



5th Annual International Conference on TESOL

USING HUMOUR: The Spice of Effective Teaching

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I. Introduction

- The importance of effective teaching + student learning outcomes
- Effective teaching \Rightarrow the connection established between the teacher + the students
- The teacher's behavior \Rightarrow the quality of instruction + the learning environment

I. Introduction (Cont)

- Creating an environment conducive to optimal student learning
- Injecting some fun into our classroom \Rightarrow a sense of humor
- Teaching \Rightarrow cooking \Rightarrow our addition of some spice \Rightarrow using humor

II. What is Humour?

- Something that makes a person laugh or smile
- Forms of humour \Rightarrow jokes, puns, anecdotes, + cartoons
- Humour \Rightarrow universal or culture bound

Examples

A. Jokes

A: Mr. Maxwell couldn't sleep after his wife left him.

B: Why? Did he miss her?

A: No, she took the bed with her.

Football player: I don't know what to say. I feel so ashamed for missing that goal that I could kick myself.

Football coach: Let me do it for you – you're sure to miss.



B. Puns

Customer: Excuse me, will my hamburger be
long?

Waiter: No, sir. It'll be round.

Customer: Waiter, call me a taxi, please.

Waiter: Okay, sir. You're a taxi.

C. Humour relevant to topics or concepts

Echo

A man and his wife were traveling out West and stopped at a sign that said, “Echo Point.”

“Try it,” the woman said.

“I think it’s silly, but I’ll try it,” her husband said. With that he shouted at the top of his voice, “You’re a liar!”



After a minute, he said, “See, nothing happened.”

“Try it again,” his wife said.

To impress his wife, this time he shouted,
“You’re the only woman I love.”

And then the echo came back, “You’re a liar!”

Enemy

A priest saw two little boys fighting outside the church.

“You shouldn’t fight,” he said to the bigger boy.

“Remember, you should love your enemy.”

“But he’s not my enemy,” said the boy. “He’s my brother.”

D. Cartoons



III. How Important Is Humour in the Classroom?

- Peter Medgyes \Rightarrow humour is of vital importance for human beings to survive
- **Three** main reasons why we should use humour in our teaching:
 - ❶ Humour helps capture our student's attention.
 - ❷ Humour can be a great stress reliever.
 - ❸ Our students are more likely to be receptive to learning.

① Capture our student's attention

- Student's attention span \Rightarrow limited + varied according to their ages
- Cracking a relevant joke during our teaching \Rightarrow students remaining attentive and concentrated

② A great stress reliever

- Learning \Rightarrow stressful \Rightarrow working hard without fun
- The most earnest student \Rightarrow a moment of fun
- Tension + stress in the classroom \Rightarrow boredom \Rightarrow demotivating students \Rightarrow developing their loathing for the subject or course

- Use of humour in every lesson \Rightarrow relaxation + a positive atmosphere
- **Loomans & Kolbert** \Rightarrow allowing the brain a breather to process + integrate learning material

③ Being receptive to learning

- Cultivating humour \Rightarrow establishing a supportive social climate
- Humour \Rightarrow a catalyst for our student's excitement + enthusiasm about learning \Rightarrow fast learning + full information retention



- **Katherine Abbott & Mark Lewis** ⇒

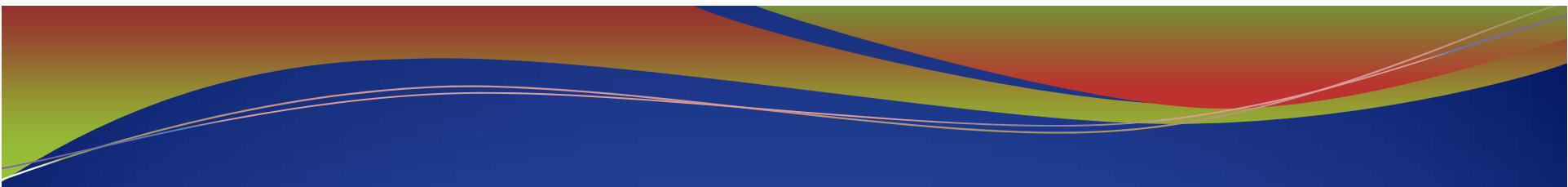
Student's commitment to the learning process ⇒ not possible ⇒ if students are reticent

- Associating the curriculum with fun ⇒ increasing our student's motivation, comprehension + memory

- Hill \Rightarrow Jokes + anecdotes \Rightarrow a memorable context for student recall
- Scott Thornbury \Rightarrow A basic rule of thumb for grammar teaching \Rightarrow efficacy
- The efficacy of a grammar activity \Rightarrow partly measured by the degree of attention it arouses
- The efficacy \Rightarrow memorable grammar learning

IV. Opportunities to Incorporate Humour in the Classroom

- Humour \Rightarrow serving a variety of purposes to enhance teaching effectiveness
- **Meelam Kher** \Rightarrow all terms of humour can be interjected in various phases of the instructional process \Rightarrow warming up, presentation, practice + production stages
- Bringing humour into the teaching of grammar \Rightarrow serious language can be fun

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- Students enjoying the exercises + remembering the content
 - Using cartoons for production \Rightarrow talking about, writing a story about, + giving captions to selected cartoons

Examples

A. Jokes for grammar presentation and practice

A: My grandmother is 83 and she **has got** one grey hair on her head.

