

## Humor Application in Teaching English to Future Lawyers of Ukraine

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### Abstract:

In the twenty-first century, foreign languages have become exactly the means of “survival” in the conditions of world community formation and global thinking. The successful development of a person ready for “survival” is a process of entering into a foreign culture. The most objective solving of the problem of students’ acquaintance with a foreign culture, as the authors believe, is modeling real intercultural intercourse situations: that is, intentional confrontation of situations of native and foreign cultures. The creation of the model of foreign culture is one of the basic requirements of foreign language teaching as a means of “survival.” It requires working out new components of teaching-methodical complexes, both in content and form. Students’ preparation for acquisition of foreign culture is one of the unique objectives of contemporary higher education. Motivation is one of the main factors on which students’ proficiency depends. Students’ interest in learning foreign languages can be arisen by some new methods of teaching. Humor application during English classes at universities is essential because studying peculiarities of English and American humor the learners of foreign languages are ready to enter the system of international and world cultures and behave naturally either in British or American societies. English humor is an integral part of British and American society, so its knowledge is necessary for learners of English as a second language. Humor usually requires a specific style and is based on surprise. It means that something relevant to the audience is present and goes something different from what the audience expected. Our pedagogical experiment with the application of humorous texts during English classes resulted in increasing students’ motivation, broadening their mental outlook, and knowledge of a foreign culture.

**Keywords:** Communicative competence, English language, foreign culture, humor competence, knowledge and skills, motivation, police officers.

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## Introduction.

Today the Law System of Ukraine is interested in highly-qualified, all-round developed specialists mastering not only their specialty but foreign language as well. They should be prepared to enter the system of national and world cultures. That is why improving foreign languages skills at Universities of Internal Affairs are of the most considerable significance nowadays.

High level of mastering different languages, the degree of speech skills and habits development is a necessity today. This problem in external methodology has become especially topical in the twenty-first century because of the growing interest in international partnerships.

The primary function of the word is serving as a means of communication. International intercourse is realized directly or indirectly through the written language that is through printed or hand-written texts. Therefore, the educational universities' curricula sets forth the following practical requirements: the instruction should be such that the graduates can learn a foreign language in simple everyday subjects using the speech material dealt with in the course of studying, can read and understand without a dictionary a natural text in the foreign language and with the occasional help of a dictionary if the book presents moderate difficulties and can express in the written form simple thoughts (writing a short letter).

In other words, the practical objective means not only communication; it also knowledge, skills, and habits of the technological character. The educational objective of foreign language teaching consists of the principles of morality uncalculated in students through instruction in the foreign language.

The cultural goal implies the following tasks: widening the students' general outlook, developing their abstract thinking, cultivating the sense of beauty, and their appreciation of art. Reading English texts, acquainting the students with life, and culture of the English-speaking nations, and with their manners and customs will contribute to the mental growth of the students. Later, the ability to read English and American authors in the original and authentic texts in the English language reflecting the culture of the countries where the language is spoken will serve the students as a means of attaining a higher general educational level. Reading good authors in a foreign language will develop their feeling of beauty. Widening their philological outlook will result in the unconscious and conscious comparison of the international and the native languages.

The personality's developing aim is connected with the development of students' language abilities, their culture of speech behavior, general educational skills, stable interest to language learning as well as positive emotions, will power, memory, etc. That is why students learn to guess, to transfer their knowledge and skills into a situation based on the problem-search activity, to find differences, to be logical, to be able to enter, continue and finish communication, to be prepared for overcoming difficulties, and working hard, etc.

At present the strategic objective is emphasized. This one reflects the social order of society. It presupposes the formation of the second language personality that is a person, who is not only mastering a foreign language but who can reflect the surrounding world using the foreign language. The student is supposed to know the system of the language and be able to use it in his communication. Besides, the personality has to know all the notions and be able to put into practice

his aims, interests in the process of his speech activities. All the issues mentioned above allow the second-language personality to participate in intercultural communication (Vitin, 1997).

The role of humor in conducting lessons cannot be overestimated. Nowadays, universities are equipped better either with technical aids or with literature, which allows students to get comprehensive education.

