

Fall 12-15-2017

Falling Up: Building Language Use and Cultural Awareness Through the Implementation of Humor in the ESL Classroom

Glen Kovar
glenkovar@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/thes>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kovar, Glen, "Falling Up: Building Language Use and Cultural Awareness Through the Implementation of Humor in the ESL Classroom" (2017). *Master's Theses*. 249.
<https://repository.usfca.edu/thes/249>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.

RUNNING HEAD: FALLING UP

University of San Francisco

**Falling Up: Building Language Use and Cultural Awareness Through the Implementation
of Humor in the ESL Classroom**

A Thesis Presented to
the Faculty of the School of Education International and Multicultural
Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

by

Glen A. Kovar

December 2017

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Project	4
Theoretical Framework.....	5
Methodology.....	7
Limitations of the Study.....	7
Significance of the Study	8
Definition of Terms.....	9
CHAPTER II.....	11
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	11
Introduction.....	11
Review of Literature	12
Familiarization and Rapport	13
Motivation.....	20
Cultural Awareness.....	26
CHAPTER III	35
RESULTS	35
Introduction.....	35
Overview of Participants.....	35
Research Questions.....	37
Primary Questions.....	38
Findings.....	43
Necessity for Context and Explicit Instruction.....	43
Appropriate Language Use	46
Culture, Language, and Benefits.....	48
Humor as Personal and Societal Expression.....	50
Advancement of Humor.....	56
Summary.....	61
CHAPTER IV	63

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 63

 Discussion 63

 Conclusion 65

 Recommendations 67

 References 75

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are so many generous and supportive individuals I have to thank, who not only helped with this final MA-TESOL project, but who were also available for me to lean on during this educational journey. Thank you to those participants who willingly gave their time to help me achieve a greater insight into both their own linguistic experiences, and their viewpoints on language learning in general. Thanks also to the knowledgeable professors at the University of San Francisco that I had the privilege to learn from. Their courses gave me the necessary tools that greatly contributed to the evolution of this final project.

I owe a great deal of thanks to Professor Brad Washington for his support and guidance, as he went far beyond his role of instructor and advisor. Were it not for him and his encouragement to continue my studies after a life-changing, personal tragedy, I would not have continued on with my studies.

Sincere thanks to Penny for stepping in and helping out with my boys. Without your help I never would have had the time to accomplish this project. Finally, to Xander and Isaac: thank you for understanding that papa had a lot of work to do, and for being such helpful, darling boys. I am doing this for all of us, and I appreciated how good you were during this difficult time in our lives.

ABSTRACT

This study examined the importance of explicitly teaching humor to upper-intermediate and advanced adult English language learners (ELLs), and filled in the gap that exists in studies and literature by examining the use, and implementation of humor in English as a second language/foreign language (ESL/EFL) curricula. Humor is an important human behavior, playing a crucial role in communication, social interactions, and comprehension of a second language (L2) culture. High-level ELLs often lack the linguistic and cultural awareness necessary to effectively communicate. Language courses often accentuate test-taking and language strategies, and courses that explicitly engage with and teach humor to students are simply not available. This thesis utilized a qualitative research approach to conduct interviews with ten ELLs from various cultures in order to better comprehend the issues facing learners in their linguistic and cultural learning journeys. The data collected serves present educators in being able to construct viable curricula using the explicit instruction of humor in the language learning classroom. The participants in this study disclosed that not having access to courses concerning humor acted as a limitation for them in many ways. Humor allows ELLs a more relaxed environment in which to learn, fosters strong class cohesion, aids in knowledge retention, and is a constructive way to learn about vocabulary, syntax, semantics and discourse conventions (Bell, 2009). The explicit instruction of humor also supplies learners with the necessary social and cultural awareness many fail to achieve even at higher levels of language acquisition. The data collected over the course of this thesis serves present educators by providing tools to assist them in the construction of viable curricula using the explicit instruction of humor in the language learning classroom. This thesis concludes with recommendations for educators to implement explicit humor

instruction in order to supply ELLs with applicable language tools for both language development as well as comprehension of a second language culture.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The way in which English is conventionally taught to adult English language learners (ELLs) often does not adequately prepare students to communicate or interact in authentic contexts. Many upper-intermediate and advanced-level adult ELLs, reach a stage in their acquisition where it appears as though they have strong linguistic skills, yet many do not have a complete grasp on the complexities of authentic language use or the cultural behaviors that influence communication. The challenge is compounded by the types of language education that ELLs are encouraged or incentivized to participate in. High-level adult learners often register in, or are pressed to attend, English as a Second Language (ESL) courses geared toward studying for specific standardized tests. These high-level adult ELLs gravitate toward these courses, not because they contribute more to their authentic communicative abilities and comprehension of a culture, but because achieving success in one of these tests can potentially advance ESL learners into a new spectrum of academic or professional life. This creates a focus on test-taking strategies and score outcomes, that may in fact, produce inaccurate assessments of a student's true abilities. Authors such as Hamp-Lyons (as cited in Hafernik, Messerschmitt, & Vandrick, 2002) articulated that there is a concern that test preparation materials and classes, with still unproven value, may cause detrimental effects, such as curricular alignment and raising scores beyond the student's actual ability.

Additional issues arise once the initial interest of studying the language has waned. The classroom learning experience can become mundane to the students who have spent years of

attending similar ESL courses, particularly if social interactions between learners and instructors have dissipated. This lack of excitement within the classroom is often accompanied by lack of student motivation and decreased class cohesion. This prioritization of structured classrooms and standardized tests actively discourages students from solving problems through a creative or indirect approach, commonly referred to as ‘lateral thinking’.

Increased inclusion of humor within the ESL classroom can at least partially address some of these challenges. Known as the ‘father of lateral thinking,’ Edward de Bono (2012) has argued that humor is the most important and significant behavior of the brain. Lateral thinking is an act of deliberate creativity; it is an asymmetrical pattern system, and de Bono asserts that in order to break out of learned patterns, individuals require provocation to do so. Humor is a device that can be used to break students out of a system of familiarity; it is a significant enough departure from formal ways of language learning that its introduction can change how ELLs study language, and encourage them to learn at, and beyond, their level. While some research has been conducted on this topic, not enough emphasis has been placed on the importance of humor within the ESL classroom. Schmitz (2002) believed that classroom exposure to humor prepares learners to understand and react to this pervasive and authentic element of discourse during real communicative language interactions.

Students are also more successful at learning language when they are motivated to do so, when their levels of anxiety are low and their comfort levels are high (Kristmanson, 2000). When humor is planned as a part of a teaching strategy, it establishes a caring environment: flexibility is encouraged, and communication between student and teacher is that of freedom and openness (Watson & Emerson, 1988). In addition to serving as the act of provocation that

encourages ELLs to engage with more creative and lateral thinking, humor can also contribute to a less stressful environment that better facilitates language learning.

Despite these potential benefits, however, many instructors choose to actively avoid the inclusion of humor within the classroom. While some instructors believe that humor serves little if any function in language acquisition, other rationales for avoiding its inclusion are more nuanced. There is a perception that there is a lack of lesson plans, materials, or resources available that have a specific focus on humor, leading instructors to believe that they would not be well-supported in maintaining viable learning long-term. The limited information on the positive impact the role of humor plays for L2 learners is also a factor, as is the misconceptions that the use of humor in the classroom entails only the use of jokes, puns, and word play. There is also a persistent assumption by instructors and learners alike that humor may not benefit them, either because it is seen as childish, or because it does not fit the academic template that learners are often guided toward. However, just because humor can be a light-hearted tool does not make it frivolous or inconsequential. Azizinezhad & Hashemi (2011) stated that:

Using humor and allowing laughter in the class, does not mean the teachers need to be comedians. Teachers main responsibility is to make the learning process easier, so if humor can make the learning process more enjoyable and can arouse students' interest and attention, why not use it in class? (p.2094)

Furthermore, while some instructors have reservations about using humor, due to concerns that its directness or cruelty could potentially offend some learners, Bell & Pomerantz (2016) argued that, "humor as a way of accomplishing social action need not always have a cruel edge. Humor is, in fact, an important means for doing politeness. It allows us to express a range of emotions and opinions in a safe manner" (p.30). Rather than fixating on the chance that the use of humor

could cause students to feel discomfited during lessons, instructors should be encouraged to consider the long-term benefits of introducing students to some of the cultural and social basics of humor while they are still within the safety of the classroom. This would benefit students by encouraging them to grasp how to apply humor culturally and linguistically, both inside the language-learning classroom, as well as the world outside its doors.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to interview and submit the experiences of adult English language learners who studied in Canada and the United States in order to examine the issues they had with comprehending linguistic and cultural aspects of the countries. Was there an absence of humor taught in the classroom for these learners, and were these ELLs denied stronger language acquisition and cultural insight as a result? The information gathered from these interviews then allow for the compilation of pertinent data that will aid other language instructors to understand both the importance of using humor in the classroom, as well as the types of curricula that should be developed to accommodate its greater inclusion.

Humor has played a large role in my personal life, as well as in my professional career as a language instructor. Being raised abroad and living in various cultures has allowed me to understand that humor is not only an effective device to use in communication, but also the extent to which allows one to understand the psyche of a nation. The lessons I learned about humor, and the way in which it reflects the heartbeat of its associated culture, were the result of me being consistently exposed to it. According to Raj (2016), “humour is an inextricable aspect of human discourse, teachers may often utilize humour to facilitate dual beneficiary, both socially and psychologically” (p.27). This thesis argues that humor is an invaluable tool for

ELLs, that the instruction of humor must not be ignored by educators, and that humor should be promoted and implemented within curricula.

Research Questions

The research questions presented here will be used as a framework during the interview process. While not a detailed list, it provides a summation of the questions that will aid in guiding conversation in order to collect data:

- What does humor or being funny mean to you?
- Do you feel that humor has a place within the language learning process in terms of cognitive development and cultural awareness?
- During your second language learning experience, had you ever been exposed to courses specifically designed for the recognition and/or use of humor?
- Is humor cultural or linguistic, and can it be taught? Is the instruction of humor actually possible?
- If you had had the opportunity to have attended English language courses that gave explicit lessons in humor, do you believe it could have aided your linguistic and cultural development?

A detailed dissection of the questions and answers given in the interviews will be present in chapter three.

Theoretical Framework

This project is based in two theoretical areas: Stephen Krashen's input hypothesis (1985) and Lev Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding (1978). Firstly, Krashen's input hypothesis theory states that learners will acquire language only when they understand language that has structure a bit beyond of where they are at present. This theory is relevant to this project as it will identify

the necessity of learners having to go beyond their linguistic repertoire in order to comprehend the scope of humor used within communication, and how humor aids in the understanding of the mindset of cultures. Krashen stated that the input hypothesis relates to acquisition, not learning, and that we acquire by understanding language that contains structure beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$). This is done with the help of context or extra-linguistic information. This is an important concept for the study, as it provides guidance for instructors on how curricula should be developed. Learners must be exposed to the language and culture of humor, which then creates in turn an emergence of knowledge, and the production of the language itself. Krashen asserted that acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language – natural communication – in which speakers are concerned not with the form of their utterances, but with the messages they are conveying and understanding.

Secondly, Vygotsky's theory of scaffolding (1978), and his zone of proximal development (ZPD), is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky viewed the interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. Instructors should therefore emphasize cooperative learning exercises where less competent learners develop from the help of more skillful ones. Once the student, with the benefit of scaffolding, masters the task, the scaffolding can be removed and the student will then be able to complete the task on his own. This assists instructors who are creating curricula using humor in the classroom by helping them to determine the type of activities they should incorporate.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach will be used for this study where the participants will answer a list of questions using a conversational approach. During the interview process, there may be slight deviations in terms of how the questions are presented, and in which order, but all questions will pertain to humor in the language learning classroom. Organizing it in this manner will allow the participants to answer freely and openly.

The participants were selected based on the following criteria: all are adult, non-native speakers of English either living in Canada or America, and had lived there for over a six-month period. They all had attended some level of language institution or formal language education classes, and now have a proficiency at or near a native-speaker level. There should not be issues concerning answering the selection of questions on humor and the cultural aspects of it, as the participants are familiar to the researcher either as prior students, colleagues, or ECE/Montessori instructors involved in the researcher's educational realm.

The interviews will either be conducted in person or on Skype, at an average duration of thirty to forty-five minutes. As stated, there will be slight deviations in questioning, however all questions will pertain to humor and learning in the classroom, and the experiences of these previous ESL learners. The participants will be directly contacted via Messenger or in person, and will be interviewed upon their availability.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that may have some impact on the overall results. First, because of time restraints, the interviews that will be conducted only allow for a small number of participants who will be involved. If a larger group of participants could be interviewed, there may be more varied results.

Second, because participants were selected based on their familiarity with the researcher, the breadth of the researcher's social circle may affect the scope of the cultures that are represented. If larger-scale studies are conducted on this topic in future, a larger number of participants from a greater variety of cultures could be represented. Furthermore, most of the participants of this study are directly involved with the education field and are therefore particularly cognizant of the impacts of humor in the ESL classroom. Future studies could involve more participants who work outside the realm of education, perhaps yielding somewhat different outcomes.

Finally, another limitation of the study may be with the researcher's selection of participants, in that the researcher is familiar with the ELLs at either the teacher-student or professional instructor levels. These factors may pose certain limitations on the data collected as they represent a minute segment of ELL groups.

