive to learning.

Sense of Humor Scale

Thorson and Powell's (1993) Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) was utilized to measure EFL teachers' sense of humor. The MSHS is an auto-report measure of overall sense of humor and is composed of 24 items assessing humor on four dimensions. These four dimensions include: (a) the creation or production of humor, (b) humor used as a coping mechanism, (c) humor used socially, and (d) humor appreciation.

General Facts about Humour

In general terms, humour can be described as "anything that people say or do that is considered funny and tends to make others laugh" (R.A. Martin in Vrticka et al. 2013: 860). As such, humour is defined in very broad terms and it can be seen to involve two

components: the cognitive component; i.e. “the mental processes that go into both creating and perceiving [...] an amusing stimulus”, and the affective component, “the affective response in the enjoyment of” that specific stimulus (ibid. 860). Thus, the experiencing of humour involves both the processes of comprehension and appreciation, the latter of which is often linked to a feeling of amusement, mirthful laughter and enjoyment (see also Özdo•ru and McMorris 2013: 136).

The type of humour enjoyed by humans, i.e. the act of “enjoying incongruity” through the mental play with either words and objects (see Vrticka et al. 2013: 861), is nowadays known to be a human-specific characteristic which is not learned, as it was previously assumed, but rather “a genetic, biological characteristic of the human race” (Fry 1994: 111). Thus, no person, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, is generally found to be without a sense of humour, but the statement or object that is perceived as funny is strongly dependent on one’s own character, situation and culture. “A sense of humor” can, as Fry (1994: 112) remarks, accordingly be seen as “a kind of psychological fingerprint, distinctive for each person”. However, there is believed to be a distinction between a form of humour with universal appeal, which is recognized and enjoyed throughout the world, and other varieties of humour, which are typically only understood by a distinct group of individuals in certain cultural, linguistic or social contexts (see ibid.: 112 and Schmitz 2002: 93-110).

The appreciation of humour, however, does not only depend on the situation or context of its occurrence, but also on its specific form and function. In terms of its form, Wagner and Urios-Aparisi (2011: 400) observe that one can differentiate “between complex manifestations of humor that are associated with behaviors such as joking, teasing and humorous stories and simple phenomena such as irony or hyperbole that

generally can be reduced to the utterance stratum”. With reference to the functional component of humour, it is Schmitz (2002: 90) who observes that “humorous statements can have very different functions in spoken and written discourse [...]; some involve satire, a play on words, while others have as their target, [sic] criticism of either men or women or a particular group, nation or race.” Although humour can appear in various forms, within the field of humour research, however, the joke is deemed to be the primary object of study (see Wagner and Urios-Aparisi 2011: 400 and Schmitz 2002: 91).

Reasons for Using Humour in the EFL Classroom

The previous chapter has indicated that in the appreciation and production of jokes and other kinds of humour context plays a very vital role. In the classroom where humour is defined as “an act performed through linguistic and non-linguistic means by any of the participants”, i.e. students or teacher (Wagner and Urios-Aparisi 2011: 400), humour, too can occur in various forms and serve different purposes. While Schmitz (2002) analyses and proposes a division of classroom humour into three basic groups; universal, cultural and linguistic, other researchers have studied the effects of these various forms of humour on both teaching and learning. Wagner and Urios-Aparisi, for instance, summarize the results of previous studies on humour in classroom settings (2011: 403) and note that the teacher’s use of humour has been mostly linked to the issues of teaching effectiveness, student learning, classroom atmosphere, student motivation, the evaluation of teachers by students and teacher immediacy.

Although it has been almost impossible to measure the direct effects that humour has on students’ learning outcomes (see Wagner and Urios-Aparisi 2011: 403-404), researchers

nonetheless deduce many benefits of implementing humour in the classroom with regards to its effects on learning. Some of the most important arguments for using humour in foreign language teaching will be summarized in the following subsections.

Arguments of Language Acquisition

As the arguments from educational psychology have shown, humour can enhance learning processes in two ways: both directly, through emotional appeal and stimulation of our cognitive processes responsible for retention and memory, and indirectly, through the creation of a more positive classroom atmosphere which in turn proves conducive to learning. From a language-acquisition point-of-view, both these factors also play a very important role when it comes to determine the reasons for why humour should be used in the classroom.

The main argument for implementing humour in the foreign language classroom is based on Krashen's popular Input Hypothesis (1985), which he developed within the context of second-language learning in the later decades of the past century. According to Krashen, a student's feeling of anxiety builds up an affective filter, a mental block which makes the individual generally unreceptive to language input. Thus, the learner cannot utilize "the comprehensible input [he or she] receive[s] for language acquisition", which keeps him or her from making further progress in that specific target language (ibid.: 3).