B: That's amazing!

A: No, it's not. She's bald!

A: Oh darling! You **mustn't** leave me!

B: But I can't leave you.

A: Is that because you love me so much, darling?

B: No, it's because you're standing on my foot!

A: Why are you hitting your dog with a chair?

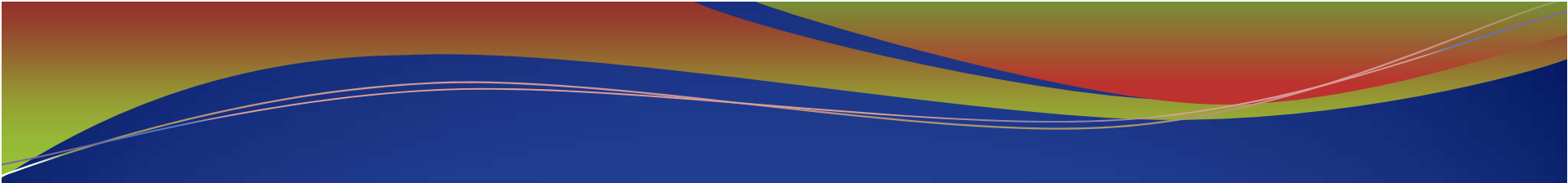
B: Because I **can't** lift the table!

(From Grammar with Laughter By George Woolard)

B. Jokes for word definitions

Some people believe that copying from one source is *plagiarism* but copying from several sources is *research*.

An English teacher asked a student, "Give me a synonym for **injustice**."

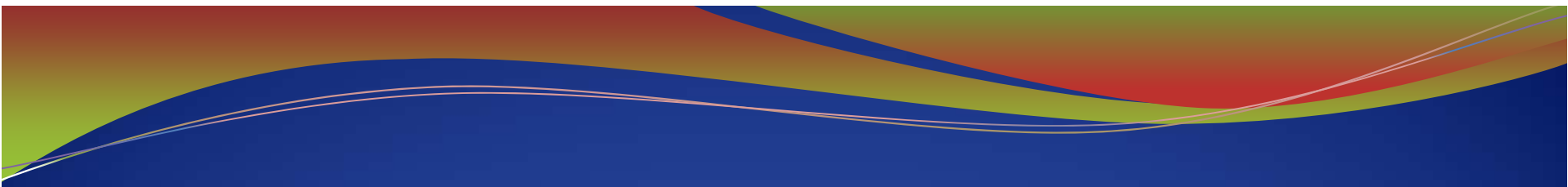


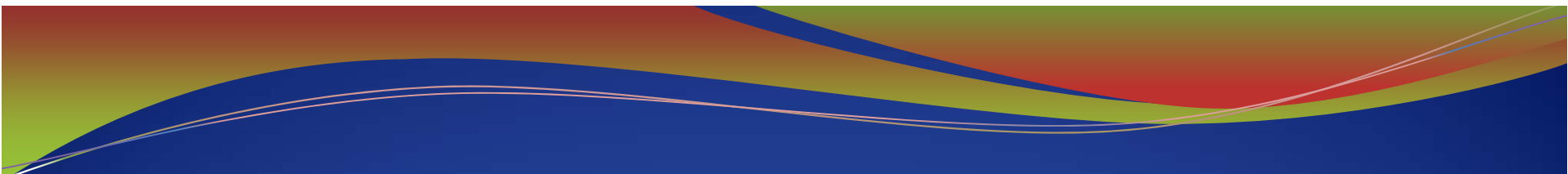
“When my father makes a mistakes in the homework and the teacher blames me,” said the student.

Teacher: Why do they call our language the **mother tongue?**

Student: Because fathers seldom get the chance to use it.

(From Academic Jokes By S.M. Mathur)

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- **Guidelines for appropriate use of humour**
 - Avoid directing humour at an individual or a group.
 - Avoid racial slurs or put-downs of a target group.
 - Resist the temptation to refer to ethnicity, disability, appearance, or any other offensive identifiers.

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- Avoid sexually suggestive humour **exept** in context of sex education.
 - Avoid using irrelevant jokes
 - Avoid prolonging funny moments in class.
 - Make use of just-in-time humour.

VI. Conclusion

- Teacher's job \Rightarrow providing an encouraging learning environment \Rightarrow student's relaxation, confidence, + enthusiasm
- Students feeling relaxed and invested in the language process \Rightarrow teachers achieving their lesson objectives

VI. Conclusion (Cont)

- Humour \Rightarrow not everything in instructional success \Rightarrow but a motivational factor for developing a positive learning environment
- Teachers \Rightarrow powerful role models \Rightarrow using appropriate humour to spice up their teaching \Rightarrow to achieve effective teaching + learning

References

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