Review article
UDK 371.134:811.111-845
DOI 10.21618/fil2124222j
COBISS.RS-ID 135418625

Sanja R. Josifović-Elezović[1]
University of Banja Luka
Faculty of Philology

WHAT CAN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHERS LEARN FROM MULTIDISCIPLINARY HUMOUR RESEARCH

Abstract: *The aim of this article is to explore the advantages of the employment of humour in foreign language teaching for teachers and adult learners. How could teachers and learners in foreign language instruction benefit from improved humour awareness and developed humour competence? The paper reviews major definitions, theories, functions, and types of humour from multidisciplinary humour research, and examines the role of humour in foreign language instruction in view of important empirical findings and current requirements for foreign language speakers as stated in Common European Reference for Languages (2020). Conclusions suggest which kinds of humour should be incorporated into a contemporary foreign language classroom, and why. Further study recommendations are proposed that would allow for more effective applications of humour in modern adult foreign language education.*

Key words: *education, foreign language, humour, learners, teachers, teaching.*

1. Introduction

During the second half of the twentieth century humour gradually became a popular field of research for many disciplines, primarily philosophy, psychology, sociology, linguistics, education and literature, but also anthropology, biology, cultural studies, health and medicine, media and communication studies, political science, and more recently, computer science, or Artificial Intelligence (Mulder & Nijholt 2002). This is not surprising, taking into consideration that humour is a genetic, biological characteristic of the human race and no persons have been found to be without a sense of humour, 'except on a temporary basis because of some dire personal or national tragedy which for the time being has caused an eclipse of humor' (Fry 1994: 111). A sense of humour is a kind of 'psychological

[1] sanja.josifovic-elezovic@flf.unibl.org

fingerprint', and each person develops a sense of humour which is slightly different from that of each other person (Fry 1994:112).

The purpose of this study is to review the influential studies from multidisciplinary humour research, more than a half-century long, and evaluate how the existing research findings relate to a contemporary, student-centred, communicative foreign language classroom. The main aim of this paper is to explore how teachers and learners benefit from the employment of humour in foreign language instruction. The central research question is: how can humour in foreign language instruction help adult students learn and improve their competences on the basis of the current research on humour?

In order to answer the question, significant definitions, theories, functions and types, of humour will be reviewed first. Next, major findings from multiple disciplines, with various aspects and effects of humour in the classroom will be examined and important implications for foreign language instruction discussed. Conclusions about the role and effects of humour will provide some guidelines for incorporating humour into contemporary adult foreign language teaching. Further research recommendations will be proposed that would allow for more effective applications of humour in modern adult foreign language education.

2. Definitions of humour

Contemporary dictionary definitions of humour are broad and similar, stressing either the quality of something comical and amusing, or the ability in people to recognise something as funny, or both (Cambridge, Oxford Learners', Collins), while Merriam Webster dictionary introduces the idea of incongruity, defining humour as a sense of humour, rather than being funny - "mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous".

Scholars' definitions of humour vary to a much greater extent. Some see humour as undefinable (Escarpit 1960, in Attardo 1994:3), while others struggle to explain it one way or another. There is still no agreed-upon terminology in research on humour and no consensual definition (Ruch 1998; as cited in Peterson & Seligman 2004:585).

Many stress the necessary element of "nonserious social incongruity" (Gervais & Wilson 2005:399). A significant fact is that humour is a multidimensional concept, which can be a part of different types of psychological traits, so a sense of humour can be conceptualised as a cognitive ability (one needs to understand jokes, etc.), an aesthetic response (one needs to like certain types of jokes), a habitual

behaviour pattern (some people have the habit of laughing often, or of telling many jokes), an emotion-related temperament trait, an attitude, and a coping strategy or defense mechanism (Martin et al. 2003: 49). In 2007, Martin further acknowledged humour's multiple forms - cognitive-perceptual, social, emotional, behavioural - and succinctly summarised it as 'essentially a positive emotion called mirth, which is typically elicited in social contexts by a cognitive appraisal process involving the perception of playful, nonserious incongruity, and which is expressed by the facial and vocal behaviour of laughter' (Martin 2007: 29).

Humour embraces verbal and nonverbal communication behaviours that are usually associated with laughter and fun, so some scholars find it essential to spotlight this connection, and elaborate further on humour orientation, the ability to intentionally 'elicit positive responses like laughter, pleasure or joy' (Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield 1991: 206). Often it may be so, in an ideal case. However, it is known that humour is not always conscious, intended or planned, does not elicit only positive responses (mirth, joy, laughter), but also a range of negative ones (embarrassment, isolation etc.), and laughter is a physical and physiological manifestation of humour, but not always and not necessarily. Many kinds and dimensions exist, so using it as an effective didactic device asks for thoughtfulness and deliberation.

