Approaching Culture through Humour in the EFL Classroom at the Department of Letters and English, University of Frères Mentouri Constantine1

Abstract

Teaching a language as a system outweighs its cultural underpinnings which enfold a large amount of what is said. This calls for a reconsideration of the way of teaching so as to give culture its weight. Over seriousness in classrooms tends to fan the flame of tension and anxiety among students; consequently, classrooms should be designed with an appealing atmosphere that encourages the learning process and impedes boredom. To this end, humour makes a convenient teaching method which both eliminates boredom, and stimulates culture learning. Thus, the aim of this paper is to get an insight into students' willingness to study culture through the humorous tunnel. A descriptive study relying on a questionnaire, as a research tool, is used to see the validity of humour in the classroom. The questionnaire is addressed to a sample of 46 second year students extracted from a population of about 250 students at the Department of Letters and English, University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1. Findings reveal that humour is worth incorporation in the EFL classroom because it both generates a cosy, stress-free atmosphere and helps to learn about the target culture.

Keywords: language learning, culture, humour , University.

Sarra MAHCENE

Department of Letters and English, University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine1, Algeria.

Résumé

Enseigner le système d'une langue se fait généralement au dépend de son aspect culturel inhérent qui n'est pas de moindre dans tout ce qui se dit dans cette langue. Ceci appelle à reconsidérer la manière avec laquelle elle est enseignée pour accorder à la dimension culturelle son dû. Une approche excessivement sérieuse à l'enseignement des langues ne fait qu'exposer les apprenants à davantage de stress et d'anxiété. Par conséquent, un cours de langue doit être conçu de façon à être appliqué dans une atmosphère plus attrayante, plus stimulante et beaucoup moins ennuyeuse. A cette fin, on peut recourir à l'humour comme approche adéquate à même d'éliminer chez les apprenants l'ennui et stimuler l'apprentissage de la culture d'une langue. Dès lors, l'objectif de cet article est d'examiner la disposition des étudiants à étudier cette culture par le biais de l'humour. Une étude descriptive, utilisant un questionnaire comme outil pour voir l'importance de l'humour dans un cours de langue, est menée. Le questionnaire est administré à un échantillon de 46 étudiants parmi une population de 250 étudiants de deuxième année licence en langue anglaise, Université des Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1. Les résultats montrent que l'humour vaut bien la peine d'être incorporé dans un cours d'anglais comme langue étrangère car il crée une atmosphère plus amicale et moins stressante pour apprendre la culture cible.

Mots clés: Apprentissage de la langue, culture, humour, Université.

ملخص

يتمحور تدريس اللغة حول مفهوم قواعدي يلغي حجم الثقافة والتي تشكل خلفية كبيرة لما يقال وهذا ما يتطلب إعادة النظر في طريقة التعليم بحيث تتناسب مع الثقافة وحجمها. تعتبر الجدية المبالغ فيها في الاقسام السبب الاساسي للتوتر والقلق عند الطلبة و لذلك وجب توفير الجو المناسب الذي من شأنه ان يشجع على الدراسة و يقضي على الملل، ولهذه الغاية تشكل الفكاهة انجع طريقة للتخلص من الملل والتحفيز على تعلم الثقافة. لذلك تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تحليل رغبة الطلبة في تعلم الثقافة من خلال الفكاهة، وتعتمد على دراسة وصفية قائمة على استبيان كأداة للبحث عن فعالية الفكاهة في القسم. تم تقديم هذا الاستبيان الى عينة متكونة من 46 طالبا انتقيت من 250 طالبا في السنة الثانية للعام الجامعي 2016- 2017 من قسم الآداب واللغة الانجليزية في جامعة الاخوة منتوري قسنطينة1. وخلصت الدراسة الى ان تضمين الفكاهة في اقسام تعليم اللغات الاجنبية مطلوب لكونها توفر البيئة المناسبة للدراسة كما تساعد على تعلم الثقافة الاجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تعليم اللغة، ثقافة، فكاهة، الجامعة.

* Corresponding author, e-mail: saramahcene25@gmail.com

I- Introduction :

Communicating with others is no longer a local phenomenon; the world becomes a global village in which everyone talks to the other. This emergence called for a Lingua-Franca to generate successful conversations. English played this role which made it the target of acquisition from the part of students who want to realise different goals other than communication such as business, travelling, translation, teaching, etc. However, in our universities, it is just taught as a code made up of a set of rules and social practice is mostly, if not totally, ignored.