English lessons give teachers a lot of space for creative work. The variety of tasks and activities meant for achieving the aims of foreign language teaching (practical, educational, cultural, personality developing, strategic) is not limited and depends on the teacher's professionalism. But still, the atmosphere at the English lesson is far from good. Students get bored and tired of routine work in the classroom too quickly which results in the low level of mastering the language. One of the possible ways out of this situation is the application of humor into language teaching.

Those persons engaged in foreign language learning know well that the appropriate introduction of a joke in the course of classes cannot only revive student's flagging interest but can contribute to his understanding and mastering of the subject matter as well. But still, humor being included in textbooks has not been regarded by scientists and educators as a very essential constituent part of the educational process.

This slip makes realizing the goals of foreign language teaching much more difficult. Moreover, two of them – socio-cultural and strategic ones cannot be achieved in the full volume. The person who studies English and is going abroad to one of the English speaking countries should realize the unique place of humor in British society. The Englishmen use humor in their everyday life not even in funny situations instead of the abusive words and indignant intonations. Besides, no one can be considered a second language personality without being able to use humor adequately in a certain situation.

But the thing is that a teacher as the main leader of the training process should be well aware of all the genres of the English humor, and the techniques of explaining how it functions in any definite situation. For that purpose, jokes, aphorisms and different works of verbal art can be used. They are reading prose and verses by Jerome. K. Jerome, Maurice Baring, Pelham Grenville Wodehouse, Victor Sandom Pritchett, Mark Twain, Henry Graham Greene, Edward Lear, Lewis Carroll, Rudyard Kipling, T.S. Eliot can contribute significantly to broadening students' outlook.

So, studying humor during English classes is very important because knowing the peculiarities of English and American temper the learners of foreign languages are ready to enter the system of international and world cultures and behave naturally either in British or American societies.

It stands to reason that mood, like any other abstract notion, is versatile. Although issues of humor were investigated by such sciences as linguistics, psychology, philosophy etc., it is still not studied to a great depth. Humor usually requires a particular language. It is based on surprise. Its essence lies in two ingredients: the relevance factor and the surprise factor. It means that

something relevant to the audience is presented first and then goes something different from what the audience expected.

Understanding of humor is based on three factors: the case of communication, the sender, and the receiver of the message. The result of a humorous act is the level of understanding the situation by the participants. There are three types of the programs vital for its understanding: cognitive, formal and emotional. Emotional schemes are more important for understanding the sense in humorous discourse than in other types of conversations.

In recent years humor as a socio-cultural phenomenon has been paid much attention too. It led to the foundation of the International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS), the scholarly organization dedicated to humor some researches.

Cultural characteristics influence humor peculiarities greatly. English humor known all over the world gives ample proof of this fact. It is an integral part of British society, which annoys and frightens foreigners very often. English dry sense of humor is called “understatement.” Americans’ love for imaginary stories has led to “overstatement.” In stock, people in both countries express their passion for practical jokes, puns, understated quips, parodies (burlesque), and frequent use of different kinds of irony. British also tend to nonsense, whimsical and black humor while Americans use a lot of slang and enjoy slapstick and physical comedy.

### **Literature Review.**

Different aspects of humor attracted attention by English and American scientists. Willis Ken (2002) considered sense of humor from pragmatic and political aspects. According to psychiatrist Dr. Mailloux (2002), humor in psychology fulfills three main roles: being funny; expression of feelings or thoughts; a hostility transfer mechanism. Roeckelein J. E., Martin, Rod A. (2002) dedicated their investigations to psychological aspects of humor.

H. W. Fowler (1937) considered that most instances of verbal irony are sarcastic suggesting that the term “sarcasm” is more widely used. Bogel V. in his scientific works studied irony, inferences and other aspects of humor. Today scientists consider humor as a sociocultural phenomenon (International Society for Humour Studies (ISHS) Scientists study its role in business, entertainment and health care and how humor varies according to culture, age, gender, purpose and context. Russian scientists Dubovitskaya T. D. (2002), Vitin Zh. L. (1997), Livergant A. (1986) considered theoretical and methodical aspects of humor application at English lessons.