Over the years, Krashen's *Affective Filter Hypothesis* has been verified by several scholars, including Horwitz et al. (1986) who examined the effects of student anxiety in foreign language classrooms. Their observations show that anxious students are "uniquely unable to deal with the task of language learning" (1986: 130) and they are more prone "to avoid attempting difficult or personal messages in the target language"

(ibid.: 126). Although anxiety is also experienced outside the foreign language classroom, most researchers seem to agree with Krashen that there is a distinct form of student anxiety that becomes increasingly apparent when learning a language (see Wagner and Urios-Aparisi 2011: 404 and Horwitz et al. 1986). To them, the fact that students are forced to communicate in a language which they cannot yet fully master or control seems to further reinforce an already stressful classroom situation. This perception becomes especially apparent in Dörnyei's publication (2001) on teaching motivation where he seems to be convinced that students learning a language experience a distinct and somewhat natural form of anxiety. To him, "the language classroom is an inherently face-threatening environment, with learners being expected to communicate using a severely restricted code" (ibid.: 91).

Tied to the students' experience of anxiety are usually even more severe consequences that many teachers often do not take into account. Anxiety and the students' inability to perform in a foreign language very often lead to bad test results and grades and the teacher's misinterpretation of the students' actual language ability, as highlighted by Horwitz et al (1986: 127):

The resulting poor test performance and inability to perform in class can contribute to a teacher's inaccurate assessment that the students lacks either some necessary aptitude for learning a language or sufficient motivation to do the necessary work for a good performance.

Due to these greater consequences and the vast degree of emotional stress that some students are claimed to experience while learning a language that is not native to them, it becomes particularly important for the teacher to employ specific techniques that help to create a more relaxed classroom

atmosphere and “allay students’ anxiety” (ibid.: 125). Humorous discourse employed by the teacher, either through humorous materials, infused in teacher-student interaction or as a general conversational tone among the students themselves hence becomes an effective classroom management tool that is able to dissolve an authoritative and tense classroom atmosphere.

In summary, from a language-acquisition point-of-view, there are good reasons for employing humour in the classroom for it can reduce foreign language anxiety and hence make the students more likely to participate in and become engaged with the target language. Thus, as Chabeli (2008: 55) correctly remarks, “[u]sing humor that is appreciated by learners can act as intrinsic motivator because it will elicit positive emotions while generating sustained interest and involvement in the construction of one’s own learning.”

DISCUSSION

Humour and classroom dynamics

Many researchers, and particularly Stephen Krashen, have written about the negative effects of anxiety on students' ability to learn. Using humour can play an important part in helping to relax students and help them overcome stress and nerves and so make them more receptive to learning. Humour can also help to improve the classroom atmosphere particularly for students who are worried about making mistakes or nervous about their speaking.

A Few Ideas for Employing Humour in Classroom

Here are a few ways in which The researcher have tried to integrate humour into her classes.

1. Telling a Joke

Just telling a joke can be a great listening activity for the students and really there's no need to prepare anything. Every joke comes

with its own comprehension task. If the listener laughs at the end of the joke then they have understood it.

These are examples of famous jokes:

a. A man asked for a meal in a restaurant. The waiter brought the food and put it on the table. After a moment, the man called the waiter and said:

"Waiter! Waiter! There's a fly in my soup!"
"Please don't speak so loudly, sir," said the waiter, "or everyone will want one."

b. What is the longest word in the English language?

"Smiles". Because there is a mile between its first and last letters!

c. There are 5 birds in a tree. A hunter shoots 2 of them dead. How many birds are left?

2 birds. The other 3 fly away!

d. An English teacher wrote these words on the whiteboard: "woman without her man is nothing". The teacher then asked the students to punctuate the words correctly.

The men wrote: "Woman, without her man, is nothing."

The women wrote: "Woman! Without her, man is nothing."

e. The woman was in bed with her lover and had just told him how stupid her Irish husband was when the door was thrown open and there stood her husband. He glared at her lover and bellowed, "What are you doing?" "There," said the wife, "didn't I tell you he was stupid?"

f. What's the definition of a pessimist?
A pessimist is a well-informed optimist.

g. Mark called in to see his friend Angus (a Scotman) to find he was stripping the wallpaper from the walls. Rather obviously,

he remarked "You're decorating, I see." to which Angus replied "No. I'm moving house." h. One day an Englishman, a Scotsman, and an Irishman walked into a pub together. They each bought a pint of Guinness. Just as they were about to enjoy their creamy beverage, three flies landed in each of their pints, and were stuck in the thick head. The Englishman pushed his beer away in disgust. The Scotsman fished the fly out of his beer, and continued drinking it, as if nothing had happened. The Irishman, too, picked the fly out of his drink, held it out over the beer, and started yelling, "SPIT IT OUT, SPIT IT OUT YOU BAS**RD!!!!"

i. A man was injected with a deadly poison, but, it did not kill him. Why?

