

THE ROLE OF HUMOUR IN TEACHING ORAL SPEECH

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It is of utmost importance for English teachers to help students to enhance speaking abilities. Humour has always been seen as enhancement to classroom teaching and learning. Over time, the problem of humour caught the attention of many thinkers. In language teaching, a teacher can easily see that the learners are often motivated greatly when humour is used in classroom. Teachers' effective use of humor is generally viewed as a positive factor in the classroom and it is often identified as a teaching technique for developing a positive learning environment. In the present article the role of humour is shown in promoting speaking through some elements of humour.

Keywords: humour, foreign language teaching, puns, puzzles and jokes, increasing motivation, teaching technique.

Increasing globalization as never before has created a great need for people who can communicate in foreign languages. Now when the countries enter the worldwide community, the role of a foreign language is undoubtedly enormous becoming a must for every person. More and more attention is paid to acquiring a foreign language.

Ellis in her book of Second Language Acquisition (1997) states that a foreign language promotes the level of general cultural rise, develops creative-educational thinking and has a positive effect on emotional sphere, memory and imagination. And according to Krashen (The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom, 1983) if we use humour in the classroom, we shall be able to facilitate the learners' motivation in developing speaking skills, lower the students' affective filter, making the lessons more active and effective as well.

The aim of the article is to show the effectiveness of humour as a means of developing speaking skills in the classroom.

The topicality of the article is predetermined by the fact that humour is not only a means of developing speaking skills, but also is an important way of developing their language thinking thus having an important role in foreign language teaching.

One of the best ways to help learners to speak is to put them in "*safe*" situations in class where they are inspired and encouraged to try using language from their "*store*". These would mainly be activities that teach "*new*" language, rather they would allow learners to try out language than they already understand and have "*learned*", but not yet made part of their active personal repertoire.

Generally speaking, teachers are likely to want to create activities in which learners feel less worried about speaking, less under pressure, less nervous about trying thing out (*Baker and Westrup, 2003*).

Students need to be involved in lessons which use a variety of activities. Teachers should encourage and support their students, and if possible, the texts and materials used for teaching should be relevant to students' needs and to their daily lives.

As a matter of a fact it is important for English teachers to find effective pedagogical techniques to help enhance students' speaking abilities. Furthermore, realizing that speaking is very important for language learners, it is essential for English teachers to encourage the students to speak.

Humor has been seen as enhancement to classroom teaching and learning. In language teaching, a teacher can easily see that the students are often motivated differently, largely as a result of the different thinking and reasons for learning a language. While someone may learn a foreign language, because he/she may like the culture of the country where the language is spoken or just for the like of the language, others may learn a language because they want to acquire an additional language to make them bilingual and more competitive on the job market. In general, there are many reasons why people learn languages though majority accept the fact that languages are learnt mainly for communication purposes.

Current methodologies in foreign language teaching are not only based on communication alone, but also on the culture of the people where that particular language is spoken. Culture in this context is defined differently by researchers (*Csajbok-Twerefou, 2010*). We understand culture in this context as a summary of geographical location, language(s), political and social life, etiquette, traditions etc. of a nation.

Jokes, anecdotes and funny stories often describing traditions, habits or norms of inhabitants of a particular country are national in nature. Also, many countries have their funny characters, such as Moricka in Hungary or Vovka in Russia around which jokes are created. In many situations, national humour often underlines the weakness of the state; humour of subcultures makes jokes on the weakness of the subculture etc.

Jokes and anecdotes of a culture or nation may be used in language teaching classes because they are humorous and describe the everyday life of the native speakers of the studied language very well. *Ginman and Ungern-Sternberg (2003:73)* observed that "humour can be used to lighten up the class and to provide variety" and therefore advisable to use them in all levels of language teaching.

