TEACHING HUMOR TO EFL IRAQI STUDENTS

Asst. Prof. Dr. Bushra Ni'ma Rashid

College of Education, Ibn Rushd for Human Sciences, Iraq,
The University of Baghdad

ABSTRACT

Many experienced linguists and methodology manual writers have emphasized that authentic material and using games are not just time-filling activities but also have a great educational value. These activities make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct forms. These activities are highly motivating and entertaining, and they can give shy student more opportunity to speak and to express their opinions and feelings. They also help learners of the English as a foreign language to acquire new experiences which are not always possible during a typical lesson.

Humor is one of such activities. It can add diversion to the regular classroom activities. It can create a relaxed atmosphere and make students remember things faster and better. Using such activity, students will be encouraged, entertained, taught, and promoted fluency. If not for any of these reasons, it should be used just because it helps students see beauty in a foreign language and not just problems that at times seem overwhelming. The present study sheds light on what is meant by humor? ? And how to be used inside the classroom?

This research is predicted to find answers for the following questions: What do different types of humor occur in EFL classrooms? Are there differences in the quantity or content of humor used in 5th grade elementary school lessons as compared to 9th grade secondary school lessons? And how does the use of humor affect the atmosphere of the classroom?

This study aims at: highlighting humor usage in different contexts of EFL classrooms, figuring out the differences in two groups, childhood and adolescence by investigating humor initiation of both teacher and student, pointing out the change of humor from childhood to adolescence, and finding how humor has an effect on the atmosphere of the classroom.

It is hypothesized that: Humor has a considerable effect on the classroom atmosphere, there is a change of humor from the childhood to the adolescence stage, the childhood group uses more types of humor than the adolescence group.

The data collected for the present study consists of 45-minute EFL lessons, 5th grade elementary school lessons and 9th grade secondary school lessons. In addition to the recordings, a 25minute thematic interview was conducted with the teacher of the lessons. The two school grades, 5th and 9th, were chosen according to the teacher's schedule.
Key words: Humor, EFL classrooms, childhood, adolescence

1.INTRODUCTION

Humor is a part and parcel of human nature. It is demonstrated in mostly all types of interpersonal relationships; thus, it has a great effect on people's daily life. Numerous theories such as philosophical, psychological, sociological, anthropological and linguistic theories try to elucidate humour and its functions, due to considering humour as a biological attribute all human have. Different qualities regarding humour like: the sense of humour, aging, and individuality, change over time and consequently there is no one theory that covers everything about humour. All these qualities have their effect on people's decisions on whether something is amusing or not.

At the beginning of the 20th century, no joking was permitted in the classroom. But today, in the modern classrooms, the case is different. The use of humour in classrooms has an effect on creating a positive interaction between the teacher and students because of the amusing environment in this pedagogical relationship. For this reason, multiple studies have shown the relation between a positive learning environment and learning outcomes. Humour is also regarded as a complex phenomenon because sometimes it is amusing for some people and offensive to others.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Classroom Interaction

When it is a matter of studying classroom interaction, one should take into consideration specific agreements that suit such settings.

2.1.1 Classroom as a Hierarchical Institution

The interaction between the teacher and the students is described as institutional talk in which the teacher is the guider. The teacher has a higher status that has an impact on how he addresses his students. (Saharinen, 2007:261). In modern classrooms, power is not only limited to the teacher, on the contrary, is made when the relationship between the teacher and the students is described as "continuously under negotiation by all participants." (Thornborrow, 2002:113). Considering schools as an educational institution, there are many disciplines which are mentioned in the curriculum to direct both teachers and students. The key point is that these disciplines instruct, educate and help students to get social values, thus, rules are necessarily existed in the classroom because they give instructions.

2.1.2 The Study of Classroom Interaction from CA Perspective

It is preferable to explain conversation analysis before studying classroom interaction. Conversation analysis is put by Hutehby and Wooffit (1998:13) as the "the systematic analysis of the talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction: talk-in-interaction." CA is concerned with natural interaction. The idea of conversation analysis was arisen in the 1960's by Harvey Sacks and his associates Gail Jefferson and Emanuel Schegloff. Sacks put an assumption that included any daily conversation can be "a deeply ordered, structurally organized phenomenon ." The interest of ordinary talk such as dinner conversations was clear in the early CA studies, but later on this interest changed to be focused on the institutional talk like classroom contexts. Both contexts like dinner conversations between friends and classroom discussion are instances of talk-in-interaction, (Markee,2000:24). The study of institutional talk has received a novel growing point which is classroom interaction.

