



Use of humour as a motivator in ESL classrooms

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to contribute to the existent area of research on use of humour as a motivator in ESL classrooms through analyzing the teachers' and students' perspectives. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to gain data for the study. The first source of data in the study was interviews. The sample group of six English teachers in three selected government schools in Southern Province took part in semi structured interviews. The second source of data was a survey. The sample group of survey consists of sixty students of Grade 9, 10 and 11 in three selected government schools. The study revealed that the employment of humour in the process of teaching learning process brings significant advantages to both teacher and learner. Mainly, the study revealed the important role of humour in motivating ESL learners in learning and improving their performance and ESL teachers in teaching the second language. According to this research, humour creates fun and amusement through the use of funny songs, games, funny stories, puns and jokes and they assist in motivating or encouraging, explaining the lesson, reducing anxiety and drawing students' attention. The results of this study overwhelmingly confirm that there is a perceived productiveness and effectiveness of humor in the use of pedagogical process in ESL classrooms.

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1. Introduction

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, "humor is the quality of something that makes it funny or amusing". The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines humor as the "mental faculty of discovering, expressing or appreciating something that is comical, amusing, or absurdly incongruous". According to these definitions, it is clear that humor depends on the parties who take part in a conversation and therefore humor can be explicated as a quality perceived by participants as humorous in any communication act.

Students' motivation naturally has to do with students' desire to participate in the learning process (Lumsden; 1994) ^[26]. In ESL classrooms, humor can be used as one of the best triggers to motivate students in ESL learning and teachers in ESL teaching. Boredom may be the largest pedagogical obstacle to teaching (Hackathorn, Garczynski, Blankmeyer, Tennial, and Solomon citing Smith), thus, one of the best ways to increase students' enthusiasm in learning English is by using humor in ESL classrooms. In the CR, humor can create a cheerful learning climate, enhance social bonding through increased student-instructor interaction, add variety to lectures, decrease test anxiety and provide enjoyment and laughter. (Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977) ^[22].

Humor as a motivator in ESL classrooms has been explored in a series of studies. For instance, students' interest is one of the important elements to stimulate their learning of the English language. (Amjah, 2014) ^[2]. Ziyaeemehr indicates that the use of humor has several benefits in language learning environment.

Psychologically, it motivates, relaxes and cheers up the learners. Socially, it attracts attention, affiliates and enhances students' participation in classroom activities. Instructionally, it is likely to promote understanding and learning of a second language and enhance retention of the material. Godfrey (1953) ^[17] indicates that "being an intellectual thing, may even be incompatible with humor, which seems to be an affair of the heart as much as of the head".

Since, humor is considered significant as a motivator in ESL classrooms, this project aims to find out both teachers' and students' perspectives of using humor as a motivator in ESL classrooms.

The researcher, being in the field as an ESL teacher, found that one of the most considerable problems in an ESL classroom is that the learners are easily distracted and deviated from the lesson because they do not have interest and motivation to participate in the lesson. Without the required interest and motivation, learners do not pay attention to the lesson and because of that, they show weak memory in that particular lesson. Therefore, the study aims to address this problem by attempting to find both students' and teachers' perspectives about using humor as a motivator in ESL classrooms.

Considering the above, the research questions are

1. What are the various ways which English language teachers and students perceive the use of humor in ESL classrooms?
2. What is the perceived impact of humor on students' performances in ESL classrooms?
3. Do teachers reach lesson objectives when using humor in ESL classrooms?

When considering the objectives, there is one general objective

1. To investigate the various ways which English language teachers and students perceive the use of humor in ESL classrooms?

And, there are two specific objectives

1. To investigate the perceived impact of humor on students' performances in ESL classrooms.
2. To investigate whether teachers find it easy to reach lesson objectives when using humor in ESL classrooms.

1.1. Definitions of humor

What is humorous is subjective and varies from person to person. According to the Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, "humor is the quality of something that makes it funny or amusing". The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines humor as "the mental faculty of discovering, expressing or appreciating something that is comical, amusing, or absurdly incongruous". (Andarab and Multu, 2019 citing Martin and Lefcourt) ^[3] defined "a sense of humor in terms of the frequency with which a person smiles, laughs, and otherwise displays happiness or laughter in different situations". Further, taking interest in using humor in language teaching, humor can be put into words as teacher- or student-triggered endeavor to generate laughter and amusement in the CR. According to these definitions, it is understandable that humor relies on the parties who contribute to the conversation and therefore humor can be interpreted as a quality perceived by participants as humorous in any communication act.

1.2. Definitions of motivation

Motivation is a notional conviction that come up with the inducement for the human beings to react and bring to fruition their needs. Previously, there was no proper definition for motivation in education (Gopalan, V. AbuBakar, J.A. Zulkifli, A.N. Mat, C.R, 2017) ^[18], but by now, there are standard dictionary and scholarly definitions for that. Brophy (1979) ^[10] defined motivation as a "theoretical concept that is used to explain the beginning, direction, force and insistence of goal-oriented behavior". The Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary defines motivation as a "feeling of wanting to do something, especially, something that involves hard work and effort". According to the Macmillan Dictionary, "humor is a feeling of enthusiasm or interest that makes you determined to do something". Motivation has long been recognized as one of the main components that has an effect on English language learning (Gardner, 1985) ^[16]. Learning and motivation have the same gravity in order to achieve something. According to Wimolmas (2013) ^[39], "learning makes us gain new knowledge and skills and motivation pushes us or encourages us to go through the learning process".

1.3. Humor as a pedagogical tool in education

Humor as a strong, powerful pedagogical tool in education, gives assistance to accomplish heterogeneous communicative, social and academic goals and to assist establish a productive and prolific learning atmosphere. It is generally believed that humor is beneficial and is often considered as a best practice by effective teachers and educationists. (Hackathorn, Garczynski, Blankmeyer, Tennial and Solomon). For instance, "students who listened to pre-recorded statistics lectures containing humor remembered significantly more material than the students who heard the exact same lecture, from the same professor, without humor".

(Hackathorn, Garczynski, Blankmeyer, Tennial and Solomon citing Garner). Thus, it is clear that the effectiveness of using humor in a classroom is immeasurable. "The use of humor in the classroom has been suggested to increase instructional effectiveness" (Ziyaemehr citing Wanzer; Deiter; Kher *et al*), "increase message persuasiveness" (Ziyaemehr citing Booth – Butterfield and Wanzer), "create an enjoyable and more relaxed classroom environment" (Ziyaemir citing Kher *et al*; Neuliep), "increase student motivation" (Ziyaemir citing McCroskey, *et al*; Gorham and Christophel) and "can be used as a means clarifying course material". (Ziyaemir; citing Downs, Javindi and Nussbaum). Humor can be categorized according to its inherent difficulty for language learners and he advocates what types of humor to be employed to teach English to students of low, intermediate, and advanced proficiency in the target language. He classifies humor as universal or reality-based, culture-based and linguistic or word-based humor.

1.4. What is motivation in ESL CRS?

Motivation is a consequential constituent in any learning environment. According to Amjah (2014) ^[2], motivation has a significant role in success and failure in learning a second language. Spolsky states that motivated learners are seemed to learn more and learn more quickly and speedily than the learners who are less motivated. At times, the learners who are less motivated seem to lose their attention and awareness, misbehave and put basis to cause discipline problems.

(Wimolmas, 2013) ^[39]. On the contrary, Wimolmas (2013) ^[39] states that learners who are more highly motivated will get involved in actively and pay more attention to a certain learning task or activity.

