

# Implementation and Effects of Humour in the Language Classroom

---

**Car, Paula**

**Master's thesis / Diplomski rad**

**2022**

*Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj:* **University of Zagreb, Faculty of Teacher Education / Sveučilište u Zagrebu, Učiteljski fakultet**

*Permanent link / Trajna poveznica:* <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:147:725227>

*Rights / Prava:* [In copyright](#)/[Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

*Download date / Datum preuzimanja:* **2024-12-28**

*Repository / Repozitorij:*

[University of Zagreb Faculty of Teacher Education - Digital repository](#)



SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

Paula Car

**IMPLEMENTATIONS AND EFFECTS OF HUMOUR IN THE  
LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Diplomski rad

Zagreb, veljača, 2022.

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU  
UČITELJSKI FAKULTET  
ODSJEK ZA UČITELJSKE STUDIJE

Paula Car

**IMPLEMENTATIONS AND EFFECTS OF HUMOUR IN THE  
LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

Diplomski rad

Mentorica rada:  
prof. dr. sc. Lovorka  
Zergollern-Miletić

Zagreb, veljača, 2022.

## SAŽETAK

U engleskom jeziku, humor se definira kao sposobnost da nešto smatramo smiješnim, način na koji ljudi protumače da je nešto smiješno ili karakteristika osobe ili stvari da bude smiješna, ali pojam humora obuhvaća mnogo više od toga.

Ovaj rad donosi teorijska znanja o humoru, način uporabe humora u jezičnoj nastavi i utjecaje koje humor ima na učenike, koji uče uz pomoć humora ili o humoru. Iz kratke povijesti o tome kako su se teorije humora razvijale možemo primijetiti pozitivnu promjenu u filozofskom stavu prema humoru. Od toga da je humor smatran iracionalnim i agresivnim, tijekom 18. stoljeća humor i smijeh se počinju percipirati kao racionalan način uživanja u neskladu. S evolucijskog stajališta, uspoređivanje humora s igrom opisuje ga kao način da naše kognitivne funkcije odstupaju od praktičnog razmišljanja, ali da pri tome ostaju racionalne. S obzirom da teorije potvrđuju koliko je humor bitan, možemo pretpostaviti da će imati i pozitivne utjecaje na školsko okruženje te isto tako i na jezičnu nastavu koja je fokus našeg interesa. Humor se u nastavu može integrirati na dva načina: kao pomagalo pri postizanju pojedinih ishoda učenja i upravljanju razreda te kao predmet poučavanja. Utjecaji korištenja humora u nastavi su različiti (intelektualni, fizički, psihički, edukativni) i djelotvorni. Njih je proučavalo i potvrdilo istraživanje koje je provedeno u osnovnoj školi Ksavera Šandora Gjalskog u Zaboku na uzorku od više od 100 učenika. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da učenici imaju pozitivan stav prema uporabi humora tijekom nastave i da humor ima pozitivne utjecaje na njihovo raspoloženje, stav i učenje općenito.

Ključne riječi: humor, teorije humora, jezična nastava, utjecaju humora

## SUMMARY

In the English language, humour is defined as the ability to find things funny, the way in which people see that some things are funny or the quality of being funny, but the notion of humour encompasses much more than that.

This thesis combines theoretical knowledge of humour, the application of humour in the language classroom and its effects on the students who learn with the help of humour or learn about humour. From a brief history of how the theories of humour evolved, we are able to see a positive shift in the philosophical approaches towards humour. From being thought of as irrational and aggressive, during the eighteenth century, humour and laughter began to be regarded as a rational way of enjoying incongruity. From an evolutionary point of view, comparing humour to a kind of play describes it as a way for our cognitive functions to deviate from practical thinking, while remaining rational. Since theories prove how relevant humour is, we can presume that it would have positive effects in the school environment, and also in the language classroom, which is the focus of our interest. Humour can be introduced in the classroom in two ways: as an aid of achieving certain learning and management objectives, and as the subject of teaching. The effects of using humour in the classroom are various (intellectual, physiological, psychological, educational) and beneficial. The effects of humour in the classroom were examined and confirmed in a study which was carried out in the Ksaver Šandor Gjaliski primary school in Zabok on the sample of more than a hundred participants. The results of the study show us that the students have a positive attitude towards the use of humour in the classroom and that humour has a positive effect on their mood, attitude and learning in general.

Key words: humour, theories of humour, language classroom, effects of humour

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction.....	1
1. Theories of humour.....	1
1.1. What is humour?.....	1
1.2. Historical overview of the approaches towards humour.....	2
1.3. The superiority theory.....	4
1.4. The relief theory.....	5
1.5. The incongruity theory.....	6
1.6. Humour as play.....	7
2. Humour in the language classroom.....	10
2.1. Language classroom.....	10
2.2. Implementation of humour in the language classroom.....	11
2.2.1. Teaching with the help of humour.....	12
2.2.2. Teaching about humour.....	14
2.3. Effects of humour in the language classroom.....	18
3. The study.....	20
3.1. Participants.....	21
3.2. Procedure.....	21
3.3. Results.....	22
3.4. Conclusion of the study.....	29
Conclusion.....	31
References.....	33

## **Introduction**

Throughout life, whether we found ourselves in school, at home, on our job or doing our regular daily activities, we have all encountered some instances of humour. Some people enjoy producing humour, while others just like being in the presence of humour. Some people even pursue a career of creating jokes and making people laugh. There is no doubt that humour, in its various forms, has infiltrated almost all spheres of our lives and that it is present in all cultures and languages. Such a great concept, therefore, deserves to be better examined. This thesis will try to provide us with a brief history of humour and the main philosophical and theoretical approaches which deal with this topic. Further on, it will give us an insight on how humour can be used in school, and more precisely in the language classroom, and what are the effects of its usage. The last part of this thesis is a study which investigates whether the students who were the participants in this study believe that humour is important in the classroom, if it is easier to implement it in the language classroom or into other subjects, how and to what degree they think it is useful.

### **1. Theories of humour**

Today, humour is commonly thought of as a valuable element in people's lives. It is usually mentioned in a sense that it helps us cope more easily with everyday situations, because it reduces stress, and it is often thought of as an attractive and desirable trait in people. On the other hand, most of the thoughts coming from philosophers throughout history share some common concerns about humour, and some of their approaches to it are critical. Throughout history, three main theories of humour emerged, each one of them having a different approach to how humour materializes and what its effects are. The three main theories are the superiority theory, the incongruity theory, and the relief theory. Along with these three main theories, the theory which analyses humour as a kind of a play is also taken into account by a number of researchers of humour

#### **1.1. What is humour?**

In the *Cambridge English Dictionary* humour is defined as the ability to find things funny, the way in which people see that some things are funny, or the quality of being funny. In a

much broader sense humour could be described as a stimulation which produces some sort of amusement. In this thesis the term *humour* will be used as it is used in the English language (as in the definition above), while in Croatian and many other languages it has a narrower sense, including funniness, and containing an element of intelligent amusement. In the beginning of the book *Humor, smijeh, misao, jezik (Humour, laughter, thought, language, 2021)* Zergollern-Miletić points out that Croatian works connected with the topic of humour use the terms *smiješno* and *komično*, which by the definition of *Hrvatski jezični portal* means that someone or something that causes laughter. The origin of the modern meaning of the word *humour* dates back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when it started being related to funniness and amusement. Until then, the term *humour* was mainly connected to laughter and comedy. Humour can often take a physical form such as miming, or making funny facial expressions, but it is linguistic/verbal humour that is most appreciated, and most of the literature has been dedicated to that form of humour (Marković 2019). It is usual that humorous remarks or situations will evoke laughter, but it is notable to mention that laughter is not an indispensable product of humour (Willibald et al, 2019). A good example for this is a type of linguistic joke called *pun*. Puns are linguistic jokes which exploit the different meanings which some words have or the possibility to switch some words with others that sound similar. An example of such joke is this: reading while sunbathing makes you well-red. This type of linguistic humour can produce laughter, but not necessarily. What is important is that it creates amusement as a result of playing with our cognitive processes. Most linguistic humour is formed in a similar way, starting off with a premise which we take as true or serious after which we are presented with a twist which shows us that we had a wrong assumption of what was going to come next. In other words, “One generalization that can be extracted from the literature about humour is that humour involves ‘incongruity’” (Afghar, Allami, 2007: 3). Along with providing amusement as a result of conveying clever connections between sometimes seemingly unconnected concepts, humour also fosters amiable social interactions and helps in creating a relaxed atmosphere (Al-Duleimi, Aziz, 2016: 106).