It is mentioned by Seedhouse (2004:183-184) that in L2 classroom, a "core institutional goal" is existed that is teaching learners the second language. Depending on this goal, he says that there are three "interactional properties" which are derived from this goal and that change the classrooms interaction to differentiate it from other forms of institutional talk. These properties are:

1. Language is both the vehicle and object of instruction.
2. There is a reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction, and participants constantly display their analyses of the evolving relationship between pedagogy and interaction.
3. The linguistic forms and patterns of interaction which the learners produce in the L2 are potentially subject to evaluation by the teacher in some way. (Seedhouse 2004:183-184)

So, there is a unique sequence organization for various language classrooms. This depends on a normative link between linguistic patterns learners use and the pedagogical focus of classroom interaction. This pedagogical focus is explained by the participants through turns-at-talk during their interaction. Above

the three mentioned properties, a three-way view of L2 classroom context is described by Seedhouse to explain the complexity of L2 classroom interaction that is how the interaction has different levels. This view views L2 language interaction in three "decreasing circles" which characterize these various levels. The middle circle is the L2 classroom context which surrounds the micro context of interaction and is surrounded by the institutional context. The use of this view is to characterize how "all instances of L2 classroom interaction have the same properties and use the same basic sequence organization, while at the same time portraying the extreme diversity, fluidity, and complexity of the interaction" (Seedhouse 2004:213-214).

When teachers and students interact in institutional context, their talk could be institutional when focusing on the pedagogy and it can be also non institutional when engaging in off-task talk like social chat.

2.1.3 Structural Features of Classroom Interaction

There are three structures of social organization functioning in all kind of talk including teaching. The first one is turn taking which is created by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and explained in terms of rules of speaking which makes people know when to speak and for how long, in addition, when to give someone a chance (their turn) to speak. When such rules are broken by someone, the conversation would be like a mess. The model of turn-taking contains two components; the turn constructional component (TCC) which includes turn constructional units (TCU) like "sentential, clausal, phrasal and lexical constructions" and the turn allocation component denotes completing a turn and allocating a turn to the next speaker. (Sacks et al 1974:702).

Turn-taking in classroom context tends to be formal and predictable. A traditional teacher-led view of a classroom is put by Sacks et al. (1974). There are McHoul's rules adapted from Tainio (2007:33) which are listed below:

1. After a teacher has completed a turn:

A) The teacher selects a student as the next speaker, who starts speaking;(a) The teacher names or in some other clear way displays the next speaker. (b) The teacher allocates the turn to the whole class or a group of students from which one should be selected as the next speaker.

B) If a student does not accept the turn, the teacher continues.

2. After a student has completed a turn:

A) If a student does not select the next speaker, the teacher continues.

B) If the student selects the next speaker it should be the teacher.

C) Only if the teacher does not continue, can the selected student continue speaking.

Lahdes (1997) introduced four teaching methods which encompass representative teaching, conversational teaching, group work and individual work. These methods of teaching exhibit that the turn-taking organization concerning modern classroom is having many facets.

In a certain conversation, turns have to be ordered like a sequence. The main component of sequence organization is the adjacency pairs which is built by paired utterances. There is a normative relation between turns because the first pair-part needs a response which is the second pair-part. If there is no response for a question for instance, a sequence expansion (another question) will be added for asking for clarification. Regarding classroom talk, a specific sequence organization is noticed. It is IRF sequence which means initiation-response-feedback. When a teacher asks a question, the students answer it and after that, they get feedback from the teacher. There are reasons for IRF to be occurred in the classroom:-

1. Teachers and students consider question and answer routines to be natural classroom behaviour.

2. Teachers want to please the students by giving feedback.

3. Regarding power relations the teacher controls the discussion.

4. IRF sequences advance the discourse effectively and take little time. (Walsh 2006:5-6)

Afterwards, studies have changed their direction towards a more modern classroom which is task-based group which is student–centered. The interaction here depends on many different sequence organizations.

A term repair is applied in conversation analysis to cover everything from errors that have to do with turn-taking to different forms of "correction" (Hutchby and Wooffit 1998:57). Repair is self-initiated by the speaker or it is other -initiated by another speaker (Schegloff et al. 1977:361).

Repair is divided into four different types which rely on whether the repair of the trouble source is made by the speaker him/herself or by others:

1. Self-initiated self-repair: repair is both initiated and carried out by the speaker of the trouble source.
2. Other-initiated self-repair: repair is carried out by the speaker of the trouble source but initiated by the recipient.
3. Self-initiated other-repair: the speaker of a trouble source may try and get the recipient to repair the trouble – for instance if a name is proving troublesome to remember.
4. Other-initiated other-repair: the recipient of a trouble-source turn both initiates and carries out the repair. This is the closest to what is conventionally understood as 'correction'. (Hutchby and Wooffit 1998:61)

According to McHoul (1990:353) certain repair types are more frequent in a classroom context than in an everyday conversation because of the asymmetrical relationship between the teacher and the students.

2.2 Humour

Humour is described as a "universal human trait" and thus, responding to humour is a part of natural human behaviour (Raskin 1985:2). In other words, the use of humour is a biological attribute that we all possess (Polimeni and Reiss 2006:347). Thus, humour is by no means a new phenomenon and studying humour has already been an area of interest starting from the great names of Plato and Aristotle to Bergson and Freud (Chiaro 1996:1). It is an interactive and social phenomenon that is highly dependent on the social situation and the people involved in that situation. People tend to laugh more when they are with others than when they are alone, and the ones who laugh alone mostly do so in a situation that imitates a social experience, such as watching television or reading a book The nature of humour used also depends on the people and situation.