Interest is one of the strongest motivations for learning English. "Motivation has long been identified as one of the main factors affecting English language learning". (Amjah, 2014 citing Gardner, 1985) ^[2, 16]. Both learning and motivation have the same import in order to consummate something. Learning makes us obtain new, fresh knowledge and skills and motivation pushes us or encourages us to go through the learning process (Wimolmas, 2013) ^[39].

Amjah (2014) ^[2] citing Ellis stated that "as teachers, we need to explore more fully the factors that are involved in motivating students to perform tasks well because this is something that teachers have some control over". Therefore, it is better to search out the fundamental feasible elements in which have effect on the learners' motivation and interest in learning English (Wimolmas, 2013) ^[39]. "Research has shown that factors such as positive students' and teachers' attitudes, which are interrelated to motivation, must be sustained for successful transfer of language learning". (Amjah citing Finnocchiaro; Ngeow).

Motivation is a topic that is close to every teacher's heart, one that comes up very often when they talk about their students. According to Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) ^[19], those who have had years of teaching experience would say without hesitation that learner motivation is central to any kind of learning, and plays a particularly important role in language learning. Teachers know who is motivated and who is not so motivated, and associate the former with greater success in language learning.

1.5. Implementation of humor to motivate learners

In ESL CRs, humor can be executed in many ways such as the subject of the lesson, focus of the lesson, tasks and activities used during the lesson and for different reasons. Deneire states that "the advantage of humor is that it could be used in accordance with any language teaching approach or method. Humorous material should be planned and organized beforehand but yet should give students the impression of being spontaneous". Believes that humorous discourse should bring to the table from the primary stage of language directive and continue of all through the language syllabus or curriculum. He supports the idea that humor resource should be selected in a way to improve the linguistic competence of learners.

Ocon (2015) ^[32] states that teachers should have an open-mind about what is entertaining and look for possibilities to assimilate humor into their courses. Various class assignments, activities and themes can be employed to integrate humor in the CR. He further explains that "instructors might consider implementing humor into the classroom gradually and experiment with a given topic or course initially. Just as becoming a competent teacher takes years, integrating humor effectively into an instructor's teaching style also takes time. In terms of implementing humor in the language CR, the teacher should be well aware of the humor styles".

According to Martin et al, there are four specific humor styles

1. Affiliative humor
2. Self-enhancing humor

3. Aggressive humor
4. Self-defeating humor

1.6. Benefits of using humor in ESL CRs

There are lots of benefits that could be gained from the incorporation of humor in teaching of ESL. Generally, speaking a sense of humor assists to keep the CR environment live and it helps reduce anxiety by producing a free and easy atmosphere. (Olajoke, 2013) ^[33]. Garner found that the learners who took heed of the pre-recorded statistics lectures containing humor significantly committed to more memory than the students who listened to the exact same lecture, from the same professor, without humor.

"For a dreaded course like English especially in an ESL environment, humor can help increase motivation, self-confidence and bridge gap between teachers and students. Through this, the students can maximize ESL lessons through easy understanding and long term retention".

(Olajoke, 2013 citing Glenn) ^[33]

1.7. The effect of humor on language learners

Next, so many scholars have focused their attention on the psychological and physiological effects of humor on language learners. Berk (1998) ^[6] spells out that CRs in which humor is mingled in the process of learning are likely to slash anxiety, relieve stress, develop self-esteem, and grow self-motivation. A great number of scholars (e.g., Askildson, 2005; Garner; Oxford) ^[4] similarly declare the significance of humor and its potentiality to pave the way for enhancing learning and lowering anxiety, and arguing in favor of a relaxing and psychologically secure, and encouraging CR atmosphere that is likely to reassure risk-taking, and enhance learners' motivation and self-confidence. According to Garner the implementation of contextually appropriate humor has been pointed to refine the CR atmosphere and alleviate the process of language learning, preparing the individuals to discern information or circumstances with a new standpoint perhaps leading to fresh insights. In terms of physiological effects, Berk (1998) ^[6] assets that humor helps maximize blood circulation, lower pulse rate and blood pressure, oxygen levels in the blood, cause endorphins to be released into the bloodstream. Garner maintains that,

"The application of contextually suitable humor has been indicated to improve the classroom atmosphere and ease the process of language learning, paving the way for the individuals to perceive information or circumstances with a new perspective perhaps leading to fresh insights".

2. Research methodology and sample

2.1. Data Collecting Techniques

For a reliable, systematic, and a valid result, the researcher employed mixed method as the data collecting technique. "Researchers increasingly have used mixed- method techniques to expand the scope of, and deepen their insights from, their studies". (Sandelowski). The teacher participants were qualitatively interviewed and the student participants were provided with quantitative surveys.

Table 1: Methodology

Mixed Method	
Qualitative Interview (For teachers)	Quantitative survey (For students)

2.1.1. Interview

Qualitative approach can be defined as an appropriate strategy to know one's perspectives and experiences about something, as "it begins with individuals and sets out to understand and interpret their experiences of a particular phenomenon". (Cohen *et al*). According to Merriam, (1998: citing Ohata), the use of interviews as a data collection tool is convenient and much fitting in qualitative data collection as it can provide access to things that cannot be directly observed, such as feelings, thoughts, intentions, or beliefs. It also provides participants with opportunities to select, reconstruct, and reflect upon details of their experience within the specific context of their lives. Since one of the main focuses of this study was on finding out the teachers' perspectives on using humor as a motivator in ESL CRs, interviews were used as one of the main sources of finding data for this study, as interviews seemed appropriate means to understand the perspectives and attitudes of the teachers on using humor in ESL CRs, because there is enough space for flexibility and clarification of the information.

Thus, a qualitative research technique will be employed in this study. All the teachers' interviews were semi structured interviews. This questionnaire for the interview has the characteristic of being based on a previous study questionnaire of (Askildson, 2005) ^[4] which was partially modified.

2.1.2. Survey

Accordingly, in addition to semi structured interviews, the other technique employed by the researcher in collecting data for this study was quantitative survey. According to Statswork website (2018-2019), "quantitative data help produce conclusive evidence for proving or disproving a hypothesis. These methods give us data that is easy to understand, compare and draw conclusive evidence". Thus, employing quantitative survey method to collect data for this study provided the researcher with the opportunity to simply find out the perspectives of using humor as a motivator in ESL CRs of the students in one junior secondary grade (9) and two upper secondary grades (10,11) CRs.

Furthermore, this survey was a modified version of the previous research questionnaire of (Askildson, 2005) ^[4]. 60 questionnaires were distributed among the 60 students of the selected government schools in Southern Province. The

students were asked to underline their response regarding the use of humor in ESL CRs.

In summary, this research study employed the mixed method which contains both semi structured interviews and quantitative surveys as data collecting tools, to offer a systematic, reliable and a valid study to answer the following research questions,

1. What are the various ways which English language teachers and students perceive the use of humor in ESL classrooms?
2. What is the perceived impact of humor on students' performances in ESL classrooms?
3. Do teachers reach lesson objectives when using humor in ESL classrooms?

3. Research Sample

The researcher randomly selected three schools; a girls' school, a boys' school and a mixed school from Southern Province, Sri Lanka in order to select both teacher participants and student participants for the study. The student participants for the study were selected from grade 9 in the girls' school; grade 10 in the boys' school and grade 11 in the mixed school. 20 students from the girls' school, 20 students from the boys' school and another 20 students from the mixed school were randomly selected from each grade in each school. The reason behind choosing grade 9, 10 and 11 for the quantitative survey was that the researcher wanted to gather true and accurate data in order to make the study more realistic and systematic and the researcher believed that the students in the selected grades would express themselves genuinely. Altogether 60 student participants from the selected grades in selected schools were provided the quantitative questionnaire. Accordingly, the researcher selected school settings and the participants based on the assumption that they will enable to answer the survey.

