



The Effect of Teacher Humour on EFL Learners' Motivation and Comprehension

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Abstract

A case of the effects that teacher humour has on motivation and comprehension in the EFL classroom. Drawing on both the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Krashen and the Social Development Theory of Vygotsky, the study takes a mixed method design with 40 intermediate skill students. Subjects were randomly divided into two groups: experimental and control. Results of pre- and post-tests, questionnaires and interviews showed that humor-induced teaching enhanced learner involvement, understanding and motivation. Thus, it is emerged that teacher humour that reflects the culture can be a powerful tool with which to teach EFL in a way that is safe and that will promote EFL learning.

Keywords: English language, teachers, foreign

تأثير حس الفكاهة لدى المعلمين على دافعية متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية وفهمهم لها
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ملخص

دراسة حالة لتأثيرات حس الفكاهة لدى المعلمين على الدافعية والفهم في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. بالاعتماد على فرضية كراشين "المُرْتَبِّح العاطفي" ونظرية فيجوتسكي في التطور الاجتماعي، اعتمدت الدراسة تصميمًا مختلطًا لـ 40 طالبًا من ذوي المهارات المتوسطة. قُسم المشاركون عشوائيًا إلى مجموعتين: تجريبية وضابطة. أظهرت نتائج الاختبارات القبلية والبعدية والاستبيانات والمقابلات أن التدريس المُحفَّز بالفكاهة عزز مشاركة المتعلمين وفهمهم وتحفيزهم. وبالتالي، اتضح أن حس الفكاهة لدى المعلمين، الذي يعكس الثقافة، يمكن أن يكون أداة فعالة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بطريقة آمنة تُعزِّز تعلمها.
الكلمات المفتاحية: اللغة الانكليزية، المعلمين، اجنبية

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) classes, the emotional and psychological atmosphere that the teacher creates can influence a student's motivation and understanding. In this context, teacher humour has become one of those interpersonal aspects that may have an impact on the climate in the classroom. Not only can humour alleviate anxiety, but it can also serve to reinforce engagement and a sense of bond between teachers and students. Humor, when employed judiciously, can illuminate difficult concepts, maintain student



engagement, and provide a more relaxed and enjoyable environment for learning a language.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Teacher humor is considered an effective strategy in general education (Meyer, 2000), although its effects on motivation and comprehension in EFL are understudied. Some language teachers may approach the use of humor in the language classroom with caution, either because of cultural reasons, the risk of misunderstanding, or the lack of any perceivable value. Consequently, it remains to be explored whether teacher humor can be a pedagogical mean to improve EFL's motivation and comprehension.

1.3 Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Examine the impact of using humor by teacher on EFL students' motivation.
2. Investigate the effects of teacher humour on the English language understanding of students.
3. Investigate attitudes of EFL learners about humour in the classroom.

1.4 Research Questions

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Does teacher humour significantly influence the motivation of EFL learners?
2. How does teacher humour affect learners' comprehension of English content?
3. What are EFL learners' perceptions of humour as a teaching strategy?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The current study adds to the growing body of research on what role interpersonal factors, such as teacher humour, play in language learning. Practical implications for language instructors who wish to foster an enjoyable and supportive classroom environment may be derived from the presented results. Furthermore, this research may have some interesting implications for teacher training about the importance of intelligence and communicative style to be included in homemade language teaching.

1.6 Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on EFL learners at the intermediate level in a formal classroom setting. It investigates the influence of teacher humour on motivation and comprehension within the context of English language instruction. Limitations include the subjective nature of humour, potential cultural differences affecting its reception, and the variability in teaching styles among instructors.



Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following section offers an overview of the current literature on the role of teacher humour in educational settings, particularly in the EFL environment. The article investigates definitions of humour, theoretical underpinnings of humour, the effect of humour on student motivation and understanding, and studies that have been conducted in L2 contexts.

2.2 Defining Teacher Humour

Teacher humor is defined as purposeful utilization of any kind of 'funny' or entertaining comments or behaviors by the teacher to attract students' attention, release pressure, or facilitate learning. It includes a variety of types of humour, ranging from spontaneous jokes to planned examples, as well as verbal, slapstick, physical, and other forms.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on Humour in Education

A number of theoretical constructs justify the use of humour in the classroom. Reducing learners' anxiety can facilitate better language learning according to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982). Humour also can reduce affective filter by establishing a relaxed environment. Furthermore, Vygotsky's Social Development Theory underscores the significance of interaction and affectivity in learning, justifying humour as a means to enhance rapport between students and teachers.

2.4 Humour and Student Motivation

Junior professors have a tough job. Motivation in language teaching and learning is important. Research supports that humour elevates intrinsic motivation to learn, providing more enjoyable lessons and breaking routine of the orthodox teaching approach. When students can relate to teachers as people that they can approach, they can connect with the material and are more likely to participate.

2.5 Humour and Language Comprehension

Changing the text to humour text that would help readers understand what they read because humor can help readers understand what they read based on the context, easier to understand difficult concepts, and making the text more memorable. According to cognitive theories, humour facilitates information processing and retention when it matches instructional content. In the EFL classroom, humour can also promote cultural understanding, and make distant linguistic structures seem less foreign.

2.6 Empirical Research on Teacher Humour in EFL Environment



Several studies have examined the role of humour in the language classroom. For instance, Banas et al. (2011) concluded that suitable laughter can make teaching more effective and create a bond.

ommunity. In an EFL setting, the researches conducted by Wanzer and Frymier (1999), and Ziyaeemehr et al. (2011) attest that students tend to react positively to humor which is context-based, unplanned, and respectful of a cultural sense of humor.