3. Theories of humour

One indicator of humour as a multi-faceted subject is the existence of multiple theories developed over time, attempting to discuss some, or all, of its complexity. Foot and McCreaddie (2006) identified over a hundred humour theories (as cited in Booth-Butterfield & Wanzer 2010: 223). Most of the theories ever proposed are actually mixed theories, and many contemporary researchers agree that humour in its totality is too huge and multiform a phenomenon to be incorporated into a single integrated theory (Krikmann 2006: 28).

It is not possible to provide a comprehensive review of all humour theories in this article because the subject is too wide and complex. It is essential, though, to look at the most well-known ones that provide basic background information for understanding why something is humorous and how it affects classroom learning. Different theories call for evaluating instances of humour from multiple perspectives. Humour is diverse and intricate, universal and individual, constructive and destructive, i.e. one needs to be careful with its functions and types in specific

contexts, bearing in mind that it differs from person to person, from time to time, language to language, culture to culture, situation to situation.

The *superiority* theories (dating back to Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and in modern age to Hobbes, Bergson, Gruner and others) are the oldest. They are called disparagement or hostility theories since they suggest that humour, or amusement, depends on the feeling of superiority regarding the object of the joke, i.e. there is a winner and a loser, as in a competition, e.g. laughing at someone who slipped on a banana peel because we did not slip and feeling good about it. Modern fat jokes, blonde jokes, racist and other reactionary jokes could go under this category. These theories are, according to some theoreticians, limited and outdated, but they explain some humour behaviours still present today, which generally refer to hurtful, offensive and hostile kinds of humour that are typically unacceptable in educational settings. An example of this theory's explanation of why some people laugh in classroom settings would be teachers teasing students for not knowing something or for making mistakes in class. That humour is one-sided, and typically negative and counter-productive for the students, especially if it provokes the laughter of their peers.

The *incongruity* (also known as *incongruity-resolution*) theories are the most influential approaches to the study of humour and laughter today. Incongruity remains the most plausible account of why we laugh (Eagleton 2019: 67). They were mostly proposed by philosophers, such as Kant, Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, and Morreall. In their view, laughter arises when what we expect and what we are presented with are different. Schopenhauer put it well: '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.' (As cited in Morreall 2020).

The *relief or release theories* deal with the relaxation humour provokes in people. They are also known as psychoanalytic, Freud being one of the most outstanding representatives of them, and were elaborated by Spencer, Bakhtin, Mindess and Fry. All deal with the temporary release of some excess, nervous energy, when we laugh in situations in which we expected to feel some emotion, but, due to some semantic or cognitive twist, we are spared that emotion. Jokes are often about taboos, authority figures etc. In educational context, students may release their pent-up stress if teachers tell them a funny story or a joke. In foreign language classrooms, this theory, for example, explains how students' anxiety and frustration produced due to their unfamiliarity with foreign language rules can be released through the teacher's use of humour.

A recently developed theory of humour as *benign violation* is the result of an attempt by Peter McGraw and Caleb Warren, who built on work by a linguist, Tom Veatch, to integrate existing humour theories to propose that humour occurs only when three conditions are satisfied: (1) a situation is a violation, (2) the situation is benign, and (3) both perceptions occur simultaneously (McGraw & Warren 2010: 1142). As with the incongruity theory, some mild deviation from the norm, expectations and/or traditions is a necessary condition for humour to occur. Play fighting and tickling, which produce laughter in humans (and other primates), are benign violations because they are physically threatening, but harmless attacks. If a language teacher uses malapropisms and spoonerisms they would be good examples of benign violation since they violate linguistic norms, but are not threatening, and are almost always funny.

The *script-based semantic theory of humour*[2] (SSTH) by Raskin (1985) is a linguistic theory, useful for foreign language teachers because, as Schmitz (2002) concludes, for puns and plays on words students need to have acquired the necessary linguistic skills in order to understand them (Schmitz 2002: 101-104). This theory is an attempt to explain verbal jokes from a linguistic point of view. Humour, according to Raskin (1985), happens when the joke's punch line causes the audience to abruptly shift its understanding from the primary (more obvious) script to the secondary, opposing script. In other words, the text is funny when it is compatible, fully or in part, with two different, opposite scripts, e.g. real/unreal, actual/non-actual, normal/abnormal, possible/impossible. Script opposition is at the base of the *General Theory of Verbal Humour* (GTVH) (Attardo 1994), which places it on the top of six parameters (Knowledge Resources) that produce humour in a text: Script Opposition, Logical Mechanism, Target, Situation, Narrative Strategy, and Language. GTVH includes more specifications to explain why something is funny than SSTH, which deals only with jokes, and by Narrative Strategy criterion broadens the scope of humorous messages, from spontaneous one-liners, through jokes, riddles, puns, to stories and literature. This is probably what makes it a more widely accepted theory (Bell & Pomerantz 2016: 23). GTVH is especially relevant for teaching advanced foreign language students.

