

Teachers' Use of Humor in Teaching and Students' Rating of Their Effectiveness

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which teachers use humour in teaching in Migori district, Kenya, and students' ratings of their teaching effectiveness. Purposive and random sampling procedures were used in the selection of the sample for the study. Students and teachers in 6 secondary schools in Migori District participated in the study. Data was collected using questionnaire. Three hundred and eleven students (159 male and 152 female) responded to the questionnaire designed to be used by students, which surveyed the students' opinion of their teachers. Thirty-five teachers also responded to the questionnaire that was designed to survey the humour style that is common among them.

In this study, the data collected was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Inferential and descriptive statistics were used. The level of significance used in the study was 0.05. The results indicate that the use of humour in teaching is generally good and that there is a significant, moderate relationship between the use of humour and students' rating of teachers' effectiveness. The results also indicate that the most commonly used styles of humour among the students are the positive styles of humour (Affiliative humour and Self-enhancing humour).

In conclusion, teachers who use humor in teaching are generally rated effective in terms of motivation, creation of engaging lessons and anxiety reduction in students. The teachers are also rated effective in terms of stimulation of thought and interest in students and fostering of a positive teacher-student relationship.

Keywords: Humour, Teaching effectiveness, Affiliative humour, Self-enhancing humour

1. Introduction

Schools are making effort to ensure that their teachers are effective in every way in subject delivery. A lot of emphasis is placed on the curriculum in secondary schools but not on the methodology of delivery of the same. The main focus of this study was to investigate the extent to which secondary school teachers' use humor while teaching and the effect that the use of humour gives to their teaching. The study aimed to identify the variables that are positively or negatively affected by teachers' use of humor in teaching. Moreover, the study sought to find solutions and strategies to make teachers have a formed opinion of the use of humour in delivery of subject matter while teaching so as to be more effective.

Teachers are constantly in search of creative and invigorating teaching strategies that can compete with the internet, media and other forms of home entertainment for the attention of their students (Cornett, 2001). Research shows that in addition to having students learn curriculum, most teachers wish to have students enjoy time in their classes (Burgess, 2000). Teachers have questions about the most effective ways to relate to students and ensure their academic success. For these teachers, success may be found in approaches that make relevant connections and encourage higher-order thinking (Gurtler, 2002). Interestingly, one element of human development that has been proven to edify familial relationships and encourage academic excellence is often overlooked by teachers. That element is humor. Dr. Robert Provine, professor of psychology and neuroscience at the University of Maryland, answers for parents and teachers can be found in the same, simple approach: plenty of feel-good, hearty and infectious humor-induced laughter (2000).

Laughter is described by humor researchers as a response to pleasurable and/or amusing physical, emotional and/or intellectual stimuli that affects the brain in interesting and very complex ways. This understanding is based on data collection and clinical analyses causes and effects of laughter, which are said by many researchers to be so complex that it is quite difficult for them to settle on one basic definition of humor. Some even assert that humor patterns and what people find funny are not entirely traceable at present (Latta, 1998).

Research shows that laughter is an effective way for people of all ages to release pent-up tensions or energy, permit the expression of ideas or feelings that would otherwise be difficult to express and facilitate coping with trying circumstances (McGhee, 1983). The link between laughter and academic success is also well documented. Positive connections between teachers' use of humor and academic achievement even follow students into colleges and beyond (Hickman & Crossland, 2004-2005).

In a departure from most previous humor-related research, Neuliep (1991) investigated the effects of humor by soliciting teacher (rather than student) perceptions of their own humor usage and its effects in the classroom. Neuliep's study questioned 388 Wisconsin area high school teachers and asked them to indicate their rationale and subsequent perceived effect for their employment of humor. Among the most commonly stated reasons for employing humor were: its effect as a relaxing, comforting, and tension reducing device, its humanizing effect on teacher image, and its effect of maintaining/increasing student interest and enjoyment. Thus, as Neuliep himself acknowledges, humor is not perceived as, "a strategy for increasing

student comprehension and learning” (p.354).

According to Greenberg (2001) the best times to deliver serious points in teaching or a presentation to students is right after they laugh. This is because they need time to relax their minds in the midst of the intense learning and presentations. If this moment is not provided to them, Greenberg (2001) continues to say, they will end up looking like they are listening while they, actually, are not. Humor helps to provide the intensity of the next serious point in the content and is also considered to be one of the most effective tools to judge the quality of any relationship (Moore, 2006). McGhee (2002) stresses the importance of humor using his own words in an interesting way: “...laughter is the shortest distance between two people...” (par 4).