He was already dead!

j. A Scottish farmer was in his field digging up his tatties (a Scots word for potatoes). An American farmer looked over the fence and said

"In Texas we grow potatoes 5 times larger than that!"

The Scotsman replied " Ah but we just grow them for our own mouths!"

k. 1st Eskimo: Where did your mother come from?

2nd Eskimo: Alaska

1st Eskimo: Don't bother, I'll ask her myself!

l. Charles was getting annoyed and shouted upstairs to his wife, " Hurry up or we'll be late."

"Oh, be quiet," replied his wife. "Haven't I been telling you for the last hour that I'll be ready in a minute?"

m. Five Englishmen boarded a train just

behind five Scots, who, as a group had only purchased one ticket. Just before the conductor came through, all the Scots piled into the toilet stall at the back of the car. As the conductor passed the stall, he knocked and called "Tickets, please!" and one of the Scots slid a ticket under the door. It was punched, pushed back under the door, and when it was safe all the Scots came out and took their seats. The Englishmen were tremendously impressed by the Scots' ingenuity. On the trip back, the five Englishmen decided to try this themselves and purchased only one ticket. They noticed that, oddly, the Scots had not purchased any tickets this time. Anyway, again, just before the conductor came through, the Scots piled into one of the toilet stalls, the Englishmen into the other. Then one of the Scots leaned out, knocked on the Englishmen's stall and called "Ticket, Please!" When the ticket slid out under the door, he picked it up and quickly closed the door

n. Why did the bald man paint rabbits on his head?

Because from a distance they looked like hares!

o. An English man and an Irish man are driving head on, at night, on a twisty, dark road. Both are driving too fast for the conditions and collide on a sharp bend in the road. To the amazement of both, they are unscathed, though their cars are both destroyed. In celebration of their luck, both agree to put aside their dislike for the other from that moment on. At this point, the Englishman goes to the boot and fetches a 12 year old bottle of whisky. He hands the bottle to the Irish man, whom exclaims, " may the Irish and the English live together forever, in peace, and harmony." The Irish man then tips the bottle and gulps half of the bottle down. Still flabbergasted over the whole thing, he goes to hand the bottle

to the Englishman, whom replies: " no thanks, I'll just wait till the Police get here!"

p. Why do cows have horns? Because their horns don't work!

q. There was a Scotsman, an Englishman and Claudia Schiffer sitting together in a carriage in a train going through Wales. Suddenly the train went through a tunnel and as it was an old style train, there were no lights in the carriages and it went completely dark. Then there was this kissing noise and the sound of a really loud slap. When the train came out of the tunnel, Claudia Schiffer and the Scotsman were sitting as if nothing had happened and the Englishman had his hand against his face as he had been slapped.

The Englishman was thinking: 'The Scottish fella must have kissed Claudia Schiffer and she missed him and slapped me instead.'

Claudia Schiffer was thinking: 'The English fella must have tried to kiss me and actually kissed the Scotsman and got slapped for it.'

And the Scotsman was thinking: 'This is great. The next time the train goes through a tunnel I'll make that kissing noise and slap that English b**tard again.'

r. What kind of ears does an engine have?
Engineers

s. Jim was speeding along the road one fine day when the local policeman, a friend of his, pulled him over. "What's wrong, Eric?" Jim asked. "Well didn't you know, Jim, that your wife fell out of the car about five miles back?" said Eric. "Ah, praise God!" he replied with relief. "I thought I'd gone deaf!"

t. How do you count a herd of cattle?

With a cowculator.

u. A Scots boy came home from school and told his mother he had been given a part in the school play. "Wonderful," says the mother, "What part is it?" The boy says "I play the part of the Scottish husband!" The mother scowls and says: "Go back and tell your teacher you want a speaking part."

v. An Irishman had no idea his wife was having an affair, so he was mad with grief when coming home early one day he surprised her and her lover in the act.

w. He grabbed a pistol and pointed it at his head, which made his wife burst out laughing.

"What do you think you're laughing at," he cried, "you're next."

x. An Englishman, roused by a Scot's scorn of his race, protested that he was born an Englishman and hoped to die an Englishman. "Man," scoffed the Scot, "hiv ye nae ambeetion (Have you no ambition)?"

y. Mike and his pregnant wife live on a farm in a rural area in the west of England. No running water, no electricity, etc. One night, Mike's wife begins to deliver the baby. The local doctor is there in attendance. "What d'ya want me to do, Doctor?" "Hold the lantern, Mike. Here it comes!" the doctor delivers the child and holds it up for the proud father to see.