Utterances communicate more than what their constituting lexical elements imply; they carry social values and traditions which are understood only through the recognition of the cultural conventions.

Classrooms may be characterised by too serious an approach which creates a dull atmosphere to learn about the language, in general, and culture, in particular. Therefore, an approach which may serve as a drudge killer and a cultural tunnel is a requisite, if not a must.

Humour is the salient technique to create conducive atmospheres to learn about cultures as it bridges the gap between the source culture and the target one. Jokes, as a humorous instance, convey different cultural manifestations which tell a lot about the target community, but they are not the sole instance. Humour appears in various forms that enable joyful learning about the target culture. In this respect, the paper seeks to answer the following questions;

1. Is it crucial to include culture in language teaching?
2. Does humour affect language learning in general, and culture learning in particular? In the light of these questions it can be hypothesised that using humour in the EFL classroom will boost culture learning, on the one hand, and will motivate students learn through light-hearted tasks, on the other hand.

I.1. Previous Research

Previous researchers in the field reported that humour had proven its validity in terms of creating a pleasing atmosphere in the classroom which enables to eradicate tension and anxiety which, in turn, paves the way to better language acquisition. Aboudan (2009), for example, pointed out that humour is a teaching technique which is responsible for making the classroom a joyful place in which students are willing to learn. She relied on linguistic humour to stimulate students' motivation to create a better classroom management and to boost second language learning. Hanoune (2012) stated that humorous texts have to be deliberate. Teachers should plan for them, but they have to appear spontaneous. She said that this use of humour relies on establishing a clear depiction of the group being taught so to know when to crack a joke which would not offend its members. Abraham et al. (2014) presented humour from a rather different angle perceiving it as a useful teaching method to generate a teacher-student rapport. This rapport allows students to be more attentive to their lessons and retain more information because of the appealing nature that humour gives to the classroom.

These researchers defined the use of humour inside the classroom in terms of words, gestures or comments from teachers in their classes whenever possible. Their findings revealed that humour is an effective tool in generating a conducive atmosphere and fostering learning, but they neglected the role of humour types in delivering different subjects such as grammar, linguistics, culture, etc.

I. 2. Humour as a Pedagogical Tool

Humour was anciently a medical term to mean fluids of the body. A healthy person is said to have a balance between the four humours of the body (phlegm, yellow bile, black bile, and blood) (Plester, 2016). This notion evolved throughout the years to take its current meaning. It is by definition "a message whose ingenuity or verbal skill or incongruity has the power to evoke laughter; the quality of being funny; and the trait

of appreciating (and being able to express) the humorous" (Merriam Webster Dictionary, 2014).

'The most wasted day is that in which we have not laughed' is a saying which designates the weight of humour in one's life. Students' time is approximately spent in their serious classes. Seriousness evokes several issues such as anxiety, stress, passivity, boredom, and so forth which stand in front of the spontaneous learning of different subject matters. Accordingly, an urge to make the classroom a better place for learning surfaces and call for humour which makes a therapeutic tool to seriousness related problems.

Shade (1996) listed ten classroom benefits of humour;

- Humour increases self-esteem which arises from the positive settings it generates inside the classroom.
- Content-related humour is said to be the source of motivation.
- Laughing creates what is known as a comfort zone which reduces stress.
- Anxiety is another psychological problem that humour reduces successfully.
- Humour is a good treatment for health issues.
- Humour builds the spirit of a group so as to work successfully together.
- Humour destroys chained minds and opens doors in front of creative thinking.
- Humour empowers the distinction between information, especially contradicted ones such as cultural differences.
- Burnout is the result of drudged classrooms to which humour stands as a barrier.
- Humour makes a good learning way; it creates a rapport between teachers and students to make instructing an easy task. In other words, humour makes a good relationship between students and their teachers; therefore, it increases students' attentiveness to reach a fluent transmission of information and their easy retention.

