

## ROLE OF SENSE OF HUMOUR IN DEVELOPING COMMUNICATION SKILLS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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### **Abstract:**

*The very existence of the human beings largely depends on language, a commonly used medium for communication. People invariably have to use a language for their day today activities. English Language, as a global language communication has become an influential factor for the majority of the people across different countries of the world. Hence all the educational institutions give much importance to train their students in English Language Communication Skills (ELCS). Training is always a learner centred programme. The role of a teacher in ELCS is a mere facilitator. English is not mother tongue for the Indian learners as they learn English as a second language. Effective environment has to be created so as to enable them make them participate actively in learning English language and to develop their communication skills. Criticism and very strict learning environment never make the learners learn English language skills effectively. Using humour makes them feel good and instills confidence to learn and communicate in English. This paper is an attempt to understand the need for humour in ELCS training programs on the part of English teachers.*

**Keywords:** Humour, communication, English, training, learning.

### **Introduction**

Possessing effective communication skills in English enables the students to get a job, to get promotion in the job, to acquire social skills, to build healthy and trust worthy relationships. Survival in one's life and success in his efforts become possible only with these skills.

So Ayman opines that:

Nowadays, knowledge of English has become an essential part of everyday life of the global world. Many people are using English in nearly every sector and for international relations. One variable which has received a lot of attention recently in the language learning process is beliefs about language learning which Horwitz (2007) considers as central constructs in every discipline which deals with human behavior.

As communication skills are part of life skills, much care has to be taken to create a conducive environment in English classrooms. Language teachers, communication skills trainers and learners consider this learning process complex, especially regarding English language, as most of the teachers in developing countries like India are non-native speakers of English language.

### **Benefits of Humour**

Humour is one of the nine emotions ('Nav Rasas' in Indian Languages). It is used frequently among friends and familiar people. According to *Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary*, 'humour' is the quality in something that makes it funny or amusing; the ability to laugh at things that are amusing. It is a way to draw the attention of the students for the entire session. It is needless to say that by using humour both the trainer

and the learner can get many benefits. Usually speaking, a sense of humor makes the learning environment more conducive and comfortable by reducing the anxiety level of all kinds of learners.

As Munoz observes “There are many benefits to complementing humor in the classroom, it creates a cooperative atmosphere helping students to better relate to one another and it focuses them more effectively. It adds a cultural frame to language by presenting a tone, expression and context to the materials, thus increasing cultural knowledge.” The use of humour reduces tension, improves eagerness, increases enjoyment, most importantly, it creates student - teacher or learner- trainer a good rapport. It can allow even the timid and introvert students in the learners group to participate with other students of the group irrespective of their background..

When humour is used properly, it allows the student to feel that he can participate in the process of learning without any inhibition. This is of particular importance in a communicative classroom as communication skills need all about participation and interaction. Humour is definitely a kind of easy and smooth way to reach those who are nervous to express in English language. Student motivation also becomes easier through this way.

Chabeli states “using humor that is appreciated by learners can act as intrinsic motivator as it will elicit positive emotions while generating sustained interest and involvement in the construction of one's own learning”. To possess communication skills learner needs motivation. “Providing students the chance to experience humor of the target language will not only be a motivating factor in their study of language, but will also benefit them in terms of their sense of integration into the social life of the people with whom they are trying to communicate” (Omaggio). Another important benefit is that students can recollect easily what they learnt, “not only recall and recognition are enhanced through humor, but also provide new evidence that humor increases one's ability to understand the information” (Hackathorn).

### **Scope of using Humor**

Unlike other subjects and other skills, training in English language communication skills has much scope and much more possibility to use humour. Learners can be made protagonists of the situations. For instance, in teaching grammar, the names of the students may be used in sentences given as examples so that they will be very active. Using humor helps the learner in acquiring vocabulary which is usually a difficult part of language learning. Using humour may also make him aware of specific features in the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language. Inserting humorous sentences or incidents makes students attentive. It also facilitates the learners in developing visual memory and improving the linguistic problem solving ability.

In communicating with others, using humour in idiomatic expressions, puzzles, proverbs, pronunciation, games and grammatical errors may widen learner's perspective. In greetings, expressing opinions, asking for directions, supporting the views of others, opposing the opinions of others, inviting, praising, suggesting, communication skills trainer can use humour and can make others use humour. Specifically, role play, is a very important activity and it plays a major role in learning everyday social interaction and hence should contain humour. During debates and group discussions also there is wider scope to use this useful tool. Much number of humorous materials are available in internet which can make the trainers quite comfortable in the training session.

### **Humour as a tool for developing rapport with learners**

Laughter helps us in forgetting our problems, difficulties, fears, painful incidents. So generally people like the person who is humorous. Particularly, related to English language learning, both teachers and learners like it. If the students like their teacher, they also will like the subject taught by him so that it increases quality of the outcome. A strict teacher can be successful but a humorous teacher can be more successful. The teacher's sense of humour reduces the emotional and intellectual distance between teacher and learner. The statement “the more laughing in the classroom, the smaller is the distance

between the learners and the teacher” (Chabeli) is supported incontrovertibly by educationalists.

### **Sense of humour and English teachers**

English language teachers who have the ability to use humour are definitely respected and loved more by their students. Being humorous is a charming attitude and so students welcome him with smiling faces. In reality, English teachers are more fortunate as they have this opportunity of using humour by telling jokes, stories, and conducting funny language activities. Schmitz finds that “English has a large stock of phonological jokes that bring together different meanings of a specific word or relate different word sense that sound alike”. Learners of English language are expected to identify humorous ways of using words in order to successfully communicate in the language. “The job of the teacher is to get students laughing, and when their mouths are open, to give them something on which to chew” (Paul-Emile Chiasson 2002). So humour should be an integral part of ELCS training programs.

Despite the benefits in using humour, teachers and trainers have a reasonable fear that humour leads to poor class room management and the learning process may become disorder and out of control. As this is true, it shouldn't be used without preparation and clear and well defined objectives. Desirable environment can be created with well-prepared humorous activities in the communicative language. If it is not so, it will become private and sarcastic, consequently making the class room chaotic. Humour that creates sadistic pleasure, by affecting the sentiment of the individuals' faith and beliefs should be completely avoided.

### **Conclusion**

It is said that Laughter works like medicine and keeps many deceases away. We like people with sense of humour. The teacher who provokes laughter can win the heart of the students. One should have a clear view that using humour does not mean only telling jokes, stories and other language components; it may be even the mannerisms of the teacher like articulation, body language like facial expressions, posture, gesture etc. that causes laughter.

When a learner wants to possess communicative competence, he needs to understand its culture also. Humour can create linguistic awareness and information about the culture of the language. Thus, the teaching of humorous content can assist both in the development of relevant linguistic skills and cultural knowledge which is helpful for the interaction, which is very much the purpose of communication skills.

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