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# A sense of humor as an essential component of pedagogical optimism

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## ABSTRACT

The given article deals with the implementation of humor in teaching process. Advantages of the possession of sense of humor for FL teachers are illustrated via a wide range of authentic cases from teaching experience. The given cases are analyzed and suggestions are given. The importance of humor effect on learners` language acquisition and creating a friendly classroom atmosphere is considered.

**Keywords:** humor, pedagogical activity, creativity, unpredictable situations, motivation, language skills.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Today on our planet, there are many different languages, but English is the most common among them. Indeed, English is spoken today in almost all countries of the world; this language has become compulsory for study in our country.

English is the most popular foreign language in schools. The most prestigious universities in the world are English speaking. In countries where English is the second official language, students prefer to study in English. Knowledge of English provides an opportunity to get a good education and build a successful career. For this reason, the government of Uzbekistan attaches great importance to the fact that the people can freely express their thoughts, and have a clear conversation in this language. It is worth noting that not everyone is quick to learn this language, indeed it is not as easy as it seems in the description in some sources.

So, how to make the learning process more effective?

## 2. DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that education is a very serious matter, pedagogical trends in recent years have been striving to create a softer learning environment. In accordance with the currently prevailing teaching methods in education, it is believed that students will be much more motivated to learn if they are happy and cheerful than if they experience anxiety and fear. In accordance with this trend, many educators-theorists advise teachers to bring humor to the classroom: to tell about funny cases in the classroom, provide funny examples and illustrations, and encourage students to use humor frequently. Scientists suggest that humor in the classroom helps reduce tension, stress, anxiety and boredom, improves the relationship between the student and the teacher, weakens the students' fear of classes, makes learning pleasant, creating positive attitudes toward learning, stimulates interest and attention to the material taught, improves understanding, memorization, and promotes creativity. According to a survey between students, they showed that, a sense of humor is usually considered, one of the most desirable qualities of a successful teacher.

It is difficult to establish at what stage of development and for what reasons a person began to joke and what were his first jokes. However, it is well known that already in the first months of life, a child begins to smile, at first it seems, without any reason. Soon enough, a sense of humor also makes feel itself. Calling from time to time the cat drawn in the book “dog”, and the dog “pig”, getting a lot of

pleasure from the reaction of adults trying to explain to him who is who in reality, a small person wins a very important victory over a new stranger, full of strange and obscure objects by the world: he is already so oriented in him that he allows himself to deliberately “confuse” some of his realities.

For all its “frivolity,” humor is a serious condition for the normal functioning of human society and has a truly magical effect. A timely joke word helps to bear the pain of resentment and the bitterness of failure. A sense of humor is not among the abilities without which a person is not able to function normally (such as vision, hearing, ability to think), but it would hardly be an exaggeration to assume that a person endowed with a sense of humor sees in some cases a little more and hears a little better. Taking pleasure in a special kind from the opportunity to destroy the usual images of everyday life in the space of comic fantasy and create new constructions (pleasure, partly rooted in the realization that “destruction” occurs only in the imagination and you can always return everything to its place), a person thereby exercises those qualities and abilities that underlie “serious” creative activity.

As Mark Twain, the “father of humor” became the fundamental character who defined the humor as a necessary tool to hook his readers with, there are many interesting quotes said by him. For example his phrase: “It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and to remove all doubt” can freely be devoted to untactful people? Which has up-bringing, educational moral-message that can be used in class.

The possession of humor for a teacher is, first of all, the ability to improvise, maintain a friendly atmosphere in the classroom and interest in the subject. A teacher who skillfully uses various means of humor (proverbs, puns, historical jokes) thereby reduces tension in the lesson, refreshes attention, broadens the horizons of students and has an emotional effect on the audience. Often at conferences and congresses, participants begin a serious report with a fun parable. This invariably helps to win the benevolent attention of the audience not only by the power of arguments, but also by sparkling humor. [2, 56] More importantly for language learning, it has been shown that humor is able to provide cognitive stimulus (Forman, 2011), raise students’ awareness of language forms (Lucas, 2005), and/or encourage the use of linguistic skills in a creative manner (Powell & Andresen, 1985). When discussing their opinions on the more specific effects of humor on language teaching and learning, writers such as Berwald (1992), Deneire (1995) and Trachtenberg (1979) suggest that humor might be of value in developing vocabulary, fluency, and understanding of sociolinguistic rules and L2 cultural values.