### **Specificity and Problems of Teaching a Foreign Language at Non-linguistic Department**

English classes conducted in the academic groups, where English is not the primary subject, are aimed at mastering English as a means of communication in the network of the chosen profession. The main peculiarities of studying a foreign language in these groups are:

### **Practical orientation**

Future police officers study a foreign language to get additional information concerning their future job. It presupposes the coordination of English lessons with significant subjects. During first English classes students get acquainted with general terminology and terminology

concerning their future profession. For this purpose, general scientific and popular scientific texts, as well as texts in the network of a chosen profession, are included.

The succession of education. The English syllabus at University rests upon the knowledge, habits and skills acquired in secondary school.

Few hours for class work. This fact increases the importance of self-education, especially with the help of educational technology. The efforts of teachers working in such groups should be focused on the methods of rational explanation of difficult themes checking up home assignments and correcting students' mistakes.

Language requirements concerning four types of speech activity are defined in the syllabus in the following way:

Reading: 1) reading original texts concerning definite specialty with the partial help of the dictionary; 2) finding out in a voluminous text the specified information, retelling it or writing the paper.

Speaking: 1) making up monologue utterances of different types (description, narration, reasoning, and argumentation); 2) taking part in discussions on scientific, professional and socio-cultural topics.

Writing: 1) ability to compile a business document, to express the plot of the text in the form of a summary or a plan; 2) ability to answer the given question in the written form.

Audition: "1) ability to understand the content of a text or message while listening to the audio record or communicating with the teacher or group; 2) ability to single out the main information in the text that was listened to" (Shchukin, 2007, p.148).

Thus, the realization of the main aims of Foreign Language Teaching (practical, educational, personality developing, cultural, and strategic) depends on the coordination of actions of students and a teacher. It means that students should spend more time working hard, possibly only if they are highly motivated. That is why all activities during English classes should be communicative and motivating. Examining the motivation of the academic work, the authors note here that the notion "motive" is closely connected with the notions "aim" and "need." Interaction of these notions is known as the motivation sphere. This term includes all kinds of impulses: needs, interests, aims, stimuli, inclinations, and guidelines.

Scientists single out a set of motivation brands. Within the framework of non-linguistic departments, the following types are of particular interest:

1. communicative motivation, which bases on the need for communication.
2. linguistic cognitive motivation, which focuses on learning language phenomena.
3. profession-oriented motivation, which bases on getting professional knowledge utilizing foreign languages.
4. country-research motivation, which depends on the subject matter and personal interest of a student" (Dubovitskaya, 2002, p.42-45).

Success in mastering a foreign style in its cognitive function depends on acquiring the feeling of the language, obtaining complete satisfaction of cognitive motives while studying a

foreign language, forms a stable interest in learning it. Using a foreign language as a means of getting specific information (reading newspapers, magazines, and explanatory dictionaries) makes a foreign language indispensable in learner's cognitive activity, and, at the same time, a foreign language itself increases students' cognitive activity. Thus, it leads to increasing the motivation for studying a foreign language.

**The objective** of the article – analyzing humor as linguistic and sociocultural phenomenon. **The objectives** of the article - analyzing scientific, methodical and pedagogical literature; investigating the peculiarities of British and American humor; singling out and analyzing the basic language means used in humorous discourse.

### **Methods.**

In the our research following methods of investigation are used: theoretical methods devoted to analyses of scientific, methodical literature; contrastive linguistic method aims to provide the establishment of valuable theoretical and practical results on some aspects of British and American humor; empirical methods dealing with questioning, testing and experimenting to check the cadets' knowledge of British and American culture.

### **Results.**

As numerous investigations show, motivation for studying a foreign language among students of Ukrainian non-linguistic departments is not high. As a result, they don't develop their language habits and skills independently. They read literature on major subjects only in their native language and a lot of useful information in English, which can be used for their studies, remains aside. It prevents students from progressing neither in their specialty nor in foreign languages. Besides, students are not ready to participate in intercultural communication, to take the floor at the international conferences not only because their language skills and habits are not developed enough but also because they don't feel confident and secure when talking to foreigners. Thus, students should watch authentic movies and read original books, which will help them to understand the way of the behavior and thinking typical for English-speaking countries, carefully analyze them and take the opportunity to participate in intercultural communication in reality. Thus, we see that all the competencies (linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, socio-cultural, social and strategic) being the constituent parts of the communicative competence are equally crucial for the educational process at higher schools.