Significance of the Study

This study offers an opportunity for the viewpoints of ELLs, through personal interviews, to be heard concerning the challenges they faced in the acquisition of English. By collecting and submitting the personal experiences and viewpoints of these learners, it will allow educators to have a clearer view on what should be developed in classrooms, and the understanding that humor plays a significant role in language development. With more student feedback, opportunities to create innovative lessons that focus on vocabulary building, phrasing, wordplay, idiomatic language, and cultural exploration through the use of media, to name a few, will aid in more authentic outcomes, linguistically, and will give stronger cultural clarity.

Definition of Terms

Authentic language use: language where native speakers engage in communication naturally other than to teach their language. To use one's own language in a non-instructional manner (Rings, 2008).

Fluency: a speech language pathology term that means the smoothness or flow with which sounds, syllables, words and phrases are joined together when speaking quickly.

Humor: something that is or is designed to be comical or amusing, and the mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating the ridiculous or absurdly bizarre (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Input hypothesis: a necessary condition a language learner must be in to move from the stage he has already obtained (*i*) to the stage where the acquirer understands linguistic information where he is focused on the meaning and not the form of the message (*i + 1*) (Krashen, 1985).

Interaction: engaging with another individual. By talking, looking, sharing, or engaging in any kind of action with another person, you have had an interaction with that person.

L2: stands for an individual's second language learned. L1 refers to an individual's native language.

Scaffolding: the co-construction of knowledge and relates to the quality and quantity of assistance given to an individual (Blackmore, 2013).

Syntax: the way in which linguistic elements (such as words) are put together to form constituents (such as phrases or clauses) (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

TESOL: an acronym that stands for Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages and encompasses what used to be called TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) and TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language).

Zone of Proximal Development: the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky, 1978).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

There remains a significant gap in the academic literature surrounding how the use of humor should be implemented within the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. A strong argument for implementing humor stems from Krashen (1985) and his input hypothesis, stating that a learner's sense of anxiety builds up an affective filter, a mental block limiting the individual from receiving linguistic input. When learners cannot utilize the comprehensible input they receive for language acquisition it prevents them from making progress in the target language. If humor were implemented in the English language classroom, it could alleviate this issue.

Over the last forty years there has been a paradigm shift in second language learning, in which the focus has moved from the instructor to instead positioning the learner at its core. Jacobs & Farrell (2001) stated that the shift “flowed from the positivism to post-positivism shift and involved a move away from the tenets of behaviorist psychology and structural linguistics and toward cognitive, and later, socio-cognitive psychology and more contextualized, meaning-based views of language” (p.3). Those within language education, then, have been eager to determine what can be done, not only to enhance instruction, but also learning processes to make them more effective. More recently, instructors have sought to explore alternative paths to guide learners away from traditional means and methods of language education in order to allow for learner independence and autonomy. Because instructors have a wide exposure to pedagogical tools and resources, they can be a direct influence on not only strengthening the instructor-

learner relationship but also learners' outcomes in terms of language acquisition and cross-cultural awareness.

One of the areas where researchers have documented subsequent benefits for learners is in the area of the use of humor within the language-learning classroom. As Bell (2009) stated, "humor has been touted as an excellent way for students to learn vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and discourse conventions of the target language, as well as to gain insight into the culture of those who speak the language" (p.241). To add, in her study of pedagogical tools and their impact on learning, Chabeli (2008) identified that a "helping attitude, openness, willingness and an empathetic disposition" (p. 51) is vital in establishing an atmosphere within the classroom conducive to learning, an objective for which humor is an effective tool. Bell & Pomerantz (2016) stated that, "rather than teaching 'a language', we must begin to recognize language as a flexible and fluid set of resources and instead focus on the development of individual communicative repertoires" (p.10). Despite vast examination of the use of humor with English language learners (ELLs), and research conducted revealing the multitude of benefits for learners, there remains a gap in terms of implementation. The use of humor in the ESL classroom and its implementation, then, could be deeply explored as it has the potential to influence language acquisition and cultural awareness for those ELLs.

Review of Literature

For the purpose of this study, three categories will be examined concerning the aspects of humor within the English as a Second Language classroom. The first category examines research on how humor creates familiarization with not only the language of humor, but also with how individuals communicate within the culture the L2 is being spoken. Rapport will also be included with familiarization as research has revealed that humor familiarizes learners with new linguistic

capacities, which then creates an open and trusting relationship between learners and instructors. Buskits & Saville (2001) defined rapport as the student and teacher ‘connecting’ emotionally and students' motivation to participate actively in their education. Familiarity with language eases anxiety, as does a strong rapport with instructors.

The second category delves into how the use of humor creates not only a rapport between learners and instructors, as mentioned above, but it also creates an atmosphere of motivation. Because learners are put at ease through the examination and use of humor in the classroom, they gain confidence, and become more engaged and motivated in their linguistic endeavors. The use of humor as pedagogical tool has been shown to reduce classroom anxiety, create a more positive atmosphere, as well as facilitate the learning process (Berk, 1996, 1998; Garner, 2003; Pollio & Humphreys, 1996).

Finally, the third category explores research on how cultural awareness is created when humor is incorporated in class. It is of primary importance that ELLs not only develop language skills and comprehension, but also that they have a knowledge of the cultural framework of how, when, and where the language they have acquired can be used. Without cultural awareness, learners have limited avenues to navigate and implement the language they have spent so long to obtain.

Familiarization and Rapport

Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2016) examined the cognitive and pedagogical importance of the use of humor in English language classrooms. The researchers examined how humor is a multidisciplinary phenomenon that can be viewed from different points of view, and has various benefits: physiological, psychological, social, and educational. Their research used qualitative and quantitative techniques, as the data collected was obtained from fifteen English as a Foreign

Language (EFL) instructors and eighty learners from Al-Iraqia University, College of Arts, Department of English Language Studies. All of the participants held PhD and MA degrees in English Language Teaching (ELT). Instructors were men and women in their twenties to early fifties, with years of teaching experience ranging from three to thirty-five.

The students' questions were divided into two sections: section A was to elicit information on the benefits of humor to learners, and section B was designed to shed light on the attitudes of learners in regard to the use of humor in EFL teaching contexts. The results showed that the majority of the students (91.25%) agreed that humor both reduced tension in the classroom, and bridged the gap between teachers and students. Furthermore, 80% of the participants found that humor enactment made classes interesting and was pedagogically beneficial.

The fifteen Iraqi instructors were questioned on their preconceptions about the use of humor in the EFL context, whether or not they believed it was a useful teaching strategy, and how often they used humor in their classes. The results revealed that although instructors admitted the importance of humor in providing the learners with a stress-free environment, they sometimes were cautious of overusing it. These findings could be justified for two reasons, one of them being that instructors felt uncomfortable using humor, and it might have taken an experienced teacher to purposefully incorporate humor into his or her verbal repertoire. Another reason could also have been attributed to their preconception that using humor with students might have caused or led them to disrespect their instructors. However, when learners were surveyed on this issue, 58.75% of their responses refuted the concept that learners disrespected instructors because they had incorporated humorous elements within their instruction.

The findings revealed that despite some instructor hesitation, humor is very popular among both learners and instructors. It demonstrated that humor is effective in classroom teaching in that it creates a positive climate, and aids in overall language acquisition. This study also showed that humor is welcomed by learners, and that instructors should not hesitate its implementation despite misconceptions or a sense of ineptitude on the part of the instructor. High-level adult language learners are receptive of not just the linguistic aspects of the language being learned, but also how the language engages itself within the culture. Language has meaning in and only through social practices (Gee, 2014), and when learners establish a relationship of ease and familiarity with the language they are studying, it creates a positive learning environment. In this way, greater inclusion of humor in language lessons would also help to facilitate a closer connection between learners and their instructors.

In another recent study, Abdulmajeed and Hameed (2017) explored the application of the linguistic theory of humor in teaching English grammar. The purpose of the experiment in their study was to show that humor aided students in learning grammar more effectively, that humor enhanced learning, and aided in retention and recalling grammar rules. The researchers created a control group and experimental group to investigate the potential benefits of introducing humor in explaining a new topic of English grammar. Abdulmajeed and Hameed believed that “in teaching English grammar to foreign language learners, one must aim at making them efficient users of the language” (p.40), and that “the learners should be enabled to use the language for all their needs of communications” (p.40). This parallels with the viewpoint of Gee (2014), who believed that in order to use language effectively, learners must be familiar with its rules and conventions.

The researchers created a group of thirty-eight learners from the second year of the Department of English, College of Education for Women, University of Baghdad, where they were divided into a control group, and an experimental group. The experimental group consisted of nineteen learners, and the researchers worked to apply the linguistic devices of humor: metaphor, pun, and ambiguity, as these devices were “used in explaining the subject as well as engaging the students in some humorous, funny, and incongruous activities which evoke laughter” (p. 44). On the other hand, the control group, consisting of nineteen learners, received the subject in a traditional and conventional method of instruction. The instructor was serious and dealt with learners in a formal manner, as she wrote the rules on the board, and then assigned exercises. At the end of each lesson, a quiz was administered for the learners of both groups at the same time, with the same question, and the same length of time. The results showed that the number of learners who did well in the experimental group were significantly higher than in the control group. This indicated to the researchers that “creating an atmosphere of familiarity and fun gives positive results” (p.45), and that “getting rid of fear and boredom in the classroom would accelerate the learning process” (p.45). It was concluded that the use of humorous methods to create an atmosphere of fun, humor, and laughter was considered a break from the rigidity of old methods. Traditional instruction created a sense of boredom, dulled the learners’ appetite for learning, and hindered retention of information and development of learning skills. Humorous methods, however, brought learners closer to their instructors, made them happier in the classroom, and more open to learning. In this way, they concluded, humor creates a healthy environment where instructors and learners cooperate and participate in the learning process. These results give validity to the concept that the explicit instruction of humor, as well as finding

innovative ways to include humor within the classroom, creates incentives for students to learn be they in an explicit or implicit manner.

Another recent study (Petraiki and Nguyen, 2016) emphasized that research on the use of humor in the classroom is necessary in order to “extend current research on teachers’ perceptions about humor and its applicability in language teaching, especially in the Asian classroom” (p.98). The researchers empirically examined the use of humor in an Asian EFL classroom, teachers’ beliefs about humor, and their preferences of humor types in the context of Vietnam. The researchers’ study was conducted in a large city in Vietnam, involving thirty EFL instructors working in three different universities. The learners’ proficiency was at the pre-intermediate to intermediate level, and all instructors had a BA degree in English teaching from a Vietnamese university, and most had an MA in Teaching English as a Second or Other Language (TESOL) from either a Vietnamese or foreign (mainly Australian, American or British) university. The teachers were both male and female, ranging in ages from their twenties to fifties, with years of teaching experience ranging from two to twenty-five.

While not all instructors were observed using humor, they all recognized its invaluable role in facilitating students’ learning of new items, and improving learners’ intercultural competence. The instructors’ preference of humor types included spontaneous humor, humorous comments, jokes and funny stories. Vietnamese instructors made useful suggestions about appropriate humor use in the classroom. The general consensus was that humor had to be adjusted to different ages, personalities and contexts, and that instructors needed to create a safe, comfortable classroom atmosphere for humor to be effective. It may be of great use to develop a similar study in the future in order to examine what learners’ results would be at the upper-intermediate and advanced levels, as well as having an expanded study in other Asian cultures to

compare and/or contrast the data collected from Vietnam. In addition, in future studies it could aid educators and curricula builders if the specifics on how humor was implemented could be included. It is evident with the research by Petraki and Nguyen (2016), that learners and instructors acknowledge the benefits of humor, that humor must be taught with a primary focus or explicit instruction, and that an effective atmosphere for learning language is attained, yet a structure of implementation would be beneficial. These are valid, and important points moving forward.

A recent Iranian study (Mahdiloo and Izadpanah, 2017) examined the effects of humorous movie clips on better learning of English language vocabulary. Forty-eight Iranian, EFL learners at the intermediate level, who were “homogenous based on their rank scores” (p.16), were divided into two equal groups, twenty-four as experimental and twenty-four as a control group. Their vocabulary was assessed at the beginning of the study where both groups participated in a researcher-made, thirty-item multiple choice vocabulary test. The experimental group watched humorous movie clips as the groups’ vocabulary achievement was evaluated through paired samples t-test analysis, a statistical procedure used to determine whether the mean difference between two sets of observations is zero. Each subject or entity is measured twice, resulting in pairs of observations.

The results showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group since humorous movie clips had a positive effect on developing learning among intermediate EFL learners in the experimental group. In this way, the research results revealed that the use of humor can create student ease not only within the classroom, but also with the subject matter. The study effectively demonstrated the way in which learners seem to connect more strongly to their learning when humor is included in the lessons.

Another Iranian study (Hayati, Shooshtari, & Shakeri, 2011) investigated the effects of humorous texts on reading comprehension of EFL students. Twenty-eight females and twelve males, ranging in ages from twenty-three to twenty-five were selected from Shahid Chamran University Ahvaz, Iran, to take part in the study. The humorous group comprised of participants who studied the same reading texts preceded by a joke, and the non-humorous group consisted of students who studied the same reading texts without a joke. The texts chosen for the study were seven reading passages selected from *Intermediate Reading Comprehension* (1999) at an intermediate proficiency level that corresponded to the level of the students.

