

## A DESCRIPTION OF THE BENEFITS OF HUMOROUS ANDRAGOGICAL TECHNIQUE IN ADULT LEARNING ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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### ABSTRACT

*Teachers at higher education are generally expected to behave like seers but in today's world ensuring adult learning through various means is one of the academic challenges in connection with the learning of knowledge and skills. With this important factor in mind, this quantitative cum qualitative study is designed to know the perceptions of the undergrads of a public sector University of English, Economics, Education, Urdu, and Management Sciences' disciplines on the use of humor by the teachers as an educational technique. The results of the survey show that respondents felt that teaching with a blend of comedy is the best way to teach at higher education to ensure transfer and reception of knowledge and skills. They opine that such teachers are liked most who listen and respond well by adopting this method rather than serious teachers who create an environment less effective to enhance knowledge and skills at higher education. Therefore, the study suggests that humorous way of teaching should be considered as one of the effective andragogical approaches to teach future professionals and be encouraged officially to use it as an educational tool.*

**Keywords:** Higher education, humor, andragogical approach, knowledge and skills

### Introduction

Humor conveys class management-related issues without compromising teacher authority or embarrassing the class as reported by Powell (1985) and Proctor (1994). This seems to be very appropriate when applied in our classrooms, especially at higher education level where students are usually expected to be very serious and good listeners. While undergrad courses are tough and one spends a lot of time or wasting time at the University as well as teacher has a lot to do before entering the class and hence, teachers take senior students very seriously. Therefore, (Cornett, 1986; Fisher, 1997), say that pin-drop silence education is becoming a mode of higher education level, leaving many demands on students. Seriousness is certainly not a bad factor in the classroom, but in language education and other fields, humor is also useful for learning a target language and concept related to many disciplines, as previous studies have shown that humor is beneficial for learning in the classroom; it can play a very effective role.

Keeping in view the effectiveness of comedy in the class this study has been designed to examine this important aspect of the classroom situation after many students have discussed the seriousness of teachers who rarely laugh in while teaching higher education students in different degree programs or make others laugh while learning at higher education level.

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The rationale of this descriptive research is to understand the importance of comic ways of teaching at higher education level that to what extent they pave ways to the undergrads to receive knowledge and skills or it's the serious attitude which is more effective.

### **Objective of the study**

The study has the following objectives:

1. To understand andragogy as new technology in adult learning.
2. To know the better ways of transferring knowledge and skills to understand of various disciplines.
3. To find out undergrads' point of view on today's required andragogical approach in ensuring knowledge and skills in adult learning.

### **Research questions**

The study aims to find out the answers of the below given questions:

- 1) Is there any difference between friendly and serious teachers at higher education so far as teaching approaches are concerned?
- 2) Can humorous ways of teaching be called as an andragogical strategy?
- 3) Do the teachers who adopt humor as a teaching approach in adult learning carry more appreciation than the serious instructors at higher education?
- 4) Can humor be applied as a teaching technique in the classrooms of various disciplines equally?

### **Design and Procedure of the Study**

This study focuses on the responses of one hundred undergrads of different degree programs with regard to the significance of comic ways/humorous ways of teaching as a technique to understand whether or not it is effective teaching technique for transferring knowledge and skills to the undergrads. The survey (structured) questionnaire contains fifteen questions items which are based on the use and application of humor as teaching strategy to ensure knowledge and skills and its benefits. The responses have been reflected in tabular form with percentage for discussion and draw conclusion and recommendations.

### **Review of Literature**

The available material with regard to education shows that humor relaxes muscles, stimulates blood circulation, improves breathing, strengthens lung and chest muscles, controls sedative hormones, strengthens the immune system, and increases endorphins. Pressure of blood (Berk, 1996; Berk, 2002; Caron, 2002; Mahoney, 2000) increases and decreases in heart rate have been shown to have physical effects on students. The available material related to the use of comic ways to teaching reflects that it is also, psychologically, impacts the learners because it surely provides relief from anxiety, stress, and tension. Further, it does improve motivation, curiosity, understanding, and perceived quality of life on the other hand (Anderson & Arnoult, 1989; Bennett, 2003; Berk, 1996; Cornett, 1986; Garner, 2006; Stambor 2006).

Referring to Deiter (2000), who believes that sometimes most of the sessions or lessons become boring, hard to swallow both mentally and physically and are resultantly stressful for the learners. In this context it could be said that there may be some psychological reasons to motivate and fear learners when learning even a foreign language. It is important to keep in mind that at university level the entire knowledge is supposed to be transferred with the help of a foreign language and in our system it is English. And, hence, Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986), when commenting about the learning of a any foreign language anxiety say that it is considered

as a clear complex of self-confidence, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors related to classroom language learning and due to the typical norm of the process of language learning and in this context MacIntyre (1998) also states that such type of anxiety is mostly taken as a situation-related type of stress or tension.

Regarding the negative effects of such effects in the classroom, Oxford (1999) found that the outcome of such state of mental affair results indirectly by reducing the certainty of participation in the classroom through anxiety and self-doubt, and directly through the ultimate impact on student learning performance. Gregersen (2005) also argued that anxious learners often find it difficult to respond effectively to their mistakes. These learners may find their research unpleasant. In these situations, humor is a way for learners to remain interested in learning while achieving better learning outcomes.