### **Discussion. Selection and Systematization of Humorous Material**

As it stated before, motivation is one of the main factors on which students' proficiency depends. After the profound analysis of this phenomenon and its significance for the society, we have decided to apply humor at English classes at the university to persuade if its powerful influence could make the educational process more effective.

It aims at telling the effectiveness of complex exercises containing the elements of humor. Our pedagogical experiment consisted of two tasks. The first task was to reveal the level of students' motivation and its type (extrinsic or intrinsic), and their ability to work, which is essential for the students of law faculty. The second task was to work out and apply the set of exercises containing humorous elements. The third task was to investigate changes in students' motivation

and ability to work independently after introducing funny activities. The fourth task was to analyze the results of the experiments and approve or disapprove our hypothesis that humor application at English classes at university increases students' motivation. We put in the forefront the objective of working out and approving the complex of exercises containing the elements of humor.

The pedagogical experiment consisted of stating, forming, and controlling stages. The authors decided to divide students of law department who study English for particular purposes into three groups.

The stating stage aimed to reveal the level of students' motivation and its dominating type (extrinsic or intrinsic), and the level of students' ability to work independently. The results of questioning were the following: in all three groups the level of intrinsic motivation was deficient. The extrinsic type of motivation prevailed.

We concluded that such results were unpredictable. As the authors said before, students of non-philological faculties are not likely to have very high motivation in studying a foreign language. As to the level of students' ability to work independently in all three groups, it was rather deficient. However, we consider that their interest in English learning can be arisen by some new methods of teaching.

To appreciate a cultural joke, learners must be familiar with the cultural practices of a nation, society, or community. The example of a cultural fun the research presents below:

(a) – Do you know what I got for Father's Day?

– No, what?

– The bill for Mother's Day.

(b) Father's day always worries me. I'm afraid I'll get something I can't afford.

Having defined the level of students' motivation and the level of their ability to work independently, we came up with the second stage of our experiment that is the forming stage. Jokes and humorous anecdotes are pedagogically useful because the texts are short and provide students with light reading and opportunity for listening comprehension in class, in the language laboratory, through the Internet. The brevity of these texts may provide a refreshing change from those longer reading assignments – short stories, plays, and novels. To increase students' lexical competence as rapidly as possible the vocabulary that is part of humorous material was introduced before the presentation of puns of this type.

Learners have to know that in some English speaking countries, special days are set aside to remember mothers and fathers to perceive the humor in (a, b). In the USA, Father's Day comes after Mother's Day. Both (a, b) involve a stereotype shared by individual members of the society that only men pay the bills and are supposedly the sole providers. It also imputes some irresponsibility to wives and children in their buying habits. The text also points to materialism and the superficiality of giving presents in the culture. Cultural jokes serve as mirrors of the socio-cultural practices of the society and can inform the learner how some members of the community view themselves.

The joke is successful for members of the culture because these two special days occur relatively near one another. Father's Day is approximately one month after Mother's Day. The humor of this joke would undoubtedly be lost in a culture where these days are not celebrated (Stopsky, 1992, p. 68).

Proverbs are cultural jokes reflecting the way of thinking in the English-speaking society. The most famous are the aphorisms by Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde. Their aphorisms represent British wit in a full sense.

The present legal reasons for divorce are ridiculous. Bad temper is a better ground for divorce than adultery.

(Attributed to Shaw by Elbert Hubbard)

A doctor's reputation is made by the number of eminent men, who die under his care.

(Pearson, Postscript)

The Devil: An Englishman thinks he is moral when he is only uncomfortable.

(Man and Superman, Act III)

When an Englishman is sentimental, he behaves very much as an Irishman does when he is drunk. (John Bull's Other Island, Act II)

We learn from experience that men never learn anything from experience.

(Winston, Quintessence)

Love is a gross exaggeration of the difference between one person and everybody else.

(Reader's Digest, Oct. 1938)

What nonsense people talk about happy marriages! A man can be pleased with any woman, as long as he does not love her.

(The Picture of Dorian Gray)

A bad woman is the sort of woman a man never gets tired.

(A woman of No Importance)

If one could only teach the English how to talk, and the Irish how to listen, society would be quite civilized.