Findings concerning the t-test that compared the scores of recall tests of both groups over the seven sessions revealed no significant difference between recall results of both groups. However, comparing the scores obtained from the first and last reading by the humorous group showed significant improvement in the recall and comprehension of the experimental group. The findings of the study, therefore, indicated a qualified influential role of humor and jokes on recall ability and reading comprehension, and what they could mean for instructors to include humor and jokes in the reading texts that they provide for their students. Hayati, Shooshtari, and Shakeri (2011) stated that “in doing so, teachers can motivate students and attract their attention toward reading the text. In this case, jokes coming before the main reading passage can function as a pre-reading activity” (p.659). In addition, these findings “might help curriculum developers and material designers to provide materials which include some humorous elements” (p.659). This information could aid other studies, revealing how humor and jokes were specifically used, and in what capacity. For instructors who are searching to implement humor into their lessons, there still appears to be limited information, and detailed direction.

Motivation

One study out of the United Arab Emirates (Aboudan, 2009) found that the use of humor in ESL classrooms reduced tension, improved classroom climate, increased student-teacher rapport, and facilitated learning. The author argued that humor has a positive effect on the language learning setting by increasing motivation leading to linguistic success, and that humor should be used by language instructors to make their classroom more inviting and conducive to learning. Detailed information concerning how humor should be implemented was not addressed, however, and could be beneficial to examine in future studies.

Three studies were carried out on female learners studying English, as a requirement at the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU), and conducted on a group of two hundred students across three levels of English classes – introductory, intermediate, and advanced. The questions in the study included specific references to the effect of humor on learning, attention and concentration. The study also collected students' opinions about the amount of humor that would be considered appropriate in the classroom. The second study was conducted to see if humor influenced the atmosphere of the classroom. This study was conducted on one hundred and sixty students at the advanced level. Eighty students were in classes, allowing linguistic humor (the humor group), and eighty were in classrooms that had no humor (the control group). Finally, the third study investigated the effects of teaching with humor on student learning. The analyses in this study examined the effect of humor on understanding, recall, and retention of difficult material comparing immediate and delayed retention tasks.

The findings illustrated that more learners were in favor of humor in the ESL classroom than against. 71% of UAE students indicated that humor helped them in learning challenging material, as 99% voiced that jokes helped them pay more attention during class time, and

increased their level of concentration. Finally, 75% of the learners were in favor of using humor periodically. In the second study, when asked about class management, control, and how humor affects the atmosphere in the learning setting, 71% of all students found humor to be contributing to a positive atmosphere. 65% of students favored having humor as a part of their everyday classroom learning, and 85% felt that humor encouraged them to express their opinions freely while using the target language. In the third study, the effects of using humor on student learning of ESL material were investigated. The learning was tested in terms of information learned/recalled from the lectures, and the understanding and retention of challenging material. Results showed a significant correlation between understanding of content material and humor. When the effect of different types of humor on understanding of difficult ESL material was analyzed, semantic humor was shown to be more effective than grammatical humor, but less effective than vocabulary humor. Overall, 86% of difficult semantic concepts were made easier through the use of humor, 90% of difficult vocabulary items became easier, and 74% of difficult vocabulary concepts became easier with humor.

Results of the research indicated that the use of humor encourages communication between students and teachers, and the classroom environment becomes freer and more open. The author concluded that humor should become an integral part of any positive language classroom environment in the UAE.

A recent Pakistani study (Nayyar and Zeeshan, 2017) investigated Master of Philosophy scholars' views between students and teachers, regarding the use of humor in the English language classroom. The research was qualitative, and the sample consisted of eight female Master of Philosophy scholars belonging to the English departments of two universities in Pakistan. The interviews conducted, as well as being observed, were the instruments used to

collect data, and this data was analyzed through content analysis. The interview protocol consisted of three introductory questions (to obtain demographic information), and two provoking questions to explore their views about the use of humor in the English language classroom. Observations were conducted in the participants' classrooms, where an observational checklist was followed in order to compare their views with their teaching practices. The results from classroom observations suggested that the teachers used humor in their classrooms to motivate students, as they had mentioned in their interviews. The results of classroom observations and participants' beliefs as instructors were consistent with past studies done by Senior (2001) in Australia, who explained the various benefits of humor in the classroom. The participants' views and the observations of their classrooms suggested that the addition of humor could motivate students in many ways, such as improving their confidence level, improve the learning process, assist in memorization, lessen anxiety, and establish teacher-student bonding. What was not included, however, were the types of humor that teachers used, and how those types were used in the classroom.

A recent Czech study (Gregar, 2016) focused around the three main streams describing the psychological perspective of humor in people's lives, theories taken from Smuts (2016):

- Reduction of physical tension
- Feeling of superiority
- Incongruity

Gregar stated that "based on these theories, one can argue that humor might be employed even in the process of education" (p.2). The researcher also drew on the work of Neuliep and Christophel (1991) who divided humor into five categories:

- Teacher-oriented humor

- Learner-oriented humor
- Not-oriented humor (e.g. jokes, puns)
- Humor from the external source (e.g. based in historical or current events outside of the classroom)
- Non-verbal humor (e.g. faces, gestures)

In addition, Gregar, before conducting his research, divided humor into an either teacher-produced or learner-produced criterion. The second criterion was the language of humor (either in the Czech or English language), and the last criterion was humor's relation to the subject. The methodology of the research was divided in three parts where it strove to describe the educational reality in terms of the employment of humor in English Language Teaching (ELT). The first part of the study was carried out via an internet questionnaire, as it was sent out to twenty-seven teachers within the educational system. The questionnaire was composed of ten items (two general questions, seven specific questions, and a comments section). The second part of the study was carried out via the observation and recording in classrooms. The observation and recording was at a school in Olomouc, Czech Republic, of forty learners taught by two instructors. The aim of the observation was to compare the findings of the questionnaire with the directly observed educational reality, and to find out whether they correlated in order to provide more complete answers to the research findings. The third part of the study focused on learners, and involved a questionnaire that was handed out after the last lesson was observed. The questionnaire was composed of eight questions: two were general, and six focused on the topic of humor in ELT.

The study concluded that while the instructors generally thought that humor could be employed in ELT, only a minority of instructors used humor to teach. The instructors who did

include humor in their lessons were mainly those from higher levels of the educational system, and those with longer teaching experience. The explicit use of humor in the classroom, however, was only actually observed when highlighting errors, or to relax the learners. The researcher also noted that all learners included in the study stated that they would enjoy English lessons where humor would be used.

A Nigerian study (Olajoke's, 2013) aimed at making enquiries about learners' perceptions about humor in the classroom environment, with the goal of assessing its effectiveness in pedagogical use. The research sought to employ the Social-constructive model to assess the perceptions of students on the use of humor. This model was selected based on the fact that it is society that determines who and what the instructors teach since "learning takes place in environment" (p.68). The data was obtained from students of Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owa, Ondo State in Nigeria. The students were made up of twenty-five males and twenty-five females who were randomly selected ESL learners being National Diploma II students. Data was collected through questionnaires containing questions that related to the implication of humor in the teaching of English as a Second Language. Questions were also divided into two sections, one to elicit information on the benefits of humor, and the other to capture the attitudes of students on the use of humor in ESL teaching.

The data revealed that 80% of the learners believed that the use of humor by instructors was under-utilized. Concerning the benefits of humor use, 96% of the learners agreed it reduced tension, 60% believed it bridged gaps, 90% believed it assisted in the retention of lessons taught, 98% believed it made classes interesting, 70% believed it encouraged class attendance, and 98% believed it aided in the understanding of lectures. While students were asked to express their views on negative implications of humor, most students did not believe that humor could

actually have negative consequences - even in relation to potentially creating distance between instructors and learners, fostering disrespect towards instructors, or causing students to withdraw. Olajoke (2013) stated that “in essence, the fact remains that the teachers are the major determinant factor when it comes to negative humor” (p.70).

A number of pedagogical implications could be gleaned from this study. To begin, identifying the views and beliefs of learners enhanced awareness on adjusting to the various and diverse expectations of the use of humor in teaching. In addition, it is the cultural environment, and ESL teachers, who are the major determinants of students’ comprehension of humor. Language instructors need an improvement program to modify their language teaching methodology (Babatunde, 2002) which, according to Olajoke’s (2013), would allow them to “equip themselves in handling teaching strategies such as the ‘use of humor’ in making ESL an interesting experience by creating a positive impact in the classroom” (p.71).

Another recent Turkish study (Ağçam, 2017) was designed to scrutinize the perceptions of EFL instructors on the use of humor in higher education. Forty-two EFL instructors working at school of foreign languages at three state universities in Turkey participated in the study. A questionnaire consisting of multiple choice and open-ended items was prepared by the researchers, and administered to the participants in order to elicit their opinions on the significance of humor in foreign language education offered to undergraduate students who were studying EFL at school of foreign languages in Turkish institutions of higher education at the time of the study. The overall qualitative and quantitative analysis of findings demonstrated that EFL instructors tend to have positive perceptions about the use of humor in language classes, but have slight hesitation with its use. The study concluded with a few pedagogical implications on related findings, and a few suggestions for further research.

Cultural Awareness

One Brazilian study (Souza, 2008) focused on the use of jokes and riddles as a tool for learning English as a foreign language and for cultural comprehension. The study was based on six aspects involved in aiding learners to understand humor. Those aspects were: interpretation, structure, learning tool, cultural issues, individual differences and motivation. The learners' reactions to the presentation of jokes were observed in classrooms at the Language Center in the College of Education at the University of Sao Paulo. The focus of the article was the use of humor in the classroom to aid in the proficiency of English. Research was carried out over three semesters on three different student groups, at the intermediate level, where an instructor used jokes in her classes. Souza found that jokes based on and activities presented in the classroom, and the reactions of the students, may increase motivation for learning and rapport among learners. How activities surrounding the jokes were set up, contributing to the feeling that they had a sense that they were learning, and having fun as well. Learners discovered similarities between Brazil and the United States in the form of stereotypes. The jokes used in this study were deemed successful, as instructors carefully selected jokes that learners would understand in order to be able to prepare appropriate activities or exercises.

A Japanese study (Hodson, 2014) examined the design, implementation and outcomes of a one-semester program in humor competence for university EFL students. The researcher used a combination of explicit teaching of humor theories, and knowledge of schema, teacher and learner-led analysis of humor texts, and learner presentations. The primary group comprised of thirty-two, third-year students studying English as a foreign language in the literature department of a private university in Japan. These learners were all Japanese, and included twenty-one females and eleven males. Additionally, comparison data was also obtained from a larger group

of one hundred and twenty-four learners in five, first-year EFL classes majoring in international relations and cross-cultural communication, information and media studies, and nursing, at a public university in Japan. A third group consisted of eleven native speakers of English from the United States studying Japanese language and culture at a private university in Japan.

Hodson's (2014) study aimed to address the question: are language learners, when provided with specific instruction in theories of humor, information about the forms and structure of humorous texts, and controlled exposure to a variety of such texts, able to display "humor competence"? The study followed Attardo (2002) as "humor competence" was defined as

the capacity of a speaker to process semantically a given text and to locate a set of relationships among its components, such that he/she would identify the text (or part of it) as humorous in an ideal situation. This humor competence is analogous and in fact part of the semantic competence of speakers: being able to recognise a sentence as funny is a skill equivalent (but not identical, of course), for example, to being able to recognise a sentence as synonymous with another sentence. (p.161)

The course that the learners took part in consisted of fifteen weekly lessons. The first six classes covered a variety of humorous materials, including two sets of meta-skills needed to deal with them: 1) awareness of the varying extents to which materials require linguistic and content knowledge to be understood; and 2) knowledge of three basic theoretical approaches to humor (the ambiguity theory, the relief theory, and the superiority theory). In the seventh through fourteenth weeks, eight groups of students presented on selections from seven types of humorous texts: one-liners, cartoons, puns, bar jokes, idiot jokes, ethnic jokes, and satirical cartoons. In the

final week, learners had to give a brief written analysis of two humorous texts from a set of six jokes, and two cartoons representing these seven text-types.

The data revealed that there was no quantifiable evidence to prove that the learners displayed a high level of humor competence at the conclusion of the specific instruction in theories of humor, information about the forms and structure of humorous texts, and controlled exposure to a variety of such texts provided in the course. Even though humor ratings of one set of jokes were higher than the ratings of a larger group that had not received this kind of instruction, learners were not able to distinguish humorous from non-humorous texts consistently, and to an extent that would satisfy Attardo's (2002) definition of humor competence.

A Tunisian study (Moalla, 2015) investigated the way in which humor is co-constructed and negotiated among speakers of both American English and Tunisian learners of English. The data elicitation methods employed were in-depth and playback interviews, and audio-recorded data of face-to-face social interactions. Two speakers of American English and two Tunisian learners of English sat for in-depth interviews where they were asked forty questions divided into four sections; general questions about humor and the use and understanding of humor in intercultural communication; the construction of humor in intercultural communication; and the perception and interpretation of humor in intercultural communication. In addition to the in-depth interviews, two hours of spontaneous conversations between one American female participant, and three Tunisian female participants, were audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. Twenty-five humorous sequences were captured from the two recorded hours.