However, despite the above facts, emphasis on humor is still missing in teacher training programs, let alone the classrooms where teachers may be encouraged to be more humorous while teaching and providing the learners with the opportunity to acquire such skills in staff development programs (Chi, 1992). This means that humor has not been given its due emphasis yet great forces that are always at play, compelling great attention to the process and products of teaching and learning are the implications to student quality (Chye, 2008).

A lot of attention is being given to the curriculum content and the methodology of delivery of the curriculum content in teaching and learning to ensure effectiveness. Just as Chickering and Gamson (1987) seem to agree, content and pedagogy are connected, in that what is taught is as important as how it is taught. Being an effective teacher requires skills in planning, assessing, motivating, observing and analysing students, managing groups, among other skills. But most importantly, the teacher should be able to create engaging lessons out of the “content” of the curriculum (Flanagan, 2007).

Developing countries do not seem to give much attention to the school effects such as social practices or material inputs and their contribution to students’ performance as industrialized countries do, according to Fuller (1987). Yet these factors (social practices and material inputs) contribute a lot to the fluctuations in achievement of students in particular subjects. Kenya is one of the countries that gives much attention to effectiveness and efficiency in teaching; note, with a country whose Teachers Service Commission has as its vision the following statement: “To be an institution of excellence in the provision of efficient service for quality teaching” (Teachers Service Commission – Kenya, 2004).

As a matter of fact, there is a tendency to put much of the attention on outcome, rather than on the way to get to the desired or best outcome in the teaching-learning process. Abagi and Odipo (1997) agree with Fuller (1987) by saying that much emphasis is placed on examinations’ results which is used as an indicator of schools’ efficiency. They say that emphasis should rather be placed on delivery of curriculum content in the best way that it can be of benefit to the learners. Jones (2001) adds that schools are more focused on methodology, accountability and testing, therefore, focus on creating an optimal learning environment is often limited. Bruner (2006) stresses that teaching is and should always **be** the center of transforming students’ thinking by all means.

This, consequently, means that concern should be on how the effort to transform the students' thinking is made. Consider this example as quoted from Verma (2007):

“All of us at some point in our lives have been in a class where the lecture being delivered by the teacher casts a spell of boredom and dullness on all students, most of whom who find it unbearable, knock off to sleep. The kind of teachers, who would walk in the class like zombies, and lecture day in day out, as if they were talking to the walls. Classes conducted by such teachers who fail to change their repetitive ways can be really frustrating and academically detrimental for the students.” (par 6)

Consider also Powers (2005) who concedes with the following words: “...one of the greatest sins in teaching is to be boring...” (par 3). Peters and Waterman (1984) seem to agree with Verma (2007) and Powers (2005) by pointing out the fact that if information is overloaded, it seems to sit in the short-term memory, which cannot process it all and within a short while, things end up getting so confusing to the student. Humor can also help physiologically to connect the left-brain activities to the right-brain creative side and thereby allowing students to better assimilate the information presented. This is to say that humor presents, in the students, some sort of mental sharpness (Garner, 2005).

Audrieth (1998) adds that in a situation where ideas are very important and even controversial at times, they must be presented to minds which are not very receptive to learning- a fact that is very typical of teenagers in secondary schools – humor can help the teachers to get the message across.

Powers (2005) contends that a good teacher is one who looks for effective and different methods to generate interest and enthusiasm among the students that he or she teaches. The good and effective use of humor as a learning strategy has continually been attributed to better and increased comprehension of the subject content, increased retention of the taught material and the creation of a more comfortable learning environment (Garner, 2005; Cooper, 2008; McMorris, Lin, & Torak, 2004). This is in addition to the fact that the use of humor does away with anxiety and fear among the students, it stimulates curiosity and interest towards learning, it controls rebellious and disruptive behavior in the classroom among the students and it fosters a positive relationship between the teacher and the student (Verma, 2005). Bootz (2003) agrees that a poor relationship between a teacher and a student has a negative effect on teaching and learning.