(An Ideal Husband)

Gossip is charming. But scandal is gossip made tedious by morality.

(Lady Windermere's Fan)

“One must be serious about something if one wants to have any amusement in life”

(The Importance of Being Earnest) (Humor i satira Irlandii, 1986, p. 320)

The work with aphorisms is performed in different ways. For example, they can learn by heart and discuss them. Students can write compositions on the topics of proverbs because they make people think about many essential things. During our educational experiment, the work with sayings was organized in the form of a game. The students of the second course were to learn the

proverbs at home, and in the classroom, they had a competition. The group was divided into two teams. The team, which started the game, was to say the first part of an aphorism, and the second team was to add the rest. This game was very dynamic, and the students enjoyed it.

Idioms are as aphorisms the indicators of one's mentality and British people, and primarily Americans widely use them in their speech. But students find it challenging to remember the idioms which have no correspondence with their language. We consider that emotional factor plays a significant role in English classes. So, to make the learning process more effective, we analyzed humor in English idioms.

Many idioms turn out to be funny as they reveal different sides of a phenomenon hidden from our eyes before. So, a teacher should pay attention to the meaning of such idioms, which will make students remember these expressions quicker. For example, to hit the ceiling – get angry or excited; shake a leg – to hurry; white elephant – something useless;

To pull the wool over one's eyes – to deceive, to dupe; a face so ugly it can stop a clock – a very unattractive look;

as merry as a cricket – cheerful; to talk through one's hat – to lie;

as complacent as a cat – self-satisfied; on the ball – quick, prompt, efficient, an excellent track record – a good service record; to play one's cards right – to take the most advantage from a situation, to lose touch – to lose contact; to be fired – to be discharged (Kunin, 2000, p. 288).

The work with the following expressions at English classes was organized in the following way: after finding out the meaning of the following expressions, a student got a card with the phrase in it, and he had to use all his acting skills to explain the meaning of the expression without words. The group was to guess what phrase that students had chosen. It should be noted, that due to emotional factor during English lessons the group remembered the phrases very well.

The website Jokes in Levels (<https://www.jokesinlevels.com>) is used for listening skills development. The jokes are in three levels of difficulty (Elementary, Intermediate, and Upper-Intermediate). There is a placement test on the site.

Cadets/students listen to a joke, except for the last sentence. The task is to guess the end of a joke or funny story.

If it is not possible to listen to the recording, activities with website materials can be organized as follows:

1. Pair work. Give both of students a printed copy of the joke at their level.
2. Students read the joke aloud. The first student reads one sentence and explains it into their language. The second student reads the second sentence and also explains it. They keep changing after one sentence and continue this way until they read the whole text.
3. One student reads the whole trick to their partner. Their partner tries to understand. Then their partner reads the joke to them.

4. If there are more students in the class, four or more, you can give one joke to half of the class and the second joke to the second half of the class. When they finish point 3., they can tell their joke to somebody from the other half of the class.

We also applied humor at English lessons: cultural jokes, word-based humor, and professional humor. The tasks for the students were much more complicated.

The difficulty of word-based or linguistic-based joke is to understand it; students should know the language very well. In word-based jokes, such phenomena as polysemy and homonymy are widely used.

Word power is fundamental to the comprehension of humorous discourse, but «humor competence and joke competence» are also essential. Learners do not always develop jokes and humor competence in a foreign language immediately, but, with sufficient input in humorous texts, this competence can be nurtured for steady development during the study. Another type of pun, the puzzle, is also appropriate at the advanced level. This type is more difficult for foreign language learners for they involve reference to two different meanings of a word or a play on two different word meanings. There are some examples below:

When is a boat like a heap of snow?

– When it's a drift.

When does a cabbage beat a beet in growing?

– When it gets ahead.

Why is the attorney like a minister?

– Because he studies the law and the profits.

English has a large stock of phonological jokes that bring together different meanings of a specific word or relate different word sense that sound alike. The learners have to know about the existence of «snowdrifts» and boats, “a drift”, about cabbages that come in “heads”, that is, “a head of cabbage”, “a head of lettuce” as distinguished from winning a competition, beating someone in a game or contest means «getting ahead». There is a play on the homophony between “beat” as a verb with the meaning to defeat and “beet” as a noun referring to a type of vegetable.