2.3 Conversation Analysis and Humour

The founder of CA is Sacks (1974) who analyzed dirty jokes as how they are presented in a story form. Sacks presented three sequences for joke telling which are the preface (the joke is said by the teller of the joke), the telling (the actual telling of the joke), and the response (a response from the hearer). (Sacks 1974:337).

Depending on Drew's research of teasing sequences in conversation, Mulkay (1988) gives a three-part structure of teasing sequences:

"1) The first speaker (the teased one) presents a comment or action, which 2) motivates the second speaker (the teaser) to present a tease, to which 3) the first speaker replies with a serious response." Sacks' model the first two parts of a joking sequence are presented by the joker, whereas in the teasing sequence the teaser only presents the middle part (the tease), which is both motivated and responded by the one who is teased. (Mulkay 1988, as cited by Putkonen 2001:203).

2.4 The Study of Humour in Classrooms

Studying humour in connection with classrooms is an area of interest. This study is qualitative depending on CA analysis on different examples of humour. Moreover, a teacher interview is presented to get an insight on the teacher's views on her humour use. The study of the combination of humour, classroom and conversation analysis is more recent. Saharinen (2007) examined teasing as a tool to react to pupils' errors in lessons in upper secondary school. The teacher's humour is effective in making pupils get non-serious intent of the teacher. Roininen (2010) and Haapaniemi (2011) explain humour in classrooms through CA analysis as well. It is founded that when humour is produced by the teacher or by the teacher and student(s), the effects of humour use are positive. On the contrary, when humour is produced by a student, the effects are both positive and negative.

Humour is used in classrooms to relieve stress, reduce negative emotions and improve student's physical and mental health (McGhee 2010). Teachers' use of humor is effective establishing rapport and developing supportive and communication environments (Stuart and Rosenfeld 1994:98). Humour supports teachers with "an opportunity to enhance positive interaction in the pedagogical

250

relationship" between the teacher and the students (Spåre 2008). But, because the nature of humour is multifaceted , it can also have negative effects on the classroom climate, in addition to the teacher-student relationship. Teachers should possess emotional intelligence and before using humour take into consideration how the class or an individual student will react to different kinds of humour (Spåre 2008). As a result of poor consideration, teacher humour might not be understood by the students as funny or amusing, but interpreted as threatening.

2.5 Humour in Childhood and Adolescence

People's age is connected to what they find amusing. The use and understanding of humorous expressions during childhood and adolescence is also connected to the age of students who are 11-12 years as children and 15-16 years as teenagers. McGhee (1986:28) says that when people develop new cognitive skills, they are capable of comprehending, appreciating and producing new forms of humour. Studies started to look at infants' development of humour by noticing that after the age of six simple ironic expressions are understood and they would understand riddles and joking. Children group tends to get more attention towards humour than another age groups.

What someone find something to be humorous at a younger age is no longer amusing, because other types of humour begin to be appreciated. Simons et al. (1986:66) explains that the reason could be found in the complexity of adolescent behaviour. During teenage years, many physical changes occur and sexual maturity begins to be reached. The teenagers' "developmental maturity" is related with what they find funny. when jokes that do not seem to be compatible with the maturity level, teenagers find them to be boring can be perceived as boring; on the contrary, when jokes are too mature, they are found as threatening.

Nahemov(1986:4) implies that aging is not the only thing affecting humour, but many other factors such as individuality, time, social situation and emotions have an effect on humour understanding and use.

2.6 Types of Humour

Various types of humour are distinguished in this study. The point is that what types of humour occur in a specific EFL classroom.

2.6.1 Irony

The use of implicit utterances that involve double meanings is defined as irony. Being ironic person means saying the opposite of what is meant. So, there is a metamessage in the speaker's speech. (Brackman 1967, as cited by Haiman 1998:18).

Extract 1 (9th grade)

01 Teacher: why are they so important to the world.

02 Mika: they produce oxygen and use carbon dioxide.

03 Aisha: ((looks at the teacher)) why doesn't anyone raise their hand here anymore.

05 Teacher: ((looking directly at Aisha, raising her eyebrows)) when have you raised your hands?

 06   ((Aisha laughs loudly))

07 Mika: I agree.

2.6.2 Teasing

Teasing is considered as an "intentional provocation accompanied by playful off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target" (Keltner et al. 2001:229). Teasing can give positive or negative type of humour. That is, teasing can be intended to make someone laughs or it can resemble bullying, so the target is not obvious because it is highly personal in nature.

Extract 2 (5th grade, group 2)

01 Teacher: ((gets up from her seat and walks towards the back of the class to see the class clock)) okay. how much time do we have now.

02

03 Minna: ((takes out her mobile phone)) I can take a look.

04   (2.3)

05 Teacher: ((looks at Minna and 06 then the clock on the wall)) you got the perfect excuse to take out your phone.

07   (1.2) (((Minna smiles, a few other girls around her also smile. All students are looking towards Minna.))