Sociolinguistic perspectives on the way humor was used and interpreted in intercultural communication were used in the qualitative analysis of the data. Moalla (2015) stated that:

When creating and interpreting humor in everyday social interactions, participants from different cultures may resort to their background cultural and social schemata to initiate and perceive humorous utterances. Examining the influence of social and cultural values on the creation and understanding of humor helped understand the way humor was used and perceived from the point of view of the participants themselves. (p.372)

The researcher applied the approach of ethnography of communication to understand the way humor in intercultural communication is interpreted. Moalla (2015) focused on the responses provided by the two participant groups and on the conventional and sociolinguistic rules that they used to interpret humor. The data collected from the interviews and the audio recordings revealed that Tunisian learners of English and L1 speakers of American English both encountered difficulties when creating and understanding humor in intercultural communication. The difficulties they faced were related to the complex and ambiguous nature of humor, and to the rules of speaking and culture-specific values underlying humor discourse. Two major factors were found to shape the participants' attempts in maintaining relationships and avoiding intercultural difficulties, and the use of discourse staging. It is, therefore, the participants' awareness of differences in intercultural communication that makes them jointly coordinate their actions to facilitate communication. In other words, participants' awareness and recognition of the existence of cultural differences and their tendency to make sense of each other's social activities, is what inspires them to use accommodation strategies to avoid cultural misunderstandings.

Researchers on the field of international communication, therefore, do not have to focus on the sociolinguistic norms, the rules of speaking, and on the politeness and cooperation principles that non-native speakers have to acquire to be able to behave appropriately with native

speakers. They have to focus rather on the way people from different cultures collaboratively share, interpret, and negotiate meaning to solve interactional difficulties, to strengthen group cohesion, and develop intercultural relational identities.

Kozhevnikova (2013) examined how culture determines the way in which communication advances, and how individuals interpret the messages they receive. The researcher stated that “the process of communication is often realized through language exchange in a situation, which involves the transmission of socio-cultural knowledge” (p.4462).

Twenty students in IT and Tourism, at the intermediate English level, were given the opportunity to view authentic materials such as situation comedies, and to read authentic texts taken from magazines for detailed reading during one semester. The procedure was undertaken in an attempt to comprehend the impact those sources could have on learners’ cultural awareness, and language competence. Learners were also exposed to tasks related to learning new vocabulary, and topics for discussions.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted, and learners were asked about how they felt during the study, and what their viewpoints were concerning the activities. 95% of the learners stated that the use of authentic materials was deeply beneficial in their cultural, and linguistic development. In addition, the materials, according to the learners, increased their motivation in terms of learning foreign languages in general. As the researcher stated, “since authentic materials representing non-EFL environments give examples of particular language functions in operation, there are situations that EFL learners are likely to encounter through their day-to-day, socio-cultural interaction with native speakers of English” (p. 4465).

The study concluded that while exposure to the second language is essential, if it is not possible, the exposure to the authentic material within the classroom can also be beneficial if

certain conditions are observed. Instructors must be diligent in selecting cultural data and authentic materials in order to provide a wide array of cultural and linguistic information.

Consequently, Kozhevnikova (2013) observed that

Students need to know the difference in meanings of some words, associated with customs and traditions and to realize why people in the target culture act in a certain way inside their cultural frame, develop critical skills to deal with stereotypes and myths and improve the quality of their intercultural communication. (p. 4465)

The final study of this review is from Bell (2009), a prominent researcher/instructor on the use of humor in the field of TESOL. Because of the extensive body of research Bell has contributed to the field of TESOL, her work was left to conclude the literary review. The research for this study, and others Bell had undertaken, is vast and takes on various realms in terms of using humor with ESL students. The work reviewed here encompassed not only the categories of familiarization and rapport, motivation, and cultural awareness, but also other pertinent categories.

Bell (2009) drew on data gathered from previous interviews, participant observations, and discourse analysis of audiotaped or videotaped interaction collected from three research projects involving the use of second language speakers in classroom and non-classroom situations. This was done to supply evidence that the topic of humor has merely been based on theoretical discussions and not implemented directly. The researcher critiqued recommendations for pedagogical applications of humor in the L2 classroom, using examples to demonstrate how they were inadequate for determining what might be taught and learned, and to whom.

In her study, Bell (2009) articulated how the use of humor in classrooms of L2 students created a social and psychological benefit. She determined that humor helped to relax learners,

created a comfortable atmosphere to learn, created bonds with classmates, and also raised learners' interests. In addition, she found that the use of humor was shown to be an excellent way to learn about vocabulary, syntax, semantics, and discourse conventions of the target language, and in gaining insight, as was stated earlier. This is an important objective for studies in the future, in that it will show that with explicit instruction and guidance for language learners, they will be able to comprehend not only the language presented to them through the examination of the target language, but also will be able to connect those meanings in being able to understand a culture itself. It falls into the realm of Krashen (1985) and his input hypothesis in that even for advanced-level learners, they will be examining language that most likely will be beyond their level of competence ($i + 1$), which will encourage learners to go beyond what they already comprehend.

The issue that Bell (2009) articulated in her study was with how researchers had put forth typologies of humor and had made recommendations, yet those researchers had not made use of naturally occurring interactions, but simply on pre-scripted jokes. This also falls into what Krashen (1985) put forth, in that he believed that interaction in the target language should focus on the messages that are being conveyed rather than simply the form. Explicit instruction of humor is necessary, however, the use must also be undertaken. Bell (2010) stated that "although much work remains, it is generally accepted that explicit instruction in pragmatics can aid in the learning of both production and perception of speech acts" (p.2). It would be appropriate then to include Vygotsky's (1978) view which stated that interaction with peers is an effective way to develop skills and strategies. For instructors it is vital to not only comprehend what type of humor to introduce, but also to expose what type is authentic and frequent. Gee (2014) stated that language has meaning in and only through social practices, so it is imperative that instructors

find linguistic outlets for learners to become connected to.

Bell (2009) presented several ideas incorporating humor into the classroom, many falling under the category of awareness-raising or inductive activities. Examples were having learners collect and analyze samples of humor using discourse analytic techniques because by collecting their own examples and analyzing samples of humor they found difficult, the learners became more familiar with the humor used by native speakers. As mentioned previously, this is necessary to incorporate in advanced learners' education, as learners become involved in the analysis, and then can implement the uses of humor they may have been able to scaffold with other language learners and/or native speakers.

These findings are reflected in this on-going project as an attempt to establish the importance of humor being taught in the classroom to high-level adult ESL learners. In addition, it will show that by having an inclusion of activities that raise the awareness of the use of humor, learners will begin to have a stronger linguistic and cultural comprehension skills. Instructors need to be able to identify the authentic language necessary for learners to be involved with and to implement it, not simply engaging in activities or creating curricula instructors believe is pertinent in the area of humor.

Summary

The literature reviewed here is a minute segment of the existing research available on the use of humor in the language-learning classroom. The sheer vastness of available studies on this topic should indicate to institutions, educators, and instructors that humor should be more deeply examined and implemented. When humor is introduced into the language-learning environment, it brings with it a vast array of benefits from a wide variety of categories. Among other benefits, the literature reviewed above demonstrates the extent to which humor helps to create familiarity

with the L2 and build rapport within the classroom, positively impacts the motivation of learners, and contributes to an improved sense of cultural awareness among learners.

Despite these benefits, humor continues to remain on the fringe in many ESL classrooms. This is possibly a result of an overall lack of specific information on how humor should be implemented within the classroom. While the benefits of humor are well-documented, instructors may find difficulties in comprehending the specifics of implementation, since those details are rarely discussed. The absence of detail surrounding the active implementation of humor into the classroom is one of the ‘gaps’ in the literature that this project attempts to contribute towards filling, by shedding light on the practical realities of how humor can be introduced into the ESL classroom. In this way, this project provides guidance and support for instructors who may be aware of the benefits of including humor in their lessons, but do not have a solid idea of how to go about doing so.

Elkommos (2017) stated that “humour is by default a provoking/laughter-generated device. Incongruity recognition, perception and resolving it, is a cognitive mastery. The cognitive process involves a humour experience that lightens up the classroom and the mind. It establishes connections necessary for the learning process” (p.1456). While the literature reviewed may not have all aspects represented that offers pinpoint results, there is still overwhelming data indicating that humor is vital in language learning. More information must become available to educators in how they should implement humor in the ESL classroom, as it includes linguistic and cultural elements that can significantly enhance language learners’ acquisition.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Introduction

Within the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom there remains a void in the implementation of humor. While there is considerable amount of research available within the academic realm, as authors Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez & Liu (2011) summarized in *A Review of Humor in Educational Settings: Four Decades of Research*, there has been very little progression in the implementation of humor in actual ESL curricula. The purpose of this study, then, was to explore two areas: firstly, to identify areas of difficulty English language learners (ELLs) may experience with the comprehension, production, and instruction (or lack thereof) of humor in the ESL classroom; and secondly, to examine and then consider whether the explicit instruction of authentic humor and humorous language could benefit ELLs. As Maurice (1988) stated, “humor can easily be seen as a way of activating motivation and directing attention, but it can also be used in other events as well, from stimulating recall to eliciting performances and providing feedback” (p.20). Documenting language-learning experiences and input of adult English language learners, then, was primary in attempting to construct concepts for curricula that could aid other learners who find themselves in similar situations today.

Overview of Participants

The subjects who took part in interviews for this study were at the advanced level and/or proficiency level of English, and were selected as interview subjects through the researcher’s personal and/or professional associations with them. The nature of these associations include teacher-student relationships, colleague familiarity, or from their professional positions within

the Canadian workforce. The data drawn from the participants allowed for a clear vision of how, when, and where the explicit instruction of humor should be undertaken, and the specific implementation of humor within TESOL curricula.

Those who took part in this study were adults, and their native languages were not English. The participants were all fluent in English determined by their professions/academic life, and they were able to articulate their viewpoints on the use of humor in the classroom, describing prior experiences as English language learners in profound, lasting conversations. All but three of the participants currently live in Canada, and of the ten individuals interviewed, nine are working professionals while the other is a third-year university student. The ages of the participants ranged from twenty-one to sixty-five, and their countries of origins are from Japan, South Korea, China, the Philippines, France, Russia, Switzerland, Panama, and Saudi Arabia, as detailed in Table One. The data given in this table describes participants' names (pseudonyms), native languages, ages of second language acquisition, years spent living in Canada/United States, and sexes. This data was gathered during the initial stages of the interview. In most cases, due to the existing relationships between the interviewer and interviewees, this information was already common knowledge.

Table One

Linguistic Background of Participants

Name (Pseudonym)	Native Language	Age of Second Language Acquisition	Years Spent Living in Canada/United States	Sex
Maya	Japanese	15	12	Female
Tomomi	Japanese	16	24	Female
Maxie	French	12	8 months	Male
Dasha	Russian	12	2	Female
Mua	Saudi Arabian	18	4	Male
Doris	Panamanian	6	45	Female
Sue	Chinese	18	7	Female
JayS	South Korean	30	10	Female
Suz	Filipina	5	35	Female
Angie	Swiss	12	6 months	Female

Research Questions

The interview questions for this study were presented in a conversational manner, and as a result of this methodology some deviations occurred. Those deviations were in the sequencing and aspects of the wording, yet the initial guiding questions remained the same with each

participant. Those guiding questions, that played the role of type of warm-up, elicited prime demographic information:

1. What is your first or native language?
2. When did you first acquire English in terms of being able to comprehend and communicate at a level you felt comfortable with?
3. How and where did you learn English?
4. How long have or had you lived in Canada and/or the United States?

More attention was given to the anecdotal and referential information gathered for this study, and only basic demographic information was solicited. While this may appear routine it should not be dismissed, as the information collected had significant relevance on the participants' experiences and observations. It is not only when the participants acquired English, and the amount of time spent residing in Canada/the United States, that exhibited an impact on their experiences with Canadian/American culture, but also the participants' native languages and cultures.

Primary Questions

The questions that allowed for the assembly of data for this study, deemed here as primary questions, were asked of all of the participants albeit occasionally in alternate sequence. Some answers that the participants gave often warranted asking follow-up questions that did not adhere to the established sequence, yet had the same impact in how the data was collected and analyzed.

After establishing the linguistic backgrounds of the participants, I presented them with the question that asked what humor or being funny meant to them. This was an important first question because it put the participants at ease, and allowed them to give their own self-

assessment of whether they were humorous or not, and if humor had relevance in their lives. My expectations were twofold: 1) humor is all around them and they engage, in part, in the use of humor; 2) humor is far easier for them to put to use within their first language, and that the use of humor in English proved challenging. The results showed that all participants believed that humor not only played a role in their own lives, but they also felt that humor was prevalent in all cultures. Humor, however, was not dominant in their scholastic lives. It was, however, a part of their social lives where through communicative experiences with native English speakers, they were able to develop their linguistic and cultural awareness.

The following question was whether participants felt that humor has a place within the language learning process in terms of cognitive development and cultural awareness. After putting the participants at ease through the first question, it was my intention to create a thought-provoking second question that signaled the start of the data collection process. My intention for this question was to have learners ponder if humor has such a strong impact in learning a second language. My expectation of the participants' answers was that all would agree that humor does indeed have a place in the language-learning process in cognitive development, and in creating cultural awareness. In addition, my hope was that the participants would express their views on how they did not have these advantages of learning and using humor to enhance their language-learning experience. On the other hand, I believed that perhaps one or two language learners would have been exposed to humor in the English language-learning classroom, and that they would describe their experience. In all but one of the interviews, the participants answered this question in agreement, as they expressed and expanded their viewpoints from the first question. Without hesitation, the participants indicated that humor not only aids in the language-learning process, but also allows language learners to develop a cultural awareness. This was the case in

most of their own experiences. In addition, the participants believed that humor did have some place within the language learning process, but were uncertain how and when it could be implemented.

