

## The Power of Humour in Communication

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**Abstract :** “He who laughs , lasts.” (Poole,1938). Humour is something that might make us laugh , smile or amuse .It creates the warmth conducive to get any work done. A warm, safe and effective learning environment influences the activities of the students , helps them focus , regulate their behavior and also helps them understand what they are to achieve and what is expected of them. Apart from this, it is also believed that laughter is the best medicine .Thus humour is an effective means to health and a healthy body is an important factor for success in any field of life . As humour enhances respiration, improves circulation, oxygenates the blood, suppresses stress related hormones and activates the immune system, it can also be a an effective formulae for performing effectively not only in classrooms but also in an individual’s personal and professional life .

**Key words:** Humour, learning environment, stress & health.

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A sense of humour is a great quality that can help simplify complicated tasks. Effectiveness in any field is about making complicated tasks simple and interesting .Teachers make school an exciting and interesting place. They have a major role for our want to go back to school days . At this point of time ,when we recollect our good old days at school, we think of the fun that we had . Thus humour may be thought of as an important factor that makes our school days interesting. This paper focuses on the the effect of humour in classroom learning . Humour is a great way to recollect and retain information. According to Merriam –Webstar dictionary humour is the “mental faculty of discovering, expressing or appreciating something that is comical, amusing or absurdly incongruous .” Now a days a sense of humour is considered an important factor, not only in teaching, but also in our personal and professional life. Studies by Fabio Sala, a consultant at the Hay Research and innovation show that humor used in the right manner reduces enmity, deflects criticism, relieves tension improves morale & makes communication effective. Executives who were ranked as outstanding used humor over twice than those ranked average . Humour used in the apt way is also a marker for emotional intelligence . Research by Clouse and Spurgeon has also shown that a good joke can boost creativity, initiate conversation and generally build a more trusting atmosphere.

According to philosopher Thomas Hobbes’ *Superiortiy theory* on humour ,we laugh at those whom we feel are inferior to us .Later philosophers including Frances Hutchinson argued that, what we are really laughing about is incongruity because we do not laugh at inferior beings in the classroom nor do we laugh at animals unless they resemble human beings . We laugh at someone who slips on a banana peel not because we feel superior but because of the incongruity between our expectations and the sudden insight. Teachers who share a laugh or smile with students help them feel more comfortable and open to learning. Using humour brings optimism and enthusiasm to class .Thus according to the humour strategy

- Humour as a tool has been shown to reduce classroom anxiety ,create a more positive environment ,as well as facilitate the learning process.
  - Humour may physiologically help to connect the left brain activities to that of the right brain and help to assimilate the information in a better manner .
  - Humour can relieve mental stress and increase mental sharpness.
  - Humour has shown to increase retention of information in the brain.
- (Glenn 2002)

From the above explanation we may seriously consider the need to use humour in a professional manner to facilitate teaching. Generally speaking people of all backgrounds use humour. According to the humour style questionnaire developed by Rod Martin and Patricia Doris (2003), "individuals seem to differ in the ways in which they use humor in their everyday lives, and different styles of humor seem to have different outcomes." Thus based on the questionnaire 'humour styles' are of our types namely, 'Affiliative humour', 'self-enhancing humour', 'aggressive humour' & 'self-defeating humour'. Affiliative humour is used to improve one's relationship with others in a positive manner. This type of humour is used to charm, amuse and to laugh with others. Self-enhancing humour is used to laugh at one's own idiosyncrasies and circumstances. This type of humour helps an individual to focus on the bright side of life. Aggressive humour is a style where others are put down by ridicule. Self-defeating style of humour is delivered at one's own expense to amuse others.

Learning is considered as a very serious activity and humour is considered to be a light and casual activity and there is a misconception that learning and humour are two different things that can never go together. "Classrooms in which laughter is welcome bring learning to life"

(Dickinson 2001). Classroom environment plays an important role in language learning. The right environment will give the students the courage to take risk to learn something new.