1.1 Research Questions

Our analysis of the data collected addressed two main questions:

1. Which of the following variables is related to teachers' use of humor in teaching?
 - a) Students' rating of teaching effectiveness in terms of:
 - Motivation of students
 - Creation of engaging lessons
 - Anxiety reduction in students

- Stimulation of thought and interest in students
 - Fostering of positive teacher-student relationship
- b) Students' affective learning
2. Which style of humor is most commonly used by the teachers?

2. Method

This study aimed at exploring the degree of correlation between two variables - the independent variable, which is the use of humor in all forms in the classroom, and the ratings that the students give teachers in the form of teaching effectiveness. It was an attempt to explain whether or not there is an association between the two or three phenomena. Therefore, the research design employed was correlational in nature since it allows one to make predictions of one variable trait from the others (Creswell, 2005; Ary, 2002). The researchers were further enabled to give a report on the relationship that existed between the independent variable, which is the use of humor in teaching and the identified dependent variables and make prediction of the dependent variable that best suits the use of humor in teaching.

The target population of this study comprised of all the teachers and students of secondary schools in Migori District, Kenya, with the sample size constituting six schools in Migori District. The District has 29 Secondary schools. In determining which schools would constitute the sample for this study, the researchers based the criteria of selection on the following factors: (1) The type of school (Mixed and single sex) to represent the opinions of each of the genders. In this study, a balance was struck between the boys and girls in the ratio of 1:1 in data collection. This implied that for each boy picked for the study, a girl was picked as a respondent. (2) Road accessibility to those schools. To determine the road accessibility of the schools, the researchers asked for directions from the District Lands Officer at the Migori Surveyor's Office and from the locals (3) The size of school (small and large) in terms of enrolment. In this study, large schools were those with a student population of three hundred (300) and above, with small schools being those whose enrolment fell below three hundred. The researchers were interested in the large schools since this is where they were assured of getting different teaching subjects represented. (4) Students of forms two and three of the selected schools were used for the reason that they had been in school long enough to be able to rate the teachers well and for the reason that students of a higher class (form four) were candidates and the schools involved probably would not be in a position to divert their attention from matters purely academic. In each school, there were five clusters (picked in groups of eleven) of students so that a teacher is rated by a cluster. The selection of the clusters was done using random sampling procedure. The researchers deemed this technique good since it ensured that all the students had equal chances of being included in the samples. This gave data that could be generalised within a margin of error that is easy to determine statistically (Borg, 1987; Mugenda and Mugenda, 1999). (5) Five teachers were randomly selected as per the selected schools for the study. The researchers put emphasis on the fact that each department (Languages, Sciences, Humanities, Social studies Technical Subjects, and Mathematics) was represented and that they were the teachers who taught the

participating students.

In getting the participants in the survey, the researchers cast lots among the students available to them to get 55 students per school. This was most appropriate in the single sex schools visited (1 boy and 3 girls) while in the two mixed schools, only boys were selected and the researchers used the first 55 boys to arrive at the venue that was designed for the data collection. Only the boys were selected in the mixed schools using the stratified sampling technique since the researchers wished to ensure that the sub group within the population (boys and girls) were represented proportionally without bias in the sample.

The questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection, which according to Gauthier (1979), is an essential means of communication between the person doing the research and the respondents. The researchers also found the questionnaire most convenient since they could be administered to a large number of respondents simultaneously (Tuckman, 1999; Patton, 1990). Based on these ideas, the researchers designed a questionnaire to be used by students with questions on different sub-sections. Each subsection carried questions on variables on the use of humor in the class. Part one consisted of 31 questions divided into six sub-divisions. The first sub-division had questions measuring the extent of the use of humor in the classroom by the teachers (question 1-8); the next dealt with motivation of students (question 9-13), creation of engaging lessons (14-18), anxiety reduction in students (19-23), stimulation of thought and interest (24-27), and fostering of a positive teacher-student relationship which are all measures of teaching effectiveness. The questions (10) in the second sub-division had questions measuring the students level of affective learning with respondents expected to respond to items on a Likert scale ranging from 1-4 (Disagree to Agree). Questions in the third sub-section were general, they gave respondents options that tested their level of general rating of the teachers (ranging from ineffective to very effective), the teachers' level of humor usage (ranging from never at all to very often), students' overall classroom experience with the particular teacher (ranging from unsatisfactory-excellent) and lastly, the students' expectations in terms of grades expected (ranging from E to A or A-). The last sub-section had three open ended questions which allowed for the students to respond freely to questions dealing with general classroom experiences.