Theories largely overlap, and none of them, alone or in combination, interpret humour thoroughly. Neither are they universal, but rather explain some humour forms in some situations. There are other theories and instances of humour that none of these theories can explain.

[2] Script is a kind of 'semantic knot' surrounding a word, broader than lexical definition and varies from person to person. In Raskin's words it is 'a large chunk of semantic information surrounding the word or evoked by it' (Ruskin 1985: 81).

4. Humour and general education

Teachers ought to be well familiar with the concept of humour, its omnipresent and interdisciplinary nature, and intricacies, functions and types, before incorporating it consciously and competently in their classes. A significant theoretical contribution to the subject of instructional humour was made by Wanzer, Frymer & Irwin (2010), who developed the *Instructional Humour Processing Theory* (IHPT), an integrative theory that tries to explain how instructional humour can assist learning. According to the IHPT, for humour to facilitate learning, students need to perceive and then resolve the incongruity in a humourous instructional message. If the students do not resolve the incongruity, they may experience confusion instead of humour. The recognition of humour will increase students' attention when the students have the motivation and ability to process the instructional messages (Wanzer et al. 2010: 7). The resolution of incongruity resulting from the approprite instructional humour should increase recall and learning.

4.1. Functions of humour

In the broadest sense, humour, in life as in teaching, is most beneficial when it is *positive*. It is recognised as one of 24 character strengths that Peterson and Seligman (2004) propose within their six fundamental human virtues. Numerous studies have shown that humour functions as a powerful enhancer of physical, psychological and social well-being.

Favourable physical functions of humour and laughter have been well investigated, offering evidence that our muscular, respiratory, immune and endocrine, cardiovascular, central and autonomic nervous systems are actively involved in the humour experience (Fry 1994: 114). Laughter stimulates multiple physiological systems that decrease levels of stress hormones, such as cortisol and epinephrine, and increase the activation of dopamine and endorphine (Savage et al. 2017: 341).

Humour serves a number of important and 'serious' psychological functions (Martin 2007: 15). Primarily, it functions as a tension reliever and a coping mechanism. People who can see the amusing sides of problems are more adept at coping with stress (Bellert 1989; M. Booth-Butterfield et al. 2007; Dillon et al. 1985; Miczo 2004; Nelek & Derks 2001; Wanzer et al. 2005; as cited in Banas et al. 2011: 120).

Humour can create and maintain social connections and group cohesion through eliciting laughter and positive emotions (Martin, 2007: 5,16,19,116). Hearty laughter is normally infectious, and, as gelotology studies repeatedly prove, it consolidates psychosocial bonds among people (Provine 1992; as cited in Fry 1994: 115). Moreover, it is a way of directing social action and indirectly influencing others.

Many interpersonal functions of humour suggest that it may be viewed as a type of social skill or interpersonal competence (Martin 2007: 150). It can bring people together, facilitating liking, amusement and morale, but it can also degrade and isolate people, making them victims of control, abuse and manipulation. Although it is important for educators to be aware of possible negative functions of humour, it is the positive functions and their relation to learning outcomes that educators need to focus more on and make use of.

4.2. Types of classroom humour

There is a wide variety of approaches to classifying humour. Martin et al. (2003) developed and validated Humour Style Questionnaire (HSQ), focusing on the functions that humour serves in everyday life related to psychosocial well-being. This general classification of humour styles is useful for teachers (and students) as a reliable initial self-assessment. It measures 4 styles of humour, two positive, adaptive and healthy, and two negative, maladaptive and unhealthy. *Affiliative* humour involves jokes about things that everyone finds funny, its purpose being to bring people together to find the humour in everyday life, create a sense of fellowship, happiness, and well-being. *Self-enhancing* humour is about being able to laugh at ourselves in everyday situations, i.e. make a joke when something bad happens to us, in a good-natured way, and is related to healthy coping with stress. *Aggressive* humour involves putting others down through sarcasm, teasing, criticism, ridicule, or insults. It is tendentious and hurtful, usually intended to threaten or psychologically harm or bully others. *Self-defeating* humour refers to putting ourselves down in an aggressive or "poor me" fashion in order to get others to like us. The authors remind that the boundaries between these styles are not absolute, and there can be some degree of overlap.