In the next example, humor derives from the contrast of two homophones in English, namely: profits» (the unexpected or surprise remark) and “prophets” (the expected one).

Translation of humor for Ukrainian students is indeed a challenge and highly creative for the translators must know the target and source languages and foreign culture exceptionally well. In dealing with the translation of television programs from English into other languages, the researcher states that, in some instances, “... the original jokes will have to be rendered as jokes that work as such which means that entirely different jokes may have to be substituted for the original ones” (Stopsky, 1992, p. 79).

Besides word-based jokes, cultural jokes were widely introduced. But they were connected with the students' future profession. Learning the topic “Crimes and Punishment. in the Court”

students got acquainted with numerous jokes about attorneys. Pictorial humor was also used as additional aids in teaching that topic.

Here are some examples of jokes about lawyers:

An Observation by Sandra Day O'Connor

(<https://tdhollis.wordpress.com/2012/07/27/friday-funny-lawyer-joke/>)

“There is no shortage of lawyers in Washington, DC. There may be more lawyers than people”.

The Hundred-Dollar Bill

Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, an honest lawyer, and an old drunk were walking along when they simultaneously spotted a hundred-dollar bill lying in the street. Who gets it?

The old drunk, of course, the other three are mythological creatures.

A Reasonable Fee

A man phones a lawyer and asks, «How much would you charge for just answering three simple questions?»

The lawyer replies, “A thousand dollars.”

“A thousand dollars!» exclaims the man. «That's very expensive, isn't it?”

“It certainly is,» says the lawyer. «Now, what's your third question?”

Two Kinds of Lawyers

There are two kinds of lawyers: those who know the law and those who know the judge.

Mark Twain notes...

“It is interesting to note that criminals have multiplied of late, and lawyers have also, but I repeat myself”.

Bad Reputation

“Isn't it a shame how 99% of the lawyers give the whole profession a bad name” (Wright, 1996, p. 49)

Questions about Lawyers

“Q: How many lawyer jokes are there?

A: Only three. The rest are true stories.

Q: What's wrong with lawyer jokes?

A: Lawyers don't think they're funny and other people don't think they're jokes.

Q: If you have a bad lawyer, why not get a new one?

A: Changing lawyers is like moving to a different deck chair on the Titanic.

Q: How does an attorney sleep?

A: First, he lies on one side and then on the other.

Q: What's the difference between a lawyer and a leech?

A: When you die, a leech will stop sucking your blood and drop off” (Wright, 1996, p. 50).

Besides professional humor, students of law department study English proverbs and sayings as it is an integral part of British and American culture. Apart from traditional ways of learning them, the so-called anti-proverbs can be used for checking students' critical thinking.

Table 1. *Sample of Tasks for Comparison*

Anti-proverb	Source
Absence makes the heart wander.	Absence makes the heart grow fonder.

Chaste makes waste.	Haste makes waste.
Time wounds all heels.	Time heals all wounds.
Where there's a will, there's a relative.	Where there's a will, there's a way.

As a result, the atmosphere at the lessons became friendlier, vivid, and that all the students worked actively both in the classroom and at home.

### Conclusions:

Humor is a very significant phenomenon for consolidating human relationships in different spheres of life. English humor is an integral part of British and American society, so its knowledge is necessary for all learners of the English language.

Our research work aims to analyze humor as a linguistic and socio-cultural phenomenon and to approve the complex of exercises containing the elements of humor.

Our research work hypothesizes that humor application during English lessons increases students' motivation and their ability to work independently.

Our research paper consists of two main parts. The first one is devoted to theoretical aspects of humor analysis.

The second part presents the complex of exercises based on humor for developing oral and written speech habits, skills and stimulating students' interest in learning English.

The following methods were used in our research work: theoretical: analyzing scientific, systematic, and pedagogical literature on the problem; empirical: questioning, testing and experimenting.

Our pedagogical experiment resulted in increasing students'/ cadets' motivation, broadening their mental outlook and knowledge of a foreign culture.

In such a way, our hypothesis was practically confirmed by the results which have been obtained, and fixed in the second part of our research paper.

Thus, we hope humor will be applied in the educational process more widely which will result in students' proficiency and consolidating relations between students and a lecturer.

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