The teachers were given a questionnaire which was used to meaningfully assess their style of humor used in the classroom and personal characteristics such as sense of humor and personality. The questions in the instrument that was given to the students were generated from various statements from various studies done during the literature review. Personal interviews of the school administrators were used. This was to determine the presence of teachers of forms three and two who could be selected for the study.

The consistency reliability of the research instruments was determined by the use of Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha that is used to test internal consistency (Cronbach, 1984). The alpha provides a coefficient to estimate consistency of scores on an instrument if the items are scored as continuous variables (i.e. Poor to excellent or Disagree to Agree). While the reliability coefficient of 0.7 should be acceptable (Borg, 1989), the questionnaire used by the

students had a reliability coefficient of 0.926. All the sections had a reliability ranging from 0.563 to 0.801. The questionnaire used for the survey of teachers' humor style was also piloted to determine its reliability and a reliability coefficient of 0.915 was obtained. All the sections had a reliability ranging from 0.760 to 0.888 and were thus within the acceptable range.

To collect data, the researchers visited the participating schools. In all the schools, the researchers were given an appointment of a day or two later to administer the questionnaire personally. The subjects were asked to respond to the questionnaires on the spot after a brief introduction. The return rate for the students and the teachers was 100%. However, it was during data arrangement for analysis that the researchers discovered that 19 out of the possible 330 copies of the questionnaire for students were not fully answered and were thus left out of the analysis. The teachers' response was positive, with all the teachers present during the study responding to the questionnaires well.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was applied to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The Mean and Standard Deviation were used to give a description of the independent and dependent variables.

3. Results and Discussion

The analysis of research question one called for the testing of the null hypothesis which was stated as follows: *There is no significant relationship between secondary school teachers' humor production in the class and students' affective learning and students' rating of their teaching effectiveness in terms of:*

- a) *Motivation of students*
- b) *Creation of engaging lessons*
- c) *Anxiety reduction in students*
- d) *Stimulation of thought and interest in students*
- e) *Fostering of a positive teacher-student relationship*

The research question sought to determine the degree of relationship between the use of humor in teaching and students' rating of the teachers' effectiveness in terms of motivation of students, creation of engaging lessons, anxiety reduction in the students, stimulation of thought and interest in students and fostering of a positive teacher-students relationship and the degree of relationship between the use of humor in teaching and the students' affective learning.

To determine the relationship between the use of humor in teaching and students' rating of teaching effectiveness, a simple linear correlation was performed. The correlation coefficient between use of humor in teaching and motivation of students was 0.356 with a p -value of 0.000 which was less than the significance level of 0.05. This implied that there was a significant moderate relationship between teachers' use of humor in teaching and motivation of students. This indicated that each time the teachers used humor in teaching, there was a

significant effect on the motivation of the students. When teachers learn to incorporate direct approaches to generating student motivation in their teaching, they will become happier and more successful. Igniting and sustaining a source of positive energy is so vital to ultimate success. Research on motivation has confirmed the fundamental principle of causality: motivation affects effort, effort affects results, and positive results lead to an increase in ability. What this suggests is that by improving students' motivation, teachers are actually amplified to fuel students' ability to learn (Rost, 2005).

The correlation coefficient between use of humor in teaching and creation of engaging lessons was 0.231 with a p -value of 0.000 which was less than the significance level of 0.05.

This implied that there was a significant moderate relationship between teachers' use of humor in teaching and the students' engagement in the lessons being taught. This showed that when humor is being used in teaching, it has significance in the way the students are engaged in the lesson. This confirms that the way information is presented has more of an impact on the students' performance. Hands-on instruction allows success beyond the classroom, hands-on activities excite students about learning, and that hands-on activities create confidence in the students (Puentes, 2007).

The correlation coefficient between use of humor in teaching and anxiety reduction in students was 0.411 with a p -value of 0.000, which was also less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicated a significant moderate relationship between teachers' use of humor in teaching and reduced anxiety in the students that they teach. This, therefore, implied that the use of humor in teaching tended to reduce students' anxiety.

The correlation coefficient between use of humor in teaching and stimulation of thought and interest was 0.464 with a p -value of 0.000, which was also less than the significance level of 0.05. This implied that there was a significant moderate relationship between teachers' use of humor in teaching and the stimulation of thought and interest in the students in terms of the subject taught. This means that the use of humor by the teachers determines the extent or degree of stimulation of thought and interest in the students. It is apparent that the identification, stimulation and development of students' interests and thoughts in a subject are of great importance in teaching (Hasan, 1975).