Students need encouragement and not ridicule for their mistakes. Humour can contribute a conducive environment for learning but many teachers are reluctant to use humour because they feel that they need to be a professional to impart jokes in a humorous manner. This is a misconception because humour in classrooms only means an effective and interesting way to deliver complicated concepts. Another reason for not using humour is due to the belief that some people see humour as synonymous with chaos and loss of class control. The fear that students may not react to the joke and also the feeling that students may not be learning when they are laughing or having fun may be some other reasons why humour is not used in the classrooms.

Learning is all about the art of communicating and humour can be an important component of one's communication skills. The clever and appropriate use of humor is a great way to improve communication, reduce stress, help people think creatively, reduce the fear of making mistakes, improve morale, build stronger relationships, alleviate boredom. Humour is not only a creative way of studying in the school and college level but is also a very important factor in the work environment. Teachers may use humour as a means to gain liking and the effect may be increased learning outcomes. Moreover when students like their professors they may spend more attention and may also work hard to learn the subject. Teachers may also get positive student evaluation and students are also willing to take part in their classes. A number of studies have identified a positive relationship between the teacher-student relationship. As Loomans and Kolberg (1993) remarked, enthusiasm and laughter are often infectious. Humour can be a catalyst to help students learn faster. Some varieties of comic expressions that are usually used are:

a. **Anecdotes:** An anecdote is a short story that might make the listeners laugh or ponder over a subject matter. An eg. might be a mother telling her son about a family vacation when she was growing up or a father telling his daughter about a scary incident that he had one time when he stayed out too late.

b. **Cartoons & comic strips:** Cartoons give us a feeling of a fantasy world. These are a great way to help us get involved in what we are doing. Cartoons usually tell a simple story and this might help us not only to comprehend the subject matter but also understand the different usages of language in a simple manner.

c. **Jokes:** The mention of amusing things can help students overcome the boredom of learning a complicated task. Jokes may be related or unrelated. Jokes that are related may help students remember the concepts taught for a longer period of time. Jokes that are not related to the subject matter may help to relieve the tension of studying a complicated concept. "Learning to understand jokes in a new language is a cause and consequence of language proficiency." (Cook 2000)

d. **Role-play** helps students get involved in real like situations and exposure to such situations can help them master many of the communicative skills.

e. **Video clips:** The use of video clips may give a feeling of authenticity and excite the mind of the students as they see what they study on the screen.

Education is a continuous process. It does not end with college and continues till the end of life. A happy life is one where one knows to relax at the same time get ahead with the hectic activities of life. The use of humour is a great way to get attracted to those around us. It has a magnetic effect in our social environment. To use humour in the right manner its necessary to know the group to whom we are delivering our message. Research by Bettinghaus and Cody (1994) and Foot (1997) show that humor, builds rapport and liking of the humorist, makes the target person want to listen more. This is because a sense of humour relaxes the listener, makes him/her more receptive to the message, makes the person feel good, makes the information more memorable & distracts the person from thinking about counter-arguments. According to Michael Kerr, an international business speaker, points out in his book, 'The Humour Advantage' (2013) that the amount of humour in any work place would depend on the culture. "In workplaces that encourage people to be themselves—that are less hierarchical and more

innovative—people tend to be more open with their humor,” he says. “Even people who aren’t always comfortable sharing their humor tend to do so in more relaxed environments where the use of humor becomes second nature with everyone’s style.”(Kerr,2013).Apart from this humour is infectious ,it spreads to people around ,makes the environment pleasant ,it is a stress buster,has a humanizing effect ,puts everyone at ease and is a great medicine for health.

### **Conclusion**

Every teacher’s goal is to be effective in the classroom and help students learn. Educators want their students to be interested and engaged. Humor has the power to fuel that engagement.The goal of a teacher should be to do things in an effective and easier manner .Teachers want their students to be engaged and humour has really the power to help students get involved in their studies . Ultimately humour can bring about a positive change in the personality of an individual. Teachers are powerful role models and can use the right humor to increase a sense of community among the students. As we prepare students for the future it is essential that students become balanced characters to tackle their own future and humour can help student maintain their balance in lives and also help them to look at the positive things of life no matter what their circumstances are.

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