Used in literature, medicine and psychology, also in leadership, humor has a special role in the classroom being considered as an effective and appreciated tool for teaching. Studies on this issue (*Herbert. P., Cornett, C. etc.*) indicate the importance of using humor in the process of capturing and maintaining students' attention, in creating a positive relationship between teachers and students, in reducing stress and tension in the classroom, facilitating learning and supporting a good retention, developing creativity and

streamlining teaching in general. Therefore, when students observe that the class is organized in a humorous way, that is students and teachers laugh together, those who are often shy to talk will relax and laugh as well. Students in a “lightened” atmosphere will forget about their problem of being afraid to talk in class. While laughing, they have already “contributed”, they have done the first step, stop thinking about their worries and will be able to speak without any fears.

No longer, the teacher can control the students by following behavioristic approach and it is high time that we look for other humanistic approaches, where the classrooms are more lively, interactive, enjoyable and interesting. Most effective teachers are those who engage their students in creative and interesting ways. One way to engage students is to incorporate humor in teaching and hence teachers should consider incorporating little laughter into their lectures.

Humor can play an important role in today’s classrooms as it has a humanizing effect on the image of the teacher. It has physiological, psychological, social and cognitive (educational) benefits. Some of these physiological benefits include muscle relaxation, stimulated circulation, improved respiration, and exercise of lung and chest muscles, increased production of body’s natural pain killers called endorphins, as well as lowered pulse rate and blood pressure (Berk, 1998).

Humor is a major psychological tool that can help students cope with fear and stress, enhance their sense of well-being, boost self-image, self-esteem, self-confidence, as well as alleviate anxiety and depression.

Humor may be injected in various phases of the teaching process. It can be used as an ‘ice breaker’ or to reduce stress and facilitate creativity. Humorous examples, test items or test instructions can reduce anxiety on intellectually demanding tasks. Starting each lesson with humor helps students relax and creates a positive atmosphere. Humorous breaks during a lesson promote learning by allowing the brain a ‘breather’ to process and integrate lesson material. Short, simple jokes are most appropriate for the introduction and transitions while longer pieces are best at the end of the lesson. Ideas for using humor may be taken from a variety of sources. Studies show that humor becomes most effective when it is appropriate to the situation, especially when the jokes or anecdotes used directly related to the class at hand. Humor in the classroom can take many forms like *jokes, puzzles, puns, funny stories, humorous comments* and other humorous items like *magical tricks* (Duffy & Jones, 1995).

The idea for the need to pay greater attention to training of teachers in the spirit of ethics of appeal to humanizing strategies of teaching in general, using artfully humor in teaching is one of the most representatives.

Studies conducted on the topic under discussion (Duffy & Jones, 1995) indicate other benefits of using humor in the classroom, such as:

- retrieving information from previous lessons,
- retaining information more easily,

- humor being a smart way to stimulate children for knowledge,
- as a catalyst between students and teacher
- as an energizer of the intellect.

Usually, the teacher calls to *jokes, funny analogies, puns, allusions, comic or irony, and also teasing, even sarcasm or ridicule*. Unusual or unconventional associations, role-plays, gender stereotypes, appeal to fantasy / imagination etc. are also ways of building humor in the classroom. Funny questions addressed even in the oral examinations or tests may be used by the teacher to relax and alleviate the atmosphere.

It is important for the humor not to have humiliating, derogatory, caustic shades, not to affect in any way those involved.

Humor can create pleasant experiences to students if the teacher knows to use a quality humor.

The school and its teachers must prepare the students to face real life (Nagy, 2013). In our opinion, the appeal to the sense of humor, in many situations, can be an effective way to meet the challenges of life. In this context, the intervention must be done in two ways:

➤ on the one hand the training of teachers should pay attention to the subject of initiation in using humor in teaching, of course respecting the rules and rigors of ethics of education,

➤ on the other hand, to encourage the pupils / students' sense of humor, to cultivate quality, intelligent and meaningful humor.