## **1.2. Historical overview of the approaches towards humour**

Philosophical approaches to humour can be traced back to Plato (427–347 BC), but during that time, humour was mainly connected to laughter and comedy. Except the fact that



until the twentieth century (Morreall, 2012) most philosophers had a critical approach towards humour, it is also notable to mention that most of the thoughts they expressed about humour were merely a small part of some other works which were concerned with different topics. Plato, the most influential critic of laughter, treated laughter as an emotion that overrides rational self-control (Morreall, 2012). He described laughter as a malicious expression of a sense of superiority over those who are misfortunate or inadequate. In his work *Republic* in which he describes the justice system in an ideal state, he argues that in order to achieve a state like this, laughter should be avoided because it negatively affects an individual's ability to reason. Another work in which he discusses laughter is *Philebus*, a dialogue in which he compares a life filled with pleasures and a life of intelligence. He argues that anything that creates pleasure is a potential harm to rational thought, therefore, he regarded laughter as something that is not acceptable. This negative approach to humour and laughter was further on adopted by other philosophers and theorists, but also by the Christian Church. Morreall (2012) explains that most instances of humour and laughter coming from the Bible are connected with hostility and that God's laughter is only mentioned in such sense:

Do not be gracious to any who are treacherous in iniquity. They return at evening, they howl like a dog and go around the city...For, they say, "Who hears?" But You, O Lord, laugh at them; You scoff at all the nations. (Psalm 59: 5-8)

This is why many European leaders who were under the influence of their religion and some notable philosophers deemed laughter inappropriate and imposed this idea on people. This approach to humour was also favoured during the Middle Ages, and later on, when philosophers like Thomas Hobbes (1588 – 1679) and René Descartes (1596 – 1650) strengthened the theory that humour and laughter are used as an assertion of contempt and ridicule towards others. It was not until the eighteenth century that the philosophical approach to humour took a turn and drifted away from the idea that humour and laughter are irrational and aggressive. New theories took a more exhaustive approach towards understanding humour and disputed the irrationality objection, which was one of its most significant criticisms (Morreall, 2012). The theories which shaped the approach to humour will be further examined in the following passages.

### 1.3. The superiority theory

The superiority theory can be regarded as the oldest theory of humour, as it dates back to ancient Greek philosophers and most relevantly, to Plato. It was also the most commonly accepted theory of humour and laughter until the beginning of the eighteenth century. It describes humour as a way of showing the feeling of superiority towards those who are viewed as misfortunate, or towards one's earlier version of themselves. In his previously mentioned work *Philebus*, Plato regarded humour as something that disconnects an individual from his rational self. As Bardon (2005) explained, Plato and his like-minded follower Socrates studied laughter through comedies and concluded that the person who feels pleasure which appears as a result of others misfortune causes harm to himself as well.

[Plato] explains that the object of laughter in comedy is the "ridiculous." The ridiculous, more specifically, is the self-ignorance of others when they falsely believe that they possess wisdom. In other words, laughter results from a feeling of pleasure at seeing others suffer the misfortune of being deluded about their own wisdom. Socrates argues, however, that the soul experiences both "pleasure and pain" when amused by the ridiculous portrayed in comedy: one can feel pleasure and laugh when presented by such fools in comedy, but to feel pleasure at others' misfortunes is to feel malice, which he considers a "pain of the soul." The laughter and pleasure, then, that we experience when enjoying comedy is mixed with malice and pain. (Bardon, 2005: 463)

Another commonly mentioned philosopher who supported the superiority theory is Thomas Hobbes. In his work, *Leviathan* (1651 [1982]) he argues that the primary cause of laughter is the feeling of "sudden glory" over the person who is being ridiculed. Although there are some types of humour and jokes which can be viewed in terms of Hobbes's ideas, we are aware of the fact that not all jokes have to include the process of comparing oneself to others and experiencing the feeling of superiority. Another critique of this theory lies in the fact that the emphasis of humour is put on the wrong element of a joke. Hobbes overlooks the fact that an essential part of the pleasure of making a joke comes precisely from enjoying what one perceives as the humour content of the joke itself; we can enjoy a joke *for its own sake*. (Lippitt, 1995).

Although ridicule is a frequent element of humour, it would not be correct to assume that the only emotional state that humour is capable of producing is the feeling of superiority. If humour only existed as a product of feeling superior over someone, every time a person would feel better than others, he or she would want to laugh. This is obviously not the case because a person can be capable of, for example, winning a competition and being better than others

without having the need to ridicule and laugh at those who are inferior to him. Another fault in this theory is that it lacks to include humorous remarks and jokes which have nothing to do with comparing oneself to others. These deficiencies are the reasons why superiority theory is no longer an acceptable way of perceiving properties of humour and laughter.

#### **1.4. The relief theory**

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, as the superiority theory weakened, a new theory of humour was introduced. The relief theory explains humour and laughter as a way of releasing built up tension and nervous energy in the body. Supporters of this theory suggest that the energy expended in laughter is the energy of feeling emotions, the energy of repressing emotions, or the energy of thinking, which have built up and require venting (Morreall, 2012).

The first person to describe this theory was Lord Shaftesbury, who depicted this idea in 1709 in his work *“An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humor”*. In his essay he supported the idea that nerves, which connect the brain with the rest of our body and control our muscle functions, carried “animal spirits”. He described these “animal spirits” as the fluids and gasses in our bodies. Laughter is what happens when these “animal spirits” build up and create pressure in our nerves, so in order to reduce that pressure, we laugh. This idea lingered over the period of the next two centuries, but as the notion of the human biology improved, philosophers and thinkers, of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Herbert Spencer and Sigmund Freud, improved the idea behind the release theory. In his essay *“On the Physiology of Laughter”* (1911), Spencer suggests that all emotions take on physical forms and release nervous energy. Laughter releases nervous energy, too, Spencer says, but with this important difference: the muscular movements in laughter are not the early stages of larger practical actions such as attacking or fleeing. Unlike emotions, laughter does not involve the motivation to do anything. The movements of laughter, Spencer says, “have no object”: they are merely a release of nervous energy (Morreall, 2012).

Another notable idea behind the release theory comes from Sigmund Freud and his work *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (1905 [1974]). Here he analyses three situations in which laughter occurs (der Witz (joke), “the comic” and “humour”). All three situations are the

same in the way that they explain that laughter occurs when there is an excess of nervous energy which was produced for a certain task that has been abandoned. In der Witz, that superfluous energy is energy used to repress feelings; in the comic it is energy used to think, and in humour it is the energy of feeling emotions (Morreall, 2012). Although laughter expends energy and requires activation of our nervous system, the release theory is not an idea which is currently accepted by scholars discussing the field of humour.

### **1.5. The incongruity theory**

Another theory of humour which emerged in the eighteenth century, and which confronted the superiority theory was the incongruity theory. Today, this is the most dominant theory of humour as it provides the most notable account of amusement on which most contemporary philosophers and psychologists agree upon.

The incongruity theory relies on the idea that people experience the world in a consistent and ordered way and that in everyday life they experience situations which usually turn out in an expected outcome. According to this theory, we experience humour and amusement when we encounter situations which are incongruous with what is usually perceived as normal and expected. In other words, the cause of laughter is something that breaches our usual expectations (Morreall, 2012).

This approach to humour and its development is mostly attributed to two philosophers – Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788 – 1860). According to their contemporary followers, some aspects behind their thoughts about the incongruity theory require correction, but the central idea of what they supported is what most of them agree upon:

The cause of laughter in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity. It often occurs in this way: two or more real objects are thought through one concept and the identity of the concept is transferred to the objects; it then becomes strikingly apparent from the entire difference of the objects in other respects, that the concept was only applicable to them from a one-sided point of view. (Schopenhauer, 1818/1844 [1907], Book I, sec. 13).

Except the central idea, several philosophers have added their own elements to this theory, but most of them do not share the same concepts (Morreall, 2012). During the late twentieth century, when the incongruity theory went through some changes and improvements,

some weaknesses of the previous versions unfolded. As Morreall (2012) claims, in the older version of this theory, its representatives insinuated that the recognition of incongruity is enough for humour, which is evidently not true since it is possible to feel fear, anger or disgust when our expectations of a certain situation are not met. One way to correct this flaw is to say that humorous amusement is not just any response to incongruity, but a way of enjoying incongruity (Morreall, 2012).

As well as the superiority theory and the relief theory, the incongruity theory could also be the subject of further improvement but is nevertheless far more exhaustive and accurate than the previous two. The scientific approach to the relief theory is now invalid, and therefore it disputes the idea behind it, and the superiority theory lacks the account of humour which is not based on establishing authority. Therefore, the incongruity theory is now the most represented theory of humour.