Humor was removed by Stephen Leacock as a kind consideration for the contradiction between life and its art (Berk, 1998). We can that humor in fact an understanding of not only languages and their words but at the same time it can said it's their usage as well, meaning, subtle nuances, underlying culture, implications, and unwritten messages (Tuncay, 2007). As Garner (2005) also states that like the term "humor," itself the word humor is also used as a meaning in different contexts. However, like any other taste or odor, human sensitivity is different. It can also said that on the similar grounds humor can be of individual nature and in accordance with context, or in other words it could subjective. It, with little interest in taste or discomfort, can choke more than enlightenment. Simple joke counts have no attributes that well conceived or well-planned content-based humor brings to the learning environment.

When we talk about humor in academics or education, Kher, Molstad & Donahue (1999) dug out that humor is often associated or identified as a teaching approach for creating a conducive environment which may promote positivity because the students learn more actively when teachers create a supportive social climate. Precisely speaking it, humor, could be freely said as the magical catalyst in the classroom when all educational elements come together and both teachers and students are excited to learn positively. A playful attitude and willingness to use appropriate humor allows teachers to improve communication with students and develop "magic" in the classroom (Golchi & Jamaica, 2011).

Hativa (2001) also tried to offer some classes of humor that could be used in education. In particular, he claimed that there are three main categories. The first category is verbal humor, which consists of jokes, anecdotes, language games, and more. The second category is non-verbal humor such as cartoons, caricatures, photos, and puns. The latter is a combination of linguistic and non-linguistic humor, consisting of imitation, parody, satire, loneliness and sketching. Studies have shown that the general understanding and retention of classroom messages has been significantly improved by the use of humor.

Casper (1999) has found that humor-induced learning improves learning memory. Ziv (1988) investigated the impact of humorous parenting on students' learning and reported that students appreciated and enjoyed learning with teachers using humor. Similarly, Kaplan and Pascoe (1977) reported that fairly conceptual humorous reading helped remind students of the conceptual tests they had learned. It is clear that humor is essential to education and learning to motivate and embrace students.

Kristmanson (2000) stressed on the importance of the emotional environment in second language education. Without fear of criticism and ridicule, the willingness to take risks and the active participation of students in the use of a second language in the classroom cannot be fully

emphasized. It is important for teachers to create a “positive atmosphere” for learning. Reducing anxiety and stress can contribute to positive classrooms, class cohesion, and learning.

Deneire (1995) suggests a harmonious integration of humor into existing language teaching methods. The advantage of humor is that it can be used with any approach or method of teaching a language. Humorous material can add diversity to your teachings. It creates diversity and helps relieve the tensions that many learners experience during the learning process. However, the use of humorous textbooks in the classroom should be planned by the teacher.

Watson and Emerson (1988) express that when somebody is trying to plan humor as part of an educational strategy states that it creates a compassionate environment, is flexible, and enables free and open communication between students and teachers. Hooray. Tones are set in the learning context and alternatives are free. This allows you to investigate human error, reduce the teacher's reputation, and facilitate the teacher's learning process. Natural fear and anxiety exist only in new and unfamiliar situations. As the student-teacher partnership develops, the threat diminishes. The use of humor is permitted (Zajdman, 1995). In addition, humor has been shown to improve listening and reading skills, and many studies have shown positive effects of humor in the classroom.. (Berk, 2000; Berwald, 1992; Bryant & Zillmann, 1989; Clabby, 1979; Colwell, 1981; Pollack & Freda 1997), but Deneire (1995) still has humor. "In foreign language classes, it's not fully used.

#### Findings in percentage

100 Undergrads (20 each):

English: 01. Economics: 02. Education: 03. Urdu: 04. Management Sciences: 05

Sr. No	Question item	1 Yes	1 No	2 Yes	2 No	3 Yes	3 No	4 Yes	4 No	5 Yes	5 No
1	Teachers with serious attitude at higher education generate boring environment in the class after twenty minutes.	59	41	56	44	61	39	58	42	62	38
2	Most of the students like such teachers who are strict disciplinarians.	31	69	22	78	21	79	19	81	18	82
3	My favorite teacher is always the person who promotes participation in a light way and allows to students to cut good jokes in the classroom.	74	26	72	28	80	20	78	22	76	24
4	At higher education self directed learning is easily achieved when difficult concepts are transmitted to the students by using comic ways of teaching.	71	29	69	31	70	30	81	19	74	26
5	Teachers who greet students with smiling face leave far reaching impacts on the students of higher education.	84	16	81	19	82	18	80	20	83	17
6	Seriousness of life is very important but consistent seriousness in the classroom creates boredom.	74	26	78	22	79	21	80	20	78	22
7	Lively teachers with lively educational environment are more important than high seriousness.	68	32	69	31	70	30	74	26	73	27
8	Smiling teachers appear interested instructors in the learning of students' knowledge and skills.	72	28	73	27	68	32	69	31	65	35
9	Comic ways of teaching provide teachers better opportunities to generate knowledge based classroom sub matter activities.	69	31	66	34	68	32	70	30	71	29