The correlation coefficient between use of humor in teaching and fostering of a positive teacher-student relationship was 0.497 with a p -value of 0.000, which was also less than the significance level of 0.05. This indicated a significant moderate relationship between teachers' use of humor in teaching and fostering of a positive relationship between the students and the teachers. The extent or degree of the use of humor determines the extent or degree of the positive relationship between the teacher and the student. The physical environment in the classroom, the level of emotional comfort experienced by students, and the quality of communication between teacher and students are important factors that may enable or disable learning.

Skills such as effective classroom management through a positive relationship between the teacher and the student are vital to teaching and require common sense, consistency, a sense

of fairness and courage. The skills also require that teachers understand the psychological and developmental levels of each student because as educators, we are obligated to educate the “whole” child (Jackson & Davis, 2000).

To determine the relationship between the use of humor in teaching and students’ affective learning, a simple linear correlation was performed. Table 1 below shows a summary of the simple linear correlation.

Table 1. Simple linear Correlations

		Use of humor in teaching	Student motivation
Use of humor in teaching	Pearson Correlation	1	.537**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	311	311
Affective learning	Pearson Correlation	.537**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	311	311

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation coefficient between the use of humor in teaching and students’ affective learning is 0.537 which yielded a p -value of 0.000, which was less than the significance level of 0.01. This indicates the presence of a relationship between the use of humor in teaching by the teachers and students’ affective learning. How much or how less the teachers use humor in teaching determines how much or how less affective learning takes place.

The second research question asked the style of humor most commonly used by the teachers. To measure the style of humor that was most common among the secondary school teachers, respondents (the teachers themselves) were required to respond to items on a scale ranging from 1 – 4 (Never – Very Often). The scale of interpretation used was as follows: 1-1.49 Never, 1.5-2.49 Seldom, 2.5-3.49 Often, 3.5-4.00 Very Often.

3.1 Use of Affiliative Humor

Eight items of the research instrument used by teachers addressed this question with 35 teachers responding to the eight items. Table 2 shows a summary of descriptive statistics of the teachers’ use of affiliative humor as a style of humor.

The items had means ranging from 2.4571 to 2.9143. The results yielded a mean of 2.7071 and a standard deviation of 0.53460. The item with the highest mean was “usually when I tell funny things, most people will laugh” which had a mean of 2.9143. This is confirmation that most teachers who use affiliative humor are often able to make most people laugh with the jokes that they crack. However, the teachers that use affiliative humor report that they can only seldom “think of witty things to say when they are with other people;” this item scored the lowest mean of 2.4571. The teachers that use this style of humor seldom think of witty things to say when they are with other people.

Table 2. Mean Ratings of Teachers' Use of Affiliative Humor

Statement	Mean	Std Dev.
I usually laugh or joke around much with other people	2.8000	.79705
I am willing to and will always make other people laugh by telling humorous stories about myself	2.6000	.81168
I usually lie to tell jokes or amuse people	2.7429	.74134
I usually can think of witty things to say when I'm with other people	2.4571	.85209
I usually make others laugh by telling a variety of odd news and humorous things	2.7143	.85994
I often play jokes with my friends to make fun	2.8571	.87927
Usually, when I tell funny things, many people will laugh	2.9143	.74247
Making people laugh is my natural way of communicating with people	2.5714	.85011
Affiliative Humor	2.7071	.53460

3.1.1 Use of Self-Enhancing Humor

Eight items of the research instrument used by teachers addressed this question with 35 teachers responding to the eight items. Table 3 shows a summary descriptive statistics of the teachers' use of self-enhancing humor as a style of humor.

