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Teachers' and Students' Perceptions Towards The Use of Humour in The EFL Classroom:

The Case of Third-year EFL Students at Mila University Centre

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Dedication

To those with whom I shared my first laughter—my mother, father, and beloved sisters—

I dedicate this work to you.

To all those who encouraged and motivated me throughout this journey,

I dedicate this work to you.

-Meryem-

Dedication

*In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful,
I dedicate this work to everyone who supported me, the ones who believed and
motivated me along the way, to my mother and father, to my sisters and brothers.*

-Dounia-

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Abstract

The widespread use of English around the world has led to its status as a foreign language in many contexts, such as business communication and academic settings. In this regard, teachers usually use different methods and strategies to capture their students' interest and to keep them motivated. Humour, for instance, is frequently employed in language teaching. However, its perception varies among individuals. The current study attempts to explore teachers' and students' perceptions towards the use of humour in EFL classrooms at Abdelhafid Boussouf Mila University Centre. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative interviews conducted with 15 teachers and quantitative questionnaires administered to 129 third-year students. The findings revealed generally positive perceptions towards the use of humour, suggesting its significance in fostering a healthy learning atmosphere with an emphasis on a moderate use of humour.

Key words: English as a foreign language, humour, learning atmosphere, perceptions, EFL classrooms.

List of Abbreviations

CBI: Content-Based Instruction

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

IH: Integrated Humour

MKO: More Knowledgeable Others

NIH: Non-Integrated Humour

NH: Non-Humour

SCT: Sociocultural Theory

SHQ: Humour Style Questionnaire

SL: Second Language

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TBLT: Task-Based Language Teaching

TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

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General Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

The English language has become the language of the world right now. Since it is the language of technology, English is taught in schools today as a foreign language or as a second language. Therefore, various methods and strategies have been used in order to teach English effectively. Humour is one of the important methods that have been integrated in education, and many teachers and learners support it in order to make the lesson more effective and provide an enjoyable and comfortable language learning atmosphere for learners. Hence, it makes them more motivated and engaged in classroom activities and discussions.

The integration of humour in EFL classes tends to be a topic of interest among teachers and learners due to its impacts on language learning, such as memory retention, creating a positive learning atmosphere. It can also reduce stress and anxiety levels, and foster better understanding. However, teachers and learners' perceptions can be varied due to some differences in the way they perceive it, such as individual differences and educational contexts. This divergence may be the cause that can impact the role of humour and its effectiveness as a teaching strategy.

2. Literature review

The use of humour in an educational setting has become a subject of debate among scholars. They criticised its various roles in the instruction and acquisition of English as a foreign language (EFL). It includes both strategic and pedagogical functions that aid the teaching process (Ptitjean & González-Martínez, 2015). In this sense, different researchers work on the use of humour in EFL classrooms, and their studies focus on teachers' and

learners' perceptions of its use. For instance, a study by Talip (2018) in a Turkish university shows that using humour in an EFL classroom can increase students' engagement and foster a positive environment where their stress, anxiety, and affective filter decrease. The study also shows that both teachers and students maintain a positive attitude towards using humorous examples and comments in the teaching and learning context. In this respect, it has been proven that integrating humour into an EFL classroom leads to lowering students' affective filter and creating a positive environment. Humour plays a significant role in everyday life. It is arguable, then, that combining humour with teaching and learning would be more interesting and engaging for EFL students, as the majority of students seem to advocate for the use of humour in the classroom. Regrettably, numerous educators refuse to incorporate humour in the classroom for several reasons, such as losing their control or authority (Akbari, 2020).

This underscores that humour can be used as a pedagogical strategy for fostering EFL students' engagement. Despite this, a substantial number of teachers still hold a negative attitude towards this phenomenon. On the other hand, a study by Farnia and Mohammadi (2021) investigates Iranian EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of language classrooms. Following the observation of 10 English classes with a sample of 75 students and 5 teachers in English language institutes in Esfahan, the obtained results identify that teachers and learners have positive attitudes towards the use of humour in the classrooms, as it delivers the importance of using humour in teaching and learning processes. Due to the use of humour, teachers create a comfortable atmosphere in which learners' motivation will be enhanced. Hence, humour can be an important instructional tool to use in EFL teaching and learning due to its impact. Further insights can be found in a study by Rianita et al. (2023) that investigates the students' and teachers' perspectives about the integration of humour, focusing on students from private universities. The results obtained from the mixed-method approach, which

involved interviewing 5 students and giving questionnaires to 122 others, show that using humour in EFL classrooms has positive influences on students' attitudes towards learning, especially for adults. From this study, the researcher can ensure that humour improves students' engagement as well as participation inside the classroom and reduces stress and anxiety. Learners' perceptions are important, and the teacher, as such, is recommended to take them into consideration. Imane Touahar's (2023) study aims to investigate the effectiveness of humour in the learning process and identify teachers' and learners' perceptions of classroom humour. In this study, the researcher used a questionnaire as a data collection instrument for both teachers and learners at different levels at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla. The study reveals the heavy influence humour has on the learning process. In this sense, one can say that using humour inside the classroom has great significance in the teaching and learning processes. Hence, instructors' humour facilitates the act of teaching and makes it better since it increases engagement, decreases anxiety, and improves learners' levels.

In this vein, Elkhayma (2021) carried out an experimental study to test the claim that integrating humour in the classroom has a positive impact on motivation, lowers anxiety, and fosters positive attitudes towards learning in Moroccan EFL students. Following the quasi-experiment, the results obtained from the post-test revealed a remarkable enhancement in motivation, an increase in participation, and a decrease in anxiety within the treatment group when compared to the control group. Despite the positive results, the participants still have different perceptions of the efficacy of humour in the EFL classroom. While some participants favour using this phenomenon in the teaching and learning process, others still remain doubtful of its potential benefits. This reveals the complexity of integrating humour as a pedagogical strategy and suggests the need for further exploration into individuals' perceptions within the educational context. Therefore, the research gap identified lies in the

need for more comprehensive exploration into individuals' perceptions of integrating humour as a pedagogical strategy within the educational context. While existing studies highlight the positive impact of humour on engagement, motivation, and anxiety reduction among EFL students, there remains a complexity in understanding varying perceptions of its efficacy. Despite the positive results observed in experimental studies such as Elkhayma (2021), where humour positively influenced motivation and participation, there are still divergent views among participants regarding its benefits. This suggests the necessity for further investigation into the nuanced perspectives of individuals within educational settings to better understand the efficacy of humour as a pedagogical tool.

3. The Significance of the Study

While there has been no studies on exploring the perceptions of humour at Abd ElHafid Boussouf Mila University Centre, the outcomes of such research assist teachers and educators in recognising the perceived impact of incorporating humour into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. By analysing the different perspectives and perceived impacts of humour at Abd ElHafid Boussouf Mila University Centre, the study seeks to offer valuable insights into how it can positively affect language learning. Additionally, it cautions against potential negative consequences arising from the inappropriate use of humour. Consequently, enhancing learning environment at Abd Elhafid Boussouf University Mila Centre

4. Aim of the Study

This study aims to explore the different perceptions of both teachers and students towards the use of humour in the EFL classroom at the Abd Elhafid Boussouf University Centre in Mila.

5. Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following question:

1. What are the teachers' and students' perceptions towards the use of humour in the EFL classroom?

6. Population and Sample

The study targeted 129 third-year students, out of a total group of 205 individuals and fifteen experienced teachers. The audience made up most participants, and they were approximately 63% of all the third-year students in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The teachers from this group had many experiences with practice work, which also comprised the population. Bringing students at a crucial point in their academic journey and experienced EFL teachers together gives the study a wide range of views, thereby making it possible to gain a comprehensive analysis of general experiences in an EFL setting.

7. The Research Tools

In order to achieve the aim of the study and answer the research questions, the study applied a mixed-methods design, signifying that both types of data collection techniques—quantitative and qualitative methods—were employed. 129 students from the third-year class were given a quantitative questionnaire to answer in order for the researchers to obtain quantitative information on their perspectives regarding the use of humour and its impact on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) discipline. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 experienced EFL teachers, offering qualitative data for the research. These interviews allowed for deeper insights into educators' experiences. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaire and interviews,

respectively, provided a comprehensive understanding of the EFL context, enabling a richer analysis of both student and teacher perspectives.

8. Structure of the Study

The structure of the dissertation was organised into two main chapters. The first chapter established the theoretical framework and was divided into two sections. The first section was dedicated to the exploration of humour, discussing its various forms, theoretical underpinnings, and relevance in the educational context. The second section examined the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, focusing on key pedagogical approaches and methods of language learning. Moreover, it provided key theories in second language acquisition. The second chapter was devoted to the field of investigation. It included the presentation of the data, a comprehensive description, and an analysis of the findings. It also discussed the implications of the findings and provided recommendations based on the observed outcomes.

Chapter one: Humour in the EFL Classroom

1.1. Section one : Humour in the EFL Field

Introduction

Humour is a crucial aspect of daily communication, encompassing jokes, puns, and irony, among other forms. It serves various purposes such as fostering social bonds, conveying messages, reducing stress, and creating a positive atmosphere. However, misinterpretations can lead to negative outcomes. In educational settings, humour is employed by teachers to alleviate boredom, capture students' attention, or as part of their teaching style. Scholars like Ameen (2017) and Pranoto (2020) advocate for using humour to enhance engagement and comprehension in language learning, moving beyond mere entertainment. Despite its potential benefits, humour in education has faced criticism from some educators who consider it impractical or frivolous (Ağçam, 2017). This diversity of perspectives highlights the complex role of humour in education, where it can either enhance learning or be viewed sceptically.

1.1.1. Definitions of the Notion of Humour

Scholars in different fields have investigated and emphasised the aspect of humour and its effects on individuals. Even if there are some differences in the way of defining humour, the general definition refers to the act of making others laugh, or as Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines humour as "the ability to be funny or to be amused by things that are funny" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This is to say that humour is an important phenomenon that can be viewed from different points of view based on the context of its use. The topic of

humour and its impact on the performance of language learners has gained considerable attention during the past two decades (Hridari-Shahreza & Heydari, 2018). According to Heidari-Shahreza (2020), humour and language are both conceptually and practically interrelated, and “tongueless humour is usually a helpless one” (p. 81). Another study shows that “humour is an effective tool for foreign language teaching and EFL classes; it is a vital aspect of human life(Akbar, M.H. 2020).

In this sense, humour is used as a teaching strategy that facilitates the role of the teacher inside the classroom and enhances the comprehension and motivation of learners. Minoo et al. (2021) elaborate on this point, pointing out that “humour within the academic context encompasses all elements perceived as amusing or enjoyable by the teacher or students” (p. 182), i.e., the integration of humour within educational settings is considered a crucial tool for language learning purposes, and it provides both teachers and learners with the suitable conditions for their teaching and learning processes. These are all based on how they perceive the role of humour in this context and how it may affect them.

1.1.2. Theoretical Background of Humour

In order to provide a deep understanding of the notion of humour, three influential theories have been posited.

1.1.2.1 The Superiority Theory: This theory can be traced back to the works of famous thinkers such as: Aristotle , Plato and Hobbes . Moreover, Plato explains that humour is a way of teasing people who are in a powerless state. For Hobbes, laughter is an expression indicating that this person is better than others, “an expression of sudden glory,” as he believes that individuals are in ongoing competition, waiting for the others’ downfall. That is to say, humour stems from a feeling of superiority at the expense of laughing at other

people's shortcomings or dilemmas. (Mulder & Nijholt, 2002). In his thesis, Charles Grune, explained the superiority theory as a field of competition where the winner makes fun of the loser, and this is based on the nature of human beings (Grunne, 1992, as cited in Mulder & Nijholt, 2002). This theory can be found in several TV shows and sitcoms, such as "There's Something Wrong About Mary," as it is used as an analysis tool to analyse the MTV show "The Tom Green Show" (Mulder and Nijholt, 2002).

According to Martin (2007), this theory contends that humour frequently serves as a social function where members of dominant groups make fun of people they perceive to be inferior in order to emphasise their own superiority. The superiority theory focuses on the social function of humour that a dominant group can use to demonstrate a sense of superiority. "It is usually the case when we feel we are better or, say, smarter than him or her." (p. 44). This means that it can be the case when people believe that they are intellectually superior. To put it in other words, the superiority theory conveys that humour comes from the feeling of superiority over others. It creates amusement from laughing at others misfortunes and their perceived flaws. This implies that humour does not always have a positive impact; it can lead to disdainful acts that may lead to lowering students' motivation, productivity, and interest in learning English if the instructor uses it (Elkhayma, 2021). Therefore, teachers should avoid using this kind of humour, which puts students down, in order to preserve the positive atmosphere and productivity among the students.

1.1.2.2. The Relief Theory: In the journey of life, individuals often face stressful situations and different problems, but instead of being stressed as a reaction, they make fun of these situations and laugh at their misfortunes. This phenomenon aligns with the relief theory, also referred to as the release theory, one of the central theories of humour, which proposes that humour acts as a release of psychological tension. According to the relief theory, people use

humour and engage in laughter because they believe that in this way their stress and anxiety will be reduced. That is to say, humour may serve as a cognitive release from anxiety and other different negative feelings; however, relief comes from laughing at humorous situations as well, not necessarily the other way around (Wilkins and Eisenbraun, 2006). In this regard, humour can be viewed as a way of reducing anxiety and coping with different stressful situations, contributing to the minimization of students' feelings of anxiety, increasing their comfortability, and creating a stress-free atmosphere. Contrary to humour based on superiority, using humour in the context of relief theory has a generally more positive impact on students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to be aware of which type of humour to use in order to achieve the desired outcomes.

1.1.2.3. The Incongruity Theory: The incongruity theory, also called surprise theory, arose in the 18th century to challenge the superiority theory. It claims that the cause of laughter is the perception of something incongruous. This means that individuals laugh when their perception of a situation suddenly changes. The developers of this theory, Kant (1790) and Shopenhauer (1819), explain further that humour happens when people expect something and it is suddenly presented in an unexpected manner (Shade, 1996). This means that humour comes from expecting something and getting something totally different, which is surprising.

This theory focuses more on the cognitive aspects of humour. According to Morreall (2012), laughter occurs when people perceive something that breaks their expectations and are amused, according to the incongruity theory. It means that people laugh when they are surprised about something without being harmful. This kind of theory needs students who have the ability to perceive information first and then resolve the incongruity with humour. If this step is not reached, learners will receive and recognise the humorous messages in the wrong way. Additionally, not all the incongruities that people experience lead to humour.

There are some experiences that lack any sense of comedy. For example, someone wants to go to their study, and suddenly they miss the bus and do not pass the examination. This strange situation is not an occasion for humour.

In the incongruity theory, humour takes place when the listener finds any incongruity in the story or joke. The listener may get shocked due to the unexpected results of the situation, which leads to humour. This means that individuals experience humour only when they can tell the difference between a normal situation and a situation when there is a violation of the normal pattern. Straus (2014) claims that the incongruity theory functions in two ways: “first, it provides an explanation for why people find certain things funny. Second, it provides an explanation of what makes a situation itself funny” (p. 6). This implies that it describes the cognition role of humour by reappraising a negative situation to a less negative situation by decreasing the threatening perspective.

Morreall (1989) stated, “The most widely accepted philosophical theory of humour today is the incongruity theory.” Meaning that this theory is the most acceptable theory in use in contemporary research to explain humour. Furthermore, the relationship between incongruity, problem-solving, and creativity helps to enhance higher-order cognition (Teslow, 1995). Hence, this theory might be helpful for language teachers when applying humour in classrooms. Deckers and Kizer (1975), in their definition of the incongruity theory, stated that it is “the divergence between an expected and actual state of affairs...” (p. 215). Hence, this divergence may result in humour. Moreover, “incongruity is the source of amusement” (Kulka, 2007, p. 370), which means that amusement is the key that leads to humour. Based on that, this theory is considered the most complicated but also the most convincing one since amusement is the enjoyment of something that clashes with our mental patterns and expectations (Morreall, 1989).

1.1.3. Forms of Humour

1.1.3.1. Jokes: Jokes are viewed as a social phenomenon where people say something funny with the purpose of making the listeners laugh. Jokes have five types. The first is a phonological joke, which means the essence of the joke itself is the sound of the word. The second is lexical, a joke that suggests the creation of humour relies on the various meanings of the words and their different interpretations. The third is a surface structure joke, meaning manipulating the structure of the word to create a kind of ambiguity leading to humour. The fourth type is a deep structure joke, which has barriers similar to the third type. The only difference is that ambiguity now arises from the various meanings of a single word or phrase rather than from manipulating the word or phrase's structure. The fifth type is metalinguistic, which is determined by the language form used in the joke (Firjatullah et al., 2021).