Next, the research sample of this study consisted of 6 ESL teacher participants from the same three schools in the Southern Province. Two ESL teacher participants were selected from the same girls' school, 2 ESL teachers from the same boys' school and another 2 ESL teachers from the mixed school. Altogether 6 ESL teachers were qualitatively interviewed with the intention of gathering practical and authentic data for the study.

Altogether 66 participants were chosen for this study (60 student participants and 6 ESL teacher participants) and the researcher employed random sampling in conducting the study. Accordingly, the researcher selected the school settings and the participants based on the assumption that they will enable to answer the research questions.

The composition of the 66 participants for the study is given in the following table

Table 2: The composition of the participants

66 Participants	
20 students	2 ESL teachers – from the girls' school
20 students – from the boys' school	2 ESL teachers – from the boys' school
20 students – from the mixed school	2 ESL teachers- from the mixed school

3.1. Research Procedure

3.1.1. Interviews

This study adopts the method of deductive qualitative content analysis. A total of six interviews were conducted between September 2019 and November 2019. In conducting the

interviews, the researcher used the semi-structured interview format. While the participation in the interviews was absolutely voluntary, the consent of the participants was obtained to audio record the interviews and they were informed that the confidentiality of the participants will be

assured and once the transcription is done the audio recordings will be deleted adhering to the ethics, linked to research studies of this nature. All the interviewees signed an informed consent form (see appendix C) before participating. The participants were asked to use Sinhala or English during the interviews based on their convenience. At the beginning of each interview the participants were requested to provide a brief introduction of themselves. This primarily included their basic information. Each interview lasted for 15-20 minutes. The researcher also occasionally paraphrased the statements by the participants to ensure accuracy. (Hettiarachchi, 2013)^[21]. Consequently, attempts were made to identify possible themes and patterns, because in qualitative research, data analysis is an-iterative process, not a linear process following the collection of data. (Hettiarachchi, 2013 citing Lichtman)^[21]. Therefore, once the interviews were conducted, the researcher transcribed the interviews and noted down the codes. Once the initial coding was done the researcher started organizing those codes into related categories. Some codes were identified as major topics at this stage while several others were organized under a few major topics (Hettiarachchi citing Lichtman). The process was repeated several times to note if there were any redundancies on the list and to ensure that significant themes related to the study were not ignored since one of the most important parts of a qualitative data analysis is discovering themes. In addition, the interview participants were given pseudonyms in the results and discussion section.

3.1.2. Survey

For the descriptive analysis, the quantitative data gathered through the survey questionnaires was analyzed using the Microsoft Excel 2010. In analyzing the general results of the sixty questionnaires, a quantitative (frequency) analysis was used. The questionnaires were distributed after a short oral description and explanation by the researcher. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire to the best of their ability if they chose to participate, or to simply leave it blank if they chose not to participate. The questions had the Sinhala translations printed to enable the respondents to understand the questions better. The data of all the thirteen questions of the questionnaire was analyzed by calculating the percentage of students' answers to each question. To the question "How would you rate your ESL teacher in terms of his/her overall effectiveness as a teacher?", students are divided into five groups depending on how many students answered "Totally ineffective", "Slightly ineffective", "Moderately effective", "Effective", "Extremely effective". Referring to the items "How often (on average) does your teacher use humor (i.e. jokes, witticisms, humorous facial expressions, funny stories, etc.) during each class session?", students are divided into five groups on the base of the students who answered, "Uses no humor", "1-3 times", "4-7 times", "8-11 times", "12 times or more". Next, I calculated the percentage of learners who answered, "None", "A little", "About half", "Most" and "All" to the question "How much of the humor used by your language teacher is related or relevant to classroom subject matter?". To the question "To what degree does humor make you feel more relaxed (i.e. less anxious) in your language classroom?", students are divided into five groups depending on how many students answered,

"Increases anxiety", "No effect", "Slightly relaxed", "Noticeably relaxed", "Considerably relaxed". I calculated the percentage of the fifth question "To what degree does humor in the second language increase your interest in learning that language?", depending on the students' answers "Decrease in interest", "No increase", "Slight increase", "Noticeable increase", "Considerable increase". To the next question, "Do you feel that your teacher's use of humor makes him/her more approachable in class?", students are divided into five groups depending on their answers, "Less approachable", "No effect", "Slightly more", "More approachable", "Considerably more". Referring to the items, "Do you feel that humor generally improves your ability to learn the language in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment overall?", students are divided into five groups on the base of students' percentage who answered "Decrease learning", "No effect", "Slight improvement", "Improvement", "Considerable improvement". I divided the students into five groups depending on the answers "Never", "1-2 times", "3-4 times", "5-6 times", "7 times or more" for the question "How often does your teacher use actual words and/or other elements of a humorous example in second language (i.e. a joke, pun, comic strip, funny story, etc.) to illustrate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or any other particularity of the language during a typical class?". Next I calculated the percentage of the learners who answered "Not at all", "Very little", "Somewhat", "Noticeably", "Considerably" to the question "To what degree do you feel that illustrative humor in second language (as characterized in question 9 above) helps you to learn the language you are studying?". Referring to the items "Do you feel humor as a motivation to learn English as a second language in the classroom?", students are divided into five groups on the base of the students' percentage who answered "Not at all", "Very little", "Somewhat", "Noticeably", "Considerably". Next, I calculated the percentage of learners who answered "None", "1-3 times", "4-7 times", "8-11 times", "12 times or more" to the question "In your opinion, what is the ideal amount of humor (i.e. number of humorous items employed) for a typical class period in order to create the classroom environment most conducive to learning?". To the question "In your opinion, how important is humor to language learning in the classroom overall?", students are divided into five groups, depending on how many students answered "Not at all", "minimally", "Slightly", "Important", "Considerably important". Furthermore, referring to the items "How often (on average) do you use humor to communicate in English while you are learning in the class?", students are divided into five groups on the base of students' percentage who answered "Never", "1-3 times", "4-7 times", "8-11 times", "12 times or more".

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Interviews

A convenient sample of six English Teachers in three selected government schools in Southern province were interviewed. Before starting the interview, the interviewees had been informed about the purpose of the study and their right to anonymity. The following table provides an overview of the teachers' basic information including teaching experience.

Table 3: English Teachers in three selected government schools

Teacher	Gender	Area	Years of teaching experience	Subjects	Level
Teacher A	Female	Matara	12	English/English Literature	Grade 10,11
Teacher B	Female	Thihagoda	17	English/General English	Grade 10,11,12,13
Teacher C	Male	Weligama	21	English	Grade 9,10,11
Teacher D	Female	Kamburugamuwa	08	English/English Literature/General English	Grade 10,11,12
Teacher E	Male	Mapalana	11	English/General English	Grade 10,11,12,13
Teacher F	Female	Bandaththara	16	English/English Literature	Grade 10,11

These six teachers have been working with students of different levels of English

However, these interviewees also enrich my research due to their many years of experience in teaching English. The interviews were furthermore audio-recorded to ensure that the respondents' answers were reported as accurately as possible. It is important to note, however, that the data collected from those six interviewees should not be viewed as a representative of a larger population.