## **1.6. Humour as play**

Similar to what Plato argued for laughing in general, a common criticism of incongruity theory is that laughter is not rational, since it involves a breach of our cognitive patterns and expectations. As Morreall (2012) puts it, in order to disprove this *Irrationality Objection*, it is necessary to discuss how our cognitive functions can manage in a way that varies from our practical thinking.

Describing humour as a kind of play provides an explanation of how our cognitive functions can deviate from practical thinking, and still have beneficial effects. A commonly mentioned similarity which gives us an insight into humorous play is the one comparing humour to the play of animals, more precisely, laughter of the chimps while being tickled. This comparison was described in the beginning of the twentieth century by Max Eastman (1936), who argued that in humour and play generally, we take a disinterested attitude toward something that could instead be treated seriously (Morreall, 2012). Taking a closer look at the animal kingdom, it is not uncommon to find that young animals participate in play activities which imitate some situations they will encounter in the future, for example, hunting or defending themselves from other predators. Tiger cubs sneak up and attack other tigers to mimic the

movements they will later on use for hunting. Boys often imitate war situations in which they include running, fighting, and throwing objects. These play activities can be regarded as a sort of preparation and practice for the expertise they will need later on (Morreall, 2009: 34). As Marek Spinka (2001) described, animals and children tend to exaggerate these actions to test the extent of their abilities. This account of the value of play in children and young animals does not automatically explain why humour is important to adult humans, but for us as for children and young animals, the play activities that seem the most fun are those in which we exercise our abilities in unusual and extreme ways, yet in a safe setting. Sport is an example. So is humour (Morreall, 2012).

Morreall (2012) also explains that the connection between humour and play activities is that in both of them we exercise our abilities in an unusual way, but in humour, the abilities we exercise are connected to our cognitive functions. To achieve humour, we often breach our cognitive patterns and expectations by violating the rules of effective communication described by H. P. Grice (1957):

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
3. Avoid obscurity of expression.
4. Avoid ambiguity.
5. Be brief.

Violating these rules could easily cause an unpleasant situation if the interlocutors are not aware that the conversation has switched from serious to non-serious interaction. Avoiding such situations requires a sign which informs the participants of a conversation that there has been a switch. Morreall (2012) mentions that people who study animal behaviour call this sign “play signal”. The most recognizable play signals are smiling and laughter. From the evolutionary standpoint, smiling and laughter is something that was present in the very beginning of the human evolution. It can be traced back to apes that later evolved into Homo Sapiens. Smiling and laughing are play signals which arose as a way of displaying that some potentially aggressive actions like fighting and biting are actually playful. Unlike the superiority theory and incongruity theory, it (the hypothesis that laughter evolved as a play signal) explains the link

between humour and the facial expression, body language, and sound of laughter. It also explains why laughter is overwhelmingly a social experience, as those theories do not (Morreall, 2012).

As many philosophers and thinkers previously argued, people have a tendency to associate humour with some negative connotations, especially when playful aggression is used. This playful aggression is usually manifested through jokes which reflect on stereotypes about other nations, races, or gender. As Morreall (2012) puts it, in order to enjoy jokes like these, it is not necessary to believe that other nations, races or gender are truly what the joke suggests they are. The only thing that the joke should induce is amusement and enjoyment of cleverly portrayed situations or features. Although jokes are not something that should be taken seriously, they can sometimes be morally objectionable. While playing with negative stereotypes in jokes does not require endorsement of those stereotypes, however, it still keeps them in circulation, and that can be harmful in a racist or sexist culture where stereotypes support prejudice and injustice (Morreall, 2012).

Although one of the main criticisms of humour is that it is irrational, describing humour as a kind of play provides an explanation of how our cognitive functions can deviate from practical thinking, and still promote rationality. One of the main characteristics that distinguishes humans from other species is that we are capable of abstract thinking. Abstract thinking is responsible for understanding concepts which are not exactly connected with our immediate surroundings or experiences. It allows us to gather information from all kinds of different sources and to make connections between them, which gives us a more complete sense of the world that surrounds us. Humour is an excellent example of abstract thinking because it incorporates observations of the world around us and it creates unexpected connections between sometimes, at first glance, unconnected concepts. When comparing other species with humans Morreall (2012) notes that their lack of abstract thinking in combination with a situation which disrupts their expectation causes them to act in fear or anger, while human evolution has enabled us to disconnect from this typical emotional behaviour:

What early humans needed was a way to react to the violation of their expectations that transcended their immediate experience and their individual perspective. Humorous amusement provided that. In the humorous frame of mind, we experience, think about, or even create something that violates our understanding of how things are supposed to be. But we suspend the personal, practical concerns that lead to negative emotions, and enjoy the oddness of what is

occurring. If the incongruous situation is our own failure or mistake, we view it in the way we view the failures and mistakes of other people. This perspective is more abstract, objective, and rational than an emotional perspective. (Morreall 2012)

Disputing the irrationality objection, and proving that humour is not only rational, but also a significant component of human evolution, proves how relevant humour is in our lives. Except for being an innovative way of precepting the world in a pleasurable way, it helps us in stressful situations and facilitates enjoyable social interactions.

## **2. Humour in the language classroom**

Now that we have discussed the most notable humour theories, this part of the thesis will be concerned with the language classroom how to implement humour in it, and what are the effects of using humour in the language classroom. First, we will explain what a language classroom is and point out the desirable outcomes the students should achieve in such a classroom. Then, we will discuss how to implement humour in the language classroom in two ways: as a tool which helps us to teach and as the subject of teaching. And finally, we will explain what are the effects are of using humour in the language classroom, and how it affects the general atmosphere in the classroom, classroom management and students' learning and retention.

### **2.1. Language classroom**

According to the Croatian national curriculum for English language, the general purpose of the language classroom is to prepare the students to communicate in a clear, accurate and appropriate manner, to acquire the knowledge about a language as a system, to be able to interpret and express their thoughts, feelings and attitudes towards different subjects and different cultural and social situations. The interaction which includes all these aspects contributes to a better understanding of the world around the students, and by learning a foreign language, they gain knowledge about different countries and societies whose mother language is English. As one of the crucial purposes of learning English as a foreign language, the Croatian national curriculum points out the development of student's intercultural awareness, which



enriches the students on the personal level and on the level of their own, and other cultures and society as a whole.

Intercultural awareness has a noticeable impact on responsible behaviour, and the use of different methods of language learning and teaching builds personal and social skills. Knowledge of English as a global language which is used in various areas of human activity, is crucial for the active and responsible participation of children and young people in everyday life in the local and global community. By communicating with others, they shape their personal identity and integrity, develop solidarity and respect for others and those that are different from them, and raise awareness of their own culture, which contributes to the realization of their potential and enables them to continue their education and lifelong learning. (Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije, 2019)

There are three domains of the English language curriculum: Communication language competence, Intercultural communication competence and Independence in language acquisition, all three of them together creating a balanced structure of the language classroom and establishing the fundamental principles of the educational outcomes for all classes within the subject of English language.

## **2.2. Implementation of humour in the language classroom**

The first step of any well prepared and structured lesson plan starts off with the identification of the aims and outcomes of the lesson, stating what the overall goal and purpose of the lesson is and what the students will be able to do with the language they acquire. After the aims and the outcomes are established, the teacher's job is to point out lexical items, grammatical structures, and cultural aspects the students will use to achieve them. The use of humour in this case promotes the acquisition of the wanted language structures and cultural aspects rather than just making activities fun. As Bell and Pomerantz (2016) say, the focus of such lesson is on playing to learn, not learning to play, therefore, humour in the language classroom is desirable as long as it assists in the realization of the overall learning and management objectives.

### **2.2.1. Teaching with the help of humour**

It is not a rare case that students lose focus and concentration during a difficult lesson, or a lesson which does not spark any interest in them. The teacher's task to keep students' attention and to make the lesson interesting is not an easy job, and since it plays a big role in planning and performing a successful lesson, it is useful to know some strategies which could make the students more interested and involved in the topic.

Humour is a great tool which could help teachers to make their lesson more appealing to the students, and ultimately, easier to understand and remember. Before considering what kind of humorous techniques can be used to teach a lesson, teachers should keep in mind a few guidelines which will help them to use humour more effectively. First of all, as previously mentioned, humour which is used in the classroom should be applied purposefully, in a sense that, for example, it helps in explaining certain concepts or as a tool which promotes discussion of relevant topics. This of course does not mean that humour cannot be produced if a student or a teacher wants to share a good joke or a funny anecdote which are unrelated to the lesson material, but using humour as an effective tool in the process of learning means that it should be used strategically, and in situations where it will promote learning. Second thing to keep in mind is not to overuse humour as a tool for teaching, because overusing it could decrease its effects. Although humour can function as an attention gripping tool and it helps to create a comfortable atmosphere in which the students are encouraged to participate in the lesson, the excessive use of humour could cause management problems in a sense that students could become too relaxed and lose focus of what is important in the lesson. Applying too much humour in the classroom could also create an expectation that every lesson should include humour for it to be successful, which is not the case. Therefore, it is better to use humour in a couple of instances, rather than a lot of times throughout the lesson. The last thing to keep in mind as a guideline for using humour as a teaching strategy in the language classroom is to use humour which is appropriate. The classroom is a place where everyone should feel comfortable and safe, so any kind of humour which harms these principals is not appropriate. If the teacher is questioning whether or not to tell a certain joke, it is better if they keep it for themselves, rather than risking insulting someone or making them feel uncomfortable. When teachers plan to use humour which is appropriate,

they should consider “1) the subject, 2) the tone, 3) the intent, and 4) the situation, including the teller and the audience” (Nilsen, 1994: 930).