According to Zvonimir (2015), a joke is a brief humorous story that involves a comedy of a situation with the intention of making the listener or reader laugh. However, not all jokes are appropriate to be used in the classroom. Some of them are considered inappropriate, such as ethical and racial jokes, religious jokes, demeaning to men and women jokes, and hostile jokes (Shade, 1996). The use of these inappropriate jokes, as mentioned previously in the superiority theory, may lead to a reduction in students' productivity and interest in learning English. Otherwise, the use of the appropriate kind of jokes would result in a positive outcome.

1.1.3.2. Language Play: Language play can be created through the manipulation of the forms and functions of language with the purpose of having fun and amusement, whether for oneself or for others. It takes place at different levels of the language, be it phonology (the manipulation of sounds), semantics (the manipulation of meaning), or morphosyntax (the

manipulation of grammar) (Bell & Pomertanz, 2016). It is believed that having fun with language develops critical thinking skills and helps readers and writers expand their means of communication. So it is helpful to begin with a series of activities that involve students in language play (Weiss, 1993, p. 42). Therefore, teachers can profit from the use of this form of humour, especially for EFL learners, because humorous language play helps create an optimum environment for the students where they remain engaged and alert to the lessons (Forman, 2011). By incorporating language play into EFL instruction, teachers can create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that motivates students to actively participate in language learning.

1.1.3.3. Irony: The term irony is defined by many researchers in different studies, as Wolfsdorf (1992) defines irony as the use of a word in such a way that its intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words. That is to say that irony is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the polar opposite of what the words used express (Keenoy, 2012). It is also defined by several dictionaries as well. According to the Collins Dictionary, irony is “a subtle form of humour that involves saying things that you do not mean.” (Collins English Dictionary, n.d.). In the sense of irony, many studies in different fields are raised in order to find the appropriate definition for this heavy word. Irony “refers to the use of implicit or ambiguous speeches or utterances that have double meanings, such as when irony is involved.” (Fadel & Al-Bargi, 2018, p. 266). According to Masterclass (2019), irony is a situation in which there is a contrast between expectation and reality. For example, the difference between what something appears to mean and its literal meaning. Hence, the speaker says something and means something else, which is the opposite. Moreover, Hamdaoui (2020) defines irony as “a figure of speech in which words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from their actual one” (pp. 6). In this sense, irony

refers to the use of the opposite meaning of what the speaker is saying and how the listener interprets it. In other words, it refers to expressing the real meaning in the opposite way.

Irony is divided into three types, which are as follows:

1.1.3.3.1. Verbal Irony: This type of irony plays a crucial role in communicating and expressing opinions about the world. Verbal irony, according to Sullivan (2019), “is a linguistically embodied phenomenon that involves purposeful misdirection for communicative effectiveness” (p. 3). For instance, the intended meaning of someone saying, “What beautiful weather,” in a situation of heavy rain is the exact opposite of the actual meaning. In addition to that, one can get confused between verbal irony and sarcasm, which is harsh, direct, and determined to cut or give pain; it is used for aggressive purposes.

1.1.3.3.2. Situational Irony: It is an incongruity in a situation emerging from tension between what is expected or intended and what actually happens (Li, 2008). According to Montgomery et al. (2007, p. 358), situational irony is “a plot device in which the audience knows more than the characters who speak and act contrary to what they would if they shared that knowledge.” In other words, it is the opposite of what one expected. It occurs when something happens that is different from what was expected. This type of irony incorporates some kind of contradiction and a certain level of surprise or shock. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989, p. 87) also defines situational irony as “a condition of events opposite to what was or might naturally be expected, or a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things.” In short, situational irony gives the reader different results from what is expected to happen.

1.1.3.3.3. Dramatic Irony: This type of irony occurs in drama when the audience knows more about the fates and ends of the characters than the characters of the story themselves. “The incongruity happens between what the character does and what the audience really knows about the situation” (Savkaničová, 2013, p. 18). In other words, it is when the reader is made aware of the disparity between the facts or situations that happen in the novel. Dramatic irony is both a literary and theatrical device in which the audience knows more than the characters. In other words, when dramatic irony is employed, the audience knows something that the characters have not understood yet.

1.1. 3.4. Puns: According to Shade (1996) a pun is the humorous use of a word so as to suggest a different meaning or application; a play on words. Sometimes a pun plays on words with the same or similar sound but a different meaning. It has been said that it takes an intelligent person to create a pun and a brave person to use one. What is meant is that puns are a person’s creative way of playing with words in which the speaker uses a word, but the meaning is something else. The Cambridge dictionary defines puns as “a humorous use of a word or phrase that has several meanings or that sounds like another word” (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). Puns are so important in teaching students the meanings of words as well as new words in a very enjoyable manner. The use of puns would enrich learners’ linguistic capacity and help them understand the literary texts that they are learning.

1.1.3.5. Anecdotes: According to Gultom (2016), anecdotes are short, engaging stories involving real people and actual events. While anecdotes are commonly amusing, their main objective is not always to elicit laughter but rather to illuminate a specific real-life incident, providing insight into individual experiences. They allow participants to present a facet of themselves to the audience, thus enhancing rapport through mutual revelation. They allow

much interaction between the speaker and audience, sometimes to the extent that the audience becomes a co-teller. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2023), anecdotes are “usually a short narrative of an interesting, amusing, or biographical incident” (Merriam-Webster, n. d.). Using anecdotes to narrate stories inside EFL classrooms can improve learners’ language skills, motivate them, and encourage them to express themselves by telling real stories about what happened to them.

1.1.4. Styles of Humour

The meaning of humour differs from one person to another, and what is funny for one person is not always the same for another. Humour expression has been linked with physical, social, and mental health (Lee et al., 2020). Humour is divided into four main styles, which are the subject of research that focuses on how individuals’ use of humour is different; people usually differ in their sense of humour and their humour styles. There are four different styles of humour (Martin, 2003). Frewen et al. (2008) state that “the humour style questionnaire (HSQ; Martin et al., 2003, 84) is a recently developed measure that distinguishes the two potentially positive forms of humour: affiliative and self-enhancing humour, and two negative forms of humour: self-defeating and aggressive humour.” (p. 181). A further explanation of these styles is as follows:

1.1.4.1. Affiliative Humour: This style of humour involves telling jokes about anything that everybody might find funny in order to encourage people to find humour in everyday life. Affiliative humour is the prototypical humour type, representing the use of non-hostile and tolerant humour to enhance relationships with others (Martin et al., 2003). This means that it is a way of amusing others to facilitate relationships in a positive manner, like team-building activities and improved training. It has been linked to greater friendship

initiation and social competence (Yip & Martin, 2006), self-esteem (Stieger et al., 2011; Yue et al., 2014), and communication and creativity at work (Evans et al., 2018). Affiliative humour is associated with higher self-esteem and optimism (Launer, 2016); individuals who report high levels of affiliative humour are more likely to initiate friendships and less likely to become victims of bullying. This style is considered positive since it gives the opportunity for its users to be more close to others, be acceptable as they are, and enhance conversations by creating humorous interaction in everyday life.

The general meaning of affiliative humour is that it is a way of using humour to enhance social and personal relationships. It involves telling jokes about things that seem to be funny to most individuals. People who are using this style build a positive self-image and are perceived as being funny and extroverted. They use humour to make social interactions stronger. Hence, teachers who use an affiliative style are able to make their learners laugh, get information in a funny way, enjoy their courses, and create good relationships with them during the process of learning since it is considered an effective teaching tool.

1.1.4.2. Self-Enhancing Enhancing Style: The relief theory, which was dealt with above, is a good explanation of this style. That is, individuals adopt a self-enhancing humour style as a healthy coping mechanism to cope with times of stress and frustration. In other words, people turn to this style to lighten up when “life throws lemons at them.” This can reduce their anxiety and enhance their emotional stability. (Kanwar, 2022). In this sense, teachers can use humour to encourage students to engage with the language in a lighthearted and enjoyable way. Moreover, it helps reduce students’ stress about learning the language.

1.1.4.3. Self-Defeating Style: People with low confidence tend to use this style as a way to fit in with others. To elaborate, the main aim of using a self-defeating style is to seek approval from others through cracking jokes at the expense of oneself or allowing others to mock oneself. (Kanwar, 2022). This means that the person makes fun of himself or herself in order to gain validation from others and to be accepted. Self-defeating humour is used at one's own expense to establish and maintain relationships with other people. It describes the self-deprecating use of humour in situations where a person constantly makes fun of themselves and other people while being made fool of (Chen & Martin, 2017, as cited in Shaikh & Vyas, 2022). In the context of EFL, adopting this style could hinder students' confidence and motivation to engage with the language.

1.1.4.4. Aggressive Humour: Aggressive humour is a unique style of comedy that thrives on poking fun at individuals, often involving disparaging remarks and insults. It is a harmful type of humour linked to negative psychological outcomes for recipients. Research in the workplace context has suggested that exposure to aggressive humour is tied to dysfunctional resistance, health-destructive behaviours, and job stress (Goswami et al., 2015; Huo et al., 2012; Guenzi et al., 2019). This means, sarcasm, put-downs, teasing remarks, and criticism are characteristics of it. More aggressive comedians tend to use this style; it is a type that threatens and harms others. As a result, aggressive humour is mainly supposed to form a lack of respect for others' feelings through mocking and criticising them and making them feel uncomfortable (Ruch & Heintz, 2013). Hence, it is considered to be a negative humour style because it uses humour to disparage others as a way of manipulating them. People who employ aggressive humour often aim to manipulate others by means of the threat of ridicule (Janes, 2000); this means that it refers to making fun of another person at their expense. This humour style correlates highly with psychopathy and social exclusion (Masui & Ura, 2013)

because people with this style of humour are more inclined to put down others, and their humour is directed towards harming others at the psychological level.

Aggressive humour can be divided into different forms, such as sarcasm, where the speaker says something but means the opposite. For example, when someone makes a mistake, the other one says, “Oh, you are a real genius, aren't you?”. Mockery also involves making fun of someone or something in a scornful way, like when one says, “Look who is trying to be stylish today!”. The other form is insults, which are blunt, hurtful remarks used to provoke a reaction or assert dominance. For instance, you are about as useful as a screen door on a submarine!” It is considered to be the most aggressive form of humour. In general, using aggressive humour by EFL teachers is not appropriate, and it is harmful for students. So, this negative humour style should be avoided as much as possible, especially in the classroom setting, because it results in negative impacts among language learners. That is to say, it is better to avoid it in professional settings since it can harm relationships and create tension.

1.1.5. Benefits of Humour

There are different benefits to using humour. It is found in approximately every aspect of our lives. It can be said that it has a positive impact on a human’s psychological state. Some benefits are summarised below:

1.1.5.1. Psychological Benefits: From a psychological perspective, humour and laughter can lead to a significant reduction in anxiety and stress. Garner (2006) suggests that these positive emotional experiences not only alleviate negative feelings but also contribute to an enhancement of self-esteem. When individuals engage in humour, it often results in an increased sense of self-worth and a more positive outlook on life. Moreover, humour can foster self-motivation, encouraging individuals to take on challenges with a more optimistic

attitude. This implies that humour has a beneficial impact on one's psychological state by minimising negative emotions and promoting a healthier, more resilient mindset. Overall, incorporating humour into daily life can serve as an effective coping mechanism, improving overall mental well-being.

1.1.5.1.1. Decreasing Stress and Anxiety: Humour can be a good way to get through difficult situations and deal with everyday stressors. According to the relief theory, humour can be used as a strategy to cope with stressful situations that one may encounter, leading to decreases in anxiety levels, stress, and anger (Martin, 2006). Thus, exposing students to positive humour benefits their anxiety and stress, ensuring a positive learning environment (Colom et al., 2011). Therefore, teachers and students are advised to integrate humour into their teaching and learning processes in order to promote a healthy learning environment. Moreover, it helps in reducing students' anxiety and stress about learning English, which ensures an effective acquisition of the input.

1.1.5.1.2. Enhancement of Self-Esteem: The affiliative humour style is positively associated with numerous measures of self-esteem. This type of humour, which involves telling jokes and engaging in witty banter that strengthens social bonds and fosters a sense of belonging, has been shown to improve one's self-evaluation and overall sense of self-worth. According to Shaikh and Vyas (2022), the increased use of self-affiliative humour directly contributes to higher self-esteem. Individuals who frequently engage in this style of humour tend to have a more positive self-view and feel more confident in their social interactions.

In relation to the superiority theory, Gruner (1997) emphasises the significant role of humour in maintaining and enhancing one's self-esteem. The superiority theory posits that people

often use humour to assert their dominance or superiority over others, thereby reinforcing their self-worth. Gruner suggests that humour allows individuals to uphold their self-esteem by providing a means to assert themselves and resist feeling inferior or submissive to others. This form of humour not only bolsters self-esteem but also empowers individuals to navigate social hierarchies more effectively. Thus, both affiliative humour and the superiority theory highlight the intrinsic value of humour in promoting a positive psychological state and reinforcing self-esteem.

1.1.5.1.3. Increasing Motivation: Motivation is an inner state that determines an individual's desire to perform a specific task, influencing both their direction and persistence of effort. It has been proven that a positive correlation exists between motivation and humour. As discussed in Salimee and Arif's study (2019), humour has a significant positive impact on students' intrinsic motivation, which stems from internal factors such as personal interest, enjoyment, and satisfaction derived from the task itself. Their research indicates that when humour is incorporated into the learning environment, it can enhance students' engagement and willingness to participate actively in learning activities. This intrinsic motivation, fuelled by humour, can lead to more effective learning as students become more invested in the educational process. Humour creates a more enjoyable and less stressful atmosphere, making students more inclined to tackle challenging tasks with a positive attitude. Consequently, incorporating humour into educational settings can be highly beneficial for motivating students to perform learning tasks, thereby improving their overall academic performance and satisfaction.

1.1.5.2. Social Benefits: There are different social benefits to humour and laughter. For example, “strengthening relationships, attracting people to each other, enhancing teamwork, defusing conflict, and promoting group bonding. People with a good sense of humour may be more socially competent, thus better able to solve social tensions, which in turn may result in more intimate relationships” (Sinnott, 2013, p. 88, as cited in Al-Duliemi, 2016). That is to say, humour exhibits multiple social benefits that empower positive relationships and boost social interaction and communication. By creating a shared experience and fostering connections through laughter and humour, it aids in strengthening bonds and closeness between individuals. Additionally, humour contributes to lightening the mood and reducing tension, which helps to calm tense situations.

As a matter of fact, in the classroom context, the relationship between the teacher and students plays a significant role in enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. It has been found that there is a correlation between a positive relationship between a teacher and their students and humour. To elaborate, it can be said that the teacher’s use of humour in teaching fosters an affirmative and empathetic bond between teachers and students, creates an encouraging environment in the classroom, and even promotes the quality of communication. These are considered to be significant factors that may facilitate or hinder learning (Makewa, 2011).

1.1.5.3. Cognitive Benefits : From a cognitive standpoint, humour is beneficial for fostering one’s creativity and ensuring retention. To explain, humour is considered a characteristic of creativity (Getzels & Jackson, 1962). Humour enhances collaboration, relationships, problem solving, and communication, according to an empirical study by Biemans (2022). Humour and creativity complete each other, as it is believed that humour and creativity are two faces to the same coin. This implies that humour and creativity involve making non-obvious

connections between two seemingly unrelated elements (Murdock & Gamin, 1992). In addition to creativity, humour promotes retention. To elaborate, it has been shown that using humorous materials improves memory (Badli & Dzulkifli, 2013). An empirical study by Fitzpatrick (2010) shows that humour positively affects retention by comparing three groups: integrated humour (IH), non-humour (NH), and non-integrated humour (NIH) groups. The results demonstrated that the IH group obtained higher scores at recall in the immediate and delayed post-tests than the NH group and NIH group. That is to say, students who were exposed to humour are most likely to keep the information for a longer period of time. Overall, using humour in the classroom can be said to promote learners' creativity and their recall abilities.

1.1.5.4. Educational Benefits: The direct benefits of humour in education include improved retention of information (Garner, 2006; Kaplan & Pascoe, 1997), better understanding of materials (Lucas, 2005), and increased students' performance (Berk, 1996; Ziu, 1988). It means that humour may help learners remember the information presented in a humorous way easily by enhancing their memory retention. Powell and Anderson (1985) claimed that "humour in the classroom helps in promoting comprehension and retention, creating a positive classroom environment, encouraging students' involvement, fostering their cognitive development, and holding their attention. It also contributes to managing undesirable behaviour, building students' and teachers' self-confidence, and enhancing the quality of their lives" (pp. 80–81). To explain, using humour as a strategy for teaching and learning a language in classrooms improves learners' comprehension and retention of information and also captures their attention towards learning. As a result, learners will be able to engage and participate actively in classroom activities, express themselves freely, and take risks. The use of humour also creates a positive learning atmosphere, which makes it

easy for learners to recall the language aspects in a short period of time due to the positive relationship with their teachers, which leads to improved language learning outcomes.