The third question focused on whether participants had ever been exposed to courses specifically designed for the recognition and/or use of humor in their second language-learning experience. As stated above, my intention was to build on the second question, and again for the participants to voice their disappointment or regret as to not having been exposed to the language and cultural awareness that humor brings. In addition, I believed that some of the participants would point to their native-speaking peers or media that aided them in their experience. While almost all participants answered that they had not been exposed to these types of lessons or courses, two identified that they had taken drama courses in English that touched on aspects of humor, but not in terms of directly learning and implementing humor neither in the classroom nor in their everyday lives. The third question revealed that because they had not been directly exposed to humor in the classroom, or had not been exposed to humor explicitly in courses, it prevented them from advancing in their L2.

The fourth question was to inquire whether humor is cultural or linguistic, and if it can or should be taught. The third and fourth questions were the most pertinent in terms of how the participants distinctively related to the problem statement at the center of this study. The lack of explicit teaching of humor and its use, as well as its lack of implementation within curricula piqued my interest, and is the central reason as to why I wanted to examine it in detail. If many English language learners have voiced a need and desire to learn about the linguistic aspects of humor, as well as the cultural facets, why has there been so little focus on its implementation within the classroom? The participants reiterated that, because they were not taught about humor

directly, it took a great deal of time for them to become linguistically and culturally cognizant of those aspects. Many participants expressed a sense of frustration, especially after having reached advanced levels, that they did not obtain the social language, expressions, vocabulary, slang, and idioms, to be able to convey what they had wanted to express. Not only did they face challenges in this manner, but they also had difficulties in comprehending native English speakers, and felt challenges in connecting with the L2 culture because of those gaps in linguistic and cultural understanding. All participants except for JayS from South Korea, an Early Childhood Education (ECE) teacher, would have attended English language courses teaching humor and its use, had those courses been available to them. JayS stated that she was from the older segment of Korean education and believed that “humor is not really appropriate in a classroom. Just it should be used during ‘break time’ then serious in the classroom. It’s like to get ‘fresh air’, but not meaningful for entire class.” Other participants’ views, however, were that the use of humor in the classroom could create stronger bonds between instructors and learners, lessen stress for learners to create a more enjoyable atmosphere to be in, creating interest in the language, and motivation within their studies.

The questions that followed were concerned with personal and cultural aspects of the participants. I asked the participants if they felt they were funny in general, and if they were funnier in their own language or in English. The ensuing question I asked was if there are differences between humor in their own language and Canadian humor, and if there was, in their view, a visible or palpable difference between Canadian humor and American humor. Because many of the participants had lived a significant amount of time learning English in their own cultures, and had also lived in Canada and/or the United States for a measureable amount of time (minus the two learners who studied in language institutes for six to eight months), I asked these

questions in an effort to provide an understanding of Canadian humor seen from perspectives of second language learners. In addition, the purpose of inquiring if participants could label any similarities or differences between Canadian humor, the humor within their own cultures, and American humor, was again for me to obtain outside perspectives in order to identify commonalities concerning humor.

The other reason for asking this question was to identify whether it would be useful for ESL instructors to design lessons or curricula that focused on the differences between English language cultures (such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia), or if teaching students humor in a more generalized way would suffice. In the latter, instructors could then implement their own cultural viewpoints more specifically, depending on where the language learner resides. My expectation, especially of those participants who have lived in Canada for over ten years, was that they would be able to articulate the differences in humor between Canada and the United States, and give examples of why instructors may want to teach regional humor as well as general humor in the classroom. For the most part, most participants could not identify in detail the differences between Canadian and American humor, though some spoke in detail as to how Canadians appear to be more reserved, self-deprecating, and “British” than the overtly aggressive and sarcastic style of humor connected with Americans. Almost all of the participants openly expressed that both Canadian and American culture, in terms of humor, were far too sensitive when making fun of others. The participants felt that due to the “political correctness” of the cultures, individuals could not ridicule others which when done in fun without malice, allows for expression, and keeps an open dialogue between different people. Angie, a registered nurse from French-speaking Switzerland said that, “Swiss people are always joking of their neighbors because of how close we live to each other. It is not mean humor....it

plays to stereotypes, yes, but everyone is involved in it, and so we tend to all laugh at one another and not take it too serious.”

These interview questions allowed me to gain insightful perspectives on how the explicit use of humor, and how it is implemented, must be added to courses for ESL/EFL students, as the participants’ answers provided direction for creating valid recommendations that will be presented at the conclusion of this study.

Findings

Necessity for Context and Explicit Instruction

A theme that arose when interviewing the participants was that there is a need for humor to be taught explicitly in order for ELLs to be able to identify how and when to use humor, and what the L2 culture deems is appropriate linguistically and culturally acceptable. Tomomi, a social worker having lived in Canada for twenty-four years, clearly expressed her views.

Tomomi: I wasn’t exposed to humor in the classroom, but I learned early on that humor can be taught.

Researcher: Who did you learn this from?

T: From my homestay dad. He said humor is verbal, visual, and physical...and he always told me that humor is very important here, and that ‘if there’s no humor then things are bad.’ Actually, he was kind of a racist, and used sarcasm.

R: Racist?

T: Well, he told jokes or made comments about people with dark skin.

R: So, then at a young age, coming from Japan, how did you know this was inappropriate use of humor?

- T: My homestay mom. She would hear this and put me straight. She kind of would scold me too, telling me ‘if you don’t know about what people are talking about, then ask! Don’t just nod your head. You have to know what people are dragging you into.’
- R: So, it could have benefited you to have had some knowledge from the classroom that could have helped you?
- T: For sure. I think that humor gives you the tools to understand this country. I got the words, but never knew why things were funny. And you need that person, like my homestay mom, or a teacher I guess, to show you what works or doesn’t work. Without some advice, you will have no idea.

Maya, a Montessori elementary school instructor who has lived in Canada for twelve years, had worked for NOVA (a private English language school) in Japan where she had observed foreign language instructors primarily from Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom. She believes that with humor you need to understand the situation, and the words suitable within the situation.

Maya: It’s a great idea to learn about humor in English, but not in Japan.

Researcher: Oh?

M: Yes, because you have to be in culture to then be able to practice what you learned after. So, then, I also think that it should be for advanced learners only. Lower-level learners may not have ability necessary to use humor.

R: So, learners should be taught but only within the L2 culture?

M: Yes. They will know then the language and can enter into social situation and practice. Social is important...Example...when I first came to Canada I was at a

party with Japanese friend who lived here already seven years. The Canadian woman at the party was talking about sad situation about her dying cat, and she said she was wondering where in the backyard she should bury.

R: Bury the cat?

M: Yes. So, I thought it was kind of joke, and chuckle a little, but my friend elbow me, and said: 'she's serious...it's no joke!' Of course we love pets in Japan, but to think about burying in backyard seemed strange and funny to me.

R: You felt that you kind of lacked a social context.

M: Yes, I was unfamiliar. I thought she was telling something sarcastic.

While there were several students who were exposed to English at an early age such as Suz from the Philippines, who grew up with English and Tagalog almost simultaneously, and Doris who learned English from Swiss nuns in Panama, there were still issues. The lack of explicit teaching in terms of using humor hindered linguistic and cultural development, as Suz articulated:

In my experience of learning English, we didn't really have the opportunity to explore what we were studying. Luckily I spoke to my father in English, and my teachers, but it was in the Philippines, and even though we spoke "socially" it wasn't actually in the society. So, when I got to Canada in my twenties, I thought I had a grip on the language... it wasn't enough. I didn't know how to react to what people said in everyday life because I wasn't taught the language specific to Canada. I know you can't teach students everything, but there should be culture classes established, and one aspect that should be looked at is humor. What I had noticed is that much of what has to do with humor is idiomatic, and the use of slang. I mean, when someone said to me "you have to

hit the sack”, I had no idea what that could have meant. You experience these things through culture and social aspects, and that takes a long time. I understand why it wasn’t taught in my time, but it is curious why it still isn’t taught much today. It took me years to learn these things, and I learned them from friends I made or from television and movies, and from the kids I taught in my classes as well.

Appropriate Language Use

When language learners are exposed to humor in the classroom, and are explicitly taught about how the language they use impacts them from the linguistic impression they make to their ability to express themselves within cultural norms, they will understand appropriateness. Language learners have to consider topical items and situational instances in order to find success when participating in humorous interactions. This demands a comprehension of the guidelines of being appropriate within a culture, intertwined with linguistic awareness. For many of the participants in the study this proved challenging when they were learning English. Mua discussed that in Saudi Arabia, using derogatory remarks about females is considered funny, as is teasing or name-calling using animal analogies. “I knew of this before I came, so I never use when I live in Canada or in Dallas, America, but difficult not to use.” Mua did have a rhetorical question that was still on his mind even several years after the occurrence.

Mua: You know one of most important things in Saudi culture, yes?

Researcher: There are many.

M: You guess.

R: Well, I know that family plays a primary role...

M: Yes! Very good. So, you know, in Dallas I met this black guy, yes?

R: Uh-huh...

M: And he still was young guy, maybe thirty-five...and he have a daughter with him, beautiful girl, and he introduce me to her. Maybe fifteen.

R: So, she was fifteen years old?

M: Yes. So, you know, in Saudi, family is very important, and we complement and kind of make joke at same time...not really...we say: Ah, soon you will be having grandchild in your family. This is kind thing. More children coming into family.

R: So, you complemented him on raising his daughter, and because of this he will be kind of rewarded when she gets pregnant, and has her own child.

M: So, yes! It is joke, but compliment. This man was angry at me. Why not is having more family good thing? I know culture is different, but he was so angry.

Suz, despite living in Canada for over thirty years, was still bothered by the political correctness of North American culture.

Suz: You know, we Filipinos like to laugh. We are so laid back, and we laugh easily at kind of stupid or silly things. Actually, we usually laugh at something that is unique to us, and that kind of unifies us.

Researcher: And Canada is different in this way?

S: We have a wider sense of humor, as I said sillier, and not as politically correct. Here in Victoria especially, people are far too conservative...it comes from the British background here. It is almost that, in some cases, that people are afraid to laugh...like it is somehow embarrassing. I also lived in the U.S. as well, and again, it seems like minorities can laugh, but, well, let me just be honest, white Americans seem to be afraid to laugh. We Filipinos are self-deprecating, too. I guess that when life is difficult people tend to laugh more to get them through

difficulties. Getting used to behaving more subdued really bothers me, and sometimes when a social situation here is too heavy, I laugh, or make funny comments of some sort. Not appropriate, I know, but sometimes it is too hard to hold back.

Sue addressed the fact that appropriateness in China does not share the same meaning as it does in Canada. For example, it would be highly unlikely to have humor courses available to learners in China because education is not seen as something that allows for humor. Academic competition is high, and humor would not fit into the structure of the educational system. Sue continued to describe after being in Canada for eight years, humor courses would have helped her, and allow her to understand what is appropriate or not. “In China we are more direct, but in Canada people use humor in a different way because there is more meaning behind it.”

Researcher: Were there any difficulties concerning appropriateness in using English when you started studying or working in Canada?

Sue: Yes. People around me were making jokes about politician and government, and I have no idea if I laugh or not. In China, we don't do that. Politics, government, bad idea. I learned it is okay to do this, but, to be honest, I still cannot.

Sue's colleague, JayS, had an opposing opinion: “In my generation, we use sarcasm against politician. Actually now too. Canadian use sarcasm but it is against a specific person around them. Usually when I speak my humor opinion in English, people think it is too serious. Too strong.”

Culture, Language, and Benefits

Throughout the interview process, it became obvious that whether the participants believed that humor should be explicitly taught in the ESL classroom or not, each participant

expressed the positive aspects of humor use in general. Angie, a registered nurse in Switzerland, stated that humor is important in all aspects of her life because “you need to laugh at everything. It helps you go through life, especially for nurses. It helps us survive.” Angie went on to say that within the language-learning classroom, if students are embarrassed about their skills or abilities, humor can deflect their insecurities. In addition, “humor helps people cognitively because it touches emotions, something in them, that will help them remember, and they can get a feeling about a culture even if they don’t understand the words right away.” Dasha emphatically verbalized that using humor is the “first and best way to learn how to communicate” as traditional methods of language education simply do not impact today’s language learners. “I love humor because it is everywhere and it relaxes us, and connects us to others.” In Dasha’s English language-learning experiences she initially faced an instructor who was strict and lacked humor. She consequently found that she was not motivated to attend those classes. “The second instructor I had was strict too, I mean he asked a lot of his students, but because of his humor it created an easy-going environment to learn. He taught a few techniques of humor, kind of, so we kind of understood the language and culture part of who he was.” Maxie from France, an English language instructor in the Ukraine, believes that humor “is a way of dealing with whatever comes your way. You can’t have a positive outlook without it.” Maxie went on to express that “culturally it is important because we can examine aspects of ourselves. Linguistically it helps us express ourselves, but I think it is even more vital culturally.” He also articulated that the impact of humor within the classroom is necessary, especially in terms of the relationship between instructors and learners. In his view, “it creates an ease, and seems to level the playing field. Students are not intimidated...they are inspired.”

