



THE VALUE OF HUMOR IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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Humor is a powerful instructional resource in a language classroom. According to Ronald Berk “the psychological and physiological benefits of laughter can have a direct impact on teaching and learning, especially in five significant areas: teacher -student rapport, classroom atmosphere, student responsiveness, test performance, and student attendance” (2000, 152). Humor can hold the attention of the learners and create a learner-centered classroom atmosphere which helps to understand the individual differences of the learner within the classroom social milieu. It increases retention of what is learnt in the classroom through a catalytic form of laughter -oriented humorous material and cultivate constructive attitudes towards errors and mistakes while arousing learner interest and attention. The learners become tension-free and they can get rid of language anxiety in a joyous atmosphere created by laughter. Hence, this study investigated how humor helps to teach and learn English as a second language in the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Ruhuna. The sample comprised 60 1st year students who were following the course of BSc Agricultural Resource Management & Technology in 2014. Questionnaire surveys and interviews were conducted with the students to gain in-depth insights into the humor used in the classroom. In addition the researcher conducted the class for one semester, 30 hours and experienced how humor impacted on language teaching and learning. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study depicted that humor in the language classroom has a direct positive impact on teaching and learning language. Thus the findings are significant in preparing curricula or lesson materials to teach English language effectively for the educational, professional and socio-economic benefits of the students.

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