According to Morrison (2008), “the use of humour in the classroom contributes to a healthy mind-body balance, supports the change process, maximises brain power, creates an optimal learning environment, enhances creativity, and facilitates communication” (p. 10). This means that humour is considered a tool to reduce anxiety, stress, and boredom and helps to create good relationships between the teachers and their learners, in which learners engage in real-life communications and reinforce their language skills. In addition, they should think critically in order to understand humour in the right manner and be more motivated. Teachers who use humour inside EFL classrooms have a vital role in enhancing teachers' performance and learners' ability to learn.

1.1.6. Functions of Humour

The functions of humour have been identified in various settings, as they vary according to the setting. Humour serves various context-dependent communicative functions beyond amusement and laughter (Berge, 2016; Meyer, 2000). It means that amusement and laughter are the key elements of humour, since its basic function is to make people laugh. “This function can make learning more enjoyable” (Bell, 2009; Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011), i.e., using humour in the classroom may affect the learning atmosphere and make language learning more beneficial and enjoyable. According to Bell and Pomerantz (2016), functions are categorised into psychological, social, and behavioural aspects, so humour differs based on the situation and the way in which it is used. In addition, “all utterances are multifunctional. Hence, a humorous utterance may, and typically does, serve several

functions at once” (Holmes, 2000, p. 166). In this regard, it can be said that the integration of humour may consist of different functions in only one utterance.

The main motive behind teachers’ use of humour in the classroom is the fact that laughter can reduce the levels of stress and anxiety of learners and make them more comfortable and courageous in the language tasks’ challenges. In this regard, Lems (2011) believes that using humour in teaching can motivate learners and make them attentive. In addition, the good relationship between the teacher and the learners contributes to a positive learning environment in the classroom, i.e., it provides an enjoyable social context. Another social function of humour that has been proven effective is group cohesion through shared laughter by Berge (2016), in which students use humour not only to facilitate their social interaction but also to establish and engage in the community of practice. Greatbatch and Clark (2003) believe that shared laughter is important as it indicates that people understand each other because they share the same values and norms in a shared community. Added to that, the use of humour in the EFL classroom acts as a coping mechanism. According to Bellert (1989), individuals who view the amusing sides of stress are more adept at coping with stress. As such, using humour may reduce learners’ stress and anxiety levels and make them capable of coping with them. Teachers are able to facilitate teaching and learning by supporting students’ comprehension of a topic and establishing students ability to remember what they have learned (Lee, 2006; Shibinski & Martin, 2010). It means that humour facilitates students’ learning by fostering a positive attitude and emotion towards a subject (Garner, 2006). Using humour in the classroom is considered one of the main factors that motivate learners to attend their classes; this function of humour is supported by findings from both teachers’ and students’ perspectives (e.g., Deiter, 2000; Garner, 2006).

1.1.7. Humour in Pedagogy

According to researchers in the field of psychology, using humour inside the classroom can help learners retain important information, decrease stress levels, and create an effective language learning atmosphere. As Crvikly (1986) noted, using humour in the classroom could foster a supportive and cohesive environment but could also have unanticipated negative effects. In addition, according to Kristmanson (2000), to take risks, you need a learning atmosphere where you do not feel threatened or intimidated. The primary reason for using humour in the classroom is that it acts as a relaxing, comforting, and tension-reducing method. According to Provine (2000), humour is a way of getting the students involved in the class activities who are worried or nervous to try and talk their minds in a foreign language. It means that humour helps learners to overcome stress and nervousness and also helps in improving an effective atmosphere, particularly for those who are anxious about making mistakes in their speaking performance. Humour in classrooms plays a crucial role in enhancing students' abilities and making them more interested and motivated, which makes them participate and take part in group activities. This is to say that humour can act as a motivating factor for students to attend their classes. According to Watson and Emerson (1988), "when humour is planned as a part of the teaching strategy, a caring environment is established, there is an attitude of flexibility, and communication between student and teacher is that of freedom and openness. The tone is set, allowing for human error and the freedom to explore alternatives in the learning situation. This reduces the authoritarian position of the teacher, allowing the teacher to be a facilitator of the learning process. Fear and anxiety, only natural in a new and unknown situation, become less of a threat to them as a partnership between student and instructor develops" (p. 89). This implies that humour can bridge the gap between the teacher and the students by putting them at ease. In other words, it makes students and teachers close to each other and enhances a good relationship between them. Although it has been cited that humour is one of the essential characteristics of a good teacher

(Horng et al. 2005), meaning that it enables the teacher to act as a performer and a facilitator of the learning process,. In this respect, Lowman (1994) declared that a teacher is also a performer, which means that the teacher is the authority in the classroom as they have the right to control the lecture the way they want.

With empirical evidence to support the contention that the use of humour in educational settings is related to positive student perceptions of the instructor and the learning environment (Banas et al., 2011; Garner, 2006; James, 2004; Kher et al., 1999), humour improves the language learning outcomes of learners with special educational needs. This means that the integration of humour is based on how instructors use it and how learners perceive it in the classroom setting. In addition, there is an important relationship between the students and their teacher that leads to either the use or not of humour, i.e., teachers need to know their learners and their needs in order to select the appropriate methods for them.

1.1.8. Principles of Using Humour in EFL Classroom

Teachers in the classroom face many types of students; some of them are characterised as easy-going students, and others are characterised by seriousness. Therefore, in such cases, the teacher faces two different types of learners, so he should combine two things: encouragement and intimidation. If the teacher uses the style of authority, students will feel bored, and if he uses the style of humour and excessive laughter, the teacher will lose his prestige, and the main goal he seeks, which is to get learners to acquire information and skills that will help them to learn, will be distorted, so that teacher should control the lecture in the way he wants and seeks the goal he set.

Humour is one of the methods and strategies needed for teachers to perform the lesson well (Tosepu, 2017), meaning that the effective use of humour is one of the main steps of a

successful teaching and learning process. It is important to note, however, that the lecturer is not a comedian, and this is very different from the profession of a comedian. However, this does not mean that teaching does not have elements of humour or jokes (Kolisin & Agung Subekti, 2023). Pham (2014) also believes that to have humour, language teachers can incorporate jokes, funny stories, and comments into their teaching. This means that teachers can share funny stories and anecdotes that are relevant to the content in order to make learners engage and reinforce their attention and participation in the lecture. They should also make sure that the jokes are appropriate, which implies that they should not be offensive, as they also need to avoid using them as a way to put others down or make them feel uncomfortable. Another important aspect of using humour is that teachers should be sensitive, which means that they ought to make sure that their comments are appropriate. Hence, they can ensure that learners enjoy their classes and feel more relaxed and engaged in the lesson. Jonas (2010) believes that humour is based on knowing the appropriate time for its use as well as the right way to use it that can enhance the learners' learning atmosphere, meaning that the teacher who likes to use humour in their classroom needs to know the appropriate time and strategies by which humour can be used appropriately. That is to say, it is important to take into consideration the time and the situation of the joke in order to avoid any sort of inconvenience in the classroom. For example, when the teacher deals with a serious group, humour will not be effective, and it is better to stop it since humour stops being funny in such cases. According to Shade (1996), “using appropriate humour in a purposeful way in the classroom may yield numerous benefits. However, as with most things in life, the benefits are accompanied by the potential costs” (p. 85). Teachers, in this case, need to be able to create an active and fun teaching and learning environment as well as foster a creative mind for their students (Tosepu, 2017). In some cases, teachers are hesitant to use humour inside the classroom because of their fear of being unprofessional, ignoring the

fact that it can actually make them professional and better equipped to handle difficult situations. All they need to do is get to know their students better in order to use humour appropriately with all types of students and to demonstrate to them that they are not afraid to laugh at themselves when they make mistakes, such as a slip of the tongue or a spelling error in some words, by using simple jokes that all students can understand. As a result, learners will feel more comfortable and less stressed about making mistakes.

The use of humour can be beneficial in different ways, and teachers need to know how to use it inside the EFL classroom in order to get learners into an appropriate learning environment and enhance the learners' learning outcomes. This can be realised by using a set of ways that they should take into account to use humour appropriately within their lectures. In addition to this, using humour inside the classroom can be considered a very effective tool since the teacher uses it in a way that is appropriate for learners. Therefore, humour can be a powerful tool for the teaching and learning processes. However, if teachers do not know the right way to use it, it is better to avoid it in order to be safe from its negative impacts.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, using humour in EFL classrooms is not only to make the classes enjoyable but also to improve the quality of teaching and learning using various forms and styles, such as jokes and puns. This integration of humour inside the classroom is likely to result in a set of benefits, including reducing anxiety and stress levels, increasing motivation, and creating a beneficial learning atmosphere, which highlights the vital role and significance of humour as a powerful tool for teachers to facilitate instruction. Added to this, the effectiveness of humour in the classroom requires teachers to know how to use it regarding such principles as the appropriateness of time and situation and knowing the type of learners. This will

eventually ensure its positive impacts on learners themselves and their overall learning outcomes. In addition, humour serves multiple functions, including creating a positive learning environment, enhancing memory retention, and motivating learners to attend and participate in classroom activities.

Humour can be a powerful tool in pedagogy since it acts as an essential strategy for teachers to make their learners creative thinkers and enhance their language learning outcomes by fostering their memory retention and their learning experiences during the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, the use of humour by the teacher is likely to enhance good relationships between them and their learners and facilitate their connection, giving them the opportunity to express themselves and be creative.

1.2. Section two: EFL Classroom

Introduction

Language is essential for effective communication, requiring shared understanding among speakers. English has evolved into a global lingua franca, used across diverse native languages due to its political and economic influence (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). The widespread adoption of English has spurred its integration into education systems worldwide, including Algeria, where it is taught as a foreign language (EFL). This educational approach is grounded in linguistic theories and various language teaching methods and approaches. Understanding EFL and its classroom dynamics is crucial for exploring how humour can be effectively integrated to benefit students at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Centre of Mila.

1.2.1. A Brief History of EFL

Learning another language besides the mother tongue has always been a matter of interest for many people. A survey conducted by Eurobarometer (2012) revealed that 86% of European citizens agreed that one should master at least one additional language for different reasons, such as trade, travel, or being a hobby. The English language has gained popularity among people around the world and has gradually become the lingua franca. This has paved the way for new concepts to arise, which are ESL and EFL. The exact origins of second language teaching are not clearly defined. The practice has evolved over time, making it difficult to pinpoint a precise starting point. But the history of English language education can be divided into four periods: the classical period, the reform period, the scientific period, and the communicative period (Howatt 2014). The figure below illustrates the core concern

of each period and its associated teaching methods.

Stage I: Modern Language Teaching in Europe (1750–1920)

1. The Classical Period	1750–1880
Core Concern:	Emulating the teaching of classical languages
Associated Teaching Methods:	[The Grammar-Translation Method] [The Classical Method]

2. The Reform Period	1880–1920
Core Concern:	Teaching the spoken language
Associated Teaching Methods:	[various Reform Methods] (see <i>Jespersen, 1904: 2–3</i>) The Natural Method (<i>Henness, Sauveur</i>) The Berlitz Method The Direct Method

Stage II: English Language Teaching beyond and within Europe (1920–2000+)

3. The Scientific Period (1920–70)	
Core Concern:	Scientific basis for teaching
Associated Teaching Methods:	The Oral Method (<i>Palmer</i>) The Multiple Line of Approach (<i>Palmer</i>) The Situational Approach (<i>Hornby</i>) The Oral Approach (<i>Fries</i>) The Audiolingual Method

4. The Communicative Period (1970–2000+)	
Core Concern:	Aiming for ‘real-life communication’
Associated Teaching Methods:	Communicative Language Teaching Task-based Language Teaching

Figure 1: History of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

In this sense, in the classical period, language was taught the same way as classical languages were taught. The grammar-translation method, which gave written language precedence over spoken language, dominated it. The reform period puts more focus on the oral language. Due to the science of phonetics’ influence, this time period saw the beginning of connections between linguistics and language teaching. One of the influential methods of this period is the direct method, which emphasises teaching language through immersion,

using only the target language for instruction, and focusing on speaking and listening skills. After paving the way to connecting linguistics to language teaching, the period when theory from psychology began to be derived for language learning, which is called the scientific period. After the Second World War, language education focused heavily on structural linguistics, which helped in creating the audiolingual method. The revolutionary idea and Hymes communicative competence paved the way for a new approach, which is called the communicative approach, that aims to help the learners acquire real-life communication. This guide to designing task-based language teaching. During the evolution of EFL teaching and learning, terms like TESL and TEFL emerged.

1.2.2. What are TEFL and TESL?

The English language has become the language of global communication thanks to its wide adoption in multiple fields such as business, science, and technology, where it is linked to innovation and progress. Today, English embodies a bridge of communication between different cultures and contributes to expanding horizons of knowledge and enhancing global understanding. It is considered the international language due to its use in almost all countries as a mother tongue or as a second language, which makes teaching it a necessity in all societies to facilitate communication processes between different cultures. The English language has become dominant over all the other languages, whether as a second language or as a foreign language.

1.2.2.1. Definition of TEFL: TEFL, according to the Cambridge dictionary, “is an abbreviation for Teaching English as a Foreign Language, the teaching of English to people who are not native speakers of English, especially in a non-English-speaking country”

(Cambridge University Press, n.d.). It is the practice of teaching English to non-native speakers in countries where English is not the primary language or the first language. It is also known as TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), where people are not native speakers of English.

TEFL is an acronym that stands for Teaching English as a Foreign Language. It involves teaching English to students in countries where English is not the first language (Nuñez, 2024). The primary aim of TEFL is to help people from different cultures to speak and understand the English language so that they will be able to communicate, express themselves, and share ideas with others in different countries. It is like when the teacher teaches their learners, who do not know the English language, how to speak and understand it easily.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) is a method of teaching people English in countries where English is not the first language. TEFL teachers use a variety of methods and techniques to improve learners' language abilities and skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as to enhance their communication and understanding of other cultures; it is a way of communication between different countries (speaking environment). In this case, the teacher can use different methods, like games and conversation, to make learning beneficial for learners and to enhance their communication skills.

1.2.2.2. Definition of TESL: According to Oxford's dictionary, "TESL refers to the teaching of English as a foreign language to people who are living in a country in which English is either the first or second language" (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.). It involves teaching English in English-speaking countries. In other words, TESL is teaching English to people who know some English but want to enhance their language skills to better understand

and communicate with others. It is the most international of the languages (Nandhini, 2019). That is to say, it is the language required by the world for greater understanding. In general, TESL involves teaching non-native learners the English language aspects in order to enhance their language skills and facilitate their communication using different methods and strategies, such as teaching grammar rules and vocabulary in an English-speaking setting.

1.2.2.3. ESL vs. EFL: The terms EFL and ESL are frequently used interchangeably in both academic and practical contexts. EFL stands for English as a Foreign Language, referring to the teaching and learning of English in a country where English is not the primary language. On the other hand, ESL stands for English as a Second Language, which traditionally refers to the learning of English in a country where English is the dominant or an official language. Despite these technical differences, the terms are often employed equivalently in discussions about language learning.

In fact, ESL is used as an umbrella term that encompasses the learning of any additional language beyond one's first language (L1), as noted by Ellis (1985). This broader use of ESL indicates that it is not limited to the second language alone but also includes any other acquired languages, whether they are a second language or a foreign language. Therefore, the distinction between EFL and ESL becomes less rigid, allowing for the terms to be used interchangeably.

1.2.3. Language Acquisition Theories

In an attempt to understand how humans acquire languages, numerous theories have been formulated. Among some of the influential theories are the following:

1.2.3.1. Behaviourism: Behaviourism, initially outlined by Watson (1913) and further expanded by Skinner (1938) into what became known as operant conditioning, distinguishes between responsive and operational behaviour. According to Rivers (1968, p. 73), the behaviourist approach, particularly Skinner's operant conditioning model, views learning as the formation of habits through reinforcement and reward, emphasising stimulus-response patterns. The behaviourist theory believes that “infants learn oral language from other role models through a process involving imitation, rewards, and practice. Human role models in an infant’s environment provide the stimuli and rewards “(Cooter & Reutzel, 2004). It deals with spoken language, since children learn how to speak in their first years rather than learning writing. The major focus of this theory of learning is the change of behaviour through habit formation, and it highlights the great impact of the existence of stimuli and responses in this process. Hence, behaviourism is a habit formation theory of language teaching and learning: “not problem solving but the information and performance of habits” (Brook, 1960, pp. 46–47). According to behaviourists, language is a set of habits that can be learned by means of conditioning. They describe conditioning as the mechanism through which learning takes place, which is divided into classical conditioning by Pavlov (1927) and operant conditioning by B. F. Skinner (1938). In other words, all learning is the establishment of habits as a result of reinforcement. Behaviourism is the study of organisms’ behaviours (both humans and animals), in which behaviourists believe that behaviours come from the environment, not from the mind; it has a great and important effect on behaviours, which means that all behaviours are learned, and that learning results from the interaction of one’s behaviour with the environment, which is called “input.” It involves learners learning individually.