Table 3. Mean Ratings of Teachers' Use of Self-enhancing Humor

Statement	Mean	Std Dev.
If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up humor	2.5714	.85011
If I am feeling upset or unhappy, I usually try to think of something funny about the situation to make myself feel better	2.5143	1.01087
My humorous attitude towards life keeps me from getting overly upset or losing confidence on things	2.8286	.78537
If I'm by myself and I'm feeling unhappy, I make an effort to think of something humorous to cheer myself up	2.7143	.89349
It is my experience that looking for and thinking about some amusing and interesting aspects of the situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems	2.8286	.95442
When I'm bored or feeling unhappy, I like to recall some humorous and interesting things in the past to amuse myself and make myself laugh	2.5143	.88688
My sense of humour keeps me from getting overly upset or depressed about things	2.6000	.91394
If I am feeling sad or depressed, I usually will not lose my sense of humor	2.5786	.80231
Self-enhancing humor	2.5786	.58086

The items had means ranging from 2.0571-2.8286. The results yielded a mean of 2.5786 and a standard deviation of 0.58086. The items with the highest mean were "my humorous attitude towards life keeps me from getting overly upset or losing confidence about things" and "it is my experience that looking for and thinking about some amusing and interesting

aspects of the situation is often a very effective way of coping with problems.” They both had a mean of 2.8286 which is an indication that the teachers using this style of humor often feel or think this way. The item with the lowest mean was “If I am feeling sad or upset I usually will not lose my sense of humor” which had a mean of 2.0571. This indicates that the teachers in this category of style of humor seldom feel or think this way.

3.1.2 Use of Aggressive Humor

Eight items of the research instrument used by teachers addressed this question with 35 teachers responding to the eight items. Table 4 shows a summary descriptive statistics of the teachers’ use of aggressive humour as a style of humour. The items had means ranging from 1.5143 to 2.4000. The results yielded a mean of 1.9393 and a standard deviation of 0.64195. The item with the highest mean was “sometimes I think of something that is so funny that I can’t stop myself from saying it even if it is not appropriate for the situation” with a mean of 2.4000. This means that the teachers that use this style of humor will engage in this, though seldom. The item with the lowest mean of 1.5143 was “I often ridicule and tease those people whose abilities and social status are inferior to me.” This is also engaged in, though seldom. This also means that all the items in this style of humor are done, though seldom in the teachers’ life.

Table 4. Mean Ratings of Teachers’ Use of Aggressive Humor

Statement	Mean	Std Dev.
If someone has a shortcoming I will often tease him/her about it	2.1429	1.08852
I do not like to criticize or put people down with humor	2.0857	.91944
Sometimes I think of something so funny that I just can’t stop myself from saying it even if it is not appropriate for the situation	2.4000	1.11672
If I don’t like someone, I often tease, ridicule and put him/her down	1.5714	.88688
If I don’t like a person, I often tease, ridicule and put him/her down behind his/her back	1.8000	1.07922
If someone made a mess about something I will often tease him/her	1.8857	.90005
I often tease and ridicule those people whose abilities and social status are inferior to me	1.5143	.88688
I often play practical jokes on others to make fun	2.1143	1.05081
Aggressive humor	1.9393	.64195

3.1.3 Use of Self-Defeating Humor

Five items of the research instrument used by teachers addressed this question with 35 teachers responding to the five items. Table 5 shows a summary descriptive statistics of the teachers’ use of self-defeating humor as a style of humor.

Table 5. Mean Ratings of Teachers’ Use of Self-Defeating Humor

Statement	Mean	Std Dev.
I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should	2.0000	.90749
I will often get carried away in putting myself down if it make my family or friends laugh	2.0882	.96508
I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weakness, blunders or faults	2.2571	.88593
I often go overboard in putting myself down when I am making jokes or trying to be funny	1.8857	.90005
When I am with friends or family, I often seem to be the one that other people make fun of or joke about	2.0571	1.05560
Self-defeating humor	2.0614	.68235

The items had means ranging from 1.8857 to 2.2571. The results yielded a mean of 2.0614 and a standard deviation of 0.68235. The item with the highest mean was “I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders or faults” which had a mean of 2.2571. This means that this item, (“I often try to make people like or accept me more by saying something funny about my own weaknesses, blunders or faults”), much as it is the most common to feature in this category, it is engaged in seldom. The item with the lowest mean was “I make people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should” which had a mean of 2.000. This puts all the items in this style of humor in the same category of “seldom” used or engaged in. Based on these self-reports from the teachers, the researchers came up with the bar graph representation below, showing the means of teachers’ use of humor styles.