Doris spent much of her adult life in Canada after arriving from Panama in her twenties. As a Montessori instructor and prominent lecturer on Montessori philosophies today, she supplied thoughtful views on how humor aids in linguistic and cultural development for ELLs, and the palpable benefits of having humor in the classroom in general:

You know, humor gives us a sense of well-being both mentally and physically. What it does is it removes inhibitions, and it opens up other people's acceptance. In fact, it's a form of release, and it gives positive feedback. And if you have a teacher who is aware of your culture and language, then he can instruct you well because he will not only be aware of linguistic errors but can also direct you culturally. In general, whether we are using humor explicitly or implicitly, or even not at all, we need more instructors who are aware of the cultural group they are teaching, the students' needs, and cultural and linguistic tendencies or leanings. So, if we focus on humor, for example, it shouldn't just be taught for humor's sake, but must have a direction or purpose to advance learners.

Humor as Personal and Societal Expression

While humor plays a role in culture, how it is received often depends on how it is seen or interpreted within that culture. Additionally, an individual's preference for a particular type of humor also plays a significant role. The participants were asked how they perceived humor, and if they could identify differences between Canadian and American humor. Tomomi responded by saying that humor exists in her life, yet it depends on with whom she surrounds herself. "In Japan I was not, and am not that funny. Being funny is...it's not the way to get attention in Japan...it is outside of the personality. In Japan I'm more in a box." When asked about the differences in humor between Japan and Canada, and if she could understand differences in

humor between Canada and America, she responded by expressing that humor is more visual in Japan, though put-downs and practical jokes are relevant as well.

Tomomi: You lived in Japan for five years, right?

Researcher: Yes.

T: Well, you remember “99”, the comedy group.

R: You mean Okamura and Yabe?

T: Right. If you remember, they used severe put-downs and practical jokes, mostly Yabe on Okamura. One of my American friends saw that and felt that it wasn't funny, and kind of offensive, especially for the abuse Okamura-san received. So, it's visual humor, some verbal in Japan, but we don't see...we don't laugh at Okamura-san for being the victim of all the jokes, like people here might, we identify with him. Our bosses yell at us and put us down...nothing we can do about it. Our husband or wife annoys us or our kids don't listen to us... nothing we can do about it. So, we identify with being the victim, and we laugh at how Okamura-san takes the abuse because actually, it's us.

R: Kind of like Nasubi?

T: Totally!

R: I know why that comedian was called Nasubi (eggplant) because he looked like one, but at first I didn't get why watching a guy who was naked, stuck in an empty apartment with nothing, writing to the outside world to get things to survive, to live, was funny.

T: Did you like it after?

R: After working in Japan for a few years, I finally got it. It was funny...and it was

funny because, as you said, he represented every beat-down worker who struggled each and every day.

In terms of gauging the differences between Canada and the United States, Tomomi could not identify significant differences:

Before I came to Canada, I had a Canadian teacher in Japan, and he played a clip from Jim Carrey (2008, March 20)...it was about him being a Canadian in L.A., and how Americans were ignorant about Canada. Actually, I had no idea why it was funny. Now I get it, but...and then, do you remember at PGIC, a lot of instructors there played the “I am Canadian” (2006, May 22) campaign by some beer company? It was kind of funny, but I know many of the students were kind of confused by it. The advanced classes got it, but the lower levels were confused. I remember that.

Maxie felt that humor was vital in his life, yet he appreciated British-type of humor, such as Monty Python, more as it fit into his quick wit. He went on to state that the French enjoy various kinds of humor, yet seem to stand out when it comes to sarcasm. In terms of Canadian and American humor, he stated that he did not experience any “big humorist moment”, but experienced Canadian humor through French-Canadian culture that focused on the accent and words of the comedy. “French-Canadian humor is far different from English-speaking Canada, and it’s not only those differences, but the centralized, Canadian-French they use.” Maxie went on to state:

To be honest with you, I prefer Irish humor, because it’s kind of more like a slice of life...the Irish are more pragmatic, they make fun of things if bad things happen ...they are jolly people. I find Americans to be brash, loud...English-speaking

Canadians are a little...what is it...bland? Actually, except for *Trailer Park Boys*¹... but with that program, ESL students would need a clear explanation of what kinds of Canadians these are, and where they reside in Canada...it's a special case.

Mua, who after living in Canada for two years, and spending another two years in Dallas, Texas obtaining his Master's degree in finance, had these views on what humor means to him, and the differences between cultures.

Mua: I cannot compliment myself...if I have humor, but I like making the people laugh. I like to mock other people. We mock each other face in Saudi.

Researcher: Do you use humor in the classes you teach?

M: You know, no. It is okay for foreign teacher to make student laugh, but not Saudi teacher. Culture forces me to be strict. Class will be out of control if I do. But I teach economy so humor maybe not suitable for this class. You, English teacher, you can do.

R: So, if I incorporated humor in a Saudi class it would be successful?

M: In Saudi, no. In Canada, yes. EFL and ESL different. It is more difficult when you are in Saudi. There may be no purpose because students not use information.

R: And did you notice any differences between Canadians and Americans concerning humor since you lived in both countries for two years?

M: You know, almost similar. But...American is complicated. In Dallas,

¹ Trailer Park Boys (2001-2008; 2014 -) is a Canadian mockumentary television series, focusing on the misadventures of a group of trailer park residents, some of whom are ex-convicts, living in the fictional Sunnyvale Trailer Park in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.

I feel tension...I am not American, I am kind of brown (laughs), so... actually I felt more comfortable with black people.

R: Oh?

M: Yes...we always laugh together. Maybe because we are in similar boat.

R: How do you mean?

M: There is lots of problem with race, and many people have problem... racist comment, so...but this my experience. Houston, I feel is more multicultural, and when I visit Florida I feel it is much kinder.

R: And Canada?

M: Canada is kind country with some funny people, sarcastic, but not so aggressive like American. Except for noise, I think Canadian and American almost same. You think Saudi people are funny?

R: (Laughs). Well, I didn't think so before, but then I started spending time with some of my Saudi students, and I could see the humor there. Years ago when there was a referendum or some kind of vote going to take place, you know, about allowing women to drive...one of my students showed me the "No Woman, No Drive" (October 26, 2013) YouTube video based on the Bob Marley song "No Woman, No Cry", and I thought it was well done. I didn't expect this kind of humor from Saudi Arabia.

M: Aha! You see! (Laughs).

Doris gained her first experience learning English in Panama from Swiss nuns who she found to be strict and concise in their language instruction. She stated that there was very little

interest in the class because of their direct approach; however, years later she was taught by American priests who were “in tune with things and would catch our interests. And they made us laugh.” Doris went on to state that while Panamanians enjoy humor, it “could be more restrictive especially when dealing with religion,” and that some humor “no-nos are connected to religion and offensive language.” In terms of Canadian versus American humor, she was uncertain of any obvious differences, but articulated that sarcasm seemed to be prevalent in both cultures.

JayS, who deemed herself as “extremely unfunny”, expressed that Koreans are “serious people, so if you tell too many joke, then people don’t take you seriously.” She expressed that while she has an inability to use humor, she can understand the “humorous situations of Canada,” but still has difficulties in understanding idioms and language used in sarcasm. When asked why she has these difficulties, she admitted that the time spent outside of the ECE classroom was mostly with other Koreans or non-native speakers of English. For JayS humor is not a daily necessity, and she does not have experience using humor. In terms of whether she could see any differences in humor between Canada and the United States, JayS stated that “you know, I don’t like both humor because I think it’s all sarcastic. Korean are sarcastic, but with politician...Canadian and American way is kind of back-biting which is not respectful or kind...so, I don’t like. Don’t use.”

The results from the questions concerning if there is a distinction between Canadian and American humor surprised me. My expectation, especially from those participants who had lived in North America for longer periods of time, was that they would be able to clearly describe the differences in humor. Another interesting finding was that in most cultures, other than in some Asian cultures, sarcasm was a prevalent use of humor. While there was some mention of the type

of sarcasm participants used in their first language from that of English, it was still the main kind of humor they used.

Advancement of Humor

Most of the participants in the study gave two specific methods that aided in the development of their linguistic competence and cultural awareness in terms of humor. First, participants pointed out that it was because of frequently being exposed to authentic language use through media such as television programs, movies, YouTube, and print news satire such as *The Onion* (1988 -), that their awareness of humor had been strengthened linguistically and culturally. Secondly, the participants articulated that their knowledge and use of humor developed, as they spent time in social situations with native English speakers. It was mostly friends, homestay family members, and partners that aided in the development and advancement of being competent in humor, and language use in general. ELLs, as expressed by Moore (2008), are socialized through the use of language, and are socialized to use it through engaging in communicative encounters and in routine interactions with more knowledgeable members in order to become an active and competent member in that community. Ochs & Schieffelin (1986) stated that language socialization is not only dependent on the use of language and developmental processes, but is concerned with the effect of those processes on learners being accepted in the target community and their own statuses in it.

These concepts align themselves with those of Krashen's input hypothesis (1985), and Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theory of scaffolding. As expressed earlier in this study, Krashen's theory states that learners will acquire language when they understand language that has structure somewhat beyond where they are at present. In addition, Krashen stated that acquisition requires natural communication for learners to advance in their linguistic skills and cultural

awareness. In a similar vein, Vygotsky viewed interactions with peers as a way of developing skills and strategies. Because of interactions with more knowledgeable members, learners can scaffold the information pertinent to them, and once this is achieved the scaffolding can be removed. The learners then will be able to complete the next linguistic tasks on their own.

If instructors could create these types of conditions in the English language-learning classroom, as they incorporate the use of humor, students would be able to activate these techniques with the aid of the instructor, and within the safety of the classroom. The term safety here relates to the chances learners would be able to take without the threat of being embarrassed in authentic social situations; learners would be more likely to take risks, and would not avoid using new language.

Maya stated that being married to her Canadian husband has allowed her to see humor more clearly, and where it fits in within daily life. Despite the fact that her husband is relentless in attempting to trick her with colloquialisms, metaphors, and pop cultural references, it has allowed her to comprehend the language and situations more clearly. “Now I know, actually, how unfunny my husband is, and how his jokes, or whatever, don’t work with me...but that’s okay because they do not work with his Canadian friends either.”

Doris expressed that, had she known the importance of humor, and in how it impacts understanding aspects of a culture, she would have been more open to using humor in varying aspects to advance her language more rapidly:

Because I was taught by Swiss nuns, and because of the culture in Panama at the time, maybe still today, my language learning was more restrictive. It doesn’t mean I didn’t learn English well, or that it was taught incorrectly, but there were boundaries. I was taught to speak English properly...I don’t mean that in a snobby way...I mean, we

learned formal English. So, when I got to Canada in my twenties, most people in the “real world” spoke in a way that I had not been taught. I had a difficult time in social situations, but thank goodness for my Canadian friends. They advanced my authentic language learning a great deal. The learners today are fortunate because not only can they make friends, but they have the luxury of YouTube...media. I think I would have concentrated more on developing idiomatic language...metaphors. Understanding of popular culture comes once you have lived somewhere for a long while, but, yes...metaphors. I would have jumped into language classes that would have taught that!

Tomomi was thankful that she was a teenager when she arrived in Canada, as she could not only communicate with the members of her homestay family, but could also make friends much easier than those learners who came when they were older. In addition, Tomomi had the advantage of having access to television, and later, the Internet.

I remember watching *Friends*, and thinking that this was a pretty good show for my English. Chandler was interesting to me because of the sarcasm he used. So, you know we don't use sarcasm really much in Japan, but in high school in Canada I heard it all the time, but I didn't get it. With *Friends*, Chandler's speaking helped mine a lot. *Seinfeld* was on a lot too then, but when I came I was too young to get that show. When I got older, I started watching it more, and I loved it. Because that show is so much about social situations, and the awkwardness of them, I could relate the language to the social situation. I wish, instead of having to do this on my own, we could have had classes to help us out. And you know what, just like *Seinfeld* or *Friends*, each person had their own expressions...I guess voice...so you knew what Phoebe was like or George...Kramer.

The idea that I found of great interest was Tomomi's comment on how she realized that each individual in these situation comedies had their own voice. In one of his tools of inquiry, James Gee (2014) wrote about social languages. He believed that the different styles of language we utter create an identity with a specific social group. If language learners like Tomomi could have taken English language-learning courses that focused on aspects of humor, and its authentic use within a culture, she would have been aware of the fact that the language she learned, and chose to use, would represent who she was and the group within the culture she wanted to be associated with. Another tool of inquiry that Gee explored, referred to Discourses with a capital "D". He stated that Discourses allow for individuals to be recognized by others because of the way they speak and how they act. They do this by including their utterances, behaviors, and use of objects within interactions. By espousing this information on language learners in a course that would teach humor, those language learners would be able to not only communicate effectively within a cultural, but also have a sense of identity – something that is often lost when learners become involved in a new culture.

Dasha felt that because she had lived in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada as a young woman, she developed the ability to adapt quickly. "Because I am not shy person, and because I lived many places, my language came fast." Dasha expressed that in Russia she was sarcastic, so "wherever I lived in the West, it was okay. People use sarcasm here, so I used it too. But Russian humor is bit darker." Dasha was thankful that she had a great many experiences with her non-native and native English-speaking friends, as they aided her not only in helping improve her language, but in also guiding her through social situations. "My Canadian friends, especially, they helped me understand more than any classroom in English. I was involved in their lives, and in the culture, and they showed me the way how to use English.