In conclusion, behaviourism is mostly associated with Skinner (1938) and originated with

Pavlov's well-known classical conditioning (1927). It is characterised by stimulus, response, reinforcement, and habit formation. It suggests that exposure to input is necessary for second language acquisition, and all language learning happens when interacting with the environment. In addition, the outcome of second language learning differs depending on the differences in learning contexts; for instance, the language experiences and the exposure to different environmental stimuli. From all, behaviourism focuses on language learning experiences, so using humour in the classroom can make the learning process more enjoyable and increase students' engagement.

1.2.3.2. Cognitivism: Jean Piaget (1947) created the theory of cognitivism, which is concerned with human cognition in language learning. It focuses on the mental processes of learning that involve acquiring knowledge through the relationship between internal, mind, and external, environment, factors. It is psychology that emphasises the existence and importance of minds. This is significant to shed light on because it is related to this study's main focus, which is about integrating humour in the classroom in the way that it delves into the cognitive processes behind understanding jokes since this theory highlights how learners construct meaning. According to Mergel (1998), cognitivism is a cognitivist theory that is based on the thought process behind behaviour. This means that cognitivism occurs in the learner's mind. Its main focus is how people think, understand, and know (Asia University, 2012). As a result, it can influence a person's emotional and behavioural responses. Cognitivism involves the study of mental processes such as sensation, perception, attention, encoding, and memory, which behaviourists were reluctant to study because cognition occurs inside the "black box of the brain" (Jordan, Carlite, & Stack, 2008, p. 36). This means that the cognitive aspects of the mind are the basis of this theory.

This theory was developed as a reaction to behaviourism, emphasising how learners actively process information since retention and recall are so important. In addition, cognitive development in children is not only related to acquiring knowledge; children also need to build or develop mental models of their surrounding world (Miller, 2011). It focuses on understanding mental processes. Foreign language learning is a conscious thinking process in which cognitivists use modern instruction rather than traditional methods. Teachers should provide tools that help learners' brains process information, for instance, using textbooks and other materials. They should produce new content according to learners' mental levels and choose an appropriate one based on learners' needs using different strategies, such as humour. However, the teacher is not authoritative in the classroom; they are advanced learners. In addition, according to cognitivist theory, learning is a continuous process in which learners are allowed to work in pairs or groups. They have the ability to change ideas and work on their learning process to enhance their abilities and skills because they are autonomous learners. Hence, they can develop critical thinking and be creative.

1.2.3.3. Sociocultural Perspectives on Language Learning: This theory explains SLA through understanding the social and cultural role, as sociocultural theory (SCT) suggests that individuals develop SL via social and cultural mediation of the mind (Ohta, 2017). Mediation refers to the use of tools, which refers to anything used for the purpose of achieving goals. Among these tools, the most important is symbolic language. Mediatonal language assists individuals to move into and through the zone of proximal development (ZPD). In other words, speaking mediates thinking. Zone of proximal development is a key concept introduced by Vygostky (1978), in which he highlights the importance of the guidance of more knowledgeable others (MKO) to achieve the learners' learning goals. To elaborate,

interacting with experts assists learners to reach their goal and move from the ZPD. Thus, the SCT infers that SLA takes place through communication and interaction between learners and MKO, or expertise in the target language. That is to say that communicating with people with a higher level of language helps enrich one's language competence. Starting from this point, humour can be a useful tool for leading to a more spontaneous and creative interaction with MKO.

1.2.3.4. Kreshan's Hypotheses: Kreshan's hypothesis, also referred to as the monitor model, is, according to Ellis (1985), the most comprehensive of the theories that attempt to explain SLA. The monitor model is composed of five hypotheses: the acquisition and learning hypothesis, the natural order hypothesis, and the affective filter hypothesis. As the affective filter hypothesis is the most relevant to this research, a further explanation of this hypothesis is provided below.

1.2.3.4.1. The Affective Filter Hypothesis: This hypothesis is about the existence of a barrier that blocks learning. Emotional factors, such as motivation, anxiety, self-esteem, and stress, act as filters that may disable or enable the acquisition. Positive emotions, which involve being motivated, having high self-esteem, and having a low level of anxiety and stress, lower the acquirer's filter and thus facilitate learning. However, if the filter is up, it will hinder the acquisition of the input. To summarise, the affective filter determines the number of learners' acquisitions of the input (Min, 2016). Therefore, creating a positive and supportive environment can help lower the affective filter and facilitate language acquisition.

From the aforementioned information, which highlights Kreshen's hypothesis on the affective filter, it is clear that motivation as well as confidence, and low stress and anxiety levels are crucial for effective language learning. Therefore, learners with high self-esteem, high motivation and confidence, and low anxiety and stress would acquire language better. Backmore (2013) and Liang (2008) both stressed the role of humour in creating a positive and motivating learning environment, which can help reduce anxiety and stress among students. Moreover, as pointed out earlier in Section one, humour enhances one's self-esteem (Grumer, 1997). Thus, humour is an effective tool that can be used to create encouraging environments and keep the students' affective filters low.

1.2.4. Teaching Methods and Approaches

Multiple approaches and methods were designed in an attempt to apply theories related to language and learning. A method is a framework that comprises the syllabus, materials, and instructional activities (Thornbury, 2006). These methods and approaches ensure the effectiveness and organisation of language teaching and learning. Below are some of the most known and widely applied methods and approaches in teaching English.

1.2.4.1. The Direct Method: The direct method is a radical change from the grammar-translation method by using the target language as a means of instruction and communication in the language classroom (Liu & Shi, 2007). It was adopted and made popular by Maximilian Berlitz (1852–1921) (Flowerdew & Miller, 2005). It emerged as a reaction to the grammar translation method. The direct method is also known as the natural method because it involves only using the target language. This method distinguishes itself

by using the target language as a medium of instruction and communication in the language classroom and by avoiding the use of the first language and translation as a technique (Stern, 1983). It means that it is a method for teaching foreign languages that refrains from using learners' native languages and just uses target languages. Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated that language is primarily speech, i.e., it involves teaching vocabulary through realia, pantomimes, and other visuals and teaching grammar through an inductive approach in order to make learners find the rules through presentations. This method suggests that language learners will be able to learn about the culture of the language, not only how to speak it. It has been seen as a set of grammatical rules, and its vocabulary is used in reality even in oral or written contexts.

The aim of this method is to enhance communication in a foreign language without any use of the mother tongue. It gives priority to speaking and listening skills, but reading and writing are also important, which means that it is a matter of priority. The teacher in the direct method should be native or have proficiency in the language (Celce-Murcia, 2001). This is due to its work with listening and speaking, meaning that the teacher should spell the words appropriately in order for learners to acquire them correctly. The teacher is the authority; they should use only the target language to explain ambiguous ideas and information to learners. If learners cannot understand, the teacher can use funny stories, jokes, and anecdotes in order to make them feel at ease and understand better. In this case, the teacher should have good pronunciation in order to keep the communication going.

Overall, the direct method is an approach used to teach language skills through interaction using the target language. It involves the integration of visual aids and real-life situations and avoids translation to find out the meanings. This method involves teaching grammar inductively by using examples and letting learners figure out the rules themselves, in which pronunciation is so important to developing communicative competence, which encourages

learners to think in the target language without any help from the first language. It means that they are not allowed to use translation. This implies that using humour in this method as a valuable tool can make learners relax and be able to remember vocabulary and grammar structures easily.

1.2.4.2. The Silent Way: The students in this method are encouraged to produce as much language as possible, whereas the teacher keeps silent as much as possible in the classroom. This method follows the principle that teaching should be secondary to learning. The silent way method encourages oral production and fosters learners' autonomy; that is, learners rely on themselves to achieve learning objectives (Yüksel et al. 2014). This means that learners are responsible for their own learning, while the teacher's role is just to remain silent and guide them when it is needed. In this regard, the silent way aims to promote critical thinking and problem-solving while also encouraging students to become autonomous language learners. As such, humour could be employed in this approach to foster learners' critical thinking, as it was mentioned earlier that language learning fun activities that can create humorous atmosphere tends to improve critical thinking skills and communication skills (Weiss, 1993).

1.2.4.3. The Natural Approach: According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), the natural approach is one of the communicative approaches that rejects the principles of ALM, which puts more emphasis on grammar. This approach aims to help beginner acquirers become intermediates. This suggests that the natural approach is used to develop basic communication skills, whether they are written or spoken. The natural approach follows Krashen's affective filter hypothesis. For example, in teaching and learning activities,

learners are let loose. That is, learners are not required to say anything until they feel ready, and this is in order to minimise stress and create a more comfortable atmosphere (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this approach, the teacher is the primary source of comprehensive input. He or she is expected to create more encouraging and interesting classes with a low affective filter. Furthermore, the teacher is supposed to choose variant activities that meet different learning styles and preferences (Mani, 2016). The learners, in this approach, are seen as processors of the given input by the teacher that slightly challenges their cognitive level, meaning they are not required to make a lot of efforts (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In other words, the natural approach emphasises the importance of comprehensible input and low-anxiety environments for language acquisition. Therefore, as pointed out earlier in the affective filter hypothesis, humour would be a useful tool in this approach.

1.2.4.4. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT): Richards et al., in the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, defined communicative language teaching (CLT) as “an approach to foreign or second language teaching that emphasises the role of language teaching in communicative competence” (1992, p. 65). This implies that this approach emphasises teaching students how to communicate effectively in real situations without focusing on grammar and vocabulary. It is generally accepted that proponents of CLT see it as an approach, not a method (Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Savignon, 1991; Brown, 1994). The primary aim is to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching, and it helps learners improve their linguistic competence as well as communicative competence. This is why it was developed in a quick manner. That is to say, it aims to encourage learners to participate in classroom tasks in order to enhance their communicative competence. It is believed that the most effective approach focuses on the communicative competence of the learners in many countries (Kaisheng, 2007), i.e., it gives the opportunity

to learners to practise the target language and emphasises communication and interaction as the main goal of learning a language. The learner can master the rules of sentence formation in a language and still not be very successful at using the language for meaningful communication (Richards, 2006). CLT is regarded more as “an approach since the aims of CLT are a) to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and b) to develop procedures for the teaching of the four language skills that acknowledge the interdependence of language and communication” (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p. 66). This means that this approach focuses on speaking and communicating using the language since its major aim is to develop learners’ communicative competence.

The teachers’ role in CLT is the most important because they are the language communicators in the language teaching process. As communicators, they are in charge of negotiating the meaning of their communication, trying to understand and gain the meaning of other messages in the communication using their competence in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2001). This implies that in CLT, teachers play a vital role as language communicators. They guide students in understanding and exchanging meanings in the target language. The application of the CLT approach in the EFL classroom improves students’ performance and interactions and enhances their speaking skills since it helps them create meaning rather than develop grammatical structures. Hence, learning a foreign language depends on how the learners’ communicative skills are developed and to what extent they are able to use this language knowledge in real-world settings. All these are based on the interactive language activities that the teacher selects in the classroom. This approach includes such types of humour with which teachers design various communication activities. These activities include pair and group discussions by sharing jokes and anecdotes, since they emphasise the importance of communication and interaction in language learning. Learners in

CLT class have the chance to show their personalities and share their thoughts and opinions (Tekliuk, 2020).

This approach encompasses a range of abilities, including: first, knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Second is the ability to say the right thing in a given social situation. Third is the ability to introduce, enter, contribute to, and end a conversation, and to do so consistently and coherently. Fourth, the ability to communicate effectively. And last, repairing problems caused by communication breakdowns (Brandle, 2021). To paraphrase, learners have the opportunity to share and discuss ideas in real-life communication and be able to solve personal problems using language.

1.2.4.5. Task-based language teaching: Task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an approach where the task is the key element of instruction. According to Nunan (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001), “The communicative task [is] a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language where their attention is primarily focused on meaning rather than form. The task should also have a sense of completeness, being able to stand alone as a communicative act in its own right” (p. 244). This means that the task is the central element of language instruction. For Richards and Rodgers (2001), “tasks are believed to foster processes of negotiation, modification, rephrasing, and experimentation that are at the heart of second language learning” (p. 228). This suggests that tasks encourage learners to use the language authentically, such as newspapers. Hence, in the task-based teaching approach, meaning is quite important, which implies that the focus is on meaning and effective communication.

Task-based language teaching, referred to as TBLT, is a relevant approach within communicative language teaching. In this approach, tasks play a crucial role in the process of

learning a second or foreign language. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), tasks are “varied in format and operation; they typically include physical activity; they involve partnership and collaboration; they may call on the learners’ past experience; and they tolerate and encourage a variety of communication styles” (p. 229). This indicates that the characteristics of the tasks in this approach are widely varied. The role of the teacher in this approach is so important in which the teacher needs to select the appropriate tasks that interest their learners, such as funny role plays in which learners can play different roles in humorous scenarios. That is to say, the teacher is the task selector of this approach and also the discussion leader in the classroom, so he should start the discussion to encourage learners to participate. Furthermore, the teacher is a group manager who needs to be skilled enough to get the most out of the learners, tasks, combinations, and exchanges, as Willis and Willis (2007, p. 150) manifested, “it is sometimes useful to change the composition of the groups and repeat a task.... This provides useful opportunities for learners to rephrase ideas they have already worked through”. Every teacher is a facilitator who simplifies things for learners and guides them to enhance their skills. Meaning that every difficult task will probably lose students’ interest because it is difficult to guess and understand its structure and benefits. The teacher also should motivate his learners to engage in classroom tasks where they can enhance their interest and motivation. When it comes to learners, they also play an important role in the classroom. They are the monitors of the classroom activities. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) stated, “class activities have to be designed so that students have the opportunity to notice how language is used in communication” (p. 235). This means that they should be innovators and risk-takers in order to make decisions and include different strategies when necessary. Overall, in the task-based language teaching, humour is integrated in the way that learners are involved in the classroom tasks in order to use the language to achieve specific goals, such as increasing motivation and improving language skills.

1.2.4.6. Content-based Instruction: Content-based instruction is an approach to second language teaching in which teaching is organised around the content or information that students will acquire rather than around a linguistic or other type of syllabus (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). To explain, it is a teaching approach that involves learning language through the learning of content, i.e., academic subject matter such as maths, philosophy, science, psychology, etc. According to Mohan (1986), in CBI, the language is used as a medium for teaching subject content. It is a popular approach since learners' motivation increases when they learn about things of interest.

In content-based instruction, teachers should be knowledgeable about the content, responsible for making their instruction comprehensive, and also select authentic materials to use in the classroom. According to Curtain and Pesola (1994), "in content-related instruction, the foreign language teacher uses concepts from the regular curriculum to enrich the programme with academic content" (p. 35). This means that the curriculum content is chosen to provide a vehicle for language learning and to reinforce the academic skills needed by the students. CBI is a significant approach in language education (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 1989) where students should be autonomous and support each other; it encourages learners to learn the language as a real means of communication from the beginning in order to make them independent, then they will be able to continue their learning themselves as autonomous learners. To capture the essence, CBI is "a way of providing a meaningful context for language instruction while at the same time providing a vehicle for reinforcing academic skills" (Curtain & Haas, 1995). Hence, teachers should select the appropriate content that is interesting to students in which they can incorporate humour through anecdotes and jokes that are related to the contents; as a result, it becomes a context for language learning. In addition, they should select authentic materials, like videos and articles, that are related to the

content. Then, learners will learn the content, such as the vocabulary related to the topic, through practice, such as reading and text analysis, and they will also engage in classroom discussions and conversations. Hence, using humour in this approach can be considered a powerful tool for learners' motivation and engagement and for fostering a beneficial learning atmosphere in the classroom.

1.2.5. Classroom Management

A teacher should manage learning in order to fully benefit from the available time and resources. Classroom management is the organisation and making of decisions in the classroom in order for the lesson to be delivered effectively, especially in large classrooms (Thornbury, 2006). It helps teachers ensure a productive and respectful classroom that promotes both academic and social-emotional learning. Classroom management involves, first, classroom behaviour, which means students and teachers should act and react according to the social context they are in. It also involves discipline, which refers to how the teacher reacts to students' misbehaviour in the classroom in order to maintain authority. Also, it includes misbehaviour, which is a kind of behaviour that interrupts the flow of the lesson and the classroom environment, resulting in a violation of students' right to learn (Cooper, 2011). Additionally, Colin and Roberts (1998) defined classroom management as the teacher's use of skills to take control of the lesson, its content, and materials in a way that includes students, ensures their engagement, and avoids distractions or straying from the subject. In other words, classroom management is a skill that is needed to maintain a productive and effective learning environment.

Teachers are the leaders of the classroom. They decide almost everything that concerns the classroom and students, from proximity to movement to awareness to using their voice.

First, proximity: teachers decide the level of closeness to their students. This is based on each student's personality and preference. Second movement: some teachers spend the entire lesson just standing in one place, while others tend to move around the classroom all the time. This depends on the teacher's own style. Third awareness: teachers should be aware of students' feelings and what they are doing. Fourth, using the voice: the teacher needs to be audible, vary the quality and volume of their voice, and conserve their vocal energy because voice is the most important instrument in teaching (Harmer, 2008).