In a similar vein, Medgyes (2002) and Wagner (2007) confirmed that humour is central to language teaching, since it designs an appealing atmosphere in the classroom in which students feel the motive to acquire the language. Along with its airy nature, humour is one of the best vehicles to convey authentic cultural information which is embodied in its different forms. Jokes, as a common form of verbal humour, are founded on two principles; the first sets that "the text [of the joke] is compatible, fully or in part, with two different scripts" (Raskin, 1985, p.99); and the second one implies that "the two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite" (ibid, 1985, p.99). In other words, the text of the joke works successfully with two completely different scripts. A script is "a cognitive structure internalised by the native speaker's knowledge of a small part of the world. Every speaker has internalised rather a large repertoire of scripts "common sense" which represent his/her knowledge of certain routines, standard procedures, basic situations, etc." (ibid, 1985, p.81). In this way, culture is an integral part in jokes; as an example is the following English joke: "why is England the wettest country? Because the queen reigned there for years!" This joke is compatible with two scripts; namely, the weather of England and its royal governing regime. This joke adheres to two totally different scripts while simultaneously carrying some cultural input about England. Jokes are not the only instance of verbal humour; puns, tongue twisters, spoonerisms, and other types of wordplay constitute the first type of humour.

The second type of humour is non-verbal humour; it is a threefold entity. It comprises games, role-plays, and simulations which are all based on texts to be physically performed. Role-play, for instance, is an engaging classroom technique which safely permits students to reproduce a real life situation before really experiencing it, and, because of its enthusiastic nature, it immerses them in the learning process (Ladousse, 1987) to make a zone between the mother culture and the foreign one. In this zone, cultures may match, or mismatch; subsequently, students would not just learn about the foreign culture but also refresh their minds about their own culture (ibid).

The last type of humour is a combination of both verbal and non-verbal humour. It is based on an equality of value between words and actions that appear in its diversified constituents such as satire. This type of humour aims at corrections; be they

political, artistic, or social. The humourist spots a given issue that seems abnormal, incorrect, or inappropriate and corrects it through exaggerating some aspects of that issue (Simpson, 2003), or by ironically saying the opposite of what is thought (Martin, 2007).

These types make humour an applicable technique that has the power to clear tension from the classroom and deliver cultural input. Therefore, the use of humour in classrooms implies an eclectic approach which unifies some of the Humanistic Approach principles along with some others of Content-based Instruction. The humanistic approach, on the one hand, highlights humans' feelings and actively engages students in learning through its games and other light-hearted tasks which serve as tension absorbers (Richards, and Rodgers, 1986). Content-based Instruction, on the other hand, is considered as an approach to foreign language teaching in which language is taught through a top-down approach rather than a bottom-up one. In other words, Content-based Instruction commences from understanding content to learn the language, rather than learning the language to understand the content. In this paper, Content-based Instruction is devoted to culture learning as a content which completes the picture of language learning (Stryker, &Leaver, 1997). This eclectic method serves as a supply to create a relaxing atmosphere and deliver cultural information.

I. 3. Culture in Language Learning

In a marionette show, one can notice that a small marionette does not cease from moving; yet, the one who makes it move is an unobservable person behind the scene. This is the case of culture in relation to human behaviour; although hidden, culture controls all its aspects.

Culture frames society and defines it; people are identified by their social behaviour which is the basic component of their cultural distinctiveness (Corbett, 2003). It is "the way of life of people, the social constructs that evolve within a group, the ways of thinking, feeling, believing, and behaving that are imparted to members of a group in the socialisation process" (Hinkel, 1999, p.3). In this sense, social borders establish inner definition of culture to become a cognitive conception that is characterised by pervasiveness in the members of that speech community who express their thoughts by virtue of language. The latter is said to be the means which transforms thoughts into words to make culture and language interrelated entities.

In an attempt to teach a foreign language, teachers must consider teaching its culture as well; language and culture cannot be separated because language is the combination of both intrinsic capacities with which one was born and physical and sociocultural experiences (Byram, 1989). In this respect, culture should be an integral part in the foreign language teaching curriculum.

According to Kramsch (1993, p.177), "it is a truism to say that teaching language is teaching culture" and according to Hinkel (1999), learning about the culture of the language being studied is a must. Students may face a situation which is governed by the target culture's traditions, but because they lack cultural awareness, they will rely on their home culture to interpret intercultural situations, and this may result in misunderstanding. Consequently, students need to be culturally aware of the norms that shape the language being studied to avoid the inevitable culture shock which arises from people's misunderstanding each other because of their unknown cultural differences (Hofstede et al., 2002). In tackling a foreign language, teachers need to consider making their students reach cultural awareness which goes through several stages starting from "contact with otherness, to comparison and appreciation of similarities and differences, to identifying with otherness, and finally to take an objective view of their own culture" (Byram, and Fleming, 1998, p.5). In other words, teachers should put their students in a situation where they can compare between their mother culture (self), and the target one (which defines the traits of otherness). This method of teaching relies on an intercultural approach that focuses on both mother and foreign cultures through distinguishing between their differences and matching their similarities (Byram, and Fleming, ibid). In this respect, Byram (1997) describes three

components of culture which hold five 'savoirs' through which students should go to become culturally competent.