251

08

09 Minna: ((puts the phone back to her pocket)) eight minutes.

2.6.3 Banter

Banter is regarded as another type of teasing, but here the recipient or the target is expected to some banter forms. Thus, it is called "a match of verbal ping pong played by the two (or more) interlocutors within a jocular mode" (Dynel 2008:243-244). Plester and Sayers (2007:158) says that banter reinforces social friendship. If the recipient of banter does not replay, it will be teasing.

Extract 3 (9th grade)

01 Mika: ((looks at Lasse's workbook)) I'm clearly smarter than you.

02 Lasse: ((pokes Mika with his elbow)) you're not smart, it's just an act.

03 Mika: ((looks at the teacher)) like I'm detecting now a wind of jealousy from the north.

04

05 Lasse: why from north. there is no wind coming from the north now.

06 Teacher: ok Mika and Lasse, stop your argument and make peace.

07 Mika: ((reaches out his hand to Lasse for a handshake)) let's make peace.

08   ((Lasse looks at Mika's hand in disgust and moves further))

09 Lasse: ((making exaggerated angry facial expressions)) if you don't remove your hand then we won't. or maybe I.

10

11 Mika: ((raising his eyebrows, looking annoyed)) yeah.

12 Lasse: ((leaning towards Mika, squinting his eyes)) you're always making excuses. you could at least try to behave.

13

2.6.4 Language Play

Form a linguistic perspective, language play denotes repeating or modifying linguistic forms consciously like lexemes or syntactic patterns. (Belz 2002:16). But in terms of its relationship with interaction, language play is focusing on a particular language feature and picking out that feature humorously. It is beneficial in classrooms, because it can increase the students' awareness and knowledge of certain structures. (Lilja 2010:265).

Extract 4 (9th grade)

01 Mika: that word greenhouse effect is weird. (literal translation).

02 Lasse: I know. guinea pig is also weird cause it refers to a guinea pig (the animal). and why is there guinea in it, isn't guinea a country.

04 Teacher: Mika and Lasse hey.

05 Mika: we had something relating to the topic.

06 Teacher: well, what conclusion did you reach.

07 Mika. greenhouse effect. isn't that like (literal translation).

09 Teacher: yes. this is a good thing Mika, that you use all these types of memory rules and funny clauses or translations and (literal translation) you need to use these to your advantage, so you can acquire the vocabulary as well as possible.

2.6.5 Joking

Joking is categorized in to conversational and canned jokes. Conversational jokes can be an umbrella term for all types previously mentioned, because it has all forms that causes laughter. A canned joke is the use of a frame that is already sued by the speaker, so it is a familiar joke. For example, knock-knock jokes.

2.7 The Methods

Conversation analysis is used for the recorded lessons and content analysis for the thematic teacher interview. Conversation analysis is chosen here because it studies humour as an interactional phenomenon in the lesson. So, it studies the language use and sequences of interaction. There are various

252

types of humour which are analyzed in accordance with the verbal and non-verbal actions of participants which shows the devolvement of humour during the lesson. A thematic interview is done after the recordings. It exhibits the teachers' opinion towards humour usage in the classroom and then compare it with other practices in another lessons. The interview is analyzed in terms of content analysis, because the focus changed to what is said instead of to how it is produced.

3. THE DATA

3.1 The Data Description

The data collected for the present study consists of 45-minute EFL lessons, two 5th grade elementary school lessons and two 9th grade secondary school lessons. The 5th grade was divided into two separate

groups, which means that eventually three different groups were observed. English can mainly be described as the subject of study instead of being used as a language of instruction. In addition to the recordings, a 25minute thematic interview was conducted with the teacher of the lessons. The two school grades, 5th and 9th, were chosen according to the teacher's schedule.

3.2 Data Analysis

In general, 29 examples of humour under the categories of irony, teasing, banter, language play and joking were found in the data. To show both grades' distribution between humour types and whether humour was initiated by the students or the teacher, tables 2 and 3 are presented below:

Table 1. The different types of humour detected during 5th grade lessons.

	Irony	Teasing	Banter	Language Play	Joking
Student initiated	-	2	2	2	1
Teacher initiated	1	4	-	-	-
TOTAL	1	6	2	2	1

Table 2. The different types of humour detected during 9th grade lessons.

	Irony	Teasing	Banter	Language Play	Joking
Student initiated	1	3	3	4	-
Teacher initiated	7	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	8	3	3	4	-

3.3 The Use of Irony in Teaching

Irony and sarcasm refer to saying the opposite of what is meant; however, the target should understand the intention of insincerity in order to receive a successful response (Brackman 1967, as cited by Haiman 1998:18). One example of student-initiated irony and eight examples of teacher initiated irony were identified from the 9th grade lessons (see table 3). Only one example of irony was apparent in the 5th

grade lessons, which was teacher initiated and not understood by all the students.