One of the foundational classifications of humour for language teachers is the one made by Schmitz (2002), who divided humour into three broad categories: *universal*, *culture-based* and *linguistic*. Similarly, Hativa's categorisation (2001) differentiates between *verbal* (wordplays, funny stories, puns, content related jokes,

comic irony, metaphor, hyperbole, metonymy, riddles, funny examples/stories), *nonverbal* (facial expressions, gestures) and a *combination* of the two (impersonation, parody, satire, monologue and skit).

Countless taxonomies created in the past half century specifically address different types of instructional humour (Bryant et al. 1979; Frymier, Wanzer, & Wojtaszczyk 2008; Gorham & Christophel 1990; Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield 2005; Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, & Smith 2006; Wanzer et al. 2010). Humour *effectiveness* on student learning is normally the most important variable in the subject of using humour in educational contexts. Most importantly, effective humour needs to be understood by the learners, i.e. the incongruity needs to be resolved. It encompasses different humour types employed in instruction.

It is essential for teachers to differentiate between *appropriate* and *inappropriate* humour. As with humour in general, appropriacy should apply not only to the subject matter (course content), but also to the audience (the students), the place (the classroom), and the time of use. According to the IHPT, humour appropriateness influences the affective response by the receivers. Appropriate forms of humour create a positive affect, while inappropriate forms create a negative affect. A positive affect enhances motivation to process new knowledge, while a negative affect decreases it. This finding is in line with Stephen Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis, according to which when the affective filter is high, students' anxiety and inhibition block the new input, and if the affective filter is low, student's self-confidence and motivation are higher and open the door for a comprehensible input to sink in (Krashen 1982: 31).

Next, humour in the classroom is effective if it is *relevant* to the content, students, place and time. The relevance of humour to course content may increase motivation and the ability to cognitively process messages, and since it does not distract from the instructional message it can make information more memorable (Wanzer et al. 2010: 6-8). Garner (2006), argued that humour must match 3 criteria to be effective: 1) be specific to what is being taught, 2) targeted to enhance learning, and 3) appropriate for the audience. Whereas the second and third conditions are undoubtable, the first one is questionable. Wanzer and colleagues (2006) defy the exclusive necessity of the first condition, and rightly assert that humour unrelated to class material can also be suitable for the classroom, even if it does not help students with memorising the content, because 'teachers have other goals as well, such as creating a positive teacher/student relationship, generating a positive classroom climate, or reducing student anxiety'.

A helpful categorisation of humour types for teachers who want to research and/or incorporate humour in classes can be made by Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006). Using a sample of 712 student-generated examples of appropriate teacher humour, Wanzer and colleagues examined different types of teacher humour in the classroom, identifying 4 main types of *appropriate* humour, with 26 subtypes: *related to class material, unrelated to class material, self-disparaging,* and *unintentional or unplanned humour*, and 4 types of *inappropriate* humour with 25 subtypes: *offensive, 'student' disparaging, 'other' disparaging*, and *self-disparaging* humour (Wanzer et al. 2006). To competently use humour as a teaching strategy, the humour must help achieve the teaching goal (effectiveness), and do so without offending students (appropriateness) (Wanzer et al. 2006: 192).

Hay (2000) identified three functions of humour among friends: *solidarity-based humour, humour to serve psychological needs,* and *power-based humour*. Solidarity-based humour is synonymous with affiliative humour, and is about building solidarity among group members to create consensus. Some techniques include sharing personal experiences, highlighting similarities through shared experiences, or clarifying and maintaining boundaries. Humour serving psychological needs is used to defend oneself or cope with problems arising in the conversation. Power-based humour serves to maintain boundaries between in-group and out-group members, to raise the status of the humourist, and influence or control the conversational partner. These three functions are relevant in the classroom because teachers also use humour to create solidarity with their students, cope with problems in the classroom, or raise their own status in class management (Banas et al. 2011:122).

Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield (2005) classified humour into nine types including *low humour* (acting silly, stupid, absurd or simplistic), *nonverbal humour* (using gestures, funny faces or vocal tones), *impersonation* (imitating specific characters, actions, situations), *verbal humour* (witty language, word play including jokes, slang, or sarcasm), *other orientation* (including audience), *expressiveness/general humour* (general references to being positive and happy, e.g. joking to lighten moods), *laughter* (as a communication mechanism to elicit laughter in others), *using funny props* (e.g. hats, whistles, masks etc.), and *seeking others* (who are known as funny).