When I was sometimes aggressive with my words and actions, my friends showed me what to do.”

Sue, after having lived in Canada for seven years, explained about how her language abilities and cultural knowledge are advancing more.

Sue: When I get my ECE job, I was using English but kind of isolated.

Researcher: Oh? Why?

S: I just go to work, work with kids every day, but, you know, their English is still young. After work I go home, stay inside, and next day go to work.

R: You didn't socialize much?

S: No. First too busy, then afraid. I am worker in Canada, but cannot express well, so I embarrassed to meet native speaker.

R: That has changed?

S: Finally, I feel better, or maybe sick of my English, so co-worker and I...we sometime go out, and I can learn quickly. New word, new situation...learn about Canadian culture and be in social.

The participants who developed friendships with native speakers spoke highly of them, and how those English speakers were able to aid in their language acquisition, much faster than any English class had ever done for them. Angie expressed that while reaching advanced levels of English courses “things go boring because we covered all of the same language in the same way for many years.” Mua felt great fondness for his Canadian and American friends, who allowed him to understand how to appropriately use his English, and how to maneuver in social situations. Maxie expressed his appreciation to not only some native speakers who aided him during his linguistic journey, but also the availability to media that allowed him to pinpoint

specific areas of language, and certain social situations. “It is the combination of creating friendships with native speakers, and using aspects of media that helped me the most. It is funny, and I say this now as an English teacher myself, that I put deep value and thanks into those friendships and media, but what I learned in English classes is somewhat of a blur.”

Summary

Through the collection and analysis of data concerning humor in the ESL classroom, it is evident that there are complexities involved in its acquisition and implementation for English language learners. There are not only linguistic obstacles to overcome, such as expanding vocabulary and syntax in order to comprehend and then produce humor, but also there are a myriad of cultural/social aspects that must be maneuvered as well.

The participants in this study can be used as evidence to signify that while not having humor taught explicitly and used in the classroom did not hinder upper-intermediate and advanced learners’ acquisition of the basic tenants of English, they were impacted in other ways. According to some of the participants, English courses lacked class cohesion, were mundane due to the similarities in prior language education, and did not aid in the development of authentic language. In addition, because of the lack of instruction concerning humor, those language learners were unaware of cultural behaviors and actions.

It was due to the aid of mostly native-speaking friends and/or homestay families, as well as access to broader media that allowed the participants to gradually acquire authentic language and cultural awareness. Being exposed to the authentic language in this way played a dominant role, though time was a hindrance. It took a great deal of time to acquire the necessary skills for learners to participate in, and be connected to, Canadian culture. The emergence of language classes that incorporate the implicit instruction of humor and its use would have the potential to

positively affect English language learners today, as they would be given the linguistic and cultural guidelines in order to participate fully, and successfully, within the second language culture.

CHAPTER IV
DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The way in which language education has been presented to many adult upper-intermediate and advanced-level English language learners has fostered frustration, as many have not had viable opportunities to obtain the authentic language spoken in the second language culture. At adult advanced-language levels in ESL, there is a focus on test-taking strategies rather than a focus on language that is relevant and applicable both inside and outside the classroom. In addition to focusing on test-taking strategies, high-level adult learners have been exposed to more serious or academic language due to the language level they have achieved. Bell & Pomerantz (2014) stated that serious talk, rather than the use of humor, has traditionally been privileged in the L2 classroom “as it is usually associated with the expression of transactional, utilitarian needs, which L2 users are imagined as requiring” (p.42). They went on to state that “non-serious communication is thought of as extra and thus can be developed at a later date and outside of the classroom” (p.42). Because of this, high-level adult English language learners often lack the linguistic skills and cultural knowledge to fully integrate into English-speaking communities. While high-level adult language learners may have a grasp of basic syntax, as well as commonly used vocabulary and phrases, many fail in comprehending linguistic and cultural elements necessary to advance in, and be a part of, the English-language culture they are involved with.

Humor is an essential element in activating learners to locate those linguistic and cultural elements. When humor is used, and explicitly taught within the classroom, it provides language learners with an abundance of advantages. Based on the research on humor that had been

examined herein, as well as the viewpoints of most participants in this study, it can be confirmed that the use of humor in the language-learning classroom encourages greater interest in the subject matter, fosters motivation among learners, and results in stronger class cohesion. Because of these factors, classes that incorporate humor provide lower levels of stress, higher comfort levels, and a positive and constructive learning environment for English language learners. In addition, “playful discourse can have an equally important role in communicating practical, mundane information” (Bell & Pomerantz, 2014, p.42). All but one of the interviewed participants stated that many of these aspects would have aided them had they been implemented in their own language education. For many participants, because humor had not been included as a part of their language education, they felt their knowledge and skills were incomplete.

Furthermore, it is not only the use of humor in the ESL classroom that aids language learners, but also the explicit instruction of it. When learners are exposed to humor and its use, they not only have an understanding of the diverse linguistic elements involved in humor – including diverse vocabulary, colloquial expressions, idioms, and metaphors – but they are also provided with a greater understanding of how, when and where they can use those elements of the language. Four of the ten participants, specifically Doris, Tomomi, Suz, and Maya, discussed how that over many years of living in Canada, they were able to comprehend linguistic and cultural elements of humor. However, it would have greatly benefitted them, specifically in terms of duration, had they been exposed to humor in language courses during their studies. If adult upper-intermediate and advanced English language learners are exposed to humor within the classroom, it would prepare them to be able to comprehend and react to the pervasive, and authentic elements of discourse during real communicative language interactions. Bell & Pomerantz (2014) stated:

Skill in using humor can make navigating certain social situations much smoother. Many face-threatening situations are made less so when the threat is framed as play. Humor is regularly used to manage refusal sequences, to do indirect critiques, or to respond to teasing or bullying. The ability to join in humorous discourse eases an individual's entry into a new social group. It is also crucial to recognize that [...], discourse is not either serious or non-serious, and the ability to construct and detect utterances that are half-joking is important to interaction. All of these things are implicated in our pedagogical goal of expanding emergent bilinguals' communicative/interpretive repertoires. (p. 42)

Based on the research and the data collected from this study, it is evident that humor plays a vital role in daily conversations and interactions. When English language learners incorporate their knowledge of humor into their daily lives, they are able to comprehend, appreciate, and effectively communicate within the L2 culture. The necessity, then, as proposed in this study, is to ensure that humor is explicitly taught in adult high-level, English language-learning classrooms.

Conclusion

In order for English language learners to be able to fully participate in social and professional settings in Canada and/or the United States, it warrants the ability to use various aspects of humor. Even adult upper-intermediate and advanced-level learners who demonstrate fluency or near fluency, including the participants in this study, often find themselves at a disadvantage because of linguistic and social/cultural awareness they lack concerning humor.

The purpose of this study was to examine the necessity of having humor explicitly taught to adult high-level English language learners, as well as how to implement humor in the classroom. This study allowed English language learners to express their experiences concerning

the lack of humor used in English-language courses they had been involved in. In doing so, it allowed them to inform those within the TESOL community of the difficulties they faced, as well as to provide information on how specific changes must occur in high-level adult English language courses in order to better aid other learners in linguistic and cultural awareness.

This study is significant because it fills a gap within the current literature by examining not only how humor should be used as a theme or topic in English-language courses, but also by directly addressing the concerns of prior learners, and allowing them to have a voice. These voices have the potential to influence the extent to which instructors and learners comprehend the necessity of humor in language instruction – rather than simply viewing it as a minor component of learning English.

This study examined the issues that face adult upper-intermediate and advanced English language learners, and argued that incorporating humor in the classroom would benefit learners both linguistically and culturally. When learners do not have access to authentic language use, it creates issues for them at the linguistic level, but also prevents them from fully engaging with a culture. Learners lack the confidence to engage, as they do not have the necessary skills to operate within that group. Many ELLs find that because they lack this comprehension, they feel isolated and often lack a sense of identity within an L2 culture.

The results of the interviews conducted for this study identified that the use of humor within the language-learning classroom, as well as the explicit instruction of humor to ELLs, is vital in ESL/EFL today. Furthermore, the viewpoints and suggestions of the participants within this study allowed for the generation of concepts concerning the types of materials and skills needed within a class, as well as suggestions for what kind of activities would be beneficial when implementing them in curricula.

In conclusion, this study was successful in that it brought forward the concerns of ELLs to the forefront of the conversation, demonstrating the necessity of using and instructing humor in ESL courses, and supplying concrete, viable suggestions for the implementation of humor within the language-learning classroom. Because the participants were willing to share their experiences, it was possible to develop recommendations based on what they claimed to find lacking within their own language education. It is due to the openness of these participants that this project may provide support for present language learners, further encouraging them to excel within their linguistic and cultural development.

Recommendations

This study engaged with numerous concepts regarding how best to create curricula, incorporating humor that would be most beneficial to ELLs at the upper-intermediate and advanced levels. The following recommendations allow adult language learners the opportunity to not only comprehend and appreciate humor, but also allow them to produce authentic language. Concepts taken from prior studies on humor, as well as the data generated in this study, led to recommendations in how to incorporate humor in the English language-learning classroom for ELLs, aiding them with linguistic and cultural comprehension.

The first recommendation stems from the data collected from the participants in this study. All of the participants had either vastly limited or no experience concerning the various types of humor most commonly applied in Canada and/or the United States. Teaching these types of humor explicitly, and having discussions regarding humor within the English-language classroom, equips learners with the comprehension of terminologies, examples of use, and vocabulary recognition; this allowing learners to have an overall understanding of humor in

English. Since most ELLs are unfamiliar with English-language humor, this allows them a solid base of information that they can scaffold, as the course or class unfolds.

Participants in this study identified that a lack of basic knowledge of terms and vocabulary hindered their language acquisition; therefore, building a concrete foundation of terminology and vocabulary, for example, benefits language learners today. Additionally, incorporating discussions on humor within an English-speaking culture versus learners' own cultures, allow them a social and cultural comparison, aiding them in placing the humor into a relevant context. When a course is in its infancy stage, instructors can create "humor exploration sheets" where the most prevalent types of humor used within the L2 culture are explicitly taught to learners. These "humor exploration sheets" identify the type of humor being explored, include a description, along with notable comedians/comedy groups or programs that practice it. It is also beneficial for learners to be able to view/listen to short clips from a video or audio source, or be able to have access to short written transcripts of humor works. In the creation of these exploration sheets, it is important for instructors to present learners with a selection of comedians that are well-balanced in terms of sex and race. Language learners must be able to observe humor from both men and women, as well as from a variety of cultures, in order for them to comprehend that every individual deserves to have a voice.

As stated above, discussions on humor also aid language learners in comprehending aspects of it. Adding specific activities and discussions strengthen class cohesion, cultural awareness of various cultures, and linguistic development. Once learners have certain terminologies included in their linguistic repertoires, identification of humor within activities will put learners' knowledge to the test. For example, learners can discuss specific sentences

given to them (what aspects of humor) as they apply the correct humorous terminology to them.

Some examples, as cited from *Linguahouse.com*, are:

- Mahatma Ghandi was asked by an English journalist what he thought of Western Civilization. Ghandi replied without expression: Ahhh, that would be a very good idea.” (dry humor);
- Oscar Wilde: “I am so clever that sometimes I don’t understand a single word of what I am saying.” (self-deprecating humor);
- Samuel Butler: “Man is the only animal that can remain on friendly terms with victims he intends to eat until he eats them.” (sarcasm).

While these types of activities prove challenging at the early stages of a course, through detailed instruction and in-depth, group conversations, learners will accustom themselves to these aspects of humor.

It is also essential that instructors are cognizant of exposing learners to relevant and popular authentic language within the L2 culture. Many of the participants in this study stated that their lack of exposure to either authentic language or to social situations hindered their linguistic advancement and cultural comprehension. Instructors are the primary source whereby learners receive their knowledge regarding humor, yet instructors need not adhere to this. Often times, having instructors model the target language is simply not enough to expose learners to authentic language. It is therefore recommended that instructors bring native English speakers into the ESL classroom to discuss humor, or to be involved in activities with language learners. Instructors may expand these interactions from discussions on humor, to involving native and non-native speakers in role-plays, presentations, cloze activities, or what the direct needs of the learners are.

While bringing native English speakers into the classroom may prove challenging, instructors do have the ability to help organize events outside of the ESL classroom. This gives language learners opportunities to converse and mingle with native speakers in authentic social situations. Six of the ten participants in the study expressed interest and delight at having attended stand-up comedy shows in Canada, therefore this can also be an event instructors organize. Other activities include:

- going to watch comedy movies;
- attending open-mic events;
- attending improvisational theater; and
- being involved in comedy game nights.

If teaching language learners abroad, asking available ex-patriots to attend classes proves beneficial. If this is not a possibility, instructors can turn to media, in various forms, to allow learners to be in contact with the authentic language.