Extract 5 is from a 9th grade lesson that includes teacher-initiated irony. The school has a policy of reusing their textbooks, which means the students who start 9th grade the following year will get the same books that are now used by this class. Before this excerpt the teacher has told the students to work individually on an exercise. Nadia explains to Aisha

253

how after they have checked their homework, she has erased the right answers from her textbook and intentionally replaced them with wrong answers. Aisha finds this humorous and begins to explain Nadia's behaviour to the teacher (line 1). The teacher replies ironically by telling Nadia she is a "wonderful person" for acting the way she did; thus, giving her a compliment, she does not deserve.

Extract 5 (9th grade)

01 Aisha: ((looks at the teacher. Nadia laughs))) guess what she did. 02   (1.2)

03 Aisha: she had all the right answers in her book. after she answered you she erased them and wrote wrong answers.

05 Nadia: ((looks at the teacher)) well I didn't want them to answer correctly. he he.

07   ((the teacher smiles slightly at Nadia while nodding her head and raising 08   her eyebrows))

09 Teacher: ((browsing through a textbook)) aren't you a wonderful person.

10 Nadia: ((looks at her desk)) he he. I'm not really. 11   (2.4)

12 Teacher: ((looks at Nadia and Aisha)) next year's ninth graders, who are they.

13 Aisha: ((looks at Nadia)) aren't they the. Ahmed Ahne.

14 Teacher: ((looks at Nadia and Aisha)) Ahmed Ahne and his crew. they see the wrong answers from your book and answer incorrectly. 16   ((Aisha and Nadia laugh))

In this extract Nadia's actions are explained by Aisha on lines 1-4 and Nadia's turn no ("well I didn't want them to answer correctly.") on lines 5-6 both act as motive for the teacher's ironic reaction. Nadia replacing her correct answers in the textbook with wrong ones in an attempt to trick next year's students is not something that deserves a compliment and Nadia's actions are unlikely to be truthfully appreciated by the teacher. Thus, the teacher's turn on line 9 that refers to Nadia as "a wonderful person" is presented ironically. In other words, the teacher means the opposite of what she is saying and instead of stating her opinion directly, she uses a humorous

response. Nadia recognizes the teacher's humorous intent, which is revealed by her laughing response. Accordingly, the humour sequence is built through the various turns and reactions of the participants.

3.4 The Teacher and Students as Teasers

In extract 8 the lesson is about to end and the teacher suggests students finish the exercise in their workbook that they have been doing. Jussi self-selects himself as the next speaker on line 2 and asks what he should do if he has done the exercise already. The teacher does not have any additional homework, but on lines 3-4 she teasingly suggests that Jussi can do the next page on the workbook.

Extract 8 (5th grade, group 2)

01 Teacher: hey now I could. please finish that page at home.

02 Jussi : ((looks at the teacher)) what if I finished it already?

03 Teacher: ((looks at Jussi and raises her 04 eyebrows))   well you can finish the next page then.

05 Jussi: ((raises his hands to the air)) NOOO. teacher.

06 Teacher :really. do I have to?

08 Teacher: you asked.

09 Jussi: well I'm not gonna do it

10 Teacher: no?

11 Jussi: no. we don't have it yet.

In the current extract the teacher is giving out an exercise for homework that Jussi has already done (line 1). When Jussi reacts by asking what he should do as he has finished the exercise (line 2), the teacher responds with a teasing turn by saying he could finish the next page (lines 3-4). In addition to being a tease, the teacher's response could be analysed as slightly ironic or playful, since the teacher suggests something she does not literally mean or at least she does not suggest the additional homework as something compulsory. This is evident from the teacher's nonverbal actions as she smiles directly at Jussi while raising her eyebrows. Also, the use of the word vaikka, suggests that Jussi could do the next page, but implies

254

that it is not necessary. Finally, the stretched discourse particle no ("well") at the beginning of the clause on line 3 implies the teacher has not planned on giving more homework and the suggestion for additional homework is improvised. Jussi's preceding question acts as motive for the teacher's tease. Instead of replying in a serious manner, the teacher reacts to the question by initiating humour.

The teacher's tease gets a humorous response as Jussi recognises the teacher's comment as non-serious and acts out desperation in a loud voice, raising his hands in the air while smiling (line 5). The teacher responds by laughing at Jussi's exaggerated reaction (line 6). Interestingly, Jussi still checks his humorous interpretation by asking whether the teacher was serious and he should actually do the next page of the work book (line 7). Jussi seems uncertain of the seriousness of the teacher's response. The teacher continues to respond humorously on line 8, not answering Jussi's question directly, but pointing out laughingly sää kysyit. ("you asked."). Jussi recognises the teacher's turn as a tease as he answers with a smile and states he is not doing the next page at home (line 9). The teacher presents one more tease by laughingly asking Jussi etkö? ("no?"), to which Jussi replies ei. ei se oo meillä vielä. ("no. we don't have it yet.").

3.5 Students' Teasing Developing into Banter

The following extract is highly connected to extract 9, as it happens immediately after in the same 5th grade classroom. The students are writing clauses on the blackboard while the teacher paces around the classroom checking students' homework. After Jussi has written a clause on the blackboard and returned to his seat, he begins to tease Laura on her handwriting in the same manner he was teased earlier by Sauli and Dmitry in extract 9. Earlier Jussi was the teased one, but he now restates his role as a teaser and picks Laura as a target. However, the nature of this example is highly different compared to extract 9, since Laura begins to respond to Jussi's teases with teases of her own and thus, the teasing develops into banter.