Unfortunately, many people find humor and school incompatible. Teachers are suspicious of humor, fearing ridicule. According to pupils and students about humor, the division of humor into good and evil is clearly striking. Kind, according to the students, the teacher organizes, in order to relax, to be distracted so that the lesson does not seem boring and long. If the humor is connected with the topic of the lesson, it helps to learn the material better, since remembering what caused the laughter, students willingly or not remember the material with which it was associated. Scientists conducted a survey among students and teachers. Based on the data they received, they concluded that children appreciate humor at school more than their teachers, about seven times. Among the preferred qualities of a teacher, 35% of high school students surveyed named humor and only 5% of teachers. According to students, two minutes of a good laugh relieves tension in the lesson. There is nothing wrong with the fact that the students make fun of each other and the teacher, and the teacher, in turn, over the guys, but not abusing their position. It’s great when a teacher combines lesson and entertainment.

We tried to consider the importance of humor in the upbringing and education of young people, selectively interviewing senior students of secondary schools and second-year students of various specialties of higher educational institutions.

How important humor is in the educational process can be judged by the responses of students. To the question: “Is it necessary to apply humor in the classroom?” Of the 60 students surveyed, 70% answered positively, 10% answered negatively, and 20% said “I don’t know”. Of the same number of students, 34% answered positively, 25% negatively, and 41% did not know.

If you compare between the values obtained during the survey of students, you can see that humor is evaluated much more among students. This is due to the fact, that students perceive the occurring phenomena more consciously and are able to evaluate humor. But schoolchildren perceive everything at a more emotional level, often without thinking about the significance of certain phenomena.

As the prominent teacher of antiquity, Quintilian, emphasized: "Learning should be joyful." The work of teachers is sometimes filled with completely extraordinary and unpredictable situations. Often situations turn out to be complicated: tensions arise between the participants, which can be caused by misunderstanding of each other, rejection of the partner's positions, group egoism, and adverse conditions. Turning to humor in such situations helps to wittily solve many complex problems, mitigate interpersonal misunderstandings between the teacher and students, without prejudice to the dignity of both. Therefore, humor is so necessary in the teaching profession.

It is important to note several points on how humor affects the quality of students' education: 1) Due to optimism and a sense of humor, the teacher can raise the mood of the student as a whole, adjust him to the right mood before starting the lesson. Therefore, by entering the classroom, the teacher can smile, give a joke or ask something funny. That is, set a positive tone for the work! 2) Jokes, funny videos, films and pictures develop the creativity, cognition of students, give them new ideas and can be used as the basis for many subsequent tasks; 3) Humor is effectively used in consolidating the material of the lesson - it will help to get away from boring questionnaires or repetitions, it is better to pick up a funny video topic, find a suitable funny story and conduct quest / quiz / jeopardy etc, the repeated material will be remembered much easier and faster; 4) Humor can become material for any part of the activity (warm-up, follow-up, feedbacks, discussions, grammar practice, vocabulary and reading practice, role plays for freer practice etc.) It all depends on the teacher's desire to be creative in the lesson; 5) Laughter and jokes are able to relieve tension in a conflict situation, the teacher, with the help of an appropriate joke or funny story from life can turn a quarrel or misunderstanding into the right direction; 6) Humor is also a way of retaining, concentrating students' attention during a long or tiring lesson, exam or, say, not the most interesting topic, for example, grammar. Therefore, in such situations, humor is an assistant in motivating students, their peculiar discharge; 7) Laughing, students, especially adolescents, can more easily overcome excessive agitation and restlessness or an aggressive, depressed or depressed state due to failures at school, family or with friends; 8) Emotional discharge also performs an educational function, forming and developing positive character traits of students. [1,45]

Here we want to share an example of the use of humor for educational purposes. For instance, a physics teacher, explaining the connection of such concepts as "distance", "speed of motion" and "time", tells the following story: The fabulist Aesop, following once from Athens, met a tired traveler. "How many hours are from here to Athens?" - he asked in a hoarse voice. Aesop did not answer him. The traveler angrily sniffed and trudged on. Then Aesop called to him: "Hey! Two hours." Traveler: "Why didn't you answer right away?" Aesop: "But how did I know how fast you walk?" [3, 12]

As you can see, the teacher uses a vivid example of a joke to make it easier for students to remember new material.