1. Knowledge, also called 'savoirs' with 's' of the plural in French, is the component which encloses the conceptual recognition of the other which appears in beliefs, habits, values, behaviours, etc. It is, by definition, "knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003, p. 62).

2. Skills are the second component which enfolds three 'savoirs'; namely, "savoir apprendre"(knowledge of acquisition), "savoir comprendre" (knowledge of understanding), and "savoir s'engager"(knowledge of engagement). The former permits to obtain an insightful acquisition of the target culture's behaviours. The second (savoir comprendre) is interconnected with the former in terms of aims. They both emphasise the interpretation of cultures, but 'savoir comprendre' aims at interpreting cultures (otherness) in comparison with self. The latter (savoir s'engager) refers to being immersed in both cultures in an analytic way (Byram, 1997).

3. Attitudes, also known as "savoir être" refers to accepting the notion of otherness with tolerance. In this sense, students drop any sign of ethnocentrism and try to make a tolerable relationship between self and otherness (Alred, Byram, & Fleming, 2003). To sum up, being culturally competent entails three stages; first, students need to constitute an information package about the target culture (otherness) as well as the mother culture (self). Then, a comparison between both cultures is made to spot the existing similarities and differences. Finally, an acceptance of the target culture erases the ethnocentric belief. In order to develop these three components, teachers have to follow the objectives of culture teaching both as small 'c' culture and big 'C' Culture. The former, also called behaviour culture, refers to the culture which forms the background of nations' deeds such as behaviours, customs, music, values, beliefs, products, etc. The latter (big 'C 'Culture) is also called achievement culture and refers to the civilization which is embodied in nations' history, geography, institutions, their ways of life, etc.(Tomlin, and Stempleski, 1993).

The emphasis in the present study is on the behaviour culture because students need to know about social habits that are not studied as it is the case with achievement culture which has its specialised modules such as civilisation.

II– Methods and Materials:

The present research is a descriptive study conducted through a questionnaire to collect data about the participants themselves or about something which is related to their schools or studies in general (see Coolican, 1994; and Sinscalco and Auriat, 2005 for the questionnaire as a research tool).

The questionnaire was randomly administered to a sample of 46 students extracted from a population of about 250 second year students of English at the department of Letters and English, University of Frères Mentouri, Constantine 1. The selection of second year students was due to the fact that students, at this level, had developed a certain degree of awareness in terms of the English language. In other words, students' linguistic competence was quite acceptable to learn about the target culture through humour. The administration of the questionnaire took place during the academic year 2016-2017; it lasted 3 hours for the 46 students, who made up two groups, each of whom took one hour and a half to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire embraces three sections; namely, background information, culture, and humour, makes use of a variety of question formats such as numeric questions which are related to the respondents background. Open ended questions in which respondents are asked to freely give their opinion about something; closed questions in which students are restricted to a number of options to be selected. Likert-type questions are used to measure the participants' convergence or polarisation of opinions (Pallant, 2005; and Coolican, 1994).

Data Analysis

The present questionnaire is made up of three parts;
1. Background Information: in this section, informants were given a number of questions to collect information about the sample being studied. Findings displayed that it is composed of 69.56% of students aged 19-20 years, and 30.43% aged 21-23. Age is a requisite in culture learning for it shows that students, since they are above the age of twelve in which people commence to learn about their home culture, are in a culturally critical period to make the difference between their cultural norms and the target ones (self and otherness comparison). The majority of respondents (82.60%) are females with the presence of 17.93% of males. Gender does not have a direct influence on culture learning or humour appreciation, but it is required to give a clear depiction of the sample.

