

## **Humour: A Helpful Teaching Aid for Teachers in Balochistan**

**Language and Literature**

**Jaffar Shah <sup>1</sup>, Syed Hussain Shah <sup>2</sup>  
& Ghulam Rasool <sup>3</sup>**

### **Abstract**

*Balochistan is the largest province of the country, but along with other fields of study, this province needs drastic measures to bring about improvement in the field of English language and literature. English is an essential means of instruction in the educational institutions and universities of Balochistan. Unfortunately, students in Balochistan fail to acquire better results owing to ineffective teaching methods. English teachers in Balochistan make recourse to a number of teaching aids to make learning of English an interesting task. It has been learnt through practical examples that monotonous teaching style leads to boredom and lack of response. Rigid and stiff manners shake the confidence of shy and timid students from poor background. This research paper aims to pinpoint the significance of humour as a helpful teaching aid for teachers in the province of Balochistan. A teacher succeeds in student motivation only when he knows how to bring smiles on the faces of the pupil. Undoubtedly, English language and Literature at times become so difficult to grasp that without bundles of laughter, it is impossible to achieve teaching goals. This paper is meant to figure out how the tool of humour in its true sense: with a didactic purpose and free from farce, assures a conducive class environment and how English learning becomes an easy task with smiles on the faces of the students.*

**Key Words:** Balochistan, Humour, Student, Teacher.

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<sup>1</sup> Lecturer, Department of English Balochistan Agriculture College Quetta, Pakistan.  
Email: [jaffarshah000@yahoo.com](mailto:jaffarshah000@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Department of Education (Colleges) Govt Boys Inter College, Brewery Road Quetta, Pakistan. Email: [hussainshah77@gmail.com](mailto:hussainshah77@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> Lecturer, Department of English University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.  
Email: [khajjakghulamrasool@yahoo.com](mailto:khajjakghulamrasool@yahoo.com)

## **Introduction**

In a classroom, concerned faces of students due to an atmosphere marked by lack of interest and variety, a teacher gets an impetus to make lecture interesting through amusing anecdotes and references from history and daily life. Humour is a tool that helps provoke numerous laughters. For the surprise of the teacher, students seem to accept the complicated rules of English grammar and ambiguous terms in English Literature such as Blank Verse, Iambic Pentametre, Tragi Comedy, Stream of Consciousness process, Electra and Oedipus Complex, Soliloquy, Aside, Chorus, Willing Suspension of Disbelief and the like. But humour in its true spirit, is not something of the type of farce: it is a process which is both amusing and didactic. Humour without a serious aim, leads to hazardous consequences. Humour meant only to ridicule produces appalling results.

## **The Concept**

According to Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary, humour is the quality of something that makes it funny or amusing. The Merriam Webster Dictionary defines humour as 'the mental faculty of discovering, expressing or appreciating something that is comical, amusing, or absurdly incongruous'.

In the antiquity, there was a concept of four fluids named four humours from which originates the term in question over here. The concept illustrates that the even distribution of the four fluids in the human body renders a balanced personality. In contrary to the said even distribution, the result is a man with some mental disproportion. In English Literature too, there are numerous examples of the concept of the four humour in plays termed as Comedy of Humours. In the tradition of the concept of four humours, especially in the plays of famous English playwright, Ben Jonson, we find characters dominated by one of the four humours or fluids. The fluids are blood, phlegm, choler and melancholy that control human inclinations according to the concept. Blood here stands for cheerfulness and optimism; Phlegm in disproportion makes a man lethargic and sluggish; Choler, without a balance, renders hot temper; Black bile is the symbol of gloom and sadness according to the concept. The above humours in disproportion produce a man having eccentric manners. The concept also helps an English teacher understand the individual differences and human psychology. A teacher has to deal students on merit and according to their idiosyncrasy and natural bent of mind. This helps a teacher guide his students in the best way and according to their inclination when it comes to shape their brighter future.

Moreover, the humour of literary titans in English literature such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Alexander Pope, Charles Lamb, and Charles Dickens is both mild and didactic. These titans of universal

literature teach us the purest and best form of humour to apply anywhere both to entertain and teach. As an English teacher in Balochistan, the form of humour learnt from towering figures of English Literature as cited above, has always helped every teacher over here to bring smiles on the faces of the students and to achieve the goals of teaching English with remarkable success. However, humour should not be mishandled and must be resorted to according to the situation so that it does not render hazardous results for the teacher and students. What may seem humorous in one ambience may not be so in another environment. Humour associated with a specific atmosphere becomes its inseparable part. The teacher in a particular setting must have an understanding of the tendencies of his pupil so that he gets response and appreciation from his students for his humour. There are numerous merits of the association of humour with the teaching of English. Humour is the source of liveliness in the English classroom especially in Balochistan which already lags behind in this field because of being less developed province. Gatt (2000) highlights the importance of humour for students that “they need humour, which the teacher can find in very different places. Therefore, the teacher must bring in humour during his lessons...”