Keeping these guidelines in mind, teachers can prepare a lesson which includes different humorous techniques in order to make their lesson more interesting and to emphasize and discuss salient information. One method of teaching with the help of humour is to use anecdotes or stories which could emphasize the point of what we are trying to teach. For example, from the communicative point of view, a common topic in the language classroom is the difference between two or more cultures. The teacher and the students could share their personal anecdotes about interacting with a different culture to discuss how and why they might have misunderstood something or someone. Instead of personal stories, teachers could also use video clips from films, tv shows, or commercials. The topic and the point of these clips can be versatile, as long as they are connected to the topic of the lesson. Connecting the information students acquire during the lesson with a popular film or a show allows them to see that the concepts they learn about in the classroom are present in the world outside of the classroom as well. Seeing these films or shows later in the future might remind the students about the information they learned, and it could lead to better retention. When it comes to the linguistic outcomes, introduction and explanation of new vocabulary and grammatical structures could be prepared with the help of humour as well. For example, when teaching about the importance of correct punctuation, teachers could show a joke which could help to demonstrate an important point. A good example of such a joke compares two sentences, and it goes like this: “Let’s eat grandpa. Let’s eat, grandpa. Correct punctuation can save a person’s life.” Comics are also a great source to help illustrate an important point. Here are two comics which could be used, one illustrates a common spelling problem students encounter and the other refers to avoiding ending sentences with prepositions.

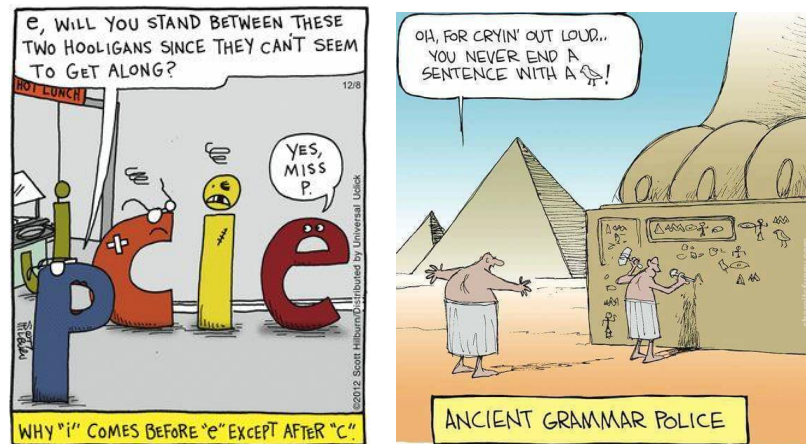


Figure 1. Examples of jokes

Simple short jokes such as puns can be used to demonstrate how some words can have multiple meanings or sound similar to other words with completely different meaning. Through such jokes, students can get familiarized with homophones, homographs, metonymy, and other aspects of figurative language through fun content which could lead to better retention.

Using humour as an aid in teaching allows the teachers to create a positive atmosphere in the classroom and it helps in keeping the students focused in interested in the lesson. Humour is also helpful for emphasizing a significant issue and for demonstrating and illustrating an important point. Teachers could use humour from many sources, such as films, tv shows, comics, memes, or personal anecdotes, but the important thing to remember is to be appropriate and to limit the use of humour so that is used purposefully.

### 2.2.2. Teaching about humour

Except incorporating humour in lessons as an aid of achieving certain learning and management objectives, humour can be also used as the subject of teaching. But before examining how humour can be thought, it is important to state what it means to teach humour. As Bell and Pomerantz (2016) say, the goal of teaching humour is not to familiarise the students with the entire spectrum of humorous techniques and the final aim of teaching humour is not creating and becoming a “humorous person” but rather to “familiarize learners with a variety of conventional practices around humorous interaction, so that they are better able to take part in it.” (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016: 170).

When we plan on teaching certain humorous techniques, a good way to begin is to define what the students will be able to do with the material that will be taught. Based on what Bell (2009, 2011) said, a lesson which focuses on teaching humour can have one or more of the following desirable outcomes:

1. Identifying humour
2. Comprehending humour
3. Producing humour
4. Responding to humour

As a first step of interacting with humour, it is necessary to be able to identify it in a given situation. The tool which helps us in identifying humour and understanding how any other interaction should be interpreted are contextualization cues (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016). People use contextualization cues in order to display the use of their language in accordance with what its intended meaning is. Same sentence could be regarded as funny, serious, sarcastic, or sincere, but with the help of the contextualization cues, we are able to decipher what it really is. These contextualization cues can vary from ones which are obvious, such as starting a story with a sentence “A guy walks into a bar”, which provides the interlocutor with the information that the following story should be taken as something funny, but sometimes, contextualization cues are not as obvious as the previous one and they require a better understanding of a certain context. That is why one of the important skills of understanding humour is being able to identify and grasp certain cues which are used to contextualize humour (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016).

One way of teaching and learning about contextualization cues is to introduce the students with a scripted interaction taken from movies and, or television. The interactions which are used in such scripts are usually made in a way that they are credible in a sense that they represent what a normal conversation would look like, that is why this would be a great source for students who are learning to recognize contextualization cues. Furthermore, same task could be given in the written form, identifying the cues from different literary works, newspapers, or online interactions. In the end, as a way of concluding what the student have learned, the teacher could ask them to use their knowledge of contextualization cues to convert a serious utterance or a text into a humorous one (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016).

After being able to identify humour, the following desirable outcome would be to enable the students to comprehend humour. This aspect of learning about humour is an extensive one, since in order to understand humour, students should become acquainted with various aspects of the target culture with which they would be in contact with. This includes the general knowledge of the language, history, customs and the current events from the target country or culture they are learning about. As Bell and Pomerantz point out in their book, as some useful skills which should be developed in order to comprehend humour “Wulf (2010) suggested developing student understanding of script opposition, sociocultural knowledge, logical mechanisms (what he refers to as “masking”), and figurative language. Helping students gain familiarity with social and cultural information related to the language they are learning, as well as developing their abilities to identify and use figurative language are already things that happen in most L2 classrooms, as well as aspects of the L2 that users are likely to gain knowledge of simply through exposure and uninstructed interaction, if that is available to them (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016: 171).” As the most efficient way of understanding humour, they suggest using script oppositions, which will help the students to understand a broad spectrum of humour types. Through script opposition, students will be able to realise that most humour relies on incongruity and connecting at first glance sometimes unconnected concepts. “To understand humour, one has to engage with both what is actually present in an interactional moment and one’s assumptions and expectations about what should have been there.” (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016: 172)

As well as for the previous outcome, as a great tool to familiarise students with script opposition, and ultimately, understanding humour, teachers could use television as the object of analysing these concepts. Another method to help the students to understand humour is taken from Winchitz’s and Kozin’s (2008) analysis of construction of “comical hypotheticals”. In this kind of communication, students would find themselves in a situation where they would create an imaginary scenario together. Being a part of this kind of activity would help the students to recognize such interaction in a situation outside of their classroom.

The production of humour is the third possible outcome of the language classroom which focuses on learning about humour. This skill will not only enable the students to be able to produce humour, but it will also play a role in developing their overall communicative and linguistic skills. As well as for the previous outcome, production of humour requires a great

linguistic competence and a general social and cultural knowledge about the target country or culture.

Since the subject of humour is usually something we derive from our daily life, a good way to start teaching about producing humour would be to familiarise the students with the target culture's inclination towards preferred topics which can be joked about. The teacher's role here is to discuss with the students about the outcomes and possible risks of using certain themes such as politics or religion as the topic of humour, but also to make them aware of the differences about how such topics are approached in different languages and cultures. Except teaching our students to be aware of the different topics which are appropriate subjects for humour, it is also important to discuss the context in which we plan to use humour. One way to practice this would be to create a list of jokes and let the students decide whether the topic they discuss is appropriate in their culture and in the target culture. Also, a list of jokes could be used in a discussion where students decide whether the same joke could be used in different contexts, for example: in school, at home, in a workplace, or a cultural event. Another interesting activity for the students would be to investigate what kind of humour is produced in the various groups they are a part, for example, their group of friends, their family, and their class, and to compare and discuss the differences and similarities between the topics and rhetorical devices they use in the mentioned groups.