Questions like 'how many years have you been studying English?' and 'how do you evaluate your level in English?' are asked to find out whether the students possess a certain level which allows them to understand humour in the first place and learn about culture in the second place. Respondents reported that their level is good (50%) and average (50%) after studying 9 years for 93.47% of them.
2. Culture: this section aims at revealing how participants see culture (the dependent variable) and its importance in language learning. At first students were asked to define culture. This is an open ended question in which answers are not restricted by options. Therefore, the adequate way to analyse it is classification. 35 respondents (76.08%) out of 46 defined the word culture as behaviour (Little 'c' culture), a definition which emphasises the social perceptions of nations. The rest (23.90%) defined it as achievement (capital 'C' Culture) which covers the parameters of civilisation. Then, students were asked to state if they had ever had a talk with a native. This is a closed question because it provides two options; yes or no to which respondents are restricted. The aim behind asking this question was to show that students may experience culture whilst in their home country. 39.18% of the respondents did have a talk with native speakers; however, 60.86% reported that they had never talked to a native speaker. This result shows that, even though the percentage is small, students may face an intercultural situation in their home country. Students were required to rate the importance of culture learning. The majority of them (76.08%) opted for 'rather important', the rest (15.21% and 8.69%) chose 'rather unimportant' and 'very important' respectively. The first option, 'not at all important', was not chosen by any of the respondents. The students' views revealed their awareness of the importance of learning about the target culture. It was noteworthy, then, to see if students tolerated the target culture and were willing to accept it or not. For this sake, they were asked about their opinion towards the proverb 'when in Rome, do as the Romans do' (Adapt to the new culture). 50% of them opted for 'I rather do'; 13.04%, 26.08%, and 10.86% opted for 'I do not at all', ' I rather do not', and ' I fully do' respectively. This finding shows that most of the students (50%+ 10.86%) were willing to adapt to the new culture, but this is just a theoretical point of view; students had not experienced another culture to truly admit that they were able to accept the new culture. In other words, being culturally competent was still fuzzy, but students' willingness was positively unlocking the doors in front of it to be achieved.
3. Humour: This section investigates humour as an Independent Variable and its presence inside the classroom. First, the respondents were asked to define humour with a number of listed options. Most of them (67.39%) chose 'being in a joyful atmosphere' reporting that humour is the experience of fun which arises especially with the presence of others. 27.73% opted for the 'something which results in laughter' option. They explained their selection by the fact that humour is a matter of the person's capacity to crack jokes. One student only (2.17%) went with the 'serious business' option without any explanation. The rest (8.69%) ticked the last option which unifies all of the preceding options clarifying that humour is a sense combined to an appealing atmosphere in which cognitive procedures are used to deliver a funny insightful message.

To come across seriousness, students were asked to describe their feeling inside serious classrooms. There is an equilibrium of rates between two and three (bored, and serious); 43.47% for each of them. Students, even those who chose 'serious', reported that they feel bored in serious classrooms, but their seriousness is a display of respect and interest to their teachers. The rest (6.52% and 6.52%) opted for 'anxious', and 'motivated and happy respectively' without any explanations.

The opposite situation was given to students to see their opinions in classrooms where teachers use humour. The majority of them (73.91%) opted for 'interested'; they clarified, in their explanations, that humour inside the classroom generates a good atmosphere in which they feel comfortable, motivated, and immersed in the learning process. 2.17% is the rate which 'frustrated' and 'bored' received without any explanation. 19.56% opted for 'amused but confused' stating that they feel like kept in the dark; they cannot tell when the teacher is serious, and when he/she is not. The rest (2.17%) did not answer this question.

Students were asked about their preference of the type of humour to be incorporated in the classroom. The third option 'the category which combines verbal and non-verbal humour' was chosen by 60.86% of the respondents explaining that verbal humour tells about other cultures, and non-verbal humour creates the sound atmosphere in which they feel willingness to receive information. 26.08% is the rate of students who opted for verbal humour. They reported that this type enables to laugh and enjoy the lecture. Non-verbal humour was chosen by 13.04% of the respondents who stated that this type is more joyful and educational at the same time.