Thus, it is obvious that one of the sources of arousing students’ interest and motivation is humour in the English classroom. The benefits of humour are enjoyed both by teachers and students simultaneously.

### **Origin**

Greek pioneers of knowledge and learning, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle highlight in their works the significance of purest humour. In his prominent literary piece *The Poetics*, Aristotle illustrates that infirmity which does not provoke disgust is the true basis for humour. All learned people around the world unanimously deem true humour the product of wit and genius. It is rightly believed that true humour should be aimed at giving a moral lesson in a mild way so that the didactic process does become scornful and irritating.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Unfortunately, Balochistan is a province that has extreme deficiencies in the field of English language and literature. There are neither effective teaching methods nor required equipments in the form of Audio visual aids and modern technology facilities to make learning an easy task. Because of poor education system and lack of facilities, students fail to learn language and literature in the best way. The deficiency is owing to the lack of interest on the part of all the stakeholders. There is need for drastic measures to develop education system and eradicate class distinction in the acquiring of education. The present research was mainly conducted for the furtherance of English language and literature in the best interest of the people of the province of Balochistan. The

focus of this research is the use of humour in the English classroom in Balochistan and it has been observed that the studies earlier to this paper have not considered the use of humour as a helpful teaching aid in Balochistan for English teachers. This study aims to focus on the significance of humour as an important tool for English teachers in the province of Balochistan.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of this paper is to ascertain as to how the tool of humour can be a helpful aid for teachers in Balochistan in the course of teaching English language and literature. The specific objectives are as under:

- a) To dissect true humour and to figure out whether the tool of humour has been resorted to in the province of Balochistan by English teachers.
- b) To ascertain whether the use of humour in its true spirit has produced desired results for English teachers and students of language and literature.

### **Discussion**

Humour is a fantastic teaching aid that provokes bundle of laughters in an English class room. Every English teacher surely resorts to this tool so as to achieve his teaching goals in an ambience free from monotony and boredom. Teachers have described "... humour as an essential quality of a good teacher." (Sylwester.2001) Moreover, "Humour is the characteristic that makes something laughable or amusing but humour in the English classroom has more than just the 'effect to induce laughter'; it brings about multiple reactions by stimulating the learner's motivation and self confidence which creates a positive classroom atmosphere for the smooth acquiring of the language."(Bonjour 2011) In a cordial ambience, a student feels free to ask his teacher what strikes his mind and never bothers to be made fun of or ridiculed. Students move at a steady pace in a conducive classroom environment free of tension and the element of fear.

Life is the amalgamation of both joys and sorrows: without both life seems to be incomplete. A teacher with an authoritarian approach never imparts with success what he wants and should impart. Humour in this connection is an amazing tool for English teachers because at times it becomes so difficult to grasp grammar and literature. Students get an impetus when teacher succeeds at arousing their chief interest. As English teachers in Balochistan, at times, we come across figures of speech such as Simile, Metaphor, Personification, Hyperbole, Euphemism, etc. There are other figures of Speech such as Oxymoron, Paradox, Litotes, and Onomatopoeia. There are tens of thousands

of interesting examples in English literature regarding the figures mentioned above. In the course of teaching such figures, we quote interesting examples from famous literary works and to our utter surprise, students seem to get a rebirth from tedious environment. There are figures of contrast such as Irony and Sarcasm. While teaching Irony, we refer to both Verbal and Situational Irony of Jane Austen in her famous novel Emma. This Irony present in famous literary works of writers such as Geoffrey Chaucer, William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, and Jonathan Swift makes my job extremely easy. Irony in The Prologue to Canterbury Tales, Elizabethan plays, The Rape of the Lock, Gulliver's Travels is an ample testimony to what actually Irony is and how Irony should be taught. Such examples help a teacher provoke bundles of laughters in an English classroom. Students both enjoy and learn to the best in a lenient and amusing environment. Students listen to such examples with smile on their faces. With the help of humorous quotes, teacher makes learning the easiest task. There are literary terms such as Aside, Soliloquy, Chorus and the like for which interesting examples can be quoted from the comedies of William Shakespeare and others contemporary playwrights.

Interesting events of personal life can help in arousing students' interest and can motivate them towards learning English. Such events narrated in the class, in connection with the topic under discussion, help students forget about their problems and learn easily. Marklin (Walker 2002) remarks that "... students enjoy humour in forms of funny anecdotes." Humour coupled with an element of edification, helps produce a conducive environment in the classroom. While teaching 'how to write a personal essay', we can narrate anecdotes full of humour, related to personal experiences. Students take keen interest when they listen to some story having element of humour. While teaching spelling rules, we can make the pronunciation interesting by producing the silent letters in sounds in words such as Psychology, pseudonym, daughter, night, gnome, bright, doubt, design, apothegm and the like. Students start laughing all of a sudden and the aim to make learning an easy task is achieved.