This review of various humour classifications from research confirms the multidimensional nature of instructional humour, and suggests that humour effectiveness on student learning cannot be understood without considering its functions in the classroom and the type of humour used, particularly regarding appropriateness, offensiveness and relevance.

4.3. Humour orientation

Humour orientation appears to be an important variable in humour application in various areas of human life. It does not refer to a person's sense of humour, which is defined as an ability to receive and appreciate humourous messages, but to the ability to produce humour. In 1991, Steven and Melanie Booth-Butterfield developed the *Humor Orientation Scale* (HOS), which assesses individual differences in humour production.

Wanzer, Booth-Butterfield, & Booth-Butterfield (1995) determined that there are three different levels of humour orientation that a teacher could be perceived having, high humour orientation (HO), medium humour orientation (MO), and low humour orientation (LO). Their research showed that when a teacher was perceived as more funny (HO), the students were more engaged with the material, and had a higher sense of affect toward the teacher and the course.

Furthering the study by Wanzer and colleagues (1995), Wanzer and Frymier (1999), examined this notion of HO, MO, and LO in correlation with student learning. They found that when students felt a teacher demonstrated HO within the course, they were more likely to learn. They also determined that when students demonstrated HO in the classroom, it had a positive correlation with their learning. Teachers who were perceived by students to have HO were more likely to be perceived as immediate, more appropriate, and responsive.

Research on humour orientation suggests that the teacher's teaching style should be consistent with his or her individual humour orientation. If a teacher is low in humour orientation he or she may find it difficult to use humour in the classroom. That is perfectly acceptable, but, in order for teachers with LO to benefit from the positive aspects of humour, they might consider incorporating a humorous video clip, funny illustrations or a cartoon to their slides to inject some humour into the class, and make the burden of spontaneous humour less cumbersome (Banas et al. 2011: 135).

5. Humour and foreign language education

General pedagogical, social and psychological (cognitive and affective) benefits of humour apply to foreign language education, the contemporary communicative classroom in particular. Although humour and laughter do not directly cause learning, a lot of evidence confirms that humour, if appropriate and relevant to course content, attracts and sustains student attention and interest, by producing

a more relaxed and productive learning environment that promotes learning. Many studies in classroom settings confirmed that students remember past knowledge much better if there is subject-related humour in their lectures (Kaplan & Pascoe 1977; Ziv 1988; Gorham & Christophel 1990; Garner 2006; Teslow 1995).

Medgyes (2002) nicely sums up well-researched pedagogical, psychosocial, linguistic and cultural benefits of humour for foreign language students. It 'brings students closer together, releases tension, develops creative thinking, generates a happy classroom, enhances motivation', but also can provide 'memorable chunks of language, reinforce previously learned items, practice language items in genuine contexts, make a refreshing change from routine language-learning procedures', and is a good vehicle for providing 'authentic cultural information and building bridges between cultures' (Medgyes 2002: 8).

Askildson's study of 236 post-secondary students of foreign/second language and 11 teachers from a variety of language courses strongly supports the majority of beneficial pedagogical and psychological effects of humour in the language classroom, and adds 'improved approachability of teachers' (Askildson 2005: 55). Student and teacher participants in this study also indicate a very strong perception of increased language and cultural learning resulting from employment of 'targeted linguistic humour' in the target language (TL) ('linguistic humor employed in the TL with the intention of illustrating specific TL features') (Askildson 2005: 56). These results of perceived language acquisition and cultural transmission through the use of TL humour (in the form of jokes, puns, funny anecdotes, etc.) correspond with the findings of Deneire (1995).

Beginning foreign language learners are expected to have high levels of anxiety and stress, so by using humour in situations and materials teachers can greatly help in reducing frustration and creating a more relaxed atmosphere. By reducing fear of performing in a foreign language in class, it enhances participation and interaction of students, which are a prerequisite for a communicative, speaking oriented classroom, where students must develop communicative competence in the target language from the beginning. Visual and non-verbal, universal types of humour are generally more suited, e.g. humorous images, cartoons, role play, simple jokes etc.

For intermediate and higher levels of proficiency, verbal humour is more useful, e.g. puns, riddles, jokes, word play etc. General, light-hearted, benevolent humour, used in moderation, is beneficial for them too, but these students have language resources that allow for more cultural and linguistic humour in their classes. Deneire (1995) suggests that, in order to enhance retention, humour 'should never be used

as a technique to acquire new linguistic or world knowledge, but rather as an illustration reinforcement of acquired knowledge' (Deneire 1995: 294).

Nowadays, it is more evident than thirty or fifty years ago that language learners need to have joke and humour competence as parts of linguistic competence. Joke competence is the ability of the learner (audience for a joke text) to recognise a text as a joke without determining whether or not the text is funny, while humour competence is defined as the ability to pass judgment on the humorousness of that specific text (Carrell 1997: 174).