Except focusing on the topics and the language used to produce humour, the production of humour also requires some performance skills. "Sequence, turn taking, volume, timing, and prosody (including intonation, rhythm, stress), among others, are all important areas related to the successful cuing of a spoken utterance as humorous. Likewise, kinaesthetic features such as gaze, gesture, expression, and posture also figure into the contextualization process." (Bell, Pomerantz, 2016: 174) In order to practice such skills in a foreign language, Bell (2007) recommends translating funny personal stories since they are easy to share across different languages. This kind of activity not only allows the students to practice using different humorous cues, but also helps in developing their communication skills.

Beside activities in which students practice producing humour in an oral manner, teachers could also engage students in activities which allow students to understand how different textual devices can suggest how a certain text should be interpreted. More precisely, they can practice

using textual devices which will help to identify a text as humorous. Some of these devices, as Bell and Pomerantz (2016) suggest are lexical items, collocations, syntactic structures or rhetorical devices, as well as the creative way of using font, pictures, emoticons and punctuation.

In addition to learning how to produce humour, studying humour in the language classroom can also prepare the students to appropriately respond to humour. This aspect of learning about humour, similarly to recognizing humour, involves recognition of different contextualization cues. As Bell and Pomerantz (2016) describe, in order to acknowledge an attempt at humour, the receiver should show understanding that the following statement or a story is humorous, express understanding of it, and finally, the appreciation of it. As Hay (2001) explains, expressing all three of these components of responding to humour indicates that the receiver is also implicating agreement with the idea represented through humour. Since some types of humour can focus on some serious topics, it is useful to know how to show appreciation for the humour which is produced, but also to know how to demonstrate whether or not we support the message behind what was said. Therefore, as Bell and Pomerantz (2016) explain, in informing the students how to respond to humour, teachers should focus on teaching how to show appreciation for humour, but also how to reject certain messages with which the students might not agree with. Some activities from which the students could benefit in this way is participating in some awareness raising discussions and performing role-play activities in which the students could read or improvise dialogues in which they would practice their techniques of responding to humour.

### **2.3. Effects of humour in the language classroom**

Humour is in general a beneficial and effective communicative device which is why it is also a great tool in education and in language classes in particular since, in most cases, it utilizes language as its main form of expression. It functions as a mechanism which increases and encourages communication between teachers and students, develops student's critical thinking, reduces stress and tension, it facilitates learning and retention, and of course, it makes the lessons enjoyable and fun. As Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2016) put it, humour is a multidisciplinary phenomenon which can be observed from different perspectives, depending on the different



effects it generates. Some of these effects are psychological, physiological, social, and educational.

According to Morreall (2009), there are several intellectual effects of humour: open-mindedness, creative thinking, and critical thinking, all of which are desirable virtues which are useful in school, as well as in everyday life. People who are prone to humour are more open to accepting new ideas and perspectives, which makes them “more adaptable to change and more accepting of what we now call diversity” (Morreall, 2009: 112). Another intellectual effect of using humour in the language classroom is student’s development of their creative thinking. Understanding and being able to produce humour based on incongruity means being able to connect or reconfigure different ideas in an unusual and unexpected way. Morreall (2009) describes two ways in which humour can develop creative thinking.

Humor promotes divergent thinking in two ways. First, it blocks negative emotions such as fear, anger, and sadness which suppress creativity by steering thought into familiar channels. Secondly, humor is a way of appreciating cognitive shifts when we are in a humorous frame of mind, we are automatically on the lookout for unusual ideas and new ways of putting ideas together. (Morreall, 2009: 113)

The third intellectual effect of humour is the development of critical thinking. This virtue is also connected to understanding incongruity. More precisely, it makes us “look for discrepancies between what people should do, what they say they do, and what they actually do” (Morreall, 2009: 113)

Humour also fosters some moral virtues, which are important in the classroom environment as well as in life in general. According to Morreall (2009) some of these strengths are self-transcendence, patience, acceptance of other people’s shortcomings, and tolerance of differences. Self-transcendence involves distancing oneself from fight-or-flight emotions. This characteristic allows individuals not only to understand others better, but also to understand and accept oneself better. He also explains that these moral virtues which can be developed through humour reduce certain emotions, such as anger. Conflicts and social tensions can be defused with the use of humour, which is why humour can be useful in such situations in the classroom.

Although the relief theory of humour is no longer as accepted as it used to be, it takes into account a valid point that humour includes some physiological aspects which have a

relaxing function. Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2016: 106) listed some of the main physiological effects in their article.

Humour also improves the body's immune system (Martin & Dobbin, 1988), stimulating circulation and improving respiration (Fry & Rader, 1977; Fry & Savin, 1988), increasing the level of endorphins that help in pain tolerance (Berk et al., 1989), and lowering blood pressure (Fry & Savin, 1988).

The psychological effects of humour which Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2016) mention, such as stress relief, improvement of one's self-esteem and mood, enhanced memory, and improved social interactions are all factors which can significantly improve classroom atmosphere and the students' overall achievement. These factors could also foster some social benefits. As previously mentioned, in a humorous state of mind, people tend to be more open to new ideas, and therefore, prone to group bonding. Except for strengthening teamwork, humour could also play a role in defusing and decreasing some problems in the classroom. "Morreall (1997) also listed various situations in which humour may provide a helping hand: announcing bad news, apologizing, handling unreasonable complaints, commanding and warning, evaluating and criticizing, handling conflicts, and much more" (Al-Duleimi, Aziz, 2016: 106).

Finally, the effects of humour which are connected to the educational outcomes are that it helps in the overall management and environment in the classroom. In this sense, it can function as an attention gripping tool which could be helpful in teaching lessons which would otherwise be boring and, or difficult to follow. Connected to the social effects, humour can also be used in defusing conflicts, and as Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2016) say, using humour to resolve disputes will achieve that in a less serious and threatening way. Except for managing social interactions in the classroom, humour is also a great instrument for achieving a better understanding of the taught material, it improves its retention and positively influences students' achievement.

### **3. The study**

The aim of this study is to examine opinions and attitudes of students towards humour in general and their attitudes towards the use of humour in the classroom and whether or not they feel that humour is more commonly used in the language classroom or in the other subjects. The

results will give us an insight on the student's attitudes and the benefits and the disadvantages of humour in the classroom environment.

### **3.1. Participants**

The data used in this study was obtained from 109 students from Ksaver Šandor Gjalski Primary School in Zabok. From the total number of the participants in this study, 23 of them attend the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, 46 attend the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and 40 of them attend the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. By that time and age, the students have already been through enough different lessons and had enough teachers to be able to point out if some of them use more humour than others and if that humour was beneficial for the learning environment or not. All of the students that participated in this study learn at least one foreign language, which is English, and most of them are learning German as well.

### **3.2. Procedure**

The study includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. The study was conducted in a form of a questionnaire and a 5-point Likert scale. Some questions from the questionnaire were used from the research conducted by Lovorka Zergollern-Miletić in 2017, which she presented in the book *Humor, smijeh, misao, jezik* (2021.). This questionnaire contains 12 questions. The first 4 questions are connected to students' general attitude towards humour. Since the participants are between the ages of 13 and 15 and most of them are active consumers of social media, 2 of the questions are connected to the internet sources they might use to find humorous content. The rest of the questions aim to investigate students' attitudes towards humour in the classroom and whether it is easier to incorporate humour in the language classroom and why. The 5-point Likert scale is used to determine to which degree the students agree or disagree with some of the previous questions and to find out what is the impact of using humour in the classroom. Since the questionnaire included open-ended questions, the study was carried out in the Croatian language in order to avoid potential confusion and in order to get clearer and more precise answers from the participants.

Any information that was shared during this study that could possibly identify the student as a participant was protected, as the survey was completely anonymous.

### 3.3. Results

#### 1) What is humour?

Most participants (57.79%) said that humour is something that that makes you laugh. Others (29.35%) stated that humour is when someone or something is witty.

Other answers include the following: humour is something that improves our mood, humour is a part of our daily life, humour is the ability to understand a joke, humour is a form of entertainment.

A small number of students (5.5%) left a blank answer.

#### 2) Do you think that humour is important in life?

Almost all answers to this question were positive (95.41%). Some of the students answered with capital letters to emphasise their answer, and some of them added that it is very important. There were also some additional explanations such as: life is better when we laugh; humour lifts the atmosphere and the mood; it would be boring and sad without humour in our lives; the absence of humour would create pressure on people; humour is half of our health.