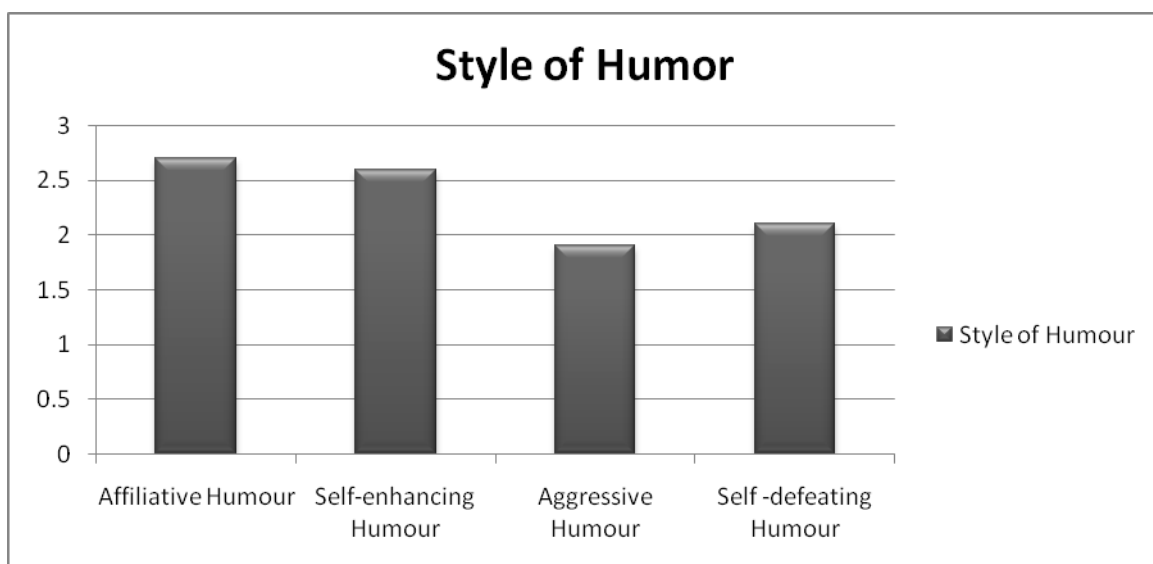


Figure 1. Means of teachers’ use of humor styles

It is encouraging to note that the greater number of teachers engaged in positive styles of humour, affiliative and self-enhancing, which have scored the highest means 2.7 and 2.6,

respectively. The implication to class instruction, therefore, is that the effectiveness of teaching is to a good degree.

4. Conclusions of the Study

On the basis of the findings of this study, the following conclusions are in order: (1) The use of humor in teaching is good and students appreciate it because they have rated the teachers as either good or very good at motivating them, reducing their anxieties in the classroom, stimulating their thoughts and interest and fostering a positive relationship between them and the teachers. (2) With the use of humor, which is then related to the teachers' effectiveness in teaching, the students generally expect to do well in the subsequent subjects. This is because they are motivated, they find the lessons engaging, their anxiety about the subjects is reduced, their thoughts and interests are stimulated and their relationship with the teacher is positive. (3) The teachers who use humor in teaching tend to be rated moderately high in terms of motivation of the students, reduction of their anxieties in the classroom, stimulation of their thoughts and interest and fostering of a positive relationship between them and the teachers and affective learning.

The role of pedagogical humor in the classroom is truly multifaceted and thus requires examination and analysis from a variety of perspectives. A great deal of research has been conducted in the area of general pedagogical effects of humor on affective variables in the generic classroom. Despite some uncertainty concerning the degree to which humor benefits the classroom, the vast majority of literature and experimental evidence in this area has generally acknowledged significant benefits to the pedagogical employment of humor. The results of the present study overwhelmingly confirm such perceived benefit. Moreover, given the particular importance of lowering the affective filter in the classroom, the affective benefits of humor would seem to be ideally applicable to such a context. In addition, a fledgling body of literature also supports the role for humor as an illustrative tool for targeted learning context. Thus, given the integral part played by humor within all facets of human behavior, pedagogical researchers and planners have an obligation to its inclusion as both a pedagogical tool and a natural component to include in all other facets of life. The largely supportive perceptions of student and teacher participants in the present study only serve as further emphasis for such a need—as well as the impetus for further research in order to clarify the scope of such a requisite. Further study may also be conducted to determine whether teachers' use of humor appears to reduce student anxiety and stress in the classroom thus likely to enhance student learning, retention, and student-teacher relationships.

Since a small number of subjects was involved in this study, the results may not necessarily be extended to make a predication about the entire population.

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