This study revealed diverse range of attitudes of teachers about the use of humor as a motivation in ESL CRs. To begin with, the study exposed 5 major themes related to the use of humor in ESL CRs: learner motivation, stress free environment, learner reinforcement, teacher student relationship and CR management.

4.1.1. Learner motivation

According to (Ocon, 2015) ^[32], the teachers can strengthen the attentiveness of the learners by creating a CR environment that encourages learning. Humor assists to motivate learners and establish a climate that elevates learning.

“The application of contextually suitable humor has been indicated to improve the classroom atmosphere and ease the process of language learning, paving the way for the individuals to perceive information or circumstances with a new perspective perhaps leading to fresh insights.” (Andarab and Multu citing Garner).

Accordingly, one of the major themes that was exposed in the study was learner motivation. Majority of the participants shared their experiences on learner motivation in a positive light. According to research findings it was revealed that, the use of humor in L2 CR helps motivate the learners to learn second language well. Following is an interview account by the teacher B from a reputed boys' school in Southern province, who uses humor in the CR in order to motivate the students in learning English.

“If the teacher uses humor effectively, the student would be motivated to learn English. They will enjoy learning English and it will become a habitual action in their lives. The use of humor helps reduce the gap between the L1 and L2 if the teacher uses more jokes related to students' L1 and their socio cultural background. Therefore, the teacher should plan the jokes and other funny activities while the teacher is planning the lesson. Then only, the teacher can use them to promote L2 learning.”

In addition, the teacher C from the selected girls' school also shared her experience of using humor to motivate students.

“Humor clearly affects for the learner's interest and motivation. Though they struggle with the language, they

feel the background is comfortable. So, it positively affects for their learning process.”

So, the research findings imply that the students who learn English as a second language are highly motivated by the use of humor in the language CR. It helps the students enjoy what they learn, reduce the gap between the L1 and L2, enhance the students' interest and makes the learning background more comfortable.

4.1.2. Stress free environment

Another interesting phenomenon emerged from the discussion was stress free environment. The use of humor makes the environment stress free for both teacher and the student. “It is believed that humor can be used as a means of coping with pain, illness and/or stress.”(Pham, 2014 citing Alston; Boyle & Joss-Reid; Cousins) ^[35].

According to Teacher A,

“It helps students to learn English as a second language because language is a skill not a theory. We could not teach any skill by force to any child. If the teacher can inspire, motivate and encourage his/her students, they will acquire the skills and competencies gradually according to their capabilities and hypothesis. Humor helps the teacher a lot to create the above relationship with the students. On the other hand, it makes the teacher's job easy and stress free by providing the job satisfaction. It reduces the behavioral problems of the students too.it makes the students interested to learn English as a second language throughout their life time if the teacher uses humor effectively and productively during the lessons.”

This declares that when the learning environment is free from stress, the teacher can inspire, motivate and encourage the students, help acquire the language skills and competencies, build a relationship with the students, make the teacher's job easy and especially provide the satisfaction in the CR. The Teacher D says that the stress free environment makes students more relaxed because it makes a bridge between the teacher and the student.

The CR setup highly affects for both teachers and students. When the environment is stress free, the teaching learning process becomes more effective and successful. Learning should take place in a stress free environment. Thus, the use of humor is one of the best ways to relieve both teachers and students from the stress and tension which occur as a result of the complexity of teaching learning process.

4.1.3. Learner reinforcement

The discussions revealed the fact that the use of humor in ESL CRs helps learner reinforcement. “All of these jokes may engage and relax students as they simultaneously present and reinforce important elements of the language.”

(Askildson, 2005) ^[4]. Following are the experiences of Teacher E and Teacher D on the use of humor in ESL CRs and the learner reinforcement.

"I already use humor to illustrate grammar because if I use more humor, students will deviate from acquiring grammar rules. I often use humor in order to teach vocabulary and then they won't forget the meaning as long as they remember the joke. They will learn vocabulary as a habit when the joke provides the reinforcement. It is easy to create jokes with vocabulary items. When it comes to pronunciation, I use pun on words to correct their pronunciation and to teach different pronunciation for similar words. In other contexts, I use situational humor to make them surprise, to draw their attention and to break the monotony. Also, when I need to inspire them at any level of the lesson, I use humor. And I use humor as a punishment whenever it is needed. I use humor at the end of the lesson purposely to keep their interest during the break." "Actually, if it is a morning class time period, the students are naturally motivated. So I do not use humor often. But if it is an afternoon class, I use comic stories often.

The research findings indicate that the appropriate and situational humor can reinforce the students to learn the second language while the excessive use of humor at inappropriate times may waste the CR time and lead the CR into a mess. The teachers should be responsible when they use humor to illustrate different parts of the language. Their main intention should be the reinforcement and the motivation of the students in order to learn second language well. For instance, the funny stories which are suitable to illustrate grammar may not be helpful to illustrate vocabulary. Thus, the teachers should understand it. It is the teacher's responsibility not to make the students deviate from the lesson by the use of excessive and inappropriate humor in the CR. The Teacher D suggests to use humor to illustrate vocabulary items and pronunciation. In addition to that, she uses humor to make the students surprised, to draw their attention, to break the monotony and to inspire the students to learn the language. The students can be reinforced by the use of situational humor. When using humor in the CR, the teacher should take the class time into consideration. According to Teacher E, humor is more appropriate to use in the afternoon classes as the students in morning classes are naturally reinforced. Thus, the teacher should be aware of the times periods of using humor in order to reinforce the students in second language learning.

4.1.4. Teacher student relationship

The teacher student relationship is central to the teaching learning process. "Humor is a double-edged sword. The judicious use of humor can help teachers gain respect and classroom rapport. However, inappropriate and insensitive humor can clearly be destructive to instructor- student relationships." (Ziyaemehr citing Haigh). The Teacher A and Teacher F talk about the teacher student relationship.

"It makes me more approachable to my students by developing a healthy rapport between me and my students, help me to comprehend the meaning (vocabulary and contextual meaning), reduce the gap between the T and the students, make a stress free

environment for the T and the students, motivates both the T and the students and it provides a feeling of self-inspiration."

"The relevant jokes help me to feel relaxed, guess or infer meaning in the target vocabulary items, keep up the rapport between the students and teachers etc. The out of CR context, jokes help in the above ways and to break the monotony of the class, draw their attention towards the lesson, encourage slow learners and as a motivational factor."

The use of humor helps to build a bridge between the teacher and the student. But, if the relationship is an unsuitable one, it would make the teacher student relationship hostile and disastrous. Thus, it is the teacher's responsibility to use only appropriate humor in the CR.

The findings reveal that the use of humor in the language CR helps build a good relationship and rapport between the two parties. It helps both teacher and student to comprehend the meaning. It reduces the gap between the teacher and the student, make a stress free environment for parties and it provides self-inspiration. The slow learners are normally backward in CR activities and by the use of effective humor the teacher can get them also involved in the lesson and through that the teacher student relationship is more strengthened.

4.1.5. Classroom Management

According to Pham, 2014 ^[35] "It was essential to somehow motivate students and to keep their attention during the lessons." If the classroom environment is friendly and supportive, the students pay their attention to the lesson. When they pay attention to the lesson, the classroom is automatically well managed. The following are the ideas of two teacher participants on the use of humor and CR management. According to Teacher B,

"By using humor in the CR, it is easy to drag the attention of the students and when they pay attention to the lesson, they learn something consciously or subconsciously and it helps for the CR management also."