The rest of the students claimed that humour is not important in our lives. Three of them just answered “No”, one of them answered that humour is not really important to her, and another student answered that it is sometimes important.

#### 3) Do you visit any internet pages where you can find humorous content? If yes, which pages do you visit?

More than a half of the participants (53.21%) answered that they do not visit any internet pages where they could find humorous content. The rest of them who answered “yes” mostly named 2 or more pages that they use. Some of them are:

- YouTube (58.82%)
- Instagram (39.21%)
- Tik Tok (19.6%)
- Other pages: Twitter, Facebook, Wombo

(The percentages refer to the total number of participants who answered “yes” for the first part of the question.)

- 4) If your previous answer was yes, describe what kind of content you enjoy on the pages that you visit.

Most of the participants who answered this question (52.94%) were very vague. The most common response was “funny content”, which some of the participants expanded by saying that they watch funny videos. The rest of the answers were more specific. A smaller portion (15.69%) said that they enjoy memes, and others (13.73%) that they like to read jokes. Some other answers were: parodies, stand-up, practical jokes and black humour.

- 5) Do you think that humour is important in the classroom?

The majority of the participants (82.56%) answered yes. Few (10.09%) said that humour is not important in the classroom. The rest of the participants wrote that humour is important on some occasions, and one participant wrote that it is good to use humour in school, but not during the lessons.

- 6) Why is humour in the classroom important/ why not?

A small number of students (7.33%) left a blank space, and others who answered that humour is important gave one or more of the following answers:

- Students feel more relaxed when humour is used (17.43%)
- The lessons are more interesting when humour is used (15.6%)
- The lessons are more fun (14.68%)
- It is easier to follow, to understand and to remember the lesson when humour is used (11%)
- Humour can cheer up students (9.17%)

Other mentioned answers were: it makes the students more interested in the lesson, humour creates a better atmosphere in the classroom, it makes time pass faster, it is healthy, it gives the students energy. One student wrote that humour could get you out of an unwanted situation.

The students who wrote that humour is not important in the classroom mainly wrote that it interferes with teaching (8.26%). Other answers were: it is important to be serious during the lesson, humour could create too much noise, humour could make us deviate from the topic, the teacher could reprehend you for using humour, humour could be offensive.

7) During which subjects is humour most used?

Students gave one or more of the following answers:

- Music (50.46%)
- Art (23.85%)
- P.E (16.51%)
- Geography (14.68%)
- English language (11.93%)
- Croatian language (9.17%)

Other mentioned answers in the order of their percentages were: History, Math, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Religion and German language. Three students wrote that humour is equally present in all lessons, and two students wrote that humour is not used in any of the lessons.

8) Can you explain why?

Students gave one or more of the following answers:

- The teacher likes to make jokes; he/she has a sense of humour (41.28%)
- The teacher is not strict; because of the relaxed atmosphere in the classroom (37.62%)
- Unable to explain (11.23%)
- During these lessons, students can interact more (5.49%)

Some other answers are the following: the teacher uses humour to explain certain concepts, there is more communication during these lessons, the teacher gives out interesting tasks which sometimes include humour.

9) Is it easier to include humour in the language teaching than it is in other lessons?

- Yes (36.7%)
- No (52.3%)
- I don't know (5 participants)
- It is all the same (4 participants)
- It depends on the teacher (3 participants)

10) If you think it is, why?

The percentages stated for this question refer to the number of participants who answered the previous question with “yes”. Some of the participants gave more than one answer.

- We communicate more during these lessons (25%)
- I don't know (25%)
- During language classes we read and analyse some texts which sometimes include humour (22.5%)
- We understand Croatian better (10%)

Other answers include: because the teacher is more prone to humour, we learn about different topics in the language classes, other subjects are more difficult, language subjects have more ways to apply humour than other subjects.

11) Is it easier to include humour in foreign language subjects than it is in Croatian?

- No (58.72%)
- Yes (31.19%)
- I don't know (6.42%)
- It depends on the teacher (2 participants)
- It is equal (2 participants)

12) If you think it is, why?

The percentages stated for this question refer to the number of participants who answered the previous question with “yes”.

The highest percentage of participants (26.47%) didn't know how to answer this question or said that there is no particular reason why they think that way. The next highest percentage of participants (23.53%) answered that the language which is less familiar to them sounds funnier, or that some words from the foreign language remind them of other words from our mother tongue. To this percentage I also included answers which stated that errors in pronunciations sometimes sound funny. A couple of students wrote that there is more humour in the foreign language subjects because the teacher allows it more than their Croatian teacher.

The following answers were given by one or two participants:

It is easier to include humour in English language because in Croatian lessons we always deal with new and more difficult and boring units.

During English and German lessons, we communicate a lot, while during Croatian lessons we often have to copy a lot from the blackboard.

During Croatian lessons we learn more about grammar and spelling, while during foreign language lessons we learn a lot about different events and occurrences from life.

In our English class books, we have more texts and dialogues which include humour.

Since we had a lot of online classes, we spent more time on social media than before, and since more stuff on social media (including things that are related to humour) are usually in English, we became more used to foreign humour.

The following tables represent the answers collected from the five-point Likert scales.

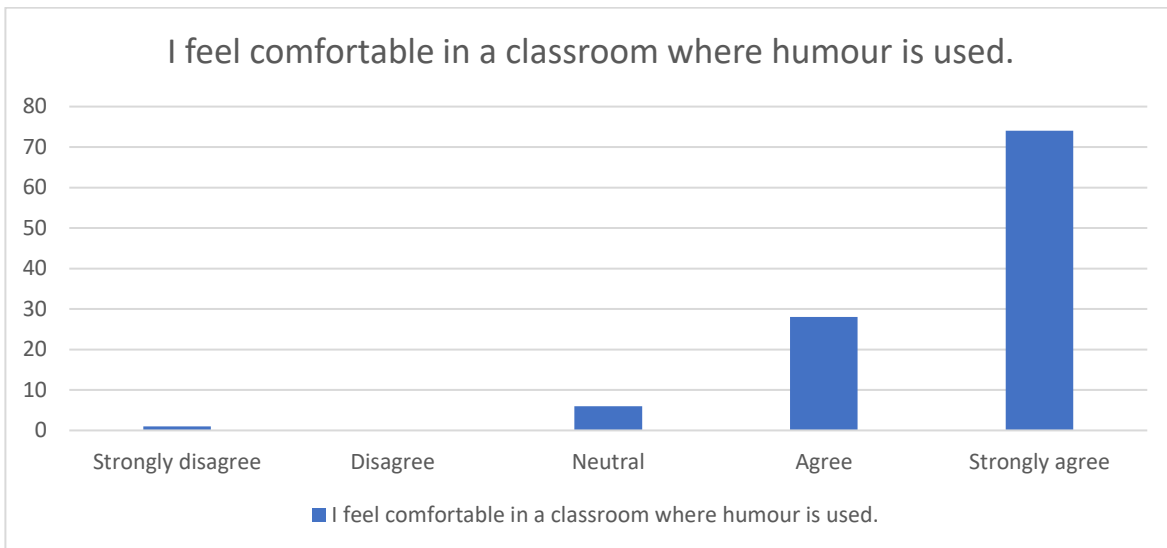
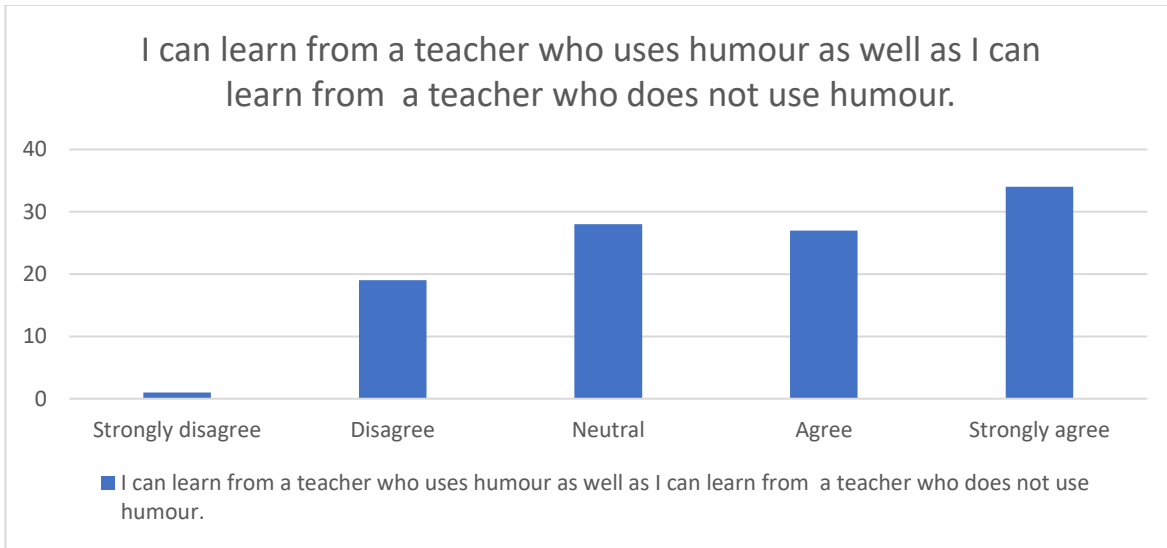
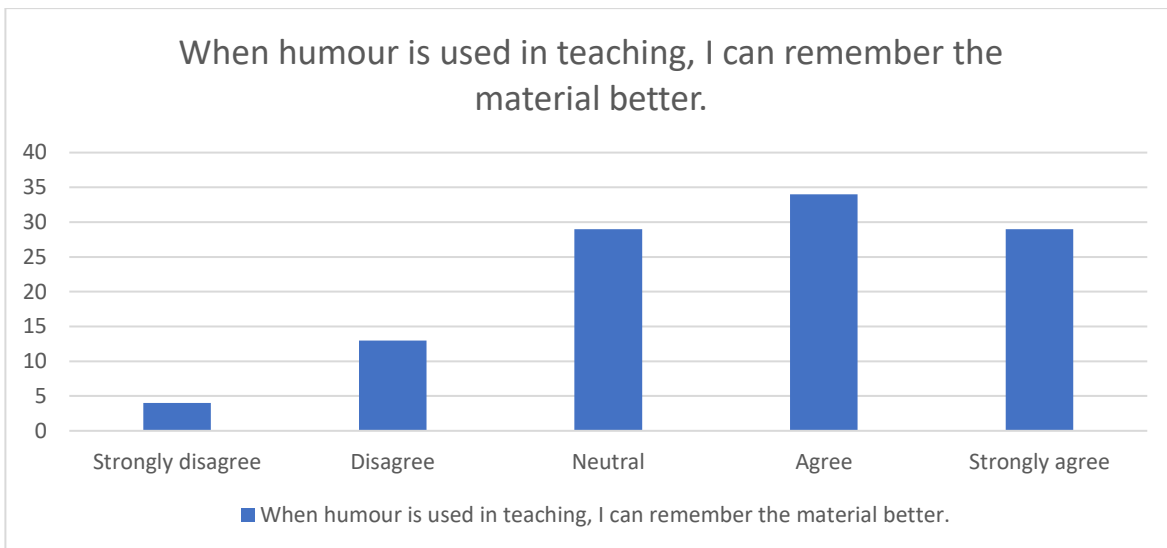