Khetarpal (2005) listed the following indications of effective classroom management: The term "*classroom climate*" describes the particular features of a classroom that set it apart from others and have a long-term impact on teacher and student behaviour. In order to achieve academic objectives, classroom communication involves the sharing of knowledge and the interpretation of meaning between teachers and students. First, *classroom management of students learning to belong*: This indicator focuses on developing a culture of support that helps students, instructors, and parents feel like they belong, which improves the learning environment. Second, *classroom behaviour management, also known as discipline*, is the process of putting into practice practical methods to control students' behaviour in order to create a setting that is favourable to learning. Third, *teaching strategies* include deciding which teaching strategies—whole-class instruction, group projects, or individualised learning—are best for the students based on their needs (as cited in Alicia, 2018). In light of this, classroom management is essential for regulating the use of humour in the classroom to ensure it has positive rather than negative effects on the learning environment.

Conclusion

To conclude, learning a second or a foreign language needs various methods and techniques to master the essential aspects of the language. Teachers inside the classroom use a variety of methods and approaches, such as the direct method, the task-based language teaching approach, and the silent way, among others. Based on language theories, teachers can create a beneficial environment for learners that supports and facilitates the process of learning, considers the appropriate setting, and contributes to achieving and motivating learners to participate and learn in an effective manner that covers their special interests. In addition, it leads to the improvement of their different skills and abilities since their feeling of being comfortable while attending classes has increased. Moreover, the teachers are considered the authority in the classroom, so they are required to maintain a purposeful educational atmosphere. They must also be knowledgeable enough about the content and have high skill levels in order to finish their instruction to the fullest extent.

Learning a second or foreign language is significantly important in a person's daily life since it is currently considered the language of the world and the language of technology. While learning a foreign language can be challenging for students, it only requires that each individual should learn according to their capacities. This is possible by applying the various methods and means that are available such as the application of humour in the classroom. These methods help learners enhance their language learning process as well as motivate them to share their thoughts and ideas in the real world.

Chapter two: The field of work

Introduction

The aim of this study is to delve into the perspectives of both teachers and students regarding the use of humour in the EFL classroom, along with its perceived benefits and impact on the teaching and learning process. In order to achieve this aim, this chapter serves as a dedicated space for deep understanding, detailed analysis, and thorough interpretations of the gathered data. The data was gathered through a mixed- methods approach. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers at Abdelhafid Boussouf Mila University in the English department. Additionally, quantitative questionnaires were submitted to 129 third-year English students. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods provides a comprehensive understanding of the research topic.

2.1. Students' Questionnaire

2.1.1. The Description of Students' Questionnaire

The researchers administered the questionnaire to 129 out of 205 third-year students in order to obtain the required data for their analysis. This dataset is intended to address the study inquiries regarding students' perspectives on the use of humour, the perceived influence, and its benefits. The method chosen for data gathering is a Likert-scale questionnaire. The survey has 19 items and a scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Additionally, it includes two open-ended questions, which provided the students with the opportunity to express their opinions without any limitations.

2.1.2. The Analysis of Students' Questionnaire

Q1: In my experience, when the teacher uses humour, it makes me more comfortable.

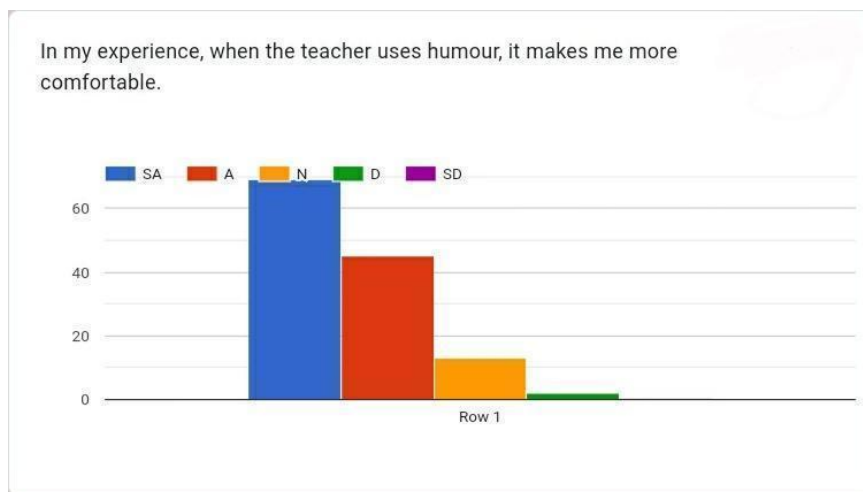


Figure 2 : Students' Perceptions of the Effect of Humour on Students' Comfortability

This question assesses whether students perceive humour as a means of comfort in the classroom. The majority of students, that makes 53.5%, voted for the option of strongly agreeing. In addition, 34.9% of participants agreed with the above statement. 10.1% of the participants were neutral. Whereas, only 1.6% of the students disagreed.

Based on the collected data, it seems that a significant majority of students strongly agreed or agreed that the use of humour makes them feel more comfortable. Specifically, 53.5% and 34.9% agreed, totaling 89% who expressed some level of agreement. This suggests that humour has a positive effect on making EFL students feel at ease in the classroom.

Additionally, the small percentage of students who were either neutral or disagreed shows that the EFL students value the use of humour.

Q2: I think that English teachers who use humour is unprofessional

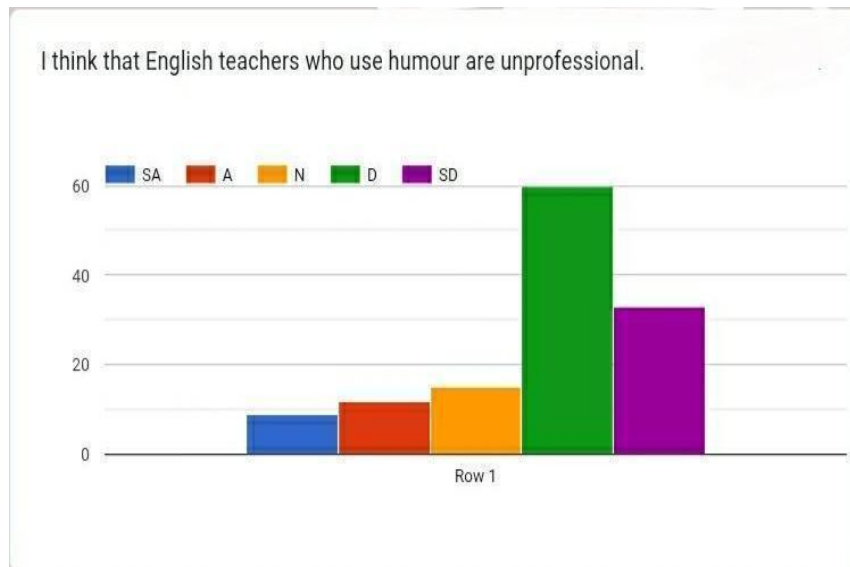


Figure 3: Assessing Professionalism: Students' Perspectives on Humour in English Teaching

This question aims to explore how students regard a teacher who uses humour. Almost half the respondents, 46.5%, did not believe that teachers who use humour are unprofessional. Added to this, 25% of them also strongly disagreed. On the other hand, 11.6% of the students preferred to be neutral, and only a few participants, 7%, strongly agreed. The provided percentages revealed that the majority of the respondents, 71% in total, did not think that teachers who use humour lack professionalism. This indicates that most students favour the incorporation of humour in the educational setting. Thus, humour is perceived positively by students in regard to teaching.

Q3: From my perspective, I am more likely to be motivated when the teacher uses humour in the classroom.

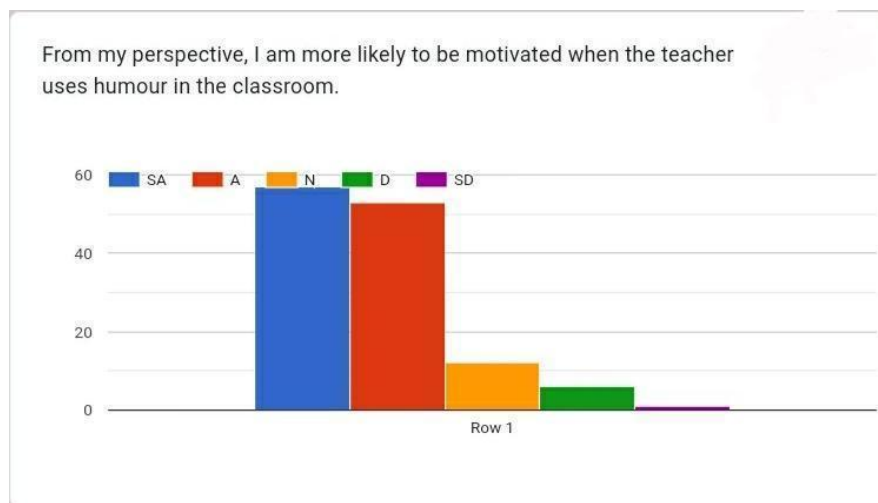


Figure 4: Students' Perceptions of the Impact of Humour on Students' Motivation

This question seeks to explore whether humour motivates learners in the classroom, meaning they can focus better on the lesson. A significant portion of 44.5% strongly agreed with the statement. Additionally, 41.1% of the students agreed, and 9.3% of them were neutral. On the other hand, 4.7% of respondents disagreed, and the remaining 0.8% strongly disagreed. According to the conducted data, 85.6%, in total, of students get motivated when the English instructor uses humour. In fact, it was discussed in the first chapter that humour has a positive correlation with motivation, as both researchers, Aniuranti (2023) and Borno (2020), emphasised the positive impact that humour has on motivating EFL students. As such, our data results thus far evidence this statement further. Moreover, a small number of students who disagreed reflect the way they view the use of humour in the classroom, meaning that EFL students perceive the implementation of humour in the classroom positively.

Q4: In my view, I am more likely to engage with classroom activities that are funny.

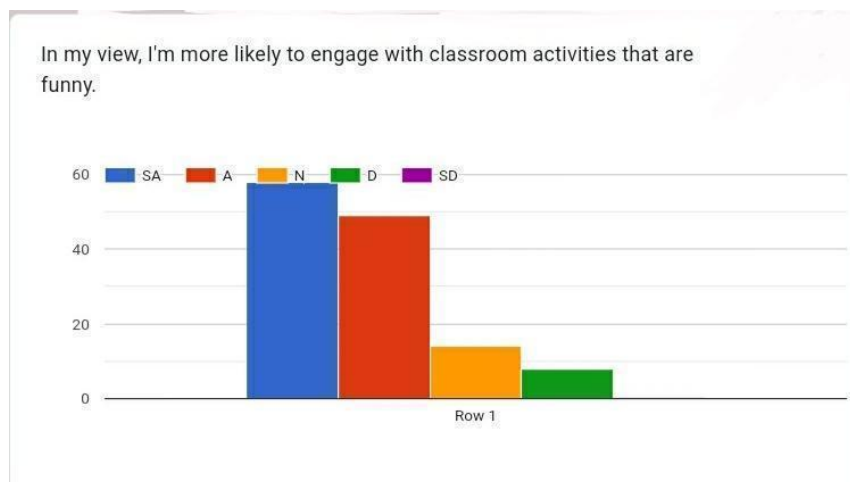


Figure 5: Humour's Role in Enhancing Students' Engagement

This question aims to investigate whether the use of humour in the EFL classroom is engaging. 45% of the students strongly agreed. In addition, 38% of them believe that humour is engaging, and 10.9% chose to be neutral. However, a handful of students, 6.2%, disagreed with the idea that humour improves students' engagement in the lesson.

From the aforementioned percentages, it can be noticed that the large majority of the respondents, 84% in total, agreed that they are more likely to engage in fun activities in the classroom. This suggests that students have a strong preference for the use of humour by teachers. This means that most EFL students view humour as an effective means to increase their engagement and interest in classroom activities. It is important to note in this light that a study by Amand (2023) reveals that humour is crucial for boosting engagement, which supports our present results from students at Abdelhafid Boussouf University Centre of Mila.

Q5: In my opinion, having an English instructor who uses humour reduces my stress

about learning English.

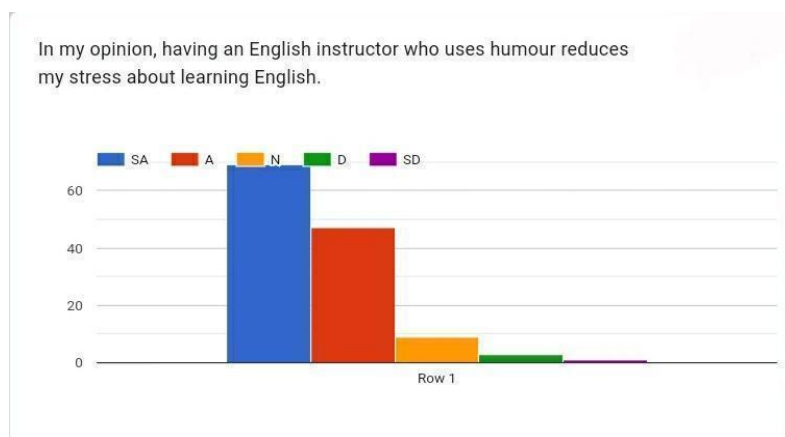


Figure 6: The Perceived Role of Humour in Reducing Students' Stress

The purpose of this question is to assess the perceived impact of humour on students' stress levels. Hence, a percentage of 54.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, and 37.3% of them agreed. On the other hand, 7.1% remained neutral, and only 0.8% of the students strongly disagreed.

From the obtained data, it is clear that humour has a significant impact on reducing EFL students' stress level, since the large majority of students, 92%, either strongly agreed or agreed that they feel less stressed when humour is integrated in the lesson. As a matter of fact, it was emphasised in the previous chapter that humour has a positive influence on decreasing stress about English language learning. Overall, the data show that a significant majority of EFL students are in favour of incorporating humour in the EFL environment.

Q6: I believe that I am more attentive in class when the English instructor uses humour.

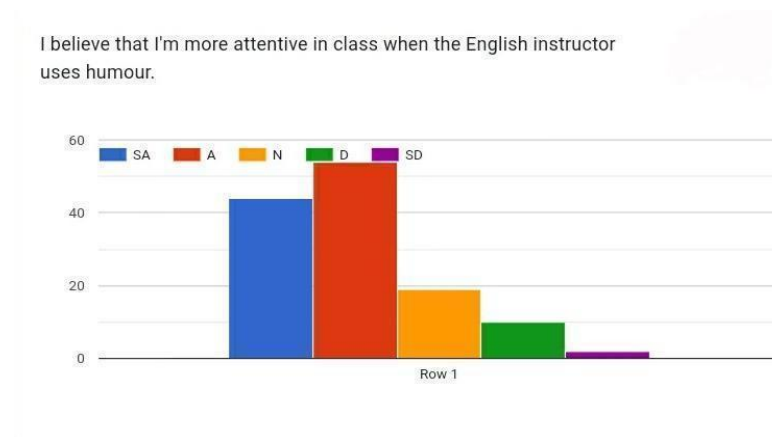


Figure 7: The Influence of Humour in Increasing Attentiveness

This question aims to examine the perceived impact of humour on students' attentiveness in the classroom. The plurality of respondents (41.9%) strongly agreed. Additionally, 34.1% agreed that they are more attentive when the instructor uses humour. Moreover, 14.7% of the participants were neutral, 7.8% of them disagreed, and a handful of students, 1.6%, strongly disagreed. A close analysis of this data reveals that a significant majority of EFL students, that is 76% in total, regard humour as a factor that enhances their attentiveness during classes. This indicates a strong positive relationship between the use of humour and increased attentiveness among these students. Moreover, the 14.7% who were neutral and the 8.8% who disagreed represent a smaller proportion of students who do not perceive humour as a way to improve attentiveness. Overall, the collected data indicates that humour is widely perceived as beneficial for promoting EFL students' attentiveness in the classroom.

Q7: It seems to me that when the English instructor uses humour in the classroom, I am not afraid to ask questions.



Figure 8: Humour's Role in Fostering Students' Confidence

The aim behind this question is to examine whether humour helps students feel comfortable asking questions freely. 41.9% of the respondents strongly agreed that they are not afraid to ask questions about the lesson when humour is integrated. Additionally, 37.2% voted to agree, while 15.5% were neutral. Some students (4.7%) disagreed with the statement that humour has a significant impact on them. As for strongly disagreeing, a low percentage was obtained with 0.7%. The gathered data suggests that a significant majority of participants, 79.1% in total, feel comfortable asking questions when the English teacher uses humour in the classroom. This indicates a strong relationship between the use of humour and students' willingness to engage in asking questions during the class. However, there is a small proportion of respondents who do not believe that humour has an influence on their readiness to ask questions. These findings show that humour has a significant role in creating a relaxed classroom atmosphere where students feel more comfortable and confident in participating and asking questions. Furthermore, these findings reflect students' perceptions of humour in

the classroom environment. Therefore, the data shows that EFL students believe that humour positively impacts their willingness and confidence to ask questions in the classroom.