It is recommended, then, for instructors to use media at various levels, in order for adult high-level language learners to be exposed to not only aural stimuli, but also humor in written form. In the current events/culture class I had created years ago, while working at a private language institution, learners were required to be active in role-plays and presentations, where they applied the vocabulary, idiomatic expressions, and other aspects of the language learned. Exposing learners to local or national news reports, either in print or on video, aids learners in distinguishing news from reliable news sources, to that of mock news sources. In today's political climate that may prove to be somewhat of a challenge, but with obvious examples given, learners will be able to distinguish the humor from "real" news, to news incorporating humor.

An activity where learners are required to read news articles from their local newspaper, and from a mock news source such as *The Onion* (1988 -), allows students to come to a realization as to what is real or what is being mocked. Instructors and students discuss aspects of print media, discuss what is real or not, and give reasons as to why what they are reading is deemed as humor. Role-plays are a necessary step in allowing learners to develop their skills in humor, as are presentations. One activity I have had success with, is to have learners create a five to ten-minute mock and/or real news report that is performed in front of a class. Those learners who are observing must later determine if what they watched and listened to was based on reality, or if it was mock news, must articulate why they believe so, and what aspects of humor were used. These role-plays and/or presentations do not occur until learners have been taught explicit lessons by reading through *The Onion* (1988 -) articles or by watching video clips from programs such as *This Hour Has 22 Minutes* (1993 -), *The Daily Show* (1996 -), *SNL's Weekend Update* (1975 -), and *The Mercer Report* (2004 -), for example.

It is also vital for English language learners to be cognizant of how humor is used in culture. Consequently, another recommendation is for instructors to select short clips from situation comedies or movies for learners to view. Participants in this study had voiced that they were not fully aware of how to use humor, and the impact it may have had on the social group they were communicating with. Selecting and using clips from television programs or movies, aids in the development of these skills. Dialogues from these clips represent authentic language in relatively authentic situations. Programs as *The Simpsons* (1989 -), *Friends* (1994 -), *The Office* (2005-2013), *Corner Gas* (2004-2009), and *Modern Family* (2009 -), for example, allow learners to view various aspects of humor, as well as the social consequences of its use. During these types of activities, instructors can create vocabulary building activities, cloze activities,

matching work, intonation practice, and have learners answer comprehension questions before launching into group discussion work, role-plays, and presentations.

Other recommendations include having learners match punchlines, guess punchlines, reconstruct a humorous dialogue, make up different endings to a joke, unscramble sentences and match two-line jokes. These activities aid in the development of the comprehension of humor, as well as the bolstering of vocabulary and expressions.

An interesting way for learners to study vocabulary and phrases incorporating humor is through the use of trite expressions and elevated vocabulary. Minchew & Hopper (2008) believe that “students get in the habit of using certain expressions both in speech and in written assignments” (p. 232), and they suggest that “students may enjoy rewriting these expressions using elevated language with the aid of the dictionary and thesaurus” (p. 232). The cliché, *Birds of a feather flock together*, for example, may be rewritten as, *Members of an avian species of identical plumage congregate* (Minchew & Hopper, 2008). While this may prove as a challenging task, learners will comprehend the importance of using words in different, unique ways.

Another vocabulary-building activity concerning humor is one where elevated vocabulary must be translated into familiar expressions. For example, learners may be given the sentence: *Male cadavers are incapable of yielding any anecdotes*, and must attempt to find the correct answer of: *Dead men tell no tales*. This type of activity allows learners to develop not only a more extensive vocabulary, but also an understanding that if some elevated vocabulary is used in certain situations, it will obscure the intended meaning.

Word play is also a vital aspect of humor, so instructors will select pairs or groups to identify, and later create, an activity based on it. Some example sentences concerning jobs for learners to discuss are:

- My last job was working at Starbucks, but I had to quit because it was always the same old grind;
- My best job was being a musician but eventually I found I wasn't noteworthy;
- I tried to be a chef, figured it would add a little spice to my life but I just didn't have the time; and
- I tried being a tailor but I just wasn't suited for it, mainly because it was a so-so job (Minchew & Hopper, 2008).

Various themes that interest language learners in the classroom will be applied to maintain interest and applicability.

If high-level adult language learners feel the need to expose themselves to the linguistic and cultural aspects of the culture they are studying in, or would like to study in, but neither have the time necessary nor inclination to immediately do so, instructors can introduce them to specific humor websites. In addition, instructors can introduce language learners to YouTube sites, humor blogs, and opportunities to communicate with native speakers through Skype, message boards, and Facebook.

In terms of humor websites, as mentioned previously, many are available to adult, upper-intermediate and advanced language learners that often provide various active opportunities to be exposed to the English language and humor. One such site, for example, is *qualitytime-esl.com*. There are detailed lessons here for learners to focus on, as a cloze activity concerning a parody

review on the new iPad. These types of humor websites and activities aid those learners who either lack time or are not yet inclined to use their linguistic knowledge.

While the ability to converse in humorous interactions proved more important to some participants in this study than others, all participants comprehended the importance of humor in terms of its positive impacts for English language learners. Most participants believed that having linguistic knowledge of humor not only allowed them to advance in language acquisition, but also connected them more strongly to the L2 culture. The linguistic and cultural backgrounds of the different participants played a role in their viewpoints, as well as the ease or difficulty it was to acquire and implement it. Humor does, in fact, impact English language learners' lives, and if educators are able to develop curricula and establish courses for high-level adult language learners, it will give validation to the importance of explicit instruction of humor in how it will benefit learners linguistically and culturally, and give them a sense of identity within their second language.

References

- Abdulmajeed, R.K., & Hameed, S.K. (2017). Using a linguistic theory of humour in teaching English grammar. *English Language Teaching, 10*(2), 40-47.
- Aboudan, R. (2009). Laugh and learn: Humor and learning a second language. *International Journal of Arts and Sciences, 3*(3), 90-99.
- Ağçam, R. (2017). Investigating instructors' perceptions on the use of humour in higher education. *European Journal of Education Studies, 3*(2), 238-248.
- Al-Duleimi, A.D.D., & Aziz, R.N. (2016). Humor as EFL learning – Teaching strategy. *Journal of Education and Practice, 7*(10), 105-115.
- Attardo, S. (2002). Humor and irony in interaction: From mode adoption to failure of detection. In L. Anolli, R. Ciceri & G. Riva (Eds.), *Say not to say: New perspectives on miscommunication* (pp. 159-180). Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- Azizinezhad, M., & Hashemi, M. (2011). Humor: A pedagogical tool for language learners. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 30*, 2093-2098.
doi: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.10.407
- Babatunde, S.T. (2002). The state of English language in Nigeria. In Adebayo Lawal, Ifeoma Isiugo-Abanike, & Isaac Nnam Ohia (Eds.), *Perspective on applied linguistics in language and literature* (pp.129-142). Ibadan: Sterling Horden Publishers (Nig) Ltd.
- Banas, J.A., Dunbar, N., Rodriguez, D., & Liu, S-J. (2011). A review of humor in educational settings: Four decades of research. *Communication Education, 60*(1), 115-144.
doi: 10.1080/03634523.2010.496867
- Bell, N.D. (2009). Learning about and through humor in the second language classroom. *Language Teaching Research, 13*(3), 241-258.

- Bell, N.D., & Attardo, S. (2010). Failed humor: Issues in non-native speakers' appreciation and understanding of humor. *Intercultural Pragmatic*, 7(3), 423-447.
- Bell, N.D., & Pomerantz, A. (2014). Reconsidering language teaching through a use of humor. *E-JournALL*, 1(1), 31-47. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21283/2376905X.1.15>
- Bell, N.D., & Pomerantz, A. (2016). *Humor in the classroom: A guide for language teachers and educational researchers*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Berk, R.A. (1996). Student ratings of ten strategies for using humor in college teaching. *Journal on Excellence in College Teaching*, 7(3), 71-92.
- Blackmore, A. (2013). If humor be the fool of learning, joke on: Perspectives of several Italian and Swedish upper-secondary school students on humor and dialogic classroom interaction. *University of Halmstad*, 6-42.
- Buskits, W., & Saville, B.K. (2001). Creating positive emotional contexts for enhancing teaching and learning. *APS Observer*, 19, 12-13.
- Chabeli, M. (2008). Humor: A pedagogical tool to promote learning. *Curationis*, 51-59.
- de Bono, E. [primetimeru]. (2012, August 29). *Humor is the most significant dimention of brain*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/K3MIBcYQtKQ>
- Elkommos, O.F. (2017). Teaching linguistic humour research theories: Egyptian higher Education EFL literature classes. *International Scholarly and Scientific Research & Innovation*, 11(6), 1456-1461.
- Garner, R. (2003). Which came first the chicken or the egg? A foul metaphor for teaching. *Radical Pedagogy*, 5(2).
- Gee, J. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (4th ed.). New York: Routledge.

- Gregar, J. (2016). Humor in the English language teaching. Olomouc. Diplomová práce. Univerzita Valackého. Vedoucí práce Mgr. Josef Nevařil, PhD.
- Hafernik, J.J., Messerschmitt, D.S., & Vandrick, S. (2002). *Ethical issues for ESL faculty: Social justice in practice*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Hayati, A.M., Shooshtari, Z.G., & Shakeri, N. (2011). Using humorous texts in improving reading comprehension of EFL learners. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(6), 652-661.
- Hodson, R.J. (2014). Teaching 'humor competence'. *Proceedings of CLaSIC*, 149-161.
- Jacobs, G., & Farrell, T.S.C. (2001). Paradigm shift: Understanding and implementing change in second language education. *TESL-EJ*, 5(1), 1-16.
- Kozhevnikova, E. (2013). Exposing students to authentic materials as a way to increase students' language proficiency and cultural awareness. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 4462-4466.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. New York: Longman.
- Kristmanson, P. (2000). Affect in the second language classroom: How to create an emotional climate. *Reflexions*, 19(2), 1-5.
- Linguahouse.com (n.d). *Humor*. Retrieved from <https://www.linguahouse.com/esl-lesson-plans/general-english/humour/worksheet/upper-intermediate-advanced/humour>
- Luce, S. [Sam Luce]. (2008, March 20). *Jim Carrey – Canada*. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ic3xNfEP_o&feature=youtu.be
- Mahdiloo, A., & Izadpanah, S. (2017). The impact of humorous movie clips on better learning of English language vocabulary. *International Journal of Research in English Education*, 16-30. doi: 10.18869/acadpub.ijree.2.2.16.1

- Maurice, K. (1988). Laugh while learning another language: Techniques that are functional and funny. *English Teaching Forum*, 26(2), 20-25.
- Merriam-Webster collegiate dictionary (10th ed.). (2001). Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster.
- Minchew, S., & Hopper, P.F. (2008). Techniques for using humor and fun in the language arts classroom. *The Clearing House*, 81(5), 232-236.
- Moalla, A. (2015). Intercultural strategies to co-construct and interpret humor. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 25(3), 367-385. doi: 10.1111/ijal.12074
- Moore, L.C. (2008). Language socialization and second language/foreign language and multilingual education in non-Western settings. In P.A. Duff & N.H. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education Vol.8* (pp.175-185). New York: Springer.
- Nayyar, R., & Zeeshan, M. (2017). MPhil scholars' views about the use of humor in English language classroom in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 7(2), 134-141.
- Neuliep, J., & Christophel, D. (1991). An examination of the content of high school teachers' humor in the classroom and the development of an inductively derived taxonomy of classroom humor. *Communication Education*, 40(4), 343-355. doi: 10.1080/03634529109378859
- Ochs, E., & Schieffelin, B.B. (1986). Language socialization. *Annual Review of Anthology*, 15, 163-191.
- Olajoke, A.S. (2013). Students' perception on the use of humor in the teaching of English as a second language in Nigeria. *International Education Research*, 1(2), 65-73.
- Petraki, E., & Nguyen, H.H.P. (2016). Do Asian EFL teachers use humor in the classroom? A case study of Vietnamese EFL university teachers. *System*, 61, 98-109.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2016.08.002>

Pollio, H., & Humphreys, W. (1996). What award-winning lecturers say about their teaching:

It's all about connection. *College Teaching*, 44, 101-106.

qualitytime-esl.com (n.d). *ESL lesson plan: Parody review of the iPad*. Retrieved from

<http://www.qualitytime-esl.com/spip.php?article459&lang=en>

Raj, S.M. (2016). Role of humor in second language teaching and acquisition. *Language in India*,

16(4), 27-33.

Rings, L. (2008). Authentic language and authentic conversational texts. *Foreign Language*

Annals, 19(3), 203-208. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.1986.tb02835.x

Schmitz, J.R. (2002). Humor as a pedagogical tool in foreign language and translation courses.

Humor, 15(1), 89-113.

Senior, R. (2001). The role of humour in the development and maintenance of class cohesion.

Prospect, 16(2), 45-54.

Smuts, A. (2016). Humor. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://www.iep.utm.edu/humor/>

Souza, L.S.M. (2008). Jokes and riddles in English as a foreign language classrooms. *Revista*

Horizontes de Linguística Aplicada, 7(2), 56-66.

Vinko. [Vinko]. (2006, May 22). *I am Canadian*. [Video file]. Retrieved from

<https://youtu.be/BRI-A3vakVg>

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society*. In M.Cole, V. John-Steiner, S. Scribner, &

E. Souberman (Eds.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wardi, A. [Alaa Wardi]. (2013, October 26). *No woman, no drive*. [Video file].

Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/aZMbTFNp4wI>

Watson, M.J., & Emerson, S. (1988). Facilitate learning with humor. *Journal of Nursing*

Education, 2(2), 89-90.