Linguistic and cultural aspects of humour use in a language class are especially apparent in advanced level foreign language classes. The teacher must use humour in these classes in order to help students achieve higher sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge of the target language. At higher levels of proficiency language students are supposed to demonstrate their ability to value and use humour in a foreign language. A proof of the increased value of humour as a part of communicative competence in foreign language education today is visible in a recently published Companion Volume with New Descriptors to Common European Framework of reference for languages (Council of Europe 2020). The scales for creative writing include the concept of humour in the descriptors for proficient language users (C1 and C2 levels): *Can incorporate idiom and humour, though use of the latter is not always appropriate* (C1). *Can exploit idiom and humour appropriately to enhance the impact of the text.* (C2) (Council of Europe 2020: 67). These descriptors were differently worded in the CEFR version from 2001. Proficient users of a foreign language in creative writing were expected to 'write clear, smoothly flowing and fully engrossing stories and descriptions of experience in a style appropriate to the genre adopted' (C2), or 'write clear detailed well-structured and developed descriptions and imaginative texts in an assured, personal, natural style appropriate to the reader in mind.' (C1) (Council of Europe 2001: 62).

Humour is specified as one of the constructs in the scales for sociolinguistic appropriateness for C levels as one of principal concepts (Council of Europe 2020: 136). At level C1 learners 'can understand humour, irony and implicit cultural references and can pick up nuances of meaning' (Council of Europe 2020: 137). Also, in the Appendix, in the individual descriptors for Establishing a positive atmosphere, it is stated that even at a B2 level, language speakers 'Can use humour appropriate to the situation (e.g. an anecdote, a joking or light-hearted comment) in order to create a positive atmosphere or to redirect attention' (Council of Europe 2020: 261).

Joke competence is visible in the C2 descriptors for *Understanding as a member of a live audience*: 'Can get the point of jokes or allusion in a presentation' (Council of Europe 2020: 50), as well as in *Reading correspondence* for C1 descriptors, it is expected that the learner 'can understand slang, idiomatic expressions and jokes in private correspondence' (Council of Europe 2020: 54). Moreover, in the sociolinguistic and cultural repertoire for deaf people, the ability to tell a joke is defined at the C1 level: 'Can tell a joke that relates to deaf experiences' (Council of Europe 2020: 154). Also, in Appendix 8, in the supplementary descriptors for mediation, building on plurilingual repertoire, the following descriptor has been validated and calibrated for C1: 'Can tell a joke from a different language, keeping the punch line in the original language, because the joke depends on it and explaining the joke to those listeners who didn't understand it' (Council of Europe 2020: 264).

Foreign language teachers greatly benefit from analysing how they can help students improve humour competence, providing specific, measurable instances of it. Although a lot of research on various affective aspects of humour in the educational settings have been done in the past fifty years, there are still inconsistencies and lack, so future empirical studies should employ more naturalistic classroom research to analyse the types of humour use, and how they affect learning in a both positive and negative sense. Teachers' and students' perceptions of humour use in the classroom, and of its effects on specific learning outcomes, could be compared at different levels of proficiency. Above all, rigorous and controlled studies of actual foreign language instruction and acquisition within the classroom should be conducted, focusing on linguistic and cultural humour employed in the foreign language with the intention of illustrating specific foreign language features.

6. Conclusion

Humour can encourage a pleasant working atmosphere of openness, increase student attention and interaction, improve their retention of the presented materials, and earn credibility for the teacher. But, like most things in life, it seems to work best when used in moderation and handled with care of the audience (adequate for all the students), time and subject matter. Too much humour can result in a loss of respect for the teacher, and inappropriate jokes or jokes at students' expense can create a hostile classroom environment, which will negatively affect learning. It is important to keep this in mind when teaching.

As semantic, sociolinguistic, (inter)cultural, pragmatic and literary aspects of communicative competence, at higher levels of proficiency, involve humour competence, i.e. ability to recognise, understand, appreciate, and produce humorous messages, helping language students expand their communicative repertoires by focusing on humorous forms of language seems to be an obligation for language teachers at advanced levels of instruction. It is formally recognised as one of important competences for language learners in contemporary society. Therefore, humour is to be taken more seriously in present-day foreign language teaching, i.e. it can and should be an integral part of it. If teachers upgrade their own humour competence they can help adult students at advanced levels do the same with theirs.