Q8: I think that having a serious learning atmosphere would be better.

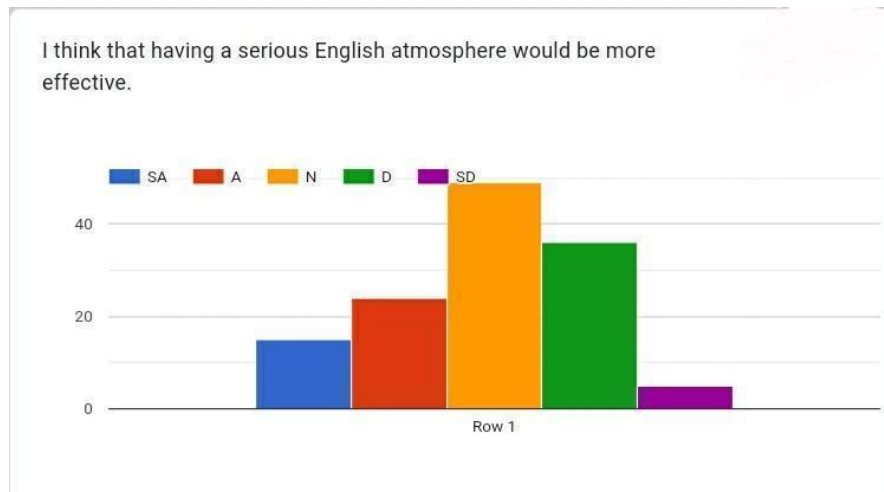


Figure 9: The Effectiveness of Serious Atmosphere in EFL classes

The purpose of including this question is to provide context and contrast for understanding the way students perceive the role of humour in an EFL classroom environment. 38% of the participants were neutral, and 27.6% of them disagreed. Additionally, 4.2% strongly disagreed. On the other hand, 18.6% of the participants agreed that they learn better in a serious atmosphere, and 11.6% of them strongly agreed. The obtained data shows a diverse range of responses. This underscores the complexity of students' perceptions of learning environments. While some of them prefer a serious environment, the majority of the respondents prefer fun and humorous environments. These divisions could be due to individual differences or their learning experiences. However, the majority of the students opted for neutral. This may be because they have mixed feelings about this approach or are uncertain.

Q9: In my point of view, teaching in a humorous way reduces anxiety.

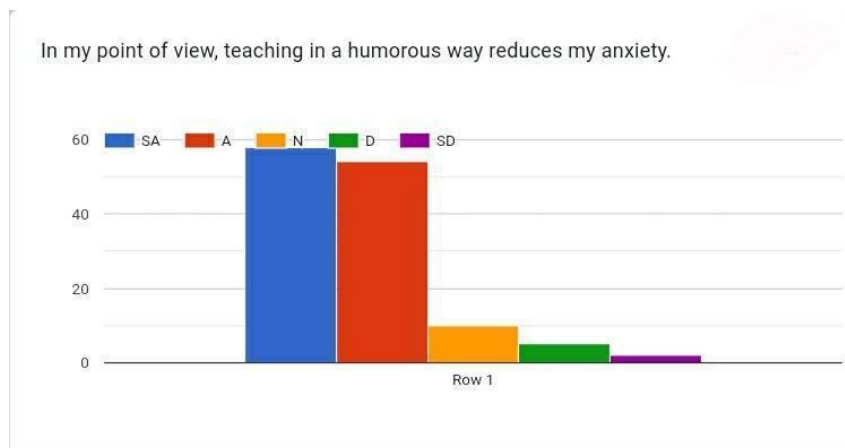


Figure 10: The perceived Impact of Humour on Students' Anxiety

This question seeks to look at whether there is an impact of humour on students' anxiety levels. 46% of respondents strongly agreed that humour reduces their anxiety level. In addition, 42.1% of them agreed, while 7.1% were neutral. A small number of students (3.2%) disagreed with the above statement, and the remaining 1.6% strongly agreed. These percentages indicate that a substantial majority of respondents (88.1% in total) believe that the use of humour helps in decreasing their anxiety levels. This implies a positive relationship between the integration of humour and the reduction of anxiety levels. The data reveals that humour is widely recognised as a beneficial tool for reducing anxiety in the EFL classroom, as suggested earlier in the first section of chapter one which provided a comprehensive examination of this matter.

Q10: I think that using humour in the classroom is distracting.

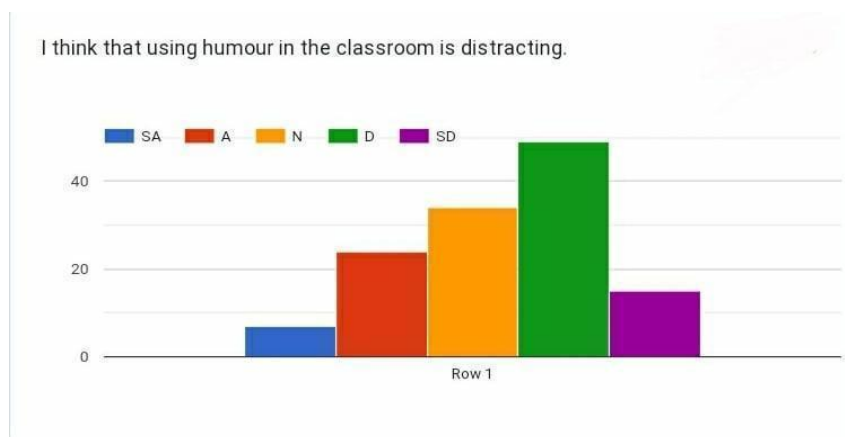


Figure 11: Exploring the Potential Distracting Effects of Humour on Learning

This question seeks to identify whether the use of humour in the classroom is distracting for students. From the graph above, 38.9% of the participants disagreed with the idea that the use of humour in the classroom is distracting, with 11.9% strongly disagreeing. 27.0% were neutral; they neither agreed nor disagreed with the question. A small number of respondents agreed, 16.7%, and 5.6% strongly agreed. From these statistics, we can say that about half of the participants do not find the use of humour in the classroom distracting, with a percentage of 50.8%, since they consider humour an important tool in the language classroom. 27.0% of the responses suggest that the use of humour in the classroom may be based on some principles, such as the appropriate time and situation of being humorous which were mentioned in Section 1 of the first chapter, to determine its effectiveness. In addition, a small number see that humour is distracting (22.3%). These results show that humour is not considered distracting in the EFL classroom, and it is considered an effective language learning and teaching tool as long as the instructor integrates it appropriately. They need to know how and when to use it to ensure its effectiveness and provide a positive learning atmosphere.

Q11: I find that English instructors who use humour are more effective in teaching.

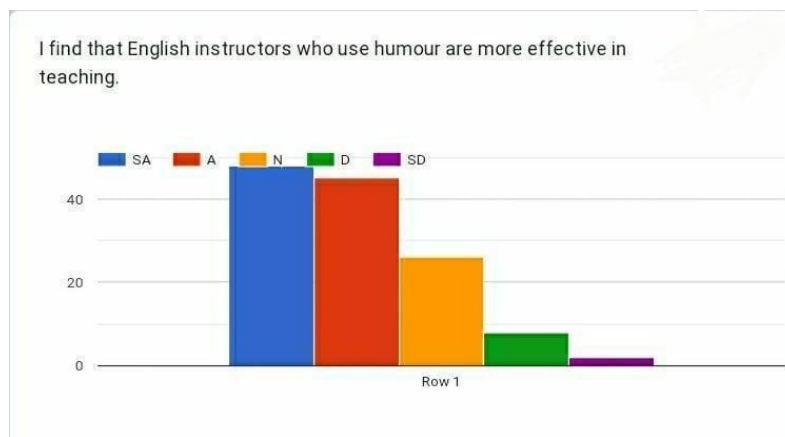


Figure12: The Impact of Humour in Enhancing The Effectiveness of Teaching

This question aims to determine if students believe that teachers who incorporate humour in the classroom are generally more effective in teaching. From the results found, 38.1% of the participants strongly agreed, and 35.7% agreed with the statement that having an English teacher who uses humour in the classroom is more effective. Besides, 20.6% of the participants were neutral. Additionally, 4.0% of the respondents disagreed with this statement, and 1.6% strongly disagreed. Based on these statistics, the majority of the respondents, with a percentage of 73.8%, support the idea that having an English teacher who uses humour is more effective. They believe that it can create a beneficial learning atmosphere. In contrast, 5.6% were against this statement, possibly because they believe that using humour can lead to a negative or less effective teaching atmosphere. Some participants, comprising 20.6%, are neither for nor against this statement, perhaps because they think that the use of humour is beneficial but not an essential part of teaching. Based on this, humour is viewed, by participants, as an effective tool that every teacher should use during teaching, as it builds a beneficial learning and teaching environment. Additionally, it can be suggested, as such, that the appropriate integration of this tool may lead to positive engagement among

learners.

Q12: It seems to me that the classes tend to be noisy when the teacher relies on humour so often to teach English.

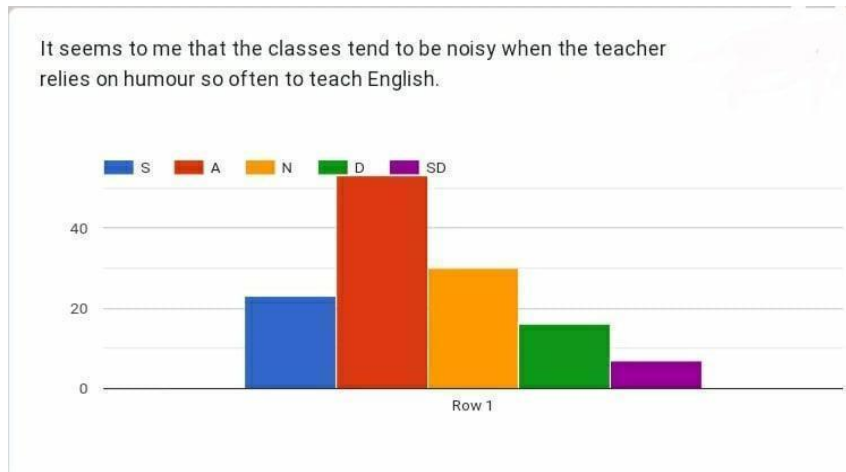


Figure 13: The Negative Effects of Humour in English Language Classes

The aim of this question is to find out if the use of humour contributes to a noisier classroom environment. According to the figure, the majority of the participants agreed that classes tend to be noisy when the teacher uses humour too often in the classroom (42.1%). Additionally, 15.9% strongly agreed. 23.3% of the respondents were neutral. Conversely, some participants disagreed with the statement (12.7%), with a small percentage strongly disagreeing (5.6%). From these statistics, the majority of the participants argue that classes tend to be noisy when the teacher uses humour excessively inside the classroom, with a total percentage of 58.0%. This suggests that the overuse of humour by the teacher increases noise levels among learners and makes the classroom vociferous. 23.3% were neutral, possibly because they do not have enough experience with the use of humour. In contrast, 18.3% of the respondents were against this statement. Although more than half participants highlighted that they are in favour of teachers' use of humour, they still expressed their opinions about it creating noise in the classroom. Based on these results, it is advised that

teachers need to manage their classrooms effectively to use humour and know how to use it, as it can be a useful strategy in the teaching and learning process. This involves integrating humour in an appropriate context to avoid making classes noisy.

Q13: I think that utilising humour in English lessons affects negatively my ability to concentrate

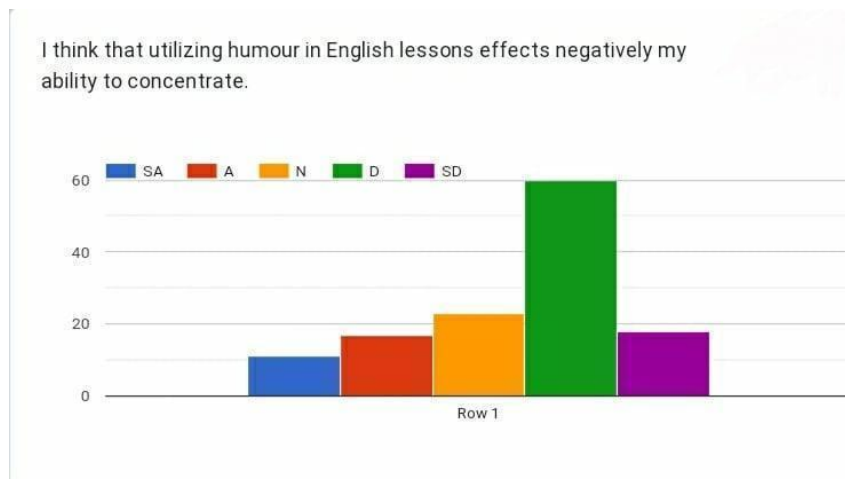


Figure 14: The Perceived Impact of Humour on Students' Concentration Levels

This question tries to understand whether humour impacts students' concentration in a negative way. From the figure above, 46.8% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that using humour negatively affects the students' ability to concentrate. 18.3% were neutral, and 14.3% strongly disagreed with the statement. Conversely, 12.7% agreed that using humour negatively affects concentration, with 7.9% strongly agreeing. Based on these results, the majority of the participants, 70.1%, oppose the idea that humour can negatively impact their concentration and that they believe that the appropriate use of humour can increase learners' concentration levels and keep them motivated. 18.3% of the participants were neutral, perhaps because they are not familiar with humour or unsure of its appropriate use. Meanwhile, a small percentage of respondents (20.6%) think that learners may lose their concentration in the classroom due to the integration of humour. Overall, the results show that

the majority of participants believe that humour is an effective strategy that does not negatively affect learners' concentration.

Q 14: From my experience, I can tell that the timing of using humour plays a significant role in its effectiveness.

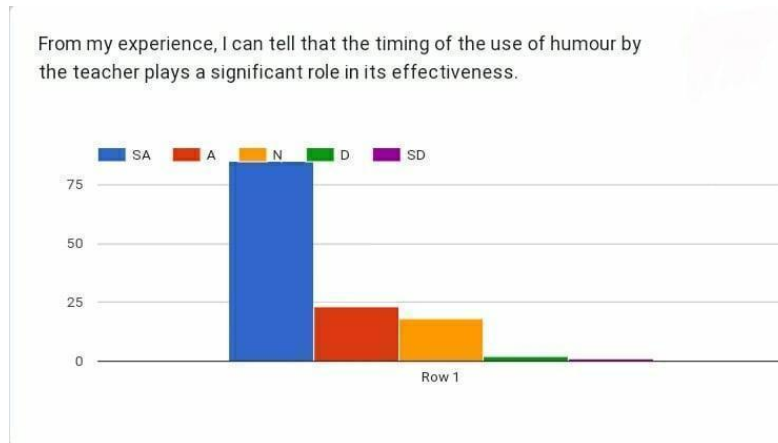


Figure 15: The Impact of Temporal Factors on the Efficacy of Humour

The aim behind asking this question is to examine whether the timing of humour is crucial to its effectiveness within the educational context. According to what the figure shows, 65.1% of the participants strongly agreed with the fact that time plays a significant role in the effectiveness of humour, added to 18.3% of those who agreed. Furthermore, 14.3% were neutral. A small percentage of 1.6% were against this statement, and 0.7% strongly disagreed. Based on the collected data, the majority of the participants believe that timing plays a significant role in the effectiveness of humour in the classroom, with a high percentage of 83.4%. This implies that humour's effectiveness is based on when it is used (based on the appropriateness of the time), which leads to a positive learning atmosphere. Some participants (14.3%) were neutral, which could be because they do not have enough experience with humour. In contrast, a small group of participants (2.3%) were against the idea of the significance of time in the effectiveness of humour. From these results, it can be seen that time plays a significant role in the effectiveness of humour. This implies that its

significance depends on the way in which the teacher manages their class and integrates humour in the appropriate context.

Q 15: In my judgement, using humour makes the lesson less effective.

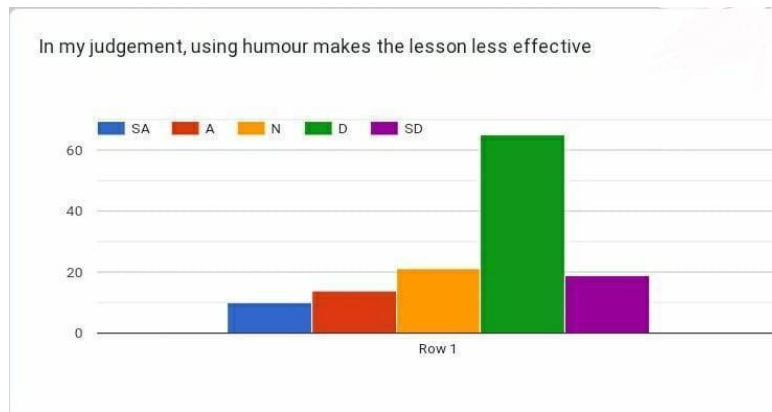


Figure 16: Possible Negative Impact of Humour on the Lessons

This question seeks to investigate if humour in the classroom decreases the effectiveness of the lesson. From the figure above, 58.8% of the participants chose to disagree with the statement that using humour in the classroom makes the lesson less effective. 16.7% were neutral, and 15.1% strongly agreed with this statement. Otherwise, 9.5% of the participants agreed, with 7.9% strongly disagreeing. From these statistics, the majority of the respondents were against the fact that the use of humour makes the lesson less effective, with a high percentage of 65.9%.