And here is an example of the use of an anecdote for educational purposes: in response to the student's accusations of nit-picking and understating, the teacher calmly replies: "You, Ivan, remind me of the hero of a joke: "The son is a poor student and always insists that the teacher is finding fault with him. Finally, father and son went to school. The father asks the teacher: "Why are you picking on my son?" - "Find fault? He doesn't know anything. Look here. What will be three times seven?" - "See, papa, he's starting again!" The students laugh, and the ashamed debater falls silent. [3,23]

As it can be seen from the example, the teacher did not scandal, but stopped the conflict in an original way.

Thus, as a result of the study, we can conclude that humor is present in the speech of teachers who use it for various purposes, often educational. There are many different genres of humor, of which you can hear a joke in the lesson. However, some of the teachers' jokes cannot be called appropriate, as they can offend the student. In addition, most teachers do not consider humor to be a positive effect on the learning process, while students wait for the teacher to have a funny word, considering humor to be an assistant in memorizing complex material or in resolving a conflict situation. And - most importantly - you need to learn humor, like any other skill.

At the same time, one should not forget that the use of humor requires a high culture. Satire and parody are limited in their use, and their ill-conceived use can cause a reaction opposite to expected. So, for example, parody per student with disabilities or with unusual not only pedagogically ineffective, but, first of all, are a violation of ethical standards. Of course, in all the cases mentioned, it may be a

comic effect has been achieved, but from the position of the educational goals of the lesson, this negatively affects the educational process. Since the quality of jokes and their focus affect the overall image of the teacher, and also serve as an example for students.

The task of humor in pedagogical activity is to show students a positive type of thinking, and not teach evil ridicule, especially at the expense of the weak and those who cannot answer. Among the ethical rules for the use of humor in pedagogical practice are the following: 1) you should not laugh at your own joke, especially the first; 2) it is impossible to humiliate a person and make fun of that which he cannot change; 3) when pronouncing a joke related to the character of the student, one should predict a possible reaction. So, a joke can be perceived as an attempt to offend or humiliate, can "hurt the living" and it depends on the inner world and the mood of the joke's object. Therefore, the study of the personality of students is the first stage of pedagogical use of humor; 4) the teacher must be ready to respond kindly to the joke, pronounced by students, to be able to laugh together and even at themselves; 5) jokes should not violate the distance between the teacher and students, form "Familiarity" relations.

The laughter in the work of the teacher is opposed to the authoritarian pedagogical action. It allows you to move from subject-object relations between teaching body and student to the subjective-subjective, allowing more diverse and deep affect all participants in communication. As O.A. Sergeev notes, wit is an innate quality, and a sense of humor that can be formed. Thus, proficiency in tricks and humor can be learned, an important role in this is played by the motivation of the teacher, his desire to make a change in their activities. [3,27]

Currently, humor plays an important role in English language learning. Teachers are trying to shed light on modern teaching formula. They consider humor a fruitful technique to make classroom learning successful. Hunsaker, (1988) tied second language learning and fun in the same frame. His argument revealed that humor can create a strong learning atmosphere which will increase the receptivity of the secondary learners. He tries to express that learning a language requires more innovation [4.285]

Let's consider humor in Second Language Grammar. Grammar is a part and parcel of a language. Previously in GTM (Grammar Translation Method) grammar was taught deductively. Freeman, (2000) mentioned that students used to study grammar deductively; they were given the rule first and later apply on examples [7.18]. Additionally, Scrivener, (1994) said that only learning grammar rules do not ensure learning grammar. [10.157] Therefore, nowadays teachers use humor in teaching grammar through inductive method (First talk about examples then rules) to make learning enjoyable. Sometimes teachers show hilarious pictures like cartoons related to grammar items in second language classroom. Once again, Hunsaker (1988) proposed a valuable solution that teachers can hang several billboards in the classroom filled up grammar items with humors. [8.285] Students can take a glance and look at those during break time.