In summary, humour alone does not guarantee learning or a successful language class even if used properly. It needs to be skillfully combined with the right content and adequate teaching methodology in order to become a powerful didactic device that will accelerate and alleviate language learning, by building safe classroom environments and communities in which teachers and students nurture trust, collaboration, divergent thinking, creativity and improvement. It has not been argued then that FL teachers should become clowns or stand-up comedians, but that by practicing proper positive humour with, not at, their students, in reasonable amounts, at reasonable times, teachers can optimise their students' and their own healthy lifestyle, supporting an active, joyful learning environment based on respect and cooperation. Trying to be appropriately funny may involve experimentation, even failures, yet, getting well informed of the proven psychological, social, cultural, linguistic and pedagogical benefits of humour, and then applying it in the classroom confidently and competently, appear to be meaningful and worthwhile goals for communicative language teachers today.

References

1. Askildson, Lance (2005), Effects of humor in the language classroom: Humor as a pedagogical tool in theory and practice. *Arizona Working Papers in SLAT, 12*.
2. Attardo, Salvatore (1994), *Linguistic Theories of Humour*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
3. Attardo, Salvatore (2017), *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor*. Abingdon: Routledge.
4. Banas, John A., Norah Dunbar, Dariela Rodriguez, Shr-Jie Liu (2011), A Review of Humor in Educational Settings: Four Decades of Research. *Communication Education, 60: 1*, 115 -144. DOI: 10.1080/03634523.2010.496867

5. Bell, Nancy and Anne Pomerantz (2016), *Humor in the Classroom: A Guide for Language Teachers and Educational Researchers*. New York: Routledge.
6. Booth-Butterfield, Steven and Melanie Booth-Butterfield (1991), Individual differences in the communication of humorous message. *Southern Communication Journal, 56*, 205-217.
7. Booth-Butterfield, Melanie and Melissa Wanzer (2010), Humorous communication as goal-oriented communication. In D. Fassett & J. Warren (Eds.), *SAGE Handbook of Communication and Instruction.* Los Angeles: SAGE Publications.
8. Bryant, Jennings, Paul Comisky, and Dolph Zillmann (1979), Teachers' humor in the college classroom. *Communication Education, 28*, 110-118. DOI:10.1080/03634527909378339
9. Carrell, Amy (1997), Joke competence and humor competence. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research, Vol. 10:2.* 173-185.
10. Council of Europe (2001), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
11. Council of Europe (2020), *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume*. Council of Europe Publishing, Strasbourg. Available at www.coe.int/lang-cefr.
12. Deneire, Marc (1995), Humor and foreign language teaching. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research, 8(3),* 285-298. DOI:10.1515/humr.1995.8.3.285
13. Eagleton, Terry (2019), *Humour*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
14. Fry, William F. (1994), The biology of humor. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research 7 (2)*, 111–126. https://doi.org/10.1515/humr.1994.7.2.111
15. Frymier, Ann B., Melissa B. Wanzer, & Ann M. Wojtaszczyk (2008), Assessing Students' Perceptions of Inappropriate and Appropriate Teacher Humor, *Communication Education 57*, 266-288. DOI:10.1080/03634520701687183
16. Garner, Randy L. (2006), Humor in pedagogy: how ha-ha can lead to aha!. *College Teaching, 54*, 177-179. DOI:10.3200/CTCH.54.1.177-180
17. Gervais, Matthew & David S. Wilson (2005), The evolution and functions of laughter and humor: A synthetic approach. *Quarterly Review of Biology, 80,* 395-430. DOI: 10.1086/498281
18. Gorham, Joan and Diane M. Christophel (1990), The relationship of teachers' use of humor in the classroom to immediacy and student learning. *Communication Education, 39,* 46-62. DOI:10.1080/03634529009378786
19. Hativa, Nira (2001), *Teaching for effective learning in higher education*. Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
20. Hay, Jennifer (2000), Functions of humor in the conversations of men and women. *Journal of Pragmatics, 32*, 709-742. DOI:10.1016/S0378-2166(99)00069-7
21. Kaplan, Robert M., and Gregory C. Pascoe (1977), Humorous lectures and humorous examples: Some effects upon comprehension and retention. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 69*, 61-65. DOI: 10.1037%2F0022-0663.69.1.61