10	Friendly but not frank educational environment is need of the time at higher education sector.	79	19	70	30	78	22	74	26	75	25
11	Funny ways to teaching are better results oriented teaching techniques.	59	41	57	43	61	39	66	34	63	37
12	Light jokes always motivate students to improve students' communications skills as they get the students away from pressured environment.	66	44	68	32	69	31	72	28	71	29
13	Friendly teachers not only teach well but address other classroom issues in a tactful manner.	69	31	72	28	76	24	75	25	72	28
14	When taught with smiling face the overall academic environment becomes conducive which promotes healthy academic competition without frowns.	79	21	74	26	78	22	74	26	78	22
15	Strictness on the part of the teachers at higher education level does not easily promote knowledge and skills' assimilation.	82	18	84	16	79	21	85	15	81	19

## Discussion

The data analyzed reflect that the majority of subjects appear to have some sort of cold attitude to the teaching approaches which are based on high seriousness during the undergrad teaching and learning set up. It may be because of the conservative view of the teaching profession in society that teachers must look like seers rather than peers. In Pakistan, education is becoming an industry and the higher education public sector has the same academic responsibilities as the private sector, but when adult learners are trained in a crowded academic environment without putting extra academic efforts the results could be otherwise and may not match with set targets. Respondents believe that teachers at higher education, irrespective of their discipline, need to take an attitude that encourages their preference for the learning knowledge and skills which could not learnt only with classical way of training students at higher education as the growing academic demands are becoming different day by day at higher education.

For example, we know that we have to consider the adult learner as ready learners because they get admission to any undergrad program with some professional objective and such readiness must be utilized by the concerned teachers. One of the ways to tap their readiness is to create such an academic environment which may accommodate all students such as light jokes about the subject can certainly become motivational factors that create a sense of ownership of the knowledge being learned. Learning new concept and skills may not be useful in the classroom if transmitted in a boring way because it is a continuous process that requires consistency not only from the learner but also from the teacher and when the things said in a monotonous approach it may not have far reaching academic impacts on the adult learners.

All kinds of humor such as stories, jokes, comics, theaters, videos, role-plays, simulations, competitions, etc., in academic life of the adult learners prepare them to become a normal human being and professional who believes in the lighter dimension of life. When we accept humor as an andragogical approach we must also be ready to accept that it reduces the dominant position of teachers in the tertiary level education, but at the same time provides instructors with such graduates who can be his / her future reference in professional life. The results of the study convince us that teaching at higher education level surely becomes stronger when teachers and students become equal partners in learning knowledge and skills and it is also important to write



that humor as an andragogical approach brings teachers closer to learners in a friendly way by building a scholarly relationship.

The study put before it the following questions

- 1) Is there any difference between friendly and serious teachers at higher education so far as teaching approaches are concerned?
- 2) Can humorous ways of teaching be called as an andragogical strategy?
- 3) Do the teachers who adopt humor as a teaching approach in adult learning carry more appreciation than the serious instructors at higher education?

By keeping into consideration the results we are in a position to state that there's yawning gap between humorous and serious approach of teaching the adult learner who cannot be treated like school children as the results reflect when we see that a majority subjects, irrespective of their disciplines, believe that strictness on the part of the teachers at higher education level does not easily promote knowledge and skills' assimilation. It is in fact the assurance of knowledge and skills at higher education that is the sole purpose of tertiary education because both of them ultimately bring a positive change in the overall academic and professional behaviour of the graduates who are to transmit the learnt knowledge and skills in their respective professional life. Hence, we can say the study has very aptly answered all the questions by saying that:

1. There is difference between friendly and serious teachers at higher education so far as teaching approaches are concerned.
2. Humorous ways of teaching can be called as an andragogical strategy.
3. Teachers who adopt humor as a teaching approach in adult learning carry more appreciation than the serious instructors at higher education.
4. Humor can be applied as a teaching technique in the classrooms of various disciplines equally? .

### **Conclusion**

In light of the results of the study, it can be concluded that teaching at higher education humorously is an effective way to ensure effective teaching and learning of knowledge and skills. In addition to being a andragogical method, it is an effective motivational factor for providing future professionals with such tools that can help them in their social and academic lives.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made taking into account the results and conclusions of the study.

- 1) Humor is an effective teaching method for teaching at higher education level. Therefore, it can be included as part of pedagogy for effective transmission of knowledge and skills.
- 2) Humorous andragogical approach can be part of the development factor of teachers involved in teaching undergrad classes.
- 3) Teaching with the help of humorous stories, jokes, comics, plays, videos, role-playing games, simulations, and competitions in a variety of techniques could be considered as academic needs of future professionals.
- 4) Higher education should be encouraged to use humorous teaching methods when teaching content-based courses related to their relevant discipline.
- 5) Humorous teaching techniques can be seen both as a paradigm shift and as a requirement of today's andragogy for teaching and learning in higher education sector.

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