The Teacher C says,

"The effective use of humor helps reduce the behavioral problems of the students too. The excessive use of humor creates CR management problems. At times I do not encourage to use humor in the language CR because of two reasons, first, I am not much comfortable in using humor in front of students. Second, the students do not understand when I use humor in second language."

The findings imply that the use of humor in ESL CRs helps CR management. It is the teacher's responsibility to make the students concentrate for the lesson using effective humor in language CRs. The use of inappropriate humor drags the students' attention away from the lesson. Then, it does not support for the effective CR management. Moreover, it seems that some teachers are not comfortable with using humor in the CR setting and some students are not able to understand it also.

The use of humor in language CRs helps achieve lesson objectives in numerous ways

According to Teacher F,

"I enjoy the use of humor in the CR scenario because it motivates me to teach, it develops the bond between the T and the Ss, it helps reach lesson objectives, it provides me energy to work, it helps change the same routine, it refreshes me, helps me to enjoy my work and provides me job satisfaction."

Teacher E says,

"According to my opinion, the ideal amount of humor is three times during a typical CR. Most probably, it can be divided among the presentation, practice and production. This number can be varied according to the lesson context. The use of effective humor helps reach lesson objectives in the CR but excessive humor will deviate students from the lesson objectives. And also, it will create CR management problems. So, it is the teacher who should decide the number of humorous items of the lesson considering the lesson context, socio cultural

issues and the level of the students."

The findings imply that the use of humor helps the teacher reach lesson objectives in the language CR. Humor should be used effectively and efficiently in order to fulfill the objectives of the lesson and the teachers should accept the fact that the use of excessive, unsuitable and inappropriate humor will deviate both the teacher and the students from lesson objectives. Thus, according to the findings, relevant and right humor always help achieve the objectives of the lesson.

4.2.1. Survey questionnaire

This subsection displays descriptive statistics of the questions that were obtained through the administration of sixty questionnaires which were distributed among three grades (grade 9, 10 and 11) of selected government schools in Southern Province.

Chart number one-Overall effectiveness of the teacher

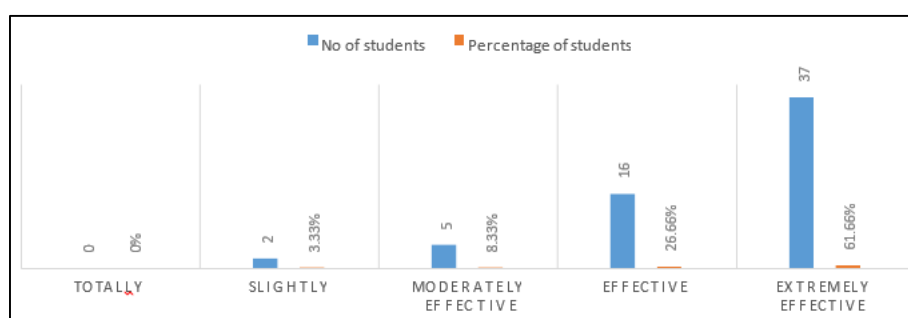


Fig 1: Overall effectiveness of the teacher

Table 1

Overall effectiveness as a teacher	No of students	Percentage of students
Totally ineffective	0	0%
Slightly ineffective	2	3.33%
Moderately effective	5	8.33%
Effective	16	26.66%
Extremely effective	37	61.66%

According to statistics, none of the students rated their language teacher as "Totally ineffective". 3.33% believed that their teacher is "Slightly ineffective" while 8.33%

considered that their teacher is "Moderately effective". 26.66% of students rated their language teacher as "Effective" while the majority of the students' (61.66%) response is "Extremely effective".

4.2.2. Chart number two - The amount of the use of humor by the teacher

This chart no.3 lists students' answers to the question "How often (on average) does your teacher use humor (i.e. jokes, witticisms, humorous facial expressions, funny stories, etc.) during each class session?".

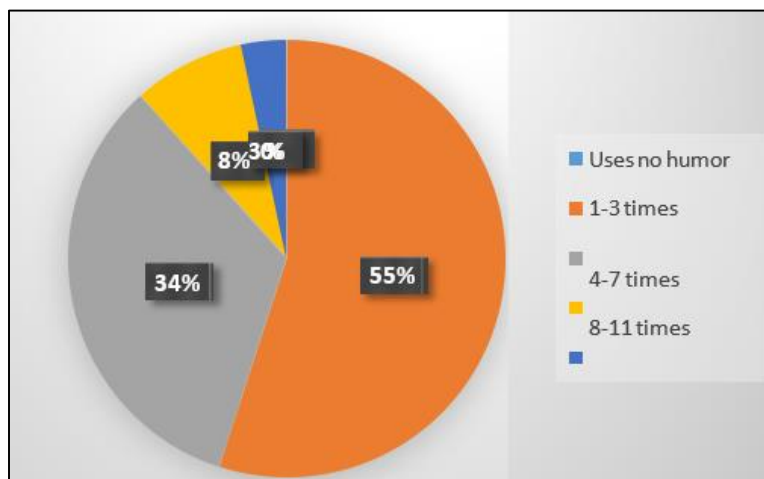


Fig 2: The amount of the use of humor by the teacher

Table 2

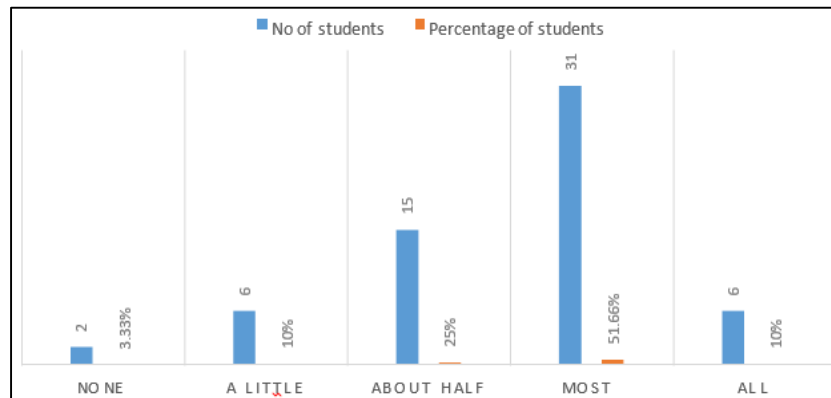
How often does your teacher use humor	No of students	Percentage of students
Uses no humor	0	
1-3 times	33	55%
4-7 times	20	33.33%
8-11 times	5	8.33%
12 times or more	2	3.33%

According to the results, 55% of students reported that their language teachers use humor 1-3 times during the lesson

while 3% of students reported that their language teachers uses no humor in the CR.

4.2.3. Chart number three – Relevance to the CR subject matter

The following chart shows the percentages of students who answer “none”, “a little”, “about half”, “most”, “all” to the question “How much of the humor used by your language teacher is related or relevant to classroom subject matter?”.

**Fig 3: Relevance to the CR Subject Matter****Table 3**

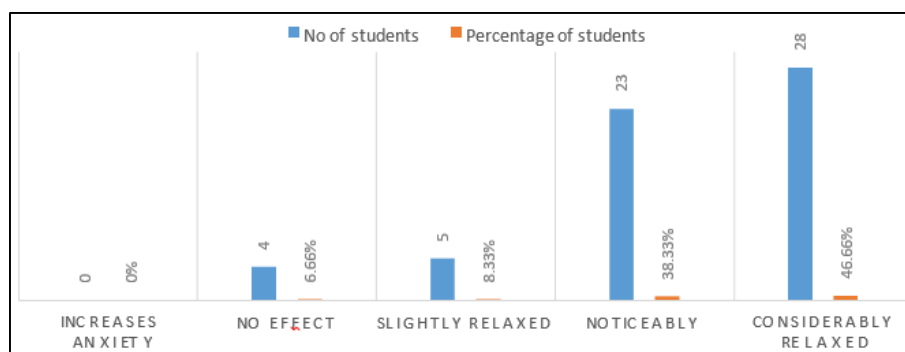
Relevance to CR subject matter	No of students	Percentage of students
None	2	3.33%
A little	6	10%
About half	15	25%
Most	31	51.66%
All	6	10%

of teachers uses humor which is related or relevant to the CR subject matter.