Table 1: How comfortable the students feel about the use of humour in the classroom





*Table 2: How well can students learn from a teacher who uses humour as opposed to learning from a teacher who does not use humour*



*Table 3: To what degree is humour helpful in remembering the lesson material*

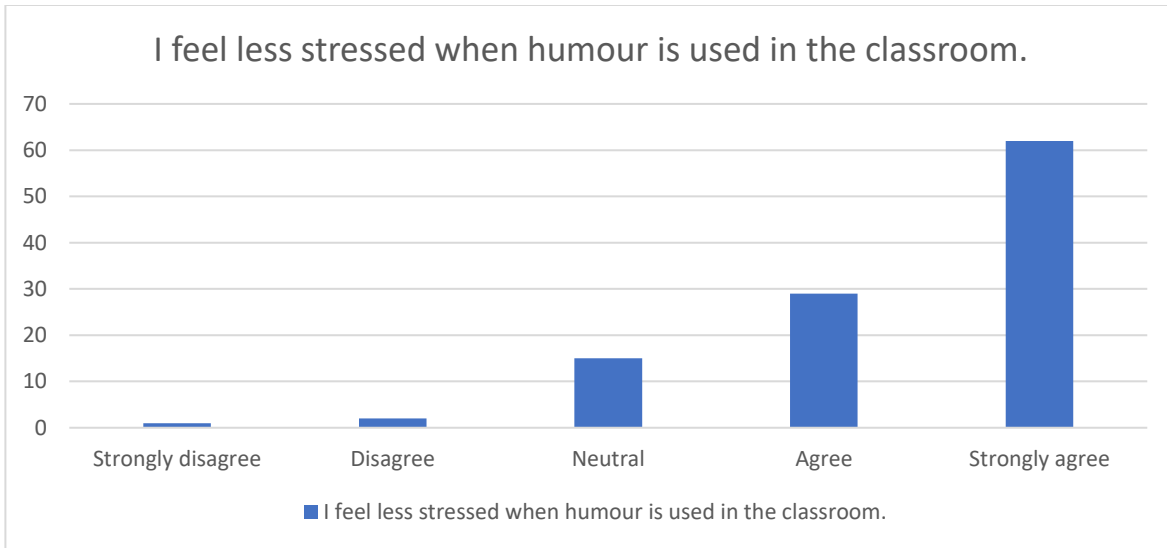


Table 4: Level of stress in the classroom where humour is used



Table 5: To what degree does humour make students uncomfortable

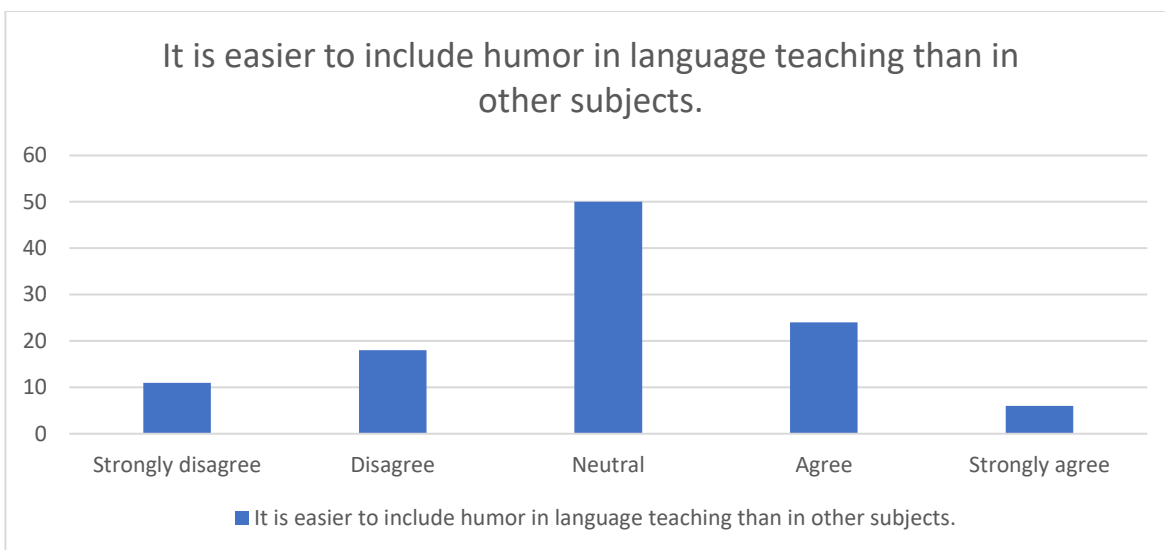


Table 6: Is it easier to include humour in language teaching than in other subjects



Table 7: It is easier to include humour in foreign language teaching than in Croatian

### 3.4. Conclusion of the study

Based on the obtained results we can conclude that the attitude of the participants towards the importance of humour in life is positive, with a few exceptions. The same goes for the participants' attitude towards the importance of humour in the classroom.

Most of the students expressed that they do not use any internet sources from which they could gather some humorous content, but those who do usually find this kind of content on YouTube or Instagram.

When describing why humour in the classroom is or is not important, students were able to give us reasoned explanations which showed us both good and bad sides of using humour, but although the participants numbered a couple of reasons why humour could be bad, the positive answers outweigh the negative ones.

When asked about the subjects in which humour is most used, most of the participants wrote Music and/or Art. As an explanation to why these lessons include most humour, the answers were usually connected to the attitude and the personality of the teacher, but it was obvious to conclude that the same teachers use humour as a tool to lighten the mood and to create a positive work environment rather than using humour as a tool to promote acquisition and retention of the lesson material. There were only two instances in the answers where the students mentioned that the teacher uses humour as a way to explain the lesson material.

Although a bit more than a half of the students agreed that it is easier to include humour in other subjects rather than in the language subjects, the ones that thought the opposite had a few good reasons which supported their idea.