Extract 11 (5th grade, group 2)

01 Jussi: hey look at that writing will you.

02   (1.3) ((Dmitry, Olli and Sauli look at the blackboard and smile))

03 Laura: ((turns and looks at Jussi)) whatever. 04 ((two other girls on the blackboard laugh))

05 Jussi: that word is so small. you can't see what that is.

06 Laura: 0.2) who cares.$ get some glasses. who cares.

07 Jussi: big letter m. and that's all I can see. 08 (0.5)

09 Jussi ((reading from the blackboard, squinting his eyes))

10 ((Laura walks away from the blackboard, stops in front of Jussi and 11 makes an angry face while holding her hand on the hip. Then she returns to 12 her seat. Jussi keeps reading the clause.))

13 Jussi: ((squinting his eyes)) loving. what?

14 Laura: ((in a high tone)) shut up.

15   ((Laura walks towards Jussi, looks at him and then the blackboard)) 16 Laura ((returns to her seat)) I don't like it how it always goes like this.

As the current example happens immediately after Jussi has been teased on his handwriting and has returned to his seat from the blackboard, it is evident that Jussi actively changes his role from being teased to being the teaser. Thus, he is not only motivated to tease Laura because of her small handwriting, but his first comment of the banter extract is occasioned by the preceding teasing segment where he was the target (extract 9). Thus, two different actions act as motive for Jussi's first tease. Laura's response to Jussi's first turn is to "talk back". Laura's response to the first tease on line 3 is defensive as she turns to face Jussi and shouts ihan sama. ("whatever."). Jussi presents another teasing turn by commenting on Laura's small handwriting (line 5). Laura responds by telling Jussi to "get some glasses" (line 6), so he could see better to the blackboard, humorously suggesting there is a problem with Jussi's vision instead of her writing. On line 7 Jussi expresses what little he can read from the blackboard: "big letter m. and that's all I can see". He continues by attempting to read Laura's handwriting while squinting his eyes (line 9). The turn-by-turn teases reveal the nature of the conversation to be banter. In banter the students motivate one another to produce teasing turns and the conversation is similar

255

to a debate, since teases are produced very quickly one after another and the teasing turn produced affects the next turn (Dynel 2008:243). In other words, teases often act as both motives and responses. Also, instead of one teased target, in banter both students become targets of teases.

The banter continues after Laura has finished writing her clause on the blackboard. Laura presents her next tease nonverbally by walking up to Jussi, putting her hand on her hip and making an angry face at him (lines 10-11). Laura's hand gesture is a typical feminine response and used with the angry facial expression it creates an emphasized meaning which nonverbally tells Jussi to stop criticizing her. Jussi no longer directly comments on Laura's writing, but tries to irritate Laura by squinting his eyes in an attempt to read the clause she wrote out loud (line 13). Laura shouts at Jussi to "shut up" (line 14), walks up to him again, looks at Jussi and then the blackboard, as if to check whether her clause is readable from where Jussi sits. Jussi no longer produces teasing turns and the banter comes to an end. The last turn on line 16, where Laura states. ("I don't like it how it always goes like this.") seems to refer to her handwriting not being visible or looking good enough on the blackboard. With this turn Laura seems to admit her handwriting to be quite small and also, that she has had problems with writing on the blackboard before, her text not being visible to the class. Laura's last turn is interesting, since she produces the final turn of banter already on line 14, where she tells Jussi to "shut up" and Jussi no longer replies with a tease, which marks the end of banter. Nevertheless, Laura admits her mistake.

3.6 Language Play in EFL Classroom Talk

The following example is from a 5th grade lesson. The teacher interrupts a game the students have been playing in pairs or groups of three and asks whether everyone got a chance to practice. Some of the students answer corroboratively, but others do not seem to hear the teacher. The teacher states that she will ask the students a few more questions, and the students begin to pay attention to what is said (lines 1-3). The students produce their turns in unison, but very quietly. Maria is the only one to produce an audible answer to one of the teacher's questions and her response is humoristic.

 Extract 13 (5th grade, group 1)

01 Teacher: ok so I'm going to ask you a few more questions.

02 Matti: ((looks at the teacher)) what?

03   (2.1) ((the students quiet down and look at the teacher))

04 Teacher: smiling?

05 Students: [*no I'm not*]

06   [*yes, I am*]

07 Teacher: are you sitting?

08 Students: *yes, I am.*

 09 Teacher: do you like cats?

10 Maria: yes:: ((looks at Julia))

11   ((Julia gazes at Maria and smiles))

12   ((the teacher continues asking questions))

 The students are asked questions, which they are expected to answer with Yes, I do/No, I don't or Yes, I am/No, I'm not -structures that are written on the blackboard. The same structures were used earlier during the game they were playing and the teacher is checking the students' knowledge through teacher-led follow-up questions. When the teacher asks the whole class do you like cats? (line 9), Maria is the only one who answers with a clear audible turn. This might be because of the change in question and answer structure (I do/don't instead of I am/I'm not) or because the students' opinion is asked and they are unable to answer immediately. Nevertheless, Maria starts by answering clearly, but begins to stretch her voice after she realizes no one else is answering. Maria then lowers her voice and finishes her answer humorously producing language play. It seems that as Maria detects she is the only one clearly answering the teacher's question, she alters her response to create humour through a paradoxical response. Thus, her turn on line 10 is directly motivated by the teacher's question, but the lack of response from other students seems to act as motive for the language play she produces in the middle of her emerging turn.