In our opinion, the formation and use of humor practicing skills in working with students, can be used in the training, sessions for creating humorous situations; they can focus on building humorous analogies in the contents to teach, to create explanations that call to humorous metaphors, thinking of emphasis and associations that shock, and amuse at the same time, finding puns or building anecdotal stories etc. All of them have a strong emotional charge and a much more force to transmit than in classical teaching methods. Equally suitable would be the initiation in some acting techniques- that focus on training gestural expressiveness, bodily expressiveness, in the end, the expressiveness of all types of communication.

Of course, the teacher must adapt humor to the students' age, the educational context and the content to study. To train students for humor means forming the free spirit, making them think outside the patterns, encourage them to try with more courageous new things, perceived from different points of view, not to standardize them but to develop their creativity.

Humor has the fundamental effect of humanizing; on one hand, humanization of teaching and, through it, on the other hand, humanizing the educational actors who respond with admiration to this fruitful challenge.

It is worth mentioning that humour should be used in foreign language classes as teaching material, especially at the intermediate and advanced levels and should be one of

the goals of the teaching and learning processes. This is due largely to the motivational role that it plays in the teaching process. The type of humour to be used in the teaching process depends on the level, age, culture of the learners as well as the pedagogical goals.

Thus, in language learning environments, the use of humour can not only serve as a means of amusement but it is a matter of rehearsal which entails not necessarily fun but a means of developing linguistic skills. We support the idea that humour used in the classroom makes learning more interactive and helps students develop speaking skills easily that cannot be taught in a traditional lesson format. It is a tool to be used in the classroom. When used correctly it increases students' enjoyment and strengthens their understanding of concepts.

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РОЛЬ ЮМОРА В ОБУЧЕНИИ УСТНОЙ РЕЧИ

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Аннотация

Юмор всегда рассматривался как улучшение преподавания и обучения в классе. Со временем проблема юмора привлекла внимание многих мыслителей. В преподавании языка учитель может легко увидеть, что ученики часто мотивированы, когда юмор используется в классе. Эффективное использование юмора учителями обычно рассматривается как положительный фактор в классе, и часто определяется как метод обучения для развития позитивной учебной среды. В данной работе показана роль юмора в продвижении речи через элементы юмора.

Современные методики обучения иностранным языкам основаны не только на общении, но и на культуре людей, говорящих на этом конкретном языке. Культура в этом контексте определяется исследователями по-разному. Мы понимаем культуру в этом контексте как совокупность географического положения, языков, политической и общественной жизни, этикета, традиций. Анекдоты, часто описывающие традиции, привычки или нормы жителей той или иной страны, носят национальный характер. Также во многих странах есть свои забавные персонажи, такие как Морица в Венгрии или Вовка в России, вокруг которых рождаются анекдоты.

Стоит отметить, что юмор следует использовать на уроках иностранного языка в качестве учебного материала, особенно на среднем и продвинутом уровнях, и он должен

быть одной из целей процесса преподавания и обучения. Во многом это связано с мотивационной ролью, которую он играет в учебном процессе. Тип юмора, который будет использоваться в процессе обучения, зависит от уровня, возраста, культуры учащихся, а также от педагогических целей.

Важно, чтобы юмор не имел унижительных оттенков, никоим образом не влиял на учащихся. Юмор может доставить учащимся приятные впечатления, если учитель умеет использовать качественный юмор.

Таким образом, в среде изучения языка использование юмора может служить не только средством развлечения, но и средством развития языковых навыков.

Ключевые слова: юмор, обучение иностранному языку, забавные истории и шутки, анекдоты повышение мотивации, эксперимент, способ обучения, забавные персонажи.

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Материал был представлен и отправлен на рецензию: 07.09.2020

Принято к публикации: 15.10.2020

Рецензент: преподаватель З. Мхитарян

The material was submitted and sent to review: 07.09.2020

Was accepted for publication: 15.10.2020

Reviewer: lecturer Z. Mkhitaryan