### **The Significance of Laughter**

It has been learnt through practical experiences that laughter is of great value to all kinds of people in every walk of life and in every phase and stage of life. Laughter helps them forget about their worries and be part of the group so as to learn and enjoy. There is an important relation between education and humour. A man surrounded by worries never makes good in future. Laughter is a great force that develops our emotional and intellectual faculties. There is great therapy in humour and laughter. Even the world of advertisement resorts to humour and laughter so as to sell their goods. They make humorous commercials so as to popularise their products in the market because people

respond quickly to their offers and products when they are introduced in an interesting way (Phillips, 2002).

Children, who get an ambience free of strict and stiff manners, prove to be effective learners. Humour, in actuality, is some positive and amusing experience that makes learning an ideal enterprise. Paul McGhee points out that “Humour appreciation seems to involve two distinct mental activities; we must first identify the nature of the incongruous event, and then set out to resolve or make sense of it” (1979). Laughter has an impact both mentally and physically because free mind assures a healthy body. Humour and laughter have great healing powers. Even when the humorous event is recalled later on, the past pleasant experience heals the present predicament. Laughter teaches us that we must be patient enough to accept both sides of the life. Laughter is the source that teaches us how to make learning interesting activity.

### **The Kind of Laughter to Avoid**

It has been mentioned time and again in this paper that humour and laughter misjudged lead to reverse outcome. A teacher should fully understand humour in its true spirit according to the child psychology and avoid the kind of humour that produces destructive results. If a teacher wishes for fruitful connection with his student, he must know which humour to use and which one not to use. The humour must not be degrading, harshly ironical, hurtful, and meant to single out some student with natural infirmity. Low humour is the one that is monotonous, biased, has sexual or cultural misconceptions, and humour that is directed at someone who does not want to participate (Forsyth, Alterman & Forsyth, 1997).

### **Humour: An Aid for Teachers and Students**

Teachers in order to control mischievous students, make use of irony and witty remarks. This both creates fun and the aim to control class is achieved without having recourse to strict and tyrannical methods. About the merits of humour it is widely believed that “... anecdotal evidence in past studies consistently suggests that humour is an extremely effective tool in education. These same studies suggest that the use of humour in the classroom reduces tension, improves classroom climate, increases enjoyment, increases student-teacher rapport and even facilitates learning.” (Loomax and Moosavi 1998)

In classroom there are always different students with their idiosyncrasies. Teacher has to deal with them keeping in view their background and inclinations. Humour is a tool that helps weak and less privileged students gain confidence and be integral part of the group. Humour gives confidence to shy students and they do not feel insecure in a large group. Shy students begin to participate in all kinds of activities. Active participation is extremely important

as language is for the most part improved through class participation. In Present Simple Tense, in a positive sentence with he, she, it, "s, es and ies" are added to the first form of the verb. An English teacher speaks out the following sentence in English classroom:

"Eye sees it." And asks his students if the sentence is correct according to English grammar. All the students taking it as " I sees it" ,declare it incorrect and tell their teacher that the correct sentence is: " I see it." But then their teacher writes the sentence "Eye sees it." On the board and all his students respond with boisterous laughters. The class environment changes all of a sudden and students take breaths of relief. This is how humour works and such examples help a teacher create an atmosphere of enthusiasm and zeal. Students from poor background can be motivated easily in a congenial environment. Therefore, let's be friendly instead of being rigid and dictatorial; let's be as sweet as possible; let's be teachers and spiritual fathers.

## **Conclusion**

Humour is the spice of life. Laughters help us escape the World of worries to the World of amusement and oblivion. Laughters create a state of oblivion in which we find ourselves at an indescribable bliss. However, humour mishandled leads to extreme form of indiscipline in the class. Laughters should be provoked with a purpose and within ethical limits. Humour must not be the source to look down upon some weak student. Humour must not be targeted at some natural infirmity of the students. Humour must be witty and meaningful. Humour must have thematic link with the topic under discussion. Humour in its true spirits, allows the teacher to give confidence to his students. Humour helps a teacher overcome monotony in the lecture. Humour helps students forget about tension and learn language at an easy pace without any fear of being ridiculed.

Teacher who are dedicated to their job, aspire for the success of their pupil in their mental development. They wish a prosperous future for their students both in their academics and in their practical life. They must use positive and constructive humour in the form of jokes, riddles, comic stories, games, acting, dialogues, and comic debates so as to relax his students and motivate their learning process. A teacher can be successful in involving every student in the classroom activities if he is able to bring smiles on their faces. The use of humour in the form of jokes, riddles, comic debates, and comic story writing is also one of the best sources of creativity for students. Such activities give confidence, relief, and amusement to the students. Humour in such a practical form helps in releasing tension and learning becomes some practical experience that eventually results in the well being of the pupil.

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