4.2.4. Chart number four-Make students feel more relaxed

Following chart displays the results for the question, “To what degree does humor make you feel more relaxed (i.e. less anxious) in your language classroom?”

Concerning the number of responses, a considerable number

**Fig 4: Make Students Feel More Relaxed****Table 4**

Make you feel more relaxed in the CR	No of students	Percentage of students
Increases anxiety	0	0%
No effect	4	6.66%
Slightly relaxed	5	8.33%
Noticeably relaxed	23	38.33%
Considerably relaxed	28	46.66%

makes them relaxed in a considerable way while no one responded as it “increases anxiety”.

4.2.5. Chart number five – Increases interest in learning the language

Here are the responses to the question “To what degree does humor in the second language increase your interest in learning that language?” are displayed.

Concerning their responses, 46.66% reported that humor

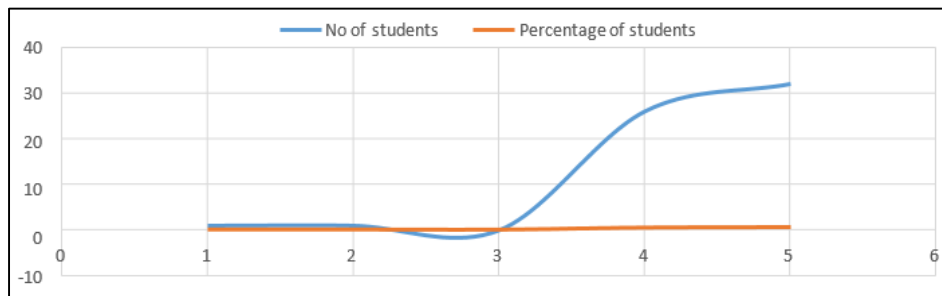


Fig 5: Increases the Interest in Learning Language

Table 5

Increases the interest in learning language	No of students	Percentage of students
Decrease in interest	1	1.66%
No increase	1	1.66%
Slight increase	0	0%
Noticeable increase	26	43.33%
Considerable increase	32	53.33%

Most of the students (53.33%) reported that the use of humor in second language considerably increase their interest in learning the language, 43.33% of students reported that the

use of humor in second language noticeably increases their interest in learning the language while only 1.66% of students reported that it decreases their interest.

4.2.6. Chart number 6 – Teacher’s approachability in the class

In order to measure the approachability of the teacher, the question “Do you feel that your teacher’s use of humor makes him/her more approachable in class?” was posed to the students in the survey questionnaire.

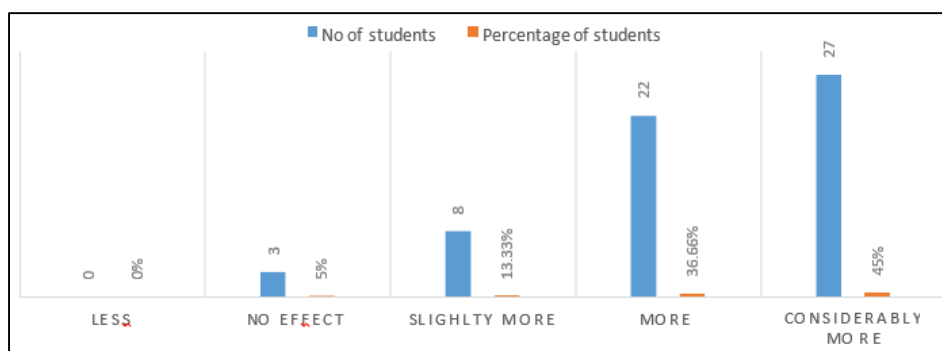


Fig 6: Teacher's Approachability in the Class

Table 6

Teacher's approachability in the class	No of students	Percentage of students
Less approachable	0	0%
No effect	3	5%
Slightly more	8	13.33%
More approachable	22	36.66%
Considerably more	27	45%

While considering the teacher’s approachability in the class, the scores displayed above indicate the percentage of 45% for

“Considerably approachable” and 36.66% for “More approachable” while 0% of percentage for “Less approachable” and 5% of percentage for “No effect”.

4.2.7. Chart number seven-Improving students’ ability to learn the language

This chart no. seven lists students’ answers to the question “Do you feel that humor generally improves your ability to learn the language in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment overall?”

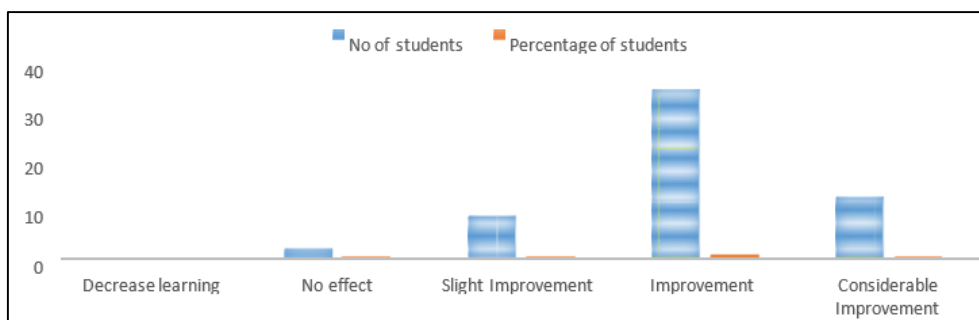


Fig 7: Improving the Students' Ability to Learn the Language

Table 7

Improving the students' ability to learn the language	No of students	Percentage of students
Decrease learning	0	0%
No effect	2	3.33%
Slight Improvement	9	15%
Improvement	36	60%
Considerable improvement	13	21.66%

Concerning their ability to learn the language, 60% reported that humor improves the students' ability to learn the language while none of the students showed "Decrease

learning".

4.2.8. Use of humorous examples in second language

The following chart shows the percentage of the students who answer "Never", "1-2 times", "3-4 times", "5-6 times" and "7 times or more" to the question "How often does your teacher use actual words and/or other elements of a humorous example in second language (i.e. a joke, pun, comic strip, funny story, etc.) to illustrate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or any other particularity of the language during a typical class?".

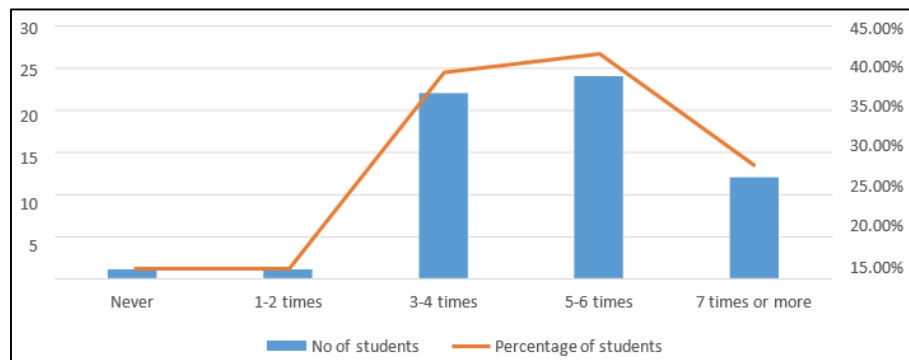


Fig 8: Use of Humorous Examples in Second Language

Table 8

Use of humorous examples in second language	No of students	Percentage of students
Never	1	1.66%
1-2 times	1	1.66%
3-4 times	22	36.66%
5-6 times	24	40%
7 times or more	12	20%

4.2.9. The help of illustrative humor to learn the language

The question no.9 shows students' responses to the question "To what degree do you feel that illustrative humor in second language (as characterized in question 9 above) helps you to learn the language you are studying?".