In her humorous turn, Maria consciously plays with the language form of the answer by using yes and I don't in the same clause, creating the paradoxical

256

answer yes I don't. Her answer can be recognised as non-serious, since she immediately laughs at her own response and by looking at Julia invites her to laugh with her. As Haakana (1996:151) points out, laughter can act as both a response and an invitation to get another person/people to laugh and accordingly, Maria uses laughter for the latter purpose. The language play produced by Maria gets no response from the teacher, which could be due to the inability to hear her answer as she lowers her voice noticeably in the middle of the turn. Only Julia, who is sitting next to Maria, responds to Maria's turn with a shy gaze and a smile on line 11. Despite the minimal response she gets, Maria has consciously manipulated the form of her answer and thus, the current extract can be classified as an example of language play.

3.7 The Rare Example of a Canned Joke

The extract is from a 5th grade lesson and involves student initiated joking. It is the beginning of class and the teacher is engaging in social chat with the students. The extract begins with a two-party conversation as Lauri is explaining to the teacher about someone he knows, who has travelled to several countries. On line 7 Lauri explicitly invites Daniel to join the conversation by asking him a question. Daniel does not answer; however, he soon interrupts the teacher's turn by producing a joke in relation to the conversation (lines 10-11). Daniel's joke does not get an appropriate response as the teacher does not hear or understand the joke and it gets no reaction from other students.

Extract 15 (5th grade, group 1)

01 Lauri: he's been to almost every European country.

02 Teacher: wow.

03 Lauri: he hasn't been to like three or four.

04   (2.6) ((the teacher browses through her papers, then looks at Lauri who nods 05   towards the teacher))

06 Teacher: oho. wow.

07 Lauri: ((looks at Daniel)) Moldova. San Marino and what was the third one.

08   (1.7) ((the teacher is still browsing through papers))

09 Teacher: doesn't he do anything else except travel to different countries.

10 Daniel: he is

11   Daniel: =SE ON Euroopan Anthony Bourdain ((looks at the teacher)) he is the Anthony Bourdain of Europe.

12 Teacher: ((looks at Daniel and leans toward her desk)) what?

13 Daniel: ((looks at the teacher)) nothing.

14 Teacher: ((looks at Daniel)) Europe's? 15   (1.2)

16 Daniel: ((looks at his desk)) nothing.

17 Teacher: okay.

18   ((Jarno looks at Daniel and smiles. Daniel leans towards Jarno and whispers 19   something inaudible, they both laugh))

The joke turn on lines 10 and 11 is produced by Daniel and thus, the extract is a clear example of student initiated humour. In addition, it can be categorized as canned joking, since it presents a familiar frame for a joke. In the joke frame "He/she/it is like the – of –", we use for example a known person, mostly a public figure, to refer to the qualities of a less known person. One might say for example "She is like the Michael Jackson of salsa dancing", referring to a person's great dancing skills, which is likely to be understood since most people know Michael Jackson and that he was famous for his dancing skills. In Daniel's turn, a reference is made to the American television personality Anthony Bourdain, who is known for his travel and food show, to refer to Lauri's acquaintance whose several travel experiences are discussed.

4. CONCLUSION

The initiation of humour in the 5th grade and 9th grade EFL lessons is examined by both students and teacher. Thus, the humour use between two groups is pointed out through the same teacher. Irony and teasing are used differently between 5th grade and 9th grade lessons. Other types of humour are used in a similar way in both groups and the differences are related with other factors, except age. For instance, language play appears more in the 9th grade lessons because the lesson is concerned with vocabulary teaching. The results also show that there is a positive

257

effect of humour on the classroom atmosphere more than negative one. The negative effect of humour depends on signs that show negativity such as crying.

REFERENCES

- Belz, J. (2002). Second language play as a representation of the multicompetent self in foreign language study. Journal of Language: Identity, and Education 1(1), 1339. http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=2277dc9befad4f24886ca0779384280b%40sessionmgr110andvid=6andhid=128

- Chiaro, D. (1996). The language of jokes: Analysing verbal play. London: Routledge.