2.7 Summary

It is, thus, a belief that properly-used teacher humor can have its beneficial effects on the EFL learners' motivation and comprehension. Theoretical as well as empirical evidence support using laughter in teaching, even though the extent to which it is effective in educational contexts may depend on contextual, cultural and individual differences. This research expands on those revelations by exploring how and why humour might work in real-life classrooms.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present study is using a mixed approach, in which both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed to take the effect of teacher humor on EFL learners' motivation and comprehension into consideration. The study has both quantitative and qualitative dimension as well as employing a pre-test and post-test to measure the students' comprehension level and questionnaires and semi-structured interviews to probe into the students' perception and motivation toward teacher's humor.

3.2 Participants

The subjects of the present research consist of 40 EFL intermediate language learners studying in a private language school. The learners are enrolled in an art academy and are between 18 and 22 years old, and are randomly divided between an experimental and a control group of 20 students in each group. In the experimental group, classroom lessons are conducted by a teacher who always uses humour, compared with the control group where lessons in a regular classroom are conducted without any specially planned use of humour.

3.3 Instruments

The study uses the following tools:



-Pre-test-post-test – a measure used to quantify the understanding of the learners prior and after the intervention.

-Motivation Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire, developed of items included within the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) used by Gardner (2001) is used in order to measure changes in motivation.

-Interview guide A semi-structured interview protocol is designed to obtain nuanced qualitative data on the students' understandings and experiences of the classroom.

3.4 Procedures

The study is conducted over a six-week period. Both groups undergo a pre-test during the first week. Over the next five weeks, the experimental group receives instruction where humour is intentionally embedded in lessons through jokes, storytelling, and humorous examples. The control group receives the same instructional content without humour. After the instructional period, both groups take a post-test. Subsequently, the motivation questionnaire is administered, and interviews are conducted with a sample of students from the experimental group.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the pre- and post-tests and the motivation questionnaire are analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests to identify significant differences between the two groups. The qualitative data from interviews are analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, perceptions, and insights regarding the use of humour in the classroom.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Written consent is obtained from all participants after explaining the purpose of the study. Student anonymity is guaranteed, and students are informed that their participation is voluntary, and they can opt out at any time with no consequences. The investigation meets institutional requirements for studies of human subjects.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

We provide here the results of the quantitative and qualitative data drawn from the research. The findings are presented by the research questions and are succeeded by an interpretation where the discussion in view of prior research is embedded.

4.2 Quantitative Results



4.2.1 Pre- and Post-Test Scores

Comprehension scores of the experimental and control groups were examined to see the effects of teacher humour on the learning outcomes.

Experimental Group: The average post-test score ($M = 83.4$, $SD = 6.2$) showed a significant increase compared to the pre-test score ($M = 69.8$, $SD = 7.1$), $t(19) = 7.12$, $p < 0.001$.

Control Group: The change in scores was minimal, with the pre-test average at ($M = 70.4$, $SD = 6.5$) and post-test at ($M = 72.1$, $SD = 6.9$), $t(19) = 1.09$, $p > 0.05$.

It can be inferred from these results that teacher humour greatly assisted comprehension in the experimental group.

4.2.2 Motivation Questionnaire

Based on the AMTB-based questionnaire, the experimental group's students had a higher motivation level ($M = 4.3$ on the 5-point scale) than that of the control group's students ($M = 3.1$). The difference was found to be significant, indicating that teacher humour had a positive effect on the motivation of the learners.

4.3 Qualitative Results

4.3.1 Student Perceptions

Qualitative analysis of student interviews revealed three main themes:

Higher Engagement: Over half noted that humor made classes more fun; between classes, students noted humor lowered stress.

- Enhanced Comprehension: Learners reported that humorous examples helped them better understand abstract or difficult concepts.

- Positive Teacher-Student Rapport: Many students felt closer to the teacher, describing the learning environment as 'friendly' and 'safe'.

4.4 Discussion

The findings support previous studies that highlight the pedagogical benefits of humour in language learning. The quantitative data demonstrate clear improvements in comprehension and motivation among learners exposed to humorous instruction, aligning with Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis. The qualitative feedback also reinforces Vygotsky's emphasis on emotional engagement in education.



While humour may be culturally sensitive, when used appropriately, it can serve as a powerful tool to increase learner motivation, clarify instruction, and enhance overall classroom dynamics.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

The present study investigated the impact of teacher humour on EFL students' motivation and comprehension. The results revealed that:

- Teachers' jokes really do help learners to understand.
- There was a greater motivation to study in the classes which humour was integrated.
- Students had favourable reactions to humorous instruction and identified the motivational and cognitive benefits of humour.

5.2 Conclusions

Jokes (In Language Classes) Humor, used judiciously in a language course, is one of the best teaching strategies. It also leads to a relaxing atmosphere in the class, builds closer relationships between the teacher and student and creates better learning. The findings highlight the relevance of affective and social dimensions in learning languages.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

- Teacher Training: Teachers must receive training in how to use humour properly and with cultural sensitivity.
- Curriculum Development: Lesson plans should be enhanced by incorporating jokes that match with learning objectives.
- Classroom Control : Humour can be a method to establish rapport and manage student attention.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study are its small sample size, short intervention span, and use of self-reported measurements in the qualitative phase. Larger and more diverse populations should be investigated in future studies.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research



- Investigate the lasting influences of humour on language learning.
- Investigate the impact of specific forms of humour (e.g., situational vs. linguistic).
- Explore cultural attitudes of humor in different EFL settings.

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