This result suggests that they believe in humour as an effective tool for education, and it can lead to effective and engaging lessons. Furthermore, a small percentage of 16.7% of the participants were neutral, which may be because they are not sure about the role of humour in education or are not familiar with its use in the classroom. On the other hand, 17.4% of the respondents support the idea that using humour in the classroom makes the lesson less effective. This group of people think that the use of humour negatively affects the teaching and learning process and can lead to a negative learning atmosphere for the learners. This can

be partly due to teachers' inappropriate use of humour. Overall, the integration of humour inside the classroom can be seen as an effective strategy that enhances the language learning outcomes of the learners and can also be seen as a tool for laughing, not for education. It is all based on how it is integrated and the context of its integration.

Q 16: In my view, balancing between humour and seriousness is the ideal learning

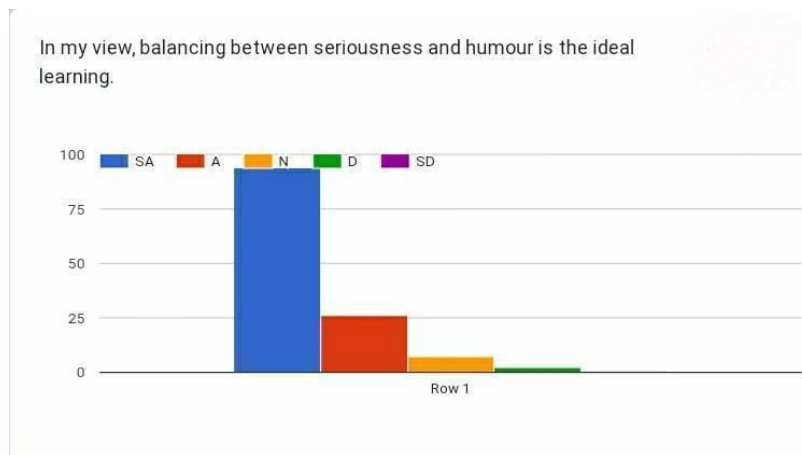


Figure 17: Students' Perspectives Towards the Interplay of Humour and Seriousness in Learning

The aim of asking this question is to explore whether students perceive the balance between humour and seriousness as ideal learning. According to the results, a huge number of the respondents strongly agreed that balancing humour and seriousness is the ideal learning style, with a high percentage of 72.2% and 20.6% agreeing with it. 5.6% were neutral, while the remaining 1.6% disagreed with this statement. None voted for the option of “strongly disagree”. From these results, the majority of the respondents tend to support the idea that balancing between humour and seriousness is the ideal learning style, with a huge percentage of 92.8%. It suggests that the most effective way of using humour is when it is combined with seriousness in educational settings. This means that instructors should control their way of teaching by knowing when to use humour and when to be serious. A very small percentage of 5.6% of participants were neutral, which may be because they are unfamiliar

with the use of humour in the classroom. 1.6% disagreed because they may think that the use of humour is not acceptable.

Based on these results, the integration of humour as a pedagogical tool in language learning and teaching is considered a necessity for most people. Moreover, balancing between humour and seriousness is the right way of its integration. Instructors need to manage this balance in order to perform the lesson according to the different styles that learners might have as well as their different language levels.

Q17: As far as I can tell, using humour in the EFL classroom makes the lesson more memorable.

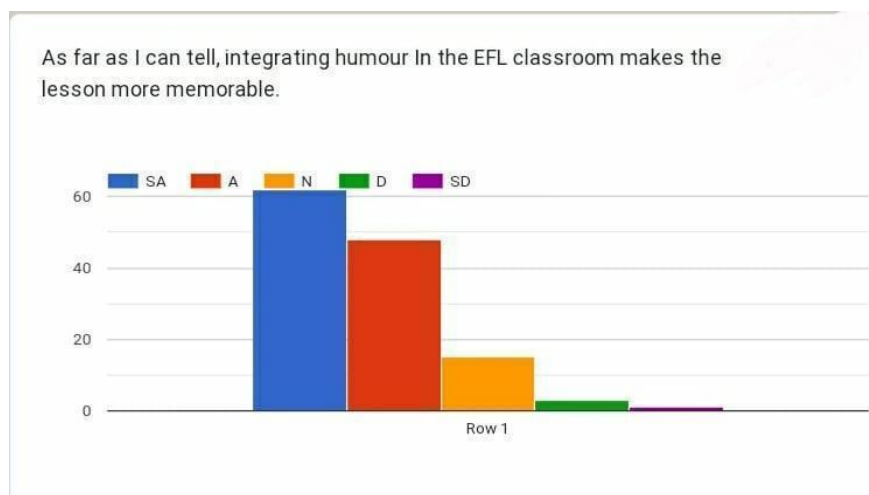


Figure 18: The Impact of Humour on Lesson Retention

The major aim of this question is to evaluate whether incorporating humour helps learners remember the information more proficiently. From the figure above, 49.2% of the participants strongly agreed and 38.1% agreed that using humour in the classroom makes the lesson more memorable. 9.5% were neutral, 2.4% disagreed, and 0.8% strongly disagreed with the statement. Based on these statistics, there is a high level of agreement that the use of humour in the classroom makes the lesson more memorable, with a high percentage of 87.3%. This suggests that the majority of participants believe in the use of humour as a

crucial strategy for language learning and teaching. In contrast, a small percentage of 3.2% were against this idea, which implies that they oppose the integration of humour in educational contexts. Furthermore, 9.5% remained neutral. From the above results, the integration of humour in education as a teaching approach for the instructors is so important, which leads to a positive learning atmosphere and enhances the lesson's retention. As can be seen, these results appear to align with previous literature, which was described earlier in the first section of chapter one.

Q18: I find that humour makes EFL learning more enjoyable and less boring.

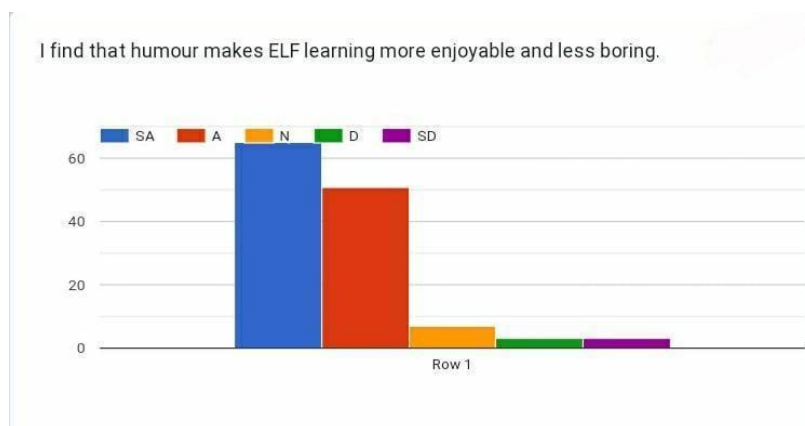


Figure 19: Humour's Role in EFL learning Enjoyment

This question aims to measure whether the use of humour in the classroom makes the lesson more enjoyable and less boring. According to the data the figure shows, the percentage of respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that using humour makes EFL learning more enjoyable and less boring is 51.6%, in addition to 39.7% of those who agreed. 4.8% of respondents remained neutral, and a small percentage strongly disagreed (2.4%). In addition, 1.5% of the participants disagreed with the statement. Based on these statistics, it is safe to say that almost all the respondents agreed that humour makes EFL learning more enjoyable and less boring, with a high percentage of 91.3% since it has an effective influence on learning. On the other hand, a small percentage of 3.9% disagreed as they do not think that

humour is effective in learning. Besides, 4.8% of the respondents are neutral, which could be because they are not familiar with humour and its impacts on language learning and teaching processes. From these results, incorporating humour into the EFL classroom plays a significant role in creating an enjoyable learning atmosphere, fostering a better understanding for learners, and making them more motivated and engaged in the classroom activities.

Q 19: What are the benefits of using humour in an EFL classroom?

This question allows us to summarise the perceived benefits of using humour in the EFL classroom. Based on the participants' responses, the integration of humour in the EFL classroom has a variety of benefits for learners. These benefits can be categorised into different themes:

° *Reducing stress and anxiety:* Most of the participants argue that humour reduces stress and anxiety levels in learners by creating a positive learning environment. As one participant stated, *“It makes learners more comfortable and less stressed or anxious. They will be more comfortable and more motivated to participate in the classroom activities without any fear of making mistakes or asking questions.”* This implies that humour encourages students to answer without fear.

° *Fostering engagement and participation:* Humour makes students feel at ease, keeps them engaged, and encourages them to participate in the classroom. One participant stated, *“In my opinion, the benefits that humour could provide include encouraging students to engage more and participate.”* It means that humour plays a critical role in learners' engagement with the lessons. The majority of the respondents believed that humour creates a positive learning environment; laughter can put students at ease, reduce anxiety, and make learning more

enjoyable. Boosts attention and engagement: a well-timed joke can perk up students and refocus their attention on the lesson. This means that humour makes the lesson more effective and interesting for most learners, which increases their attention and creates an enjoyable environment during lessons. A respondent stated, in this regard, *“If a person is not paying attention, they will focus on the humour and the related lesson,”*.

° *Enhancing learning and retention:* A respondent asserts, *“I believe that incorporating humour into lessons facilitates easier information recall.”* implying that humorous delivery of information enhances memory retention and improves language learning outcomes. In this regard, a participant stated that *“humour can be a good way to transfer information and make it more memorable.”* Hence, humour as a teaching strategy is used to make the lesson memorable and comprehensive.

° *Building relationships and comfort:* The integration of humour into education creates a sense of community inside the classroom, making learners more comfortable and relaxed because *“it helps in developing teacher-student interaction”* and breaks the ice between them. As a result of this benefit, *“students would think that the teacher is closer to them, and they could talk to him comfortably,”* said a respondent. Furthermore, humour is considered an *“ice-breaking”* tool that develops communication between students and their teachers. This means that it creates a beneficial atmosphere where students feel at ease with their teacher.

° *Encouraging positive attitudes towards learning:* When the teacher uses humour in the classroom, learners will enjoy the learning process and engage during lessons. A huge number of the participants argue that humour makes learning more enjoyable and fun, motivating them to participate in classroom tasks and discussions. One of the participants

claimed that humour “*makes learning enjoyable and makes the students more interested in learning the English language*” as it makes classes more active and less boring. Incorporating humour into EFL classrooms not only prevents learners from becoming bored in class but also ignites their enthusiasm for the subject matter, as it enhances the enjoyment of learning. Furthermore, “*in my opinion, humour reduces boredom and makes learning enjoyable...*”

° *Supporting classroom management*: Humour aids in classroom management by creating a positive learning atmosphere and decreasing tension. As a respondent stated, “*classroom management would also be better since it helps the teacher by face-lifting the interaction between teacher and learner.*” Additionally, it also helps learners to initiate a discussion, which helps shy and introverted learners to participate, as supported by the opinion of a respondent: “*...it helps to break the ice between the teacher and students, which creates a strong bond between them.*”

° *Facilitating better understanding*: It was pointed out, by a participant, that humour “*is also a way to make the lesson simpler, and the student receives it easily. The humour in presenting the lesson gives comfort to the professor and helps him deliver information in a smart way,*” since it is considered a helpful tool that fosters language learning. That is to say, humour makes difficult concepts easy for learners to understand and remember, as in grammar and vocabulary. In this regard, a participant said, “*...humour can also make complex grammar points or vocabulary more memorable.*”

In summary, using humour in the EFL classroom has several benefits. It can create a positive and relaxed atmosphere and make students more comfortable and willing to participate. Humour can also enhance retention and understanding of language by making

lessons more memorable and engaging. Additionally, it helps to build rapport between students and teachers, fostering a supportive learning environment. Humour is a useful tool in the EFL classroom because it facilitates better learning, creates a supportive atmosphere, and increases memory retention.

Q20: Do you have any recommendations regarding the teacher's use of humour in the English classroom?

Almost all the participants suggested that humour should be used in EFL classrooms, but not too often, and they appeared to be in favour of using it. Nevertheless, there were a few participants who did not give their opinion, showing they may have been unsure about it. It should also be noted that two of the participants were categorical in advising against it; this represents a minority opinion. The participants advocating for the use of humour may view it as a valuable source for making learning enjoyable and promoting positive involvement in the classroom. As participant 1 stated, *“Using humour provides an enjoyable language learning experience, but teachers need to use it wisely and strike a balance between seriousness and humour.”* This indicates that students perceive the role of humour as a joyful addition to the learning process. However, the exaggeration of its use may create chaos and result in neglecting the achievement of the learning objectives. Based on this close analysis of students' recommendations, it can be concluded that humour is perceived positively by EFL students since the majority agree about the idea of employing it in their learning experience.

2.1.3. Discussion of the Findings

The analysis of the students' questionnaire results provided valuable insights about the role of humour and how learners perceive it in the EFL classroom. According to the presented content, it can be seen that this questionnaire is divided into three major themes, including the

positive impact of humour, the negative impact of humour, and the balancing act, which consists of other subthemes. From the collected data, the majority of learners support the fact that humour makes them comfortable. This means that learners perceive humour positively since it decreases their stress levels and reduces their anxiety about learning the English language. In addition, humour can be used as a teaching strategy due to its positive effects on students' motivation and engagement, since the majority of learners believe that they feel more motivated and engaged when the teacher relies on fun activities in the classroom. Hence, it encourages them to attend their classes, participate, and share their ideas and opinions with others during sessions. Furthermore, because of the significance of humour in creating a relaxed learning atmosphere, learners feel free to ask questions and participate in classroom tasks and discussions, which makes them memorise and remember the information more efficiently. As a result, learners will enjoy learning and become more active and less bored. In addition to the idea of the learning environment, learners are different, which means the learning process also differs depending on their characteristics and personalities. When considering the learning environment, learners perceive it in various ways. Some students like to learn in a humorous atmosphere, whereas others like to learn in a serious atmosphere due to their individual differences and learning experiences. Based on this, the majority of learners support the importance of the time selected in order to incorporate humour inside the classroom. They argue that its effectiveness depends on the teachers' ability to choose the right moment to tell their jokes or to be humorous. This implies that instructors need to find equilibrium between when to be serious and when to be humorous. This balance should be well managed in order to teach according to the learners' individual differences and their different language levels. As a result, the learning atmosphere will be suitable for both styles of learners, which may enhance their language learning outcomes. In contrast, a minority of learners believe that a teacher who uses humour is unprofessional since it makes classes noisy

and distracts from learning. Additionally, they believe that the integration of humour during lessons decreases their level of concentration and the effectiveness of the lesson due to their lack of experience, or they are not familiar with the role of humour and its impacts on both teachers and learners in the classroom context. Despite this, and given the present results of the majority, it is safe to say that the integration of humour in EFL classrooms has crucial significance for the effectiveness of language learning. According to the data collected, the participants provided various benefits of humour, including stress and anxiety reduction, fostering engagement and participation, enhancing learning and retention, building relationships and comfort, encouraging positive attitudes towards learning, supporting classroom management, and facilitating better understanding. From these results, it can be said that humour is an effective tool in the learning and teaching process, but it should be used appropriately in order to meet positive outcomes. Then, from the analysis of the students' recommendations about the use of humour in the EFL classroom, almost all of them except two suggest that humour should be integrated within classes appropriately, hence in a balanced manner. Consequently, learners will enjoy learning since it creates an enjoyable environment, so they believe that humour is an effective teaching strategy that should be incorporated into their language learning experiences.

2.2. Teachers' Interview

We selected semi-structured interviews as a data collection method to gain comprehensive insights into teachers' diverse perspectives on the use of humour in their teaching experience. The data gathered by these interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method that includes coding, identifying, and organising themes. Then comes the analysis (Dawdi, 2020). This suggests that thematic analysis is a systematic process of transcription, coding, and identifying themes within the collected data.