- Dynel, M. (2008). No aggression, only teasing: The pragmatics of teasing and banter. Lodz Papers in Pragmatics 4.2, 241-261. http://versita.metapress.com/content/a56l11728n33188q/fulltext.pdf

- Haapaniemi, K. (2011). Conversational joking in the classroom. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Jyväskylä, Department of Languages. https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/36937/URN%3aNBN%3af i%3ajyu-2011111311677.pdf?sequence=1

- Haiman, J. (1998). Talk is cheap. Sarcasm, alienation, and the evolution of language. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Hutchby, I. and Wooffitt, R. (1998). Conversation analysis: Principles, practices and applications. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Keltner, D., Capps, L., Kring, A. M., Young, R. C. and Heerey, E. A. (2001). Just teasing: A conceptual analysis and empirical review. Psychological Bulletin 127 (2), 229-248.

- Lilja, N. (2010). Ongelmista oppimiseen. Toisen aloittamat korjausjaksot kakkoskielisessa keskustelussa. Jyväskylä studies in humanities 146. University of Jyväskylä.

- Markee, N. (2000). Conversation analysis. New York: Routledge.

- McHoul, A. (1990). The organization of repair in classroom talk. Language in Society 19, 349-377.

- Mulkay, M. (1988). On humor: Its nature and its place in modern society. Cambridge: Polity.

- Nahemov, L. (1986). Humor as a data base for the study of aging. In L. Nahemov, K. A. McCluskey-Fawcett and P. E. McGhee (eds.), Humor and aging. London: Academic Press Inc.

- Norrick, N. R. (2003). Issues in conversational joking. Journal of Pragmatics 35 (9), 1333-1359. http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0378216602001807/1-s2.0S0378216602001807-main.pdf?_tid=016b9e028f1011e392ce00000aab0f26&acdnat=1391678645_d5fc872e57ab3b1c5bdf47862176db43

- Plester, B. A. and Sayers, J. (2007). ''Taking the piss'': Functions of banter in the IT industry. Humor: International Journal of Humor Research. 20 (2), 157-187. http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=e6fbef30ea9b4ab09362d14fccacee88%40sessionmgr112&vid=9&hid=128

- Putkonen, S. (2001). Kahden maailman välissä. Kiusoittelu ja siihen vastaaminen kolmen tytön kasvokkaiskeskustelussa. In M. Heinonen, P. Korhonen, M. Mäntylä, S. Putkonen and L. Tainio (eds.) Keskustelun kuosit. Kielen opissa 6. Helsingin yliopiston suomen kielen laitoksen julkaisuja, 197-217.

- Raskin, V. (1985). Semantic mechanisms of humor. Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Pub. Co.

- Roininen, E. (2010). Humor in the classroom. Unpublished Pro Gradu Thesis. University of Jyväskylä. Department of Languages. https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/38142/URN%3aNBN%3afi%3ajyu-201207042000.pdf?sequence=1

- Sacks, H. (1974). An analysis of the course of a joke's telling in conversation. In R. Bauman and J. F. Sherzer (eds.), Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 337-353.

- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A. and Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematic for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. Language 50 (4), 696-735. http://anthroweb.ucsd.edu/~jhaviland/AudVid/AudVidReadings/Simplest_Systematics_for_Turn-Taking_(Language).pdf

- Saharinen, K. (2007). Huumoria koulussa – kiusoittelu opettajan keinona suhtautua oppilaan virheisiin. In L. Tainio (ed.), Vuorovaikutusta luokkahuoneessa. Näkökulmana keskusteluanalyysi. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 261-287.

- Schegloff, E. A., Jefferson, G. and Sacks, H. (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. Language 53 (2), 361-382.http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/413107.pdf?&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true.

258

- Seedhouse, P. (2004). The interactional architecture of the language classroom: A conversation analysis perspective. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

- Simons, C. J. R., McCluskey-Fawcett, K. A. and Papini, D. R. (1986). Theoretical and functional perspectives on the development of humor during infancy, childhood and adolescence. In L. Nahemov, K. A. McCluskey-Fawcett and P. E. McGhee (eds.), Humor and aging. London: Academic Press Inc, 53-80.

- Spåre, P. (2008). Huumori saa luokan poreilemaan. Opettaja   –lehti [online].http://www.opettaja.fi/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/ OPETTAJALEHTI_EPAPER_PG/2008_37/126296. htm (Accessed on 30.10.2013)

- Stuart, W. D. and Rosenfeld, L. B. (1994). Student perceptions of teacher humor and classroom climate. Communication Research Reports 11 (1), 87-97.http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfvi ewer?sid=e6fbef30ea9b4ab09362d14fccacee88%40s essionmgr112&vid=18&hid=128

- Tainio, L. (2007). Miten tutkia luokkahuoneen vuorovaikutusta keskustelunanalyysin keinoin? In L. Tainio (ed.), Vuorovaikutusta luokkahuoneessa. Näkökulmana keskusteluanalyysi. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 15-58.

- Thornborrow, J. (2002). Power talk. Language and interaction in institutional discourse. Harlow: Pearson Education. Wagner, J. (2004). The Classroom and Beyond. The Modern Language Journal 88 (4), 612-616. http://www.academia.edu/823117/The_classroom_an d_beyond

- Walsh, S. (2006). Investigating classroom discourse. New York: Routledge.