22. Krashen, Stephen D. (1982), *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* Oxford: Pergamon Press.
23. Krikmann, Arvo (2006), Contemporary linguistic theories of humour. In *Folklore: Electronic journal of folklore 33*, 27-58. DOI:10.7592/FEJF2006.33.KRIKU
24. Martin, Rod A., Patricia Puhlik-Doris, Gwen Larsen, Jeanette Gray, and Kelly Weir (2003), Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of Research in Personality 37 (1)* 48–75. DOI:10.1016/S0092-6566(02)00534-2
25. Martin, Rod A. (2007), *The psychology of humor: an integrative approach*. Burlington: Elsevier Academic Press.
26. McGraw, Peter A., and Caleb Warren (2010), Benign violations: Making immoral behavior funny. *Psychological Science, 21(8)*, 1141–1149. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797610376073
27. McGraw, Peter (2010, October). *What makes things funny*. [Video]. TEDxTalks. TEDxBoulder https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ysSgG5V-R3U&t=167s
28. Medgyes, Peter (2002), *Laughing matters: Humour in the language classroom*. Cambridge: CUP.
29. Morreall, John (2020), "Philosophy of Humor", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/humor/
30. Mulder, Martin P. and Antinus Nijholt (2002), Humour Research: State of the Art. *CTIT technical report series, 02.* University of Twente, The Netherlands.
31. Peterson, Christopher and Martin E. P. Seligman (2004), *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification.* American Psychological Association; Oxford University Press.
32. Raskin, Victor (1985), *Semantic mechanisms of humor*. Dordrecht and Boston, MA: Reidel.
33. Savage, Brandon M., Heidi L.Lujan, Raghavendar R. Thipparthi, and Stephen E. DiCarlo (2017), Humor, laughter, learning, and health! A brief review. *Advances in physiology education, 41(3)*, 341–347. DOI: 10.1152/advan.00030.2017
34. Schmitz, John R. (2002), Humor as a pedagogical tool in foreign language and translation courses. *Humor 15 (1),* 89-113. DOI:10.1515/humor.2002.007
35. Teslow, James L. (1995), Humor me: A call for research. *Educational Technology Research & Development, 43*, *3,* 6-28. DOI: 10.1007/bf02300453
36. Wanzer, Melissa B., Melanie Booth-Butterfield, and Steven Booth-Butterfield (1995). The funny people: A source orientation to the communication of humor. *Communication Quarterly, 43*, 142-154. DOI:10.1080/01463379509369965
37. Wanzer, Melissa B., and Ann B. Frymier (1999), The relationship between student perceptions of instructor humor and students' reports of learning. *Communication Education, 48,* 48-61. DOI:10.1080/03634529909379152

38. Wanzer, Melissa B., Melanie Booth-Butterfield, and Steven Booth-Butterfield (2005), If we didn't use humor, we'd die: Humorous coping in health care settings. *Journal of Health Communication, 10*, 105-125. DOI:10.1080/10810730590915092
39. Wanzer, Melissa B., Ann B. Frymier, Ann M. Wojtaszczyk, & Tony Smith (2006), Appropriate and Inappropriate Uses of Humor by Teachers. *Communication Education, 55(2)*, 178–196. DOI:10.1080/03634520600566132
40. Wanzer, Melissa B., Ann B. Frymier, & Jeffrey Irwin (2010), An explanation of the relationship between instruction humor and student learning: Instructional humor processing theory. *Communication Education, 59*, 118. DOI:10.1080/03634520903367238
41. Ziv, Avner (1988), Teaching and Learning with Humor: Experiment and Replication. *Journal of Experimental Education, 57* (1), 5–15.

Sanja R. Josifović-Elezović
Univerzitet u Banjoj Luci
Filološki fakultet

ŠTA NASTAVNICI STRANIH JEZIKA MOGU NAUČITI IZ MULTIDISCIPLINARNIH ISTRAŽIVANJA HUMORA?

Rezime

Cilj ovog članka je istražiti prednosti upotrebe humora u nastavi stranih jezika za nastavnike i odrasle učenike. Kako bi nastavnici i učenici u nastavi stranih jezika mogli imati koristi od poboljšane svesti o humoru i razvijanju kompetencije za humor na stranom jeziku? U radu se daje kritički pregled vodećih definicija, teorija, funkcija i vrsta humora iz multidisciplinarnih istraživanja humora, te se ispituje uloga humora u nastavi stranih jezika s obzirom na važne empirijske nalaze i trenutne zahteve za govornike stranih jezika navedene u Zajedničkom evropskom okviru za jezike (2020). Zaključci sugerišu koje vrste humora treba ugraditi u savremenu nastavu stranih jezika i zašto. Predložena su dalja istraživanja koja bi omogućila još efektniju primenu humora u savremenoj nastavi stranih jezika sa odraslima.

► ***Ključne reči***: obrazovanje, strani jezik, humor, odrasli učenici, nastavnici, nastava.

Preuzeto: 3. 10. 2021.
Korekcije: 16. 11. 2021.
Prihvaćeno: 1. 12. 2021.