This aids in providing a thorough understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

2.2.1. Theme Development

Hence, we have collected interview recordings from a number of participants, in which we asked teachers about their opinions in regard to the use of humour in the classroom and whether they think it benefits their learning process. After that, we have carefully conducted the transcriptions of these audio recordings. Then, we have highlighted keywords that are relevant to the subject of the use of humour in the classroom. Finally, we have gathered those keywords and selected the emerging themes. These themes are analysed below:

Theme 1: Humour: Creating a Relaxed atmosphere

Theme 2: Enhanced Learning

Theme 3: Balanced Act

Theme 4: Humour Training

2.2.2. The Interviews' Analysis

2.2.2.1. Humour: Creating a Relaxed Atmosphere: All the interviewees seem to agree that humour plays a significant role in reducing students' stress, anxiety, and boredom during the classes. In fact, some teachers claimed that they use humour solely for the purpose of making the students feel at ease. For example, participant 7 stated, "*They (the students) come to the classroom loaded with personal issues. So I think that humour has this indispensable role of bringing an element of relaxation to the classroom, which is absolutely important.*"

This implies that humour helps learners reduce negative experiences that they may be going through, either inside or outside the educational setting. This leads the students to feel more

comfortable and relaxed, as participant 11 stated, *“It is (humour) a strategy that we use in order to help students relax in the classroom.”* Additionally, a teacher shared a story where she was facing a problem with a student, which led to a bad and intense atmosphere. She said, *“I was arguing with one of my students, and I felt like the atmosphere was intense, and even the students were angry with him. During the argument, I used a sarcastic comment, and everyone laughed, even the students I was arguing with.”* Her use of humour dispelled the tension, causing the students to laugh and feel relaxed once more. This shows an example that demonstrates the way in which humour helps students to demolish various negative emotions, such as stress, tension, anxiety, boredom, and many others, contributing to a healthy and comfortable learning environment.

2.2.2.1.1. Motivation and Engagement: From the interviews, the majority of teachers argue that using humour is very important in increasing learners’ motivation and engagement. As Participant 1 stated, *“It is important to use humour from time to time; I like to think of it as a technique for teaching.”* This demonstrates that teachers tend to use humour in their classrooms in order to motivate learners and keep them engaged. Participant 2 claimed that *“the most important thing about humour is that it motivates the learners to participate in the classroom.”* Another way is to motivate them. It has to deal with the psychology of the learner himself. It means that the effective integration of humour in the classroom depends on the characteristics and personalities of the learners, which guide the teacher to its appropriate use. This idea was further supported by Participant 3 when she was asked if humour affects learners’ motivation; she replied, *“I think so, but it still depends on students’ characteristics.”* In regard to students’ engagement with the lessons, humour encourages learners to be more active and participate in the classroom; it all depends on how the teacher controls and manages his class. This implies that the teacher should establish a conducive

environment to capture students' interest and foster meaningful interactions. Participant 2 expressed that *“the teacher can create a healthy and conducive atmosphere through humour, facilitating easy exchange of ideas with the learners.”* This means that the teacher is responsible for this type of learning environment. When questioned about her students' engagement, she responded, *“Yes, they are more engaged with me. Sometimes, when you are angry, learners will be passive.”* This indicates that humour plays a significant role in learners' motivation and engagement because it creates an effective and suitable learning environment.

In a similar vein, a teacher shared a personal anecdote from her past experience in teaching, recounting how, while teaching multiple groups, she employed humour in all classes except one, which she studied at midday following an oral expression session. Then there was not enough time to organise the classroom and start the lesson. She said, *“I was angry and immediately started teaching without laughing or even talking with them.”* She told us that she always said, *“You are a bad group; you never succeeded like that.”* One day, she thought about a solution for this problem; she talked with the teacher of oral expression about organising the class before he left, and she could start her lesson on time with laughter and jokes. She said that *“the learners were shocked about the situation, and then they started laughing and participating with me.”* In the end, that group became the best in her module. From this story, we can see how the classroom atmosphere and the teacher's control affect the language learning process, as well as how the integration of humour is critical in these cases.

2.2.2.1.2. Building Relationships: Based on the data collected from the interviews, all of the respondents believed in the significance of dealing with students in a way that makes them comfortable and relaxed with their teacher. Participant 1 claimed that *“students will feel at ease talking to the teacher. It means you create a kind of friendly relationship between the*

learners; they will not get afraid while talking.” This suggests that incorporating humour into the EFL classroom improves relationships between the teacher and his students, as it can create a sense of community among the learners themselves. In these cases, learners will be more comfortable and engaged in attending their classes. However, Participant 11 does not incorporate humour during his lessons as an effective tool; he stated that *“humour is not very effective; I just use it to change the mood in order to break the ice with students and prepare them psychologically.”* This means that humour positively affects the psychological aspects of the learners, which makes them more active and learn in a beneficial atmosphere that the teacher creates using humour, and this may make them react to humour as Participant 2 claimed, *“...and they (learners) sometimes react with humour.”* Furthermore, sometimes teachers do not need much humour to deliver the lesson effectively. Participant 14 stated that *“sometimes the teacher should even smile for learners in order to feel at ease with their teacher.”* Participant 2 recounted a story where, at the end of the year, she solicited feedback from her students about her teaching methods, solicited criticism, and identified both her strengths and weaknesses to evaluate her experience. She said that she remembers the students’ words; they told her, *“Miss, we like you when you smile.”* Hence, this smile makes learners like the teacher and be closer to her, as well as motivating and engaging them all the time.

2.2.2.2. Humour: Enhanced Learning: Participants claim that humour can make information more memorable, simplify complicated concepts, and aid comprehension. A participant stated, *“I teach civilisation and literature, and I use humour mostly to help them understand ironic expressions in English. Ironic expressions are very hard, so when you mix them with humour and jokes, you know they kind of get it.”* This implies that humour facilitates the comprehension of difficult concepts. Moreover, it aids in simplifying abstract

and complicated information. In addition to this, one important positive aspect of using humour is lowering affective filter, which was explained in Chapter 1: Section 2, enabling the acquisition of comprehensive input. Participant 3 offered a more insightful explanation: *“As Kreshan said, as much as you are anxious and stressed, information will find obstacles to go through your mind. So humour will try to reduce the affective filter and increase the readiness to receive the input and comprehend it.”* In this sense, humour can improve students’ comprehension skills and make the information more memorable. Resulting in improvements in learning outcomes.

2.2.2.3. Balanced Act: All interviewees agreed with the fact that balancing humour and seriousness is a must for effective language learning. Since effective teaching involves balancing humour and seriousness, the teacher should know how to balance these two appropriately in order to create an enjoyable and beneficial learning atmosphere at the same time. Therefore, teachers are recommended to carefully choose when to use humour, as participant 5 suggested in this context, *“limiting the time in which to be humorous.”* The participants declared that the use of humour can have a positive outcome, but not too much because its overuse may result in making learning distracting, create noisy classes, and also lead to a lack of respect for the teacher. In this regard, participant 5 said that *“the overuse of humour leads to a lack of respect and distraction.”* In this case, the teacher should control their classroom because too much humour may result in a noisy class. He should manage the situation since he is the authority in the classroom, as participant 3 stated, *“Teachers are the boss.”* In addition, participant 15 asserted that *“some learners think that using humour is a lack of seriousness; it may be used by the teacher and taken to some extreme, so when you use it much, there would be some negative aspects.”* This means that seriousness is required

in order to deliver serious or important information in an appropriate and safe way.

Participant 11 stated that *“sometimes when you try to be serious, it is better because this is how students work. Students work for grades, for rewards, i.e., when you give rewards, you can observe that learners are learning.”* This implies that seriousness also has a significant role in learning, and teachers should take it into consideration in order to balance its use with humour to create a beneficial learning atmosphere and an effective learning process.

2.2.2.4. Humour Training: Interviewees were asked if EFL teachers should receive training regarding the integration of humour in the teaching context. There was a diverse range of responses regarding this matter. Most participants agreed, claiming that humour is very important, and as participant 15 stated, *“I take it (humour) as a condition and characteristic of success.”* Some other teachers argued that such training helps shift from traditional Algerian classes to modern ones where the teacher is a facilitator, not a controller. As participant 3 claimed, *“It brings new mentalities.”* In this sense, a teacher (participant 13) expressed the thought that *“generally, teachers focus on knowledge, not the learner and learning process, unfortunately.”* This suggests that raising awareness and bringing change in the EFL field requires this training. Others mentioned that this training can be helpful for guiding teachers in regard to when and how to use humour because students perceive humour differently, and misunderstandings and misinterpretations might usually take place. However, some teachers who opposed this training contended that humour is a personality trait that training cannot impart.

2.2.3. Discussion of the Findings

The thorough analysis and interpretation of the teachers' interviews provided comprehensive insights into their perceptions about the use of humour in the classroom.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 English department teachers at the Abdelhafid Boussouf Mila University Centre, gathering a diverse array of valuable opinions and perspectives. Across these interviews, there was a unanimous advocacy for the strategic incorporation of humour, with participants highlighting the need to strike a careful balance between humour and seriousness to maintain a productive learning environment. Teachers emphasised that humour contributes significantly to creating a comfortable and positive atmosphere that fosters relaxation among students. By infusing classrooms with humour, they believed that students' engagement and motivation could be effectively nurtured, potentially alleviating stress, anxiety, and boredom. This approach helps students feel more at ease and psychologically ready for learning.

Moreover, the majority of interviewees recognised humour as a powerful pedagogical tool for simplifying complex concepts, enhancing comprehension, and improving retention of information. They shared examples where the use of humour had broken down barriers to understanding and facilitated deeper learning experiences. While most teachers expressed a desire for training in integrating humour into the EFL classroom, acknowledging the benefits of structured guidance in leveraging humour for educational purposes, some held differing views. They argued that humour should arise naturally from classroom interactions rather than being a formalised teaching strategy. In conclusion, teachers at the University of Mila view humour positively, seeing it not only as a means to create an engaging learning environment but also as a tool to cultivate positive teacher-student relationships and enhance overall learning outcomes.

2.3. Limitations of the Study

The researchers encountered some difficulties in attempting to conduct this study. Among these challenges are the following:

- Lack of time: The topic under investigation contains a large amount of content that could not possibly be covered in the given period of time.
- The results of this study are restricted to teachers and third-year English students at Mila University Centre.

2.3. Recommendations

In light of the findings outlined in the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ***Know your audience:*** teachers are recommended to be aware of learners' individual differences, such as age, language proficiency, and cultural background, when attempting to use humour to ensure its effectiveness.
- ***Timing:*** It is recommended to use humour in EFL classrooms, but not too often. Teachers need to be cautious about when to use it and how often.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, an examination of the field of work has been made. The combined use of the questionnaire and interviews has provided valuable insights into the opinions of both teachers and learners about the implementation of humour in the EFL classroom. A significant majority of the participants expressed positive perspectives regarding the use of humour, indicating that humour is perceived as an effective approach for language learning. These findings highlight the importance of incorporating humour into EFL

teaching practices to foster a more suitable learning environment that makes students autonomous and active learners.

General Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding the use of humour in EFL classrooms. Numerous findings are drawn through a deep analysis of data conducted via a combination of methods involving teacher interviews and student questionnaires. Initially, almost all participants, both teachers and undergraduates, hold a positive outlook on the use of humour during the teaching and learning process. They highlight the fact that it leads to more involvement, which is crucial for language learning, as it boosts motivation and decreases the rates of stress and anxiety for learners, consequently enhancing the learning atmosphere. This fact is evidenced by several studies that show the usefulness of humour in an educational context. Additionally, all interviewees acknowledge the importance of humour due to its potential to build positive relationships with students and facilitate comprehension, thereby fostering learning outcomes. However, it is noted that both teachers and students emphasise the need for balance, suggesting that humour should be integrated strategically and contextually relevant to classroom dynamics.

In light of this study, teachers highlight the importance of using humour as part of their teaching strategies in higher education while also calling for the creation of training or instructional courses that enable teachers to use humour effectively. Overall, the findings of this study contribute to a thorough understanding of the different perceptions towards the use of humour and its perceived impact, providing educators with valuable insights to enhance the quality of learning experiences in university settings.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Dear students, we kindly request your participation in our questionnaire, that seeks to explore the EFL students' perceptions towards the use of humour in the English classroom. Your valuable input is crucial for enhancing our understanding and improving our educational environment, contributing to positive changes for the entire student community. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Please tick the option that reflects your opinion

- 1 for Strongly agree. 4 for Disagree .
 2 for Agree. 5 for Strongly disagree.
 3 for Neutral.

	The use of humour in the English classroom	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	In my experience, when the teacher uses humour, it makes me more comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5
2	I think that English teachers who use humour are unprofessional	1	2	3	4	5
3	From my perspective, I am more likely to be motivated when the teacher uses humour in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
4	In my view, I am more likely to engage with classroom activities that are funny.	1	2	3	4	5

5	It appears to me that I learn English better when the instructor is teaching in a serious manner.	1	2	3	4	5
6	In my opinion, having an English instructor who uses humour reduces my stress about learning English.	1	2	3	4	5
7	I believe that I am more attentive in class when the English instructor uses humour.	1	2	3	4	5
8	It seems to me that when the English instructor uses humour in the classroom, I am not afraid to ask questions.	1	2	3	4	5
9	I think that having a serious learning atmosphere would be better.	1	2	3	4	5
10	In my point of view, teaching in a humorous way reduces anxiety.	1	2	3	4	5
11	I think that using humour in the classroom is distracting.	1	2	3	4	5
12	I find that English instructors who use humour are more effective in teaching.	1	2	3	4	5
13	It seems to me that the classes tend to be noisy when the teacher relies on humour so often to teach English.	1	2	3	4	5
14	I think that utilising humour in English lessons negatively affects my ability to concentrate	1	2	3	4	5
15	From my experience, I can tell that the timing of using humour plays a significant role in its effectiveness	1	2	3	4	5
16	In my judgement, using humour makes the lesson less effective.	1	2	3	4	5

1 7	In my view, balancing between humour and seriousness is the ideal learning.	1	2	3	4	5
1 8	As far as I can tell, using humour in the EFL classroom makes the lesson more memorable.	1	2	3	4	5
1 9	I find that humour makes EFL learning more enjoyable and less boring.	1	2	3	4	5

20- In your opinion, what are the benefits of using humour in an EFL classroom?

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21- Do you have any recommendations regarding the teacher's use of humour in the English classroom?

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Appendix B

The teachers' Interview

1. Do you use humour in your classroom?
2. How often do you use it?
3. How do you perceive the role of humour in the teaching and learning process?
4. Do you think that humour helps enhance learners' comprehension?
5. In your view, how does the use of humour promote students' motivation to participate in EFL activities and discussions?
6. Do you think that teaching in a humorous way makes your lessons engaging?
7. From your experience, are there specific challenges you have encountered when attempting to use humour in the EFL classroom, and how have you addressed them?
8. In your experience, have you observed any differences in the way learners 'perceive humour?
9. From your experience, are there any negative sides (aspects) you have observed as a result of using humour in an EFL classroom?
10. How do you assess the effectiveness of humour in your classroom?
11. In your view, what are the most beneficial strategies that you recommend for teachers to prove humour improves the learning outcomes of students?
12. Do you believe that humour can help create a more comfortable and relaxed atmosphere inside the EFL classroom? Why or why not?
13. Have you observed any differences in language learning outcomes when humour is integrated into EFL lessons compared to when it is not? If yes, in what way?

14. In your opinion, should EFL teachers receive training related to using humour in an educational setting, and what benefits might such training provide?
15. How do you balance the use of humour with maintaining a focused and productive learning atmosphere? Have you ever encountered situations where humour backfired or was misunderstood by students? How did you handle it?
16. Can you provide examples of how you've used humour effectively in your teaching practice?
17. Any other suggestions or comments regarding the use of humour in the EFL classroom?

Résumé

L'utilisation répandue de l'anglais dans le monde entier a conduit à son statut de langue étrangère dans de nombreux contextes. L'humour est couramment utilisé dans l'enseignement des langues. Cependant, sa perception varie d'un individu à l'autre. La présente étude tente d'explorer les perceptions des enseignants et des étudiants à l'égard de l'utilisation de l'humour dans les classes d'anglais langue étrangère au Centre Universitaire de Mila. L'étude a utilisé une approche mixte, combinant des interviews qualitatifs menés avec 15 enseignants et des questionnaires quantitatifs administrés à 129 étudiants de troisième année. Les résultats révèlent des perceptions généralement positives à l'égard de l'utilisation de l'humour, suggérant son importance dans le développement d'une atmosphère d'apprentissage saine avec un accent sur une utilisation modérée de l'humour.

ملخص

استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية على نطاق واسع في جميع أنحاء العالم أدى إلى اعتبارها لغة أجنبية في العديد من السياقات. يتم استخدام الفكاهاة بشكل شائع في تعليم اللغة. ومع ذلك، تختلف تصورات الأفراد حولها. تحاول الدراسة الحالية استكشاف تصورات المعلمين والطلاب تجاه استخدام الفكاهاة في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في مركز جامعة ميله. اعتمدت الدراسة نهج الطرق المختلطة، حيث جمعت مقابلات نوعية مع 15 معلمًا وأجرت استبيانات كمية على 129 طالبًا من السنة الثالثة. تظهر النتائج تصورات إيجابية عمومًا حول استخدام الفكاهاة، مما يشير إلى أهميتها في تعزيز جو تعليمي صحي مع التركيز على استخدام معتدل للفكاهاة