It should be mentioned that, by using humor teachers teach English language grammatical items like parts of speech, intonation, paragraph writing, tense, phonology, morphology, syntax etc. The writer Askildson (2005) pointed out some of the examples that can lead to successful second language learning. "He suggests humor as a formidable tool for sensitizing students to phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic differences within a single language or between a student's L1 and the TL" [4.49]. He mainly talked about some linguistics elements' examples those lead to successful learning with humor. For example: "An American in a British hospital asks the nurse: "Did I come here to die?" The nurse answers, "No, it was yesterdie." [4. 50]

The example depicts phonological difference between British and Australian accent. Due to accent difference, both speakers might get confused. Therefore, this kind of humorous dialogue teachers' can use and help learners to understand the difference of accent. Sometimes teachers might act upon a dialogue or share his/her own jokes in class. They must have the idea in which situation a humor should be used. For example a teacher teaches "Comma" in the class. An example from (Oxford Royale Academy, 2016): Let's eat grandma - Let's eat, grandma. [6.]

The sentence teaches the importance of putting a comma in the right place. The first portion indicates that the speaker will eat his/her grandmother, while the other suggests having lunch/dinner with grandmother. These types of funny samples can avoid monotony of learning English grammar.

Another grammatical item like pronoun, teachers can also apply funny jokes or riddles. These sets of humor can help the students get an idea regarding the agenda of class. Teachers can show hilarious

examples and might ask them to do brainstorm. In case of teaching pronoun an example from (Buzz Feed, 2017) Teacher “Name two pronouns”. I said, “Who Me”

Currently, many ESL (English as Second Language) teachers try various humors in teaching grammar items like dependent/independent clause, verb to be and many more. Minchew (2001) discovered some metaphors to teach clause such as “Family”. He compared the dependent clause with teenage members. On the other side, adults were classified as independent clause [5.60-61]. These kinds of chunk help to relate the topic with ease.

Furthermore, in case of another grammar topic “Verb to Be” ESL teachers also apply humor. For example (Jarrett, The Internet TSEL Journal, 1998-2011) mentioned:

ESL teacher: You must never begin a sentence "I is ...". Clever student: Please sir, what's wrong with "I is a vowel". [4.61]

If teachers share these kinds of funny jokes in lectures then there is a glimpse that students might get motivated to know more English language jokes. Gradually, genuine love, passion and dedication might arise among learners to know English Language culture. In addition, humor more or less influences learners to communicate in English outside the classroom. In reality, the observation says there is a mixed reaction. Generally, in leisure time students tend to use their mother tongue. Very few use the target language. To motivate students to use English Language, different types of motivation quotes can work. Teachers should hang various eye catching pictures in school corridors as a possible solution for this issue.

Students like pictures a lot. A colorful classroom is always attractive to students. Humorous pictures are a good source to teach English language in the classroom. Definitely, a single picture can give birth to thousand new ideas. Skills are very important facts because a person is competent enough in a language if he/she is equally capable of four skills (Reading, writing, speaking and listening). For that reason, bright colorful pictures can play the central role to generate ideas for writing skill. Wright (1989) explained that indeed what we see plays profound role in affecting us and to give us information. Therefore, those lovely pictures help us to think, to deduce and guide us to give a shape of our thinking via writing. Along with writing skill, different types of humorous shows are also considered a guide book to practice speaking and listening skill. The result is more or less the same

In fact, according to researcher, various types of humorous shows help to practice these skills. Moreover, teachers can play humorous video like “Mind Your Language” in classroom via multimedia. These sorts of visualizations are viewed as authentic materials. Different types of comic books are really a good source to nurture reading skill. Comics are loved by all kids. By reading subconsciously they are making themselves competent in reading skill. Balcikanli (2009) referred that language teachers can be easily benefitted from You Tube [9.45]. They can let learners practice via reading comprehension which leads to work on writing skill as well.