"Mike, you're the proud father of a fine strapping boy." "Saints be praised, I..." Before Mike can finish the Doctor interrupts, "Wait a minute. Hold the lantern, Mike." Soon the doctor delivers the next child. "You've a full set now, Mike. A beautiful baby daughter."

"Thanks be to..."

Again the Doctor cuts in, "Hold the lantern,

Mike, Hold the lantern!" Soon the Doctor delivers a third child. The doctor holds up the baby for Mike's inspection.

"Doctor," asks Mike, "Do you think it's the light that's attracting them?"

- z. At an auction in Manchester a wealthy American announced that he had lost his wallet containing £10,000 and would give a reward of £100 to the person who found it.

From the back of the hall a Scottish voice shouted, "I'll give £150!"

- a. A customer ordered some coffee in a cafe. The waitress arrived with the coffee and placed it on the table. After a few moments, the customer called for the waitress "Waitress," he said, "there's dirt in my coffee!". "That's not surprising, sir, replied the waitress, "It was ground only half an hour ago."
- b. Two Americans are talking. One asks: "What's the difference between capitalism and communism?"

"That's easy" says the other one. "In capitalism man exploits man! In communism it is the other way around!"

- c. An English man, Irishman and a Scottishman are sitting in a pub full of people. The Englishman says, "The pubs in England are the best. You can buy one drink and get a second one free". Everyone in the pub agreed and gave a big cheer. The Scottishman says, ".yeah. That's quite good but in Scotland you can buy one drink and get another 2 for free." Again, the crowd in the pub gave a big cheer. The Irish man says "Your two pubs are good, but they are not as good as the ones in Ireland. In Ireland you can buy one pint, get another 3 for free and then get taken into the backroom for a shag"

The English says "WOW! Did that happen to you?" and the Irishman replies "No, but it happened to my sister."

- d. What's green and look's like a bucket?
A Green bucket

2. Translating a Joke.

Sometimes the researcher try to get students to translate jokes from their own country to retell in English. They can then either try telling them to me or their classmates or send them to one of the many joke websites on the Internet. Sometimes the researcher have got students to collect the jokes together to publish in a small class joke book.

3. Humour and Prejudice

Jokes and humour can form the basis of serious class discussions. Many jokes in many countries mask some quite negative underlying prejudices and stereotypes about people from different regions of the country bor different sectors of the society. Exploring these prejudices can be a first step towards overcoming them.

4. Quotes about Humour

Looking at quotes about humour can provide useful discussion for students. They can try to decide what they mean and which ones they agree with most, try to translate some from their own culture or even try to write their own.

Here are some examples.

- a. "He who laughs last laughs longest."
b. "Always leave them laughing."
c. "Friendship: a building contract you sign with laughter and break with tears."
d. "One can never speak enough of the virtues, the dangers, the power of shared laughter."
e. "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."
f. "Laughter is not at all a bad beginning for a friendship, and it is far the best ending for one."

- g. "If you can look into the mirror without laughter, you have no sense of humour."
h. "A person without a sense of humour is like a wagon without springs, jolted by every pebble in the road."

5. Joke Websites

As a reading activity the teacher could try getting the students to each look for one joke on a website that they like, try to memorise it and then come to class and tell it. Be sure though that the site teacher choose has jokes which are suitable for the types of class that teacher have, as many have 'adult' content on.

6. Video

If teacher have access to TV or video recordings of popular comedy programmes, these can form a fantastic resource for exploitation in the language class. They can be used in many ways, for general listening activities or you could just focus on one particular part and explore the humour. A lot of humour on TV is very rich in cultural references and this too can be an interesting, though very challenging area to explore.

When the laughter stop

One of the negative sides, particularly when the researcher have had younger or less mature students, of using humour in the classroom, is its potential to undermine my role as the manager of the class and my students' respect for me in that role. The researcher have tried to be very careful when creating a balance between providing an atmosphere that the students enjoy and feel relaxed working in and what can sometimes be a descent into chaos. The researcher haven't always been successful and have at times worked hard to re-establish the balance between enjoyment and getting some work done. Things have worked best when teacher have had specific times when humour has been appropriate, usually nearer the end of a class when things can bubble over into break times or home time.

Conclusion

The researcher think it's important to remember that not everyone is, can be or wants to be funny. As teachers researcher think we should, above all, genuinely be ourselves and if that doesn't include being a person who tells jokes then that is fair enough. researcher do believe though that there is a genuine need for our students to understand this integral part of the culture and language they want to understand and it is an important part of our role as teachers to help our students address this need.

Humour becomes both an effective memory aid and important learning tool for the students. As a trigger of amusement and laughter, on the other hand, humour works not only as a student motivator but it also creates a more relaxed and positive classroom atmosphere which in turn is beneficial for learning.

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