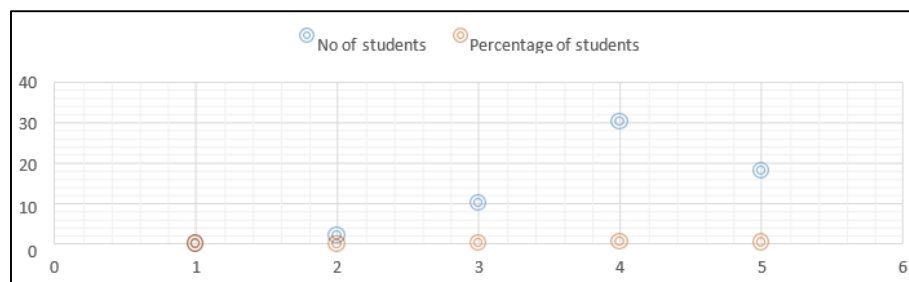


Fig 9: The Help of Illustrative Humor to Learn the Language

Table 9

The help of illustrative humor to learn the language	No of students	Percentage of students
Not at all	0	0%
Very little	2	3.33%
Somewhat	10	16.66%
Noticeably	30	50%
Considerably	18	30%

"Noticeably" feel that the use of illustrative humor helps learn the language while no one feels "Not at all".

4.2.10. Chart number 10-Humor as a motivation to learn the language

This chart no.10 lists students' answers to the question "Do you feel humor as a motivation to learn English as a second language in the classroom?"

According to students' responses, 50% of students

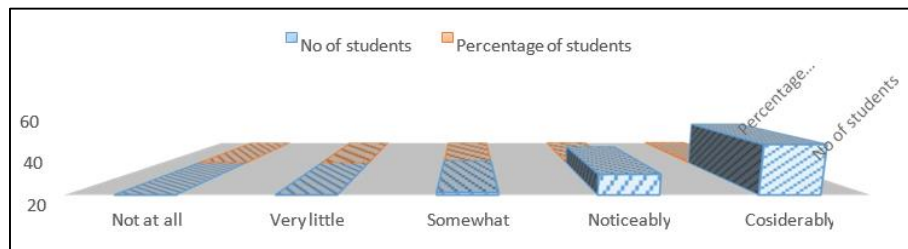


Fig 10: Humor as a Motivation to Learn the Language

Table 10

Humor as a motivation to learn the language	No of students	Percentage of students
Not at all	0	0%
Very little	0	0%
Somewhat	2	3.33%
Noticeably	17	28.33%
Considerably	41	68.33%

Most of the students (68%) feel humor as a motivation to learn English as a second language while no one agrees with

the two responses “Not at all” and “Very Little”.

4.2.11. Chart number 11 – Ideal amount of humor in a language CR

The following chart shows the percentages of students who answer “None”, “1-3 times”, “4-7 times”, “8-11 times” and “12 times or more” to the question “In your opinion, “What is the ideal amount of humor (i.e. number of humorous items employed) for a typical class period in order to create the classroom environment most conducive to learning?”.

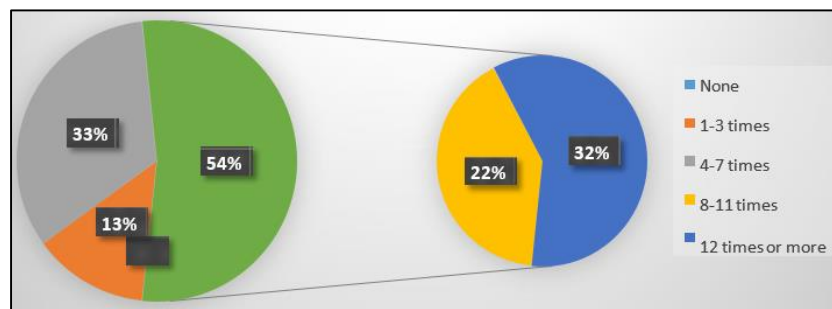


Fig 11: No of students

Table 11

Ideal amount of humor in a classroom	No of students	Percentage of students
None	0	0%
1-3 times	8	13.33%
4-7 times	20	33.33%
8-11 times	13	21.66%
12 times or more	19	31.66%

responded “0”, 13% of students responded “1-3 times”, 33.33% of students agreed with the answer 3, “4-7 times”, 21% of students said “8-11 times” would be more appropriate while 31% of students responded “12 times or more”.

4.2.12. Chart number 12 – Importance of humor to language teaching

The twelfth question is “In your opinion, how important is humor to language learning in the classroom overall?”

According to the students’ opinions, 0% of students

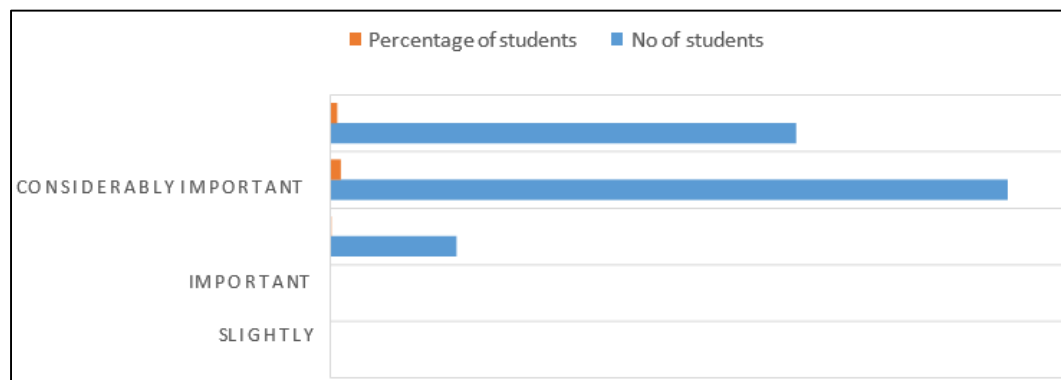


Fig 12: Importance of Humor to Language Teaching

Table 12

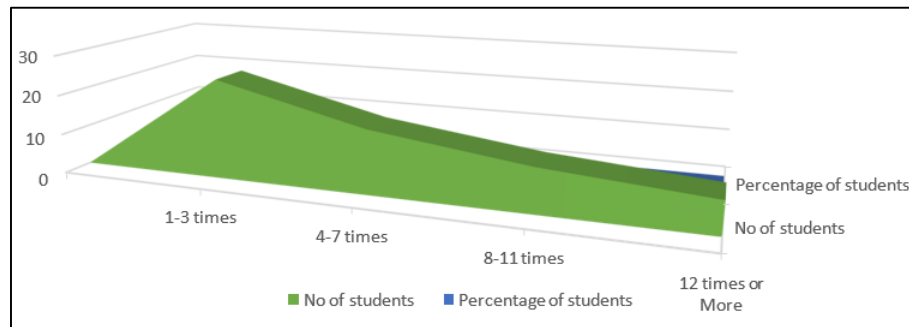
Importance of humor to language teaching	No of students	percentage of students
Not at all	0	0%
Minimally	0	0%
Slightly	6	10%
Important	32	53.33%
Considerably important	22	36.66%

According to students' opinions, 53.33% of students responded humor is "important" in learning the second

language in the CR, 36% of students responded "Considerably important" while no one responded "Not at all" and "Minimally".