Humor portrays teachers’ personality in a classroom environment. In reality, students tend to like those teachers who usually refer about jokes, funny stories or riddles in between lectures. Monotonous lecture makes the classroom environment gloomy, whereas students want diversity in learning. As Simin&Ketabi (n.d.) mentioned that humorous course material certainly add variation in lecture. Therefore, it leads to a productive classroom discussion. Nevertheless, teachers have to be extra careful while delivering the humor. Very often too much laughter leads to chaos. Consequently, students grant the course too lightly. Teachers fail to maintain the authority of the classroom. Surely, humor reduces the authoritarian position in classroom, but still teachers should maintain his/her personality. Humor aids to build a good association with teachers. According to classroom observation, students feel free to ask for any inquiries, their state of mind feels relaxed which helps to capture input easily.

On the other contrary humor sometimes leaves adverse effect in learning. Sometimes teachers unintentionally hurt students’ ego and culture as well. As a consequence, it sometimes creates a distance and dislike for certain group of teachers. Foreign teachers should take care of this issue whenever they teach outside their region. They can refer to their culture in classroom before they share any humor. Thus, both participants can grow the sense of culture ethnocentrism.

Above and all humor is an important issue. It has some social, pedagogical, cognitive values in educational sector. Humor can be a fundamental tool for maximum learning if a teacher makes the best and appropriate use of it. Also, it needs to recall that much humor might adversely affect the learning and

teacher's personality. The primary goal should always be a successful teaching plan, with humor being used to help and facilitate the leaning process. The benefits are quite visible from the findings presented by the researcher. Correct use of humor can reduce tension/anxiety among students, as well as between students and the teacher. It can help to stimulate creative thinking and expression of ideas. It can also help promote cooperation and solidarity when students are working in groups. A humorous example can help students better understand of classroom topics.

However, the pitfalls of using incorrect or excessive humor should also be considered carefully by teacher. Using too much humor is not a wise job as students could start to take things lightly. This could also waste valuable class time. Inappropriate humor, such as remarks that may be sexist, racist, biased or hurtful in any way should be avoided by the teacher.

While teachers should be free to use humor as part of the classroom teaching strategy it should be used appropriately. It is a valuable tool that builds communication skills and aids in learning (particularly language learning) for students, as long it is utilized effectively by the teacher.

### 3. CONCLUSION

We would like to say that humor in the work of a teacher is of fundamental importance, since the mission of modern education is not only to transfer knowledge. Modern teachers a representative of the educational system of the country, its region and educational institution, the training of professionals in their field and Permanent members of society. Thus, a modern teacher of higher education is inconceivable without a creative composition-expressing his activity, which, inter alia, manifests itself in humor. He himself being cheerful and optimistic, ignites students with his activity. While annoyed and chronically displeased teacher provokes internal protest and student resistance. A teacher with a sense of humor is associated with students with strength and confidence in the future. Laughter allows you to democratize pedagogical communication, to avoid conflict situations bypassing the "sharp corners" of communication. Using jokes allows you to adequately get out of difficult situations, to avoid conflicts, discuss contradictions, the task of the teacher in this aspect is to demonstrate students a positive approach to life and the importance of humor in every sphere of life.

The research has shown that the use of humor may affect learner motivation and friendly classroom atmosphere, which are the key points of any teaching philosophy.

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Жалилова Лола Жалиловнанинг 10.00.04 – Европа, Америка ва Австралия халқлари тили ва адабиёти ихтисослигида филология фанлари бўйича фалсафа доктори (PhD) илмий даражасини олиш учун ёзган «A sense of humor as an essential component of pedagogical optimism» мавзусидаги диссертацияси юзасидан чоп эттирган илмий мақоласига ҳамкорлик қилган муаллиф- Ражабов Ахтам Ўктамовичнинг

### РОЗИЛИК ХАТИ

Мен Жалилова Лола Жалиловна билан «A sense of humor as an essential component of pedagogical optimism» мавзусидаги илмий мақолани ҳамкорликда ёзиб, International Journal on Integrated Education Issue:III Volume:3, March 2020 p-ISSN: 2615-3785; e- ISSN: 2620-3502 Impact Factor 5.08 (IJE has Thomson Reuters Research ID: G-6934-2015 indexed with CNKI, google Scholar, Academia, Scribd, Slideshare, Bibsonomy) журналида чоп эттиришда ҳаммуаллифлик қилганман ва бу маволадан диссертант ўз тадқиқотида фойдаланишига розиман, қаршилик билдирмайман.



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