The majority of students think that it is easier to include humour in Croatian lessons rather than in foreign language teaching. Those who disagreed argued that most of the humour which emerges during foreign language lessons is present because foreign languages sometimes sound funny and the errors in students' pronunciations can cause laughter. Students also mentioned that it is easier to include humour in foreign language teaching due to the fact that during these lessons they communicate more and discuss more topic related to daily life than they do during Croatian lessons.

The information gathered from the Likert scales supports some of the previous answers from the questionnaire. It is evident that almost all students feel comfortable and experience less stress in a classroom where humour is used, but it is important to bear in mind that not all students will feel comfortable by its usage or by the presence of too much laughter. Although the students' answers show us that they learn almost equally successful from a teacher who uses humour as well as from a teacher who does not use humour, the majority of them said that they are able to remember the lesson material better when humour is present.

While in the questionnaire the students expressed that it is easier to include humour in the language classroom rather than in the other subjects and that it is easier to include humour in Croatian lessons rather than in foreign language lessons, when given the chance to give their answer on a scale from 1 to 5, they gravitated more towards the middle, suggesting that it is equally possible.

## **Conclusion**

Throughout history, many philosophers argued that humour and laughter are irrational and should be avoided, but much criticism prior to the eighteenth century failed to define humour in a more exhaustive way, which is why it was easier to find flaws in these concepts. Scholars who deal with the subject of humour today argue that it is not only rational, but also a significant component of human evolution. One significant thing which separates us from other living beings is the fact that we are capable of abstract thinking. This ability allows us to mentally distance ourselves from our immediate surroundings and to use different sources from our previous experiences to respond to certain stimuli more appropriately. Humour is a great example of how our abstract thinking works because it includes recognition and application of our gathered knowledge about the world. Furthermore, not only does it show a sign of developed abstract thinking, it is also a source of enjoyment. It is not seldom that people are inclined to use humour in order to lift the atmosphere, improve someone's mood or leave a good impression on someone they like. Except the social effects, humour also conveys different psychological, physiological and educational effects. All of these effects could be studied in the classroom environment. Since most instances of humour utilize language as its main form of expression, the best way of incorporating humour in school would be to use it in the language classroom. Humour in the language classroom could be used in two ways: as a tool for achieving certain learning and management objectives and as the subject of teaching. Using humour as an aid in teaching is useful as an attention gripping tool to make the lesson more appealing to students, but more importantly, humour could be used to promote the acquisition of the wanted language structures and cultural aspects the students are learning about. Therefore, the appropriate way of using humour in the classroom would be to use it purposefully. By using it too much or just for the purpose of making the lesson fun would probably decrease its effects. A lesson which

focuses on teaching humour does not aim to create a classroom full of students who would by the end of that lesson become a “funny person”, but it rather familiarises the students with the typical practices of humorous interaction, so they could be active participants of it. What is important to remember in both ways of implementing humour in the language classroom is that the humour which is used should be understandable and appropriate for the target group of students. The study conducted for the purpose of this research shows us that students have a positive approach towards humour in school and in life in general. Their approach towards humour in school suggest that most instances of humour appear due to the teacher’s personality traits (they either have a sense of humour or aren’t strict, so they allow humour in their classroom). Only two students pointed out that one teacher uses humour to make the subject material more understandable. This shows us that teachers either use humour to create a comfortable working environment or avoid humour because they do not see the potential that humour in the language classroom, or in fact any other classroom could have. Since it is clear that purposeful implementation of humour in the classroom could have such great effects on students’ learning, it seems as though the next step in implementing humour in the classroom would be to make the teachers more aware of its diverse advantages. Perhaps it is difficult to associate humour with teaching because teaching and learning follow certain rules of conduct which should be taken seriously, and humour is usually present in a more relaxed environment. Teachers could also be reluctant to use humour in the classroom because it might prompt some students to believe that “anything goes”. This is why, as for any other lesson, teachers should be well prepared to use humour or to teach about humour in order to avoid negative consequences. Ultimately, there is no doubt that humour is a good sign of developed abstract thinking and a great tool for enjoyable social interactions, so teaching with the help of humour and about humour is something that should cross any teachers mind, and hopefully be put in practice.

## References

- Afghari, Akbar & Allami, Hamid (2007). *EFL verbal Humour Appreciation*. TELL. 1(3), 1-23
- Al-Duleimi, Abbas Deygan Darweesh; Aziz, Rana Naji (2016). “*Humour as EFL Learning-Teaching Strategy*”. *Journal of Education and Practice*. Vol.7, No.10, 105-115
- Bardon, Adrian (2005). “*The Philosophy of Humor*”. *Comedy: A Geographic and Historical Guide*, 2 vols. edited by Maurice Charney, 462–476. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Bell, Nancy (2007). “*How native and non-native English speakers adapt to humor in intercultural interaction*”. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 20(1), 27–48
- Bell, Nancy; Pomerantz, Anne (2016). “*Humour in the Classroom. A Guide for Language Teachers and Educational Researchers*”. New York: Routledge.
- Berk, L. S., Tan, S. A., Fry, W. F., Jr., Napier, B. J., Lee, J. W., Hubbard, R. W., & Lewis, J. E. (1989). “*Neuroendocrine and Stress Hormone Changes During Mirthful Laughter*”. *American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, 298, 390-396
- Eastman, Max (1936). “*Enjoyment of Laughter*”. New York: Halcyon House.
- English Standard Version Bible. (2001). ESV Online. <https://esv.literalword.com/>
- Freud, Sigmund, (1905 [1974]). “*Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*” (Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten), James Strachey (tr.), New York: Penguin.
- Fry, William F., Jr. & Rader, C. (1977). “*The Respiratory Components of Mirthful Laughter*”. *Journal of Biological Psychology*, 19, 39-50
- Fry, William F., Jr. & Savin, William M. (1988). “*Mirthful Laughter and Blood Pressure*”. *Humor*, 1, 49-62
- Grice, Herbert Paul (1975). “*Logic and Conversation*”. *Syntax and Semantics*, vol. 3, Peter Cole and Jerry Morgan (ed.), New York: Academic Press, 41–58
- Hay, Jennifer (2001). “*The pragmatics of humor support*”. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 14(1), 55–82

- Hobbes, Thomas, (1651 [1982]). *Leviathan*. New York: Penguin
- Lippit, John (1995). "Humour and superiority". *Cogito*, vol. 9, issue 1, 54-61
- Marković, Ivan (2019). *Uvod u verbalni humor*. Zagreb: Disput.
- Martin, Rod A. & Dobbin, J. Paul (1988). "Sense of Humor, Hassles, and Immunoglobulin A: Evidence for Stress Moderating Effects of Humor". *International Journal of Psychiatry*
- Ministarstvo znanosti i obrazovanja (2019). *Kurikulum nastavnog predmeta engleski jezik za osnovne škole i gimnazije*. Preuzeto s <https://mzo.gov.hr/>
- Morreall, John (1997). *Humor Works. Massachusetts*. Human Resource Development Press.
- Morreall, John (2009). *Comic Relief*. Chichester, Wesr Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell
- Morreall, John (2016). "Philosophy of Humor". *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/humor/>)
- Nilsen, A.P. (1994). "In defense of humor". *College English*, 56, 928-933
- Plato. (1897). *The Philebus of Plato*. Cambridge [Eng.]: University Press
- Plato. (1943). *Plato's The Republic*. New York :Books, Inc.
- Ruch, Willibald; Plat, Tracy; Proyer, Rene T.; Chen, Hsueh-Chih, (2019). "Humor and Laughter, Playfulness and Cheerfulness: Upsides and Downsides to a Life of Lightness". *Frontiers in Psychology*, vol. 10, taken from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00730>
- Schopenhauer, Arthur, (1818/1844 [1907]). *The World as Will and Idea (Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung)*. tr. R. B. Haldane and J. Kemp, 6th ed., London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Shaftesbury, Lord (1709). "Sensus Communis: An Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour," republished in 1711, *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 1st ed., London (4th edition in 1727).
- Spencer, Herbert (1911). "On the Physiology of Laughter". *Essays on Education, Etc.*, London: Dent.



- Spinka, Marek (2001). “*Mammalian Play: Training for the Unexpected*”. *Quarterly Journal of Biology*, 76: 141–168
- Winchatz, Michaela R., & Kozin, Alexander (2008). “*Comical hypothetical: Arguing for a conversational Phenomenon*”. *Discourse Studies*, 10(3), 383–405
- Wulf, Douglas (2010). “*A humor competence curriculum*”. *TESOL Quarterly*, 44 (1), 155–169
- Zergollern-Miletić, Lovorka (2021). “*Humor, smijeh, misao, jezik*”. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada.

Izjavljujem da je moj diplomski rad izvorni rezultat mojega rada te da se u izradi istoga nisam koristila drugim izvorima osim onih koji su u njemu navedeni.

---

(vlastoručni potpis studenta)