4.2.13. Chart number 13 – Use of humor to communicate in the CR

The last question is "How often (on average) do you use humor to communicate in English while you are learning in the class?"

**Fig 13: Use of Humor to Communicate in the Classroom****Table 13**

Use of humor to communicate in the classroom	No of students	Percentage of students
Never	0	0%
1-3 times	25	41.66%
4-7 times	16	26.66%
8-11 times	11	18.33%
12 times or more	8	13.33%

Concerning the responses, 0% of students responded "Never", 41.66% of students responded "1-3 times", 26.66% of students responded "4-7 times", 18.33% of students responded "8-11 times" and finally, 13.33% of students responded "12 times or more".

4.3. Discussion

As a whole, the present study immensely contributes to the beneficial effects of didactic humor in the language classroom as described in the above literature review. Majority of the students who participated in the survey and all the teachers who participated in the qualitative discussion suggested that humor is important to create a more comfortable and conducive environment for learning. "In the classroom, humor can create a cheerful learning climate, enhance social bonding through increased student-instructor interaction, add variety to lectures, decrease test anxiety, and provide enjoyment and laughter." (Hackathorn et al citing Bryant, Comisky, Crane, & Zillmann; Gorham & Christophe; Kaplan & Pascoe, 1977; Neumann, Hood, & Neumann) [22]. The results proved that researchers have found that in some foreign-language classrooms, both teachers and students believe that humor serves positive functions, such as motivating learners. (Ziyaeemehr, Kumar, & Abdullah). According to research findings, it was revealed that relevant humor serves positive functions such as building healthy rapport between the teacher and the students, reducing the gap between the teacher and the students, making a stress free environment for both, providing a feeling of self-inspiration and motivation both the teacher and the students. "Clearly

then, humor is perceived as an important component for the learning process among both students and teachers and must, therefore, be given consideration in evaluation of pedagogical approaches to language teaching." (Askildson, 2005) [4].

In addition, the results also brought into light about linguistic humor and language acquisition through the use of humor in target language. It seems that this happens mainly through the use of humorous examples in English such as jokes, puns, comic strips and funny stories to illustrate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or any other particularity of the language. It was revealed that it is easy to create jokes with vocabulary items and the students will not forget the meaning as far as they remember the joke. According to Bell, 2019 humor is "an excellent way for students to learn vocabulary". When it comes to pronunciation, almost all the teachers used pun on words to correct their pronunciation and to teach different pronunciation for similar words. "Word puns increase vocabulary because students must first recognize an incongruity in the message and then resolve or interpret it." (Hackathorn, citing Tatum, Wanzer, Frymier, & Irwin).

Next, the research findings also proved that humor makes the teacher more approachable to students in ESL classes. As stated by Askildson, 2005 [4] "Participants indicated reduced anxiety/tension, improved approachability of teachers, and increased levels of interest as a result of humor usage by the teacher". Humor makes the teacher more approachable to students by developing a healthy rapport between the teacher and students, help to comprehend the meaning (vocabulary and contextual meaning), reduce the gap between the teacher and students, make a stress free environment for the teacher and students, motivates both the teacher and students and it provides a feeling of self-inspiration. According to Ocon, 2015 [32] "Lets your students know that you are human, real, approachable, not arrogant, and not superior to them."

In addition, although Ziyaeemehr et al states that "inappropriate and insensitive humor can clearly be destructive to instructor-student relationships", the present study accounted that both relevant and irrelevant humor lend

a hand to make the teaching learning process a success. Teacher E says that she uses both relevant and irrelevant jokes. According to her, the relevant jokes help feel relaxed and guess meaning in the target vocabulary items. The irrelevant jokes break the monotony of the class and encourage slow learners as a motivational factor. This is true not only for the teachers but for the students also. Concerning the students' responses to the question "How much of the humor used by your language teacher is related or relevant to classroom subject matter?", only 10% of students responded "All" which implies that rest of the teachers use humor that is irrelevant to classroom subject matter.

Moreover, the findings proved that some instructors are not interested in using humor in the pedagogical setting because they are not comfortable with using humor in front of students. However, the instructors do not want to be experienced to use humor in the CR. If they feel like they are not comfortable with using humor, they can think of another effective ways of incorporating humor in teaching learning process in the way that the students also can understand it. For instance, the teachers can use play humorous songs, show students some movie clips, introduce new games and let the students play etc. Then, the teacher does not want to use his or her own humor yet they can incorporate humor into CR setting effectively.

In brief, the results imply that the teachers use humor in ESL classrooms, they use both relevant and irrelevant humor to the classroom subject matter, both teachers and students enjoy using humor in the pedagogical environment, classroom humor makes the teacher more approachable to the students, it improves the ability to learn English in the classroom by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment, use of linguistic humor and the language acquisition happened through it, both teachers and students are motivated through the use of humor in the language classroom and the importance of humor to language learning in the classroom.

5. Conclusion, Recommendations and Suggestions

5.1. Conclusion

Overall, taking all the findings and discussions into consideration the study revealed that there are significant benefits to the English teaching and learning process because of the employment of humor as majority of literature and experiments have also acknowledged. It was found that many teachers and instructors implement humor as a pedagogical tool in the educational process and therefore it creates opportunities to improve and enhance classroom learning of the second language. Moreover, the instructors' attitudes and personalities affect in implementing humor in the classroom learning setting and it was revealed that the use of humor was never a threat to the professionalism, respect and creditability of the teachers. If the humor is used appropriately in the classroom, it can be taken as a mean of entertainment in the language learning process.

The findings strongly indicate that there are several benefits of humor in second language teaching learning environment. Socially, it draws students' attention towards the lesson, encourages students to participate in the lesson, develops the bond between teacher and students, encourages slow learners, helps change the same routine, breaks the monotony and promotes L2 learning in the classroom. Psychologically, it helps feel relaxed, motivates, refreshes, makes a stress free environment and feel self inspiration. Instructionally, it

assists guess or infer meaning in target vocabulary, helps comprehend, enhances retention of the material and helps the students learn something consciously or subconsciously.

Moreover, the study reveals two significant facets. First, some instructors are not comfortable with using verbal humor in front of a set of students. But, the implement of humor is important to convey linguistic and cultural knowledge to their students. If they are still uncomfortable with the situation, they can use funny video clips, television episodes, games and songs in order to give linguistic and cultural knowledge to their students. Second, the way teachers perceive the use of humor is important. If they have attitudes such as using humor would be harmful for their respect, creditability and professionalism, they would not use humor in the classroom. But, this paper shows the importance of incorporating verbal humor into second language teaching and learning process and further, it claims that it would not affect for the professionalism of the instructor.

5.2. Recommendations

When implementing humor, the teachers and instructors need to be well informed of the consequences of implementing humor in order to avoid possible negative effects in the pedagogical process.

5.3. Directions for future research

There are a few aspects that arose through the analysis of data in this study which the researcher did not discuss in this thesis due to its required scope. One such aspect is humor competence in TESL. It has not been widely researched although it has been recognized as a topic worthy to discuss.

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