Finally, students were given a Likert-type question format in which they were asked to give their opinions from 'strongly agreeing' to 'strongly disagreeing' with some statements. In this type, the measurement is based on a Likert-scale in which every option is assigned a number; 5 for 'strongly agree', 4 for 'rather agree', 3 for 'neutral', 2 for 'rather disagree', and 1for 'strongly disagree'. After that, the median's value had to be measured to move to the Interquartile Range, then to find the difference between the third quartile and the first quartile (Q3-Q1). If the Interquartile Range was small, i.e. it had a value of 0, 1, or 2, and then there was a consensus of opinions. In other words, students' opinions were clustered together towards agreement, or disagreement. In this case, one had to look at the value of the median to acknowledge the opted opinion. However, if the IQR was large i.e. its value was 3, 4, or 5, then students responses were scattered across the range of possible responses. In other words, opinions were polarised between the two bipolar responses agreement and disagreement which had to be considered (Miller,1984; Singh, 2006; & Boone H, and Boone D, 2012).
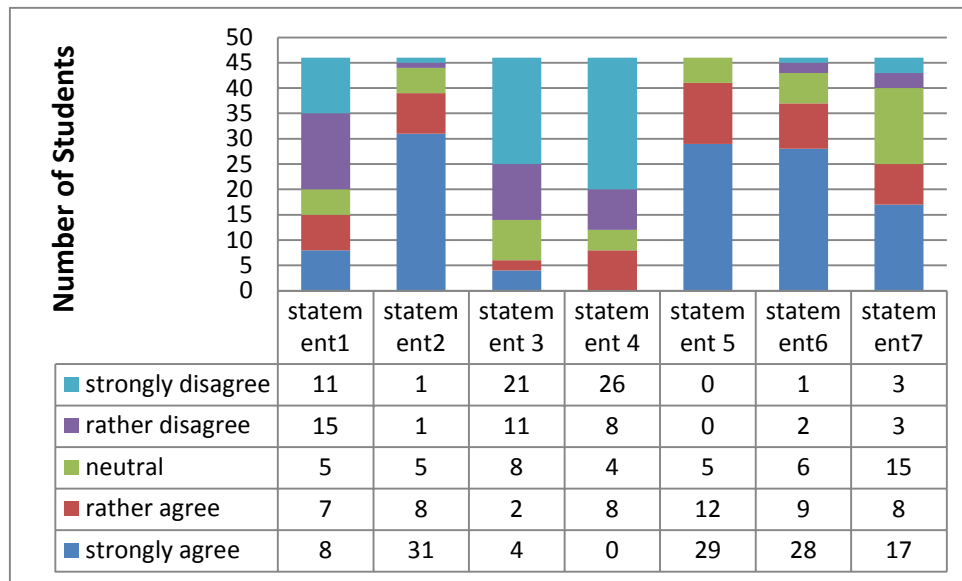
Number of Students	statement1	statement2	statement 3	statement 4	statement 5	statement6	statement7
strongly disagree	11	1	21	26	0	1	3
rather disagree	15	1	11	8	0	2	3
neutral	5	5	8	4	5	6	15
rather agree	7	8	2	8	12	9	8
strongly agree	8	31	4	0	29	28	17

Figure: Likert- scale of Students' opinions towards Humour inside the Classroom

Statement	Median	Interquartile Range
1. I am more likely to skip class where I find the lectures typically boring	2	2.5
2. I remember more information if there is a joke or a joyful learning atmosphere	5	1
3. Using humour inside the classroom reveals a lack of seriousness	2	2
4. The teacher's role is to teach, not to amuse	1	2
5. I enjoy classes in which humour is present	5	1
6. I am more immersed in my studies, if the teacher is using humorous tasks such as games, role plays, jokes…	5	1
7. Humour enables learners to know more about the foreign culture	4	2

Table: Likert- Scale's Results

The figure and the table above show that all of the Interquartile Range's values were small; therefore, there was a consensus of opinions from the part of students. In the first statement, it was 'rather disagreement' which showed students' commitment. In the second, students' opinions were clustered around 'strong agreement' to the effect of humour in retaining information. In this sense, humour makes a tunnel to deliver cultural input. Respondents expressed a 'rather disagreement with' statement 3; they did not see humour as a 'lack of seriousness'. In the fourth statement, students' opinions were clustered around 'strong disagreement'; they considered that the role of the teacher is not just to teach but also to generate the adequate atmosphere for them to learn. In both statements five and six, students expressed a 'strong agreement'. This reveals that students appreciate the presence of humour in the classroom along with its role in getting them immersed in their lectures. Students' opinions were clustered around a 'rather agreement' with the last statement (7). This result showed that students agreed on the fact that humour enables to learn about the foreign culture and brings cultural input to the classroom.

III- Results and discussion :

The results of the present paper show that there is a connection between culture learning (Dependent Variable) and humour (Independent Variable). First of all, the students admitted the importance of culture in language learning (76.08%) and defined it as a social phenomenon giving credit to the fact that culture is an integral part in language learning. Then, they defined humour as a combination of verbal and non-verbal entity in which they affirmed the role of the former in delivering cultural input, and that of the latter in generating the conducive atmosphere to learn. They also reported that classrooms which are characterised by humour are more appreciated than serious classrooms in which students expressed their feeling of boredom even though they showed interest; however, in humorous classrooms, the respondents expressed a strong agreement with the fact that they enjoy, remember and feel immersed in the learning process (see the figure and the table above). These settings, then, help them to learn about the target culture. As a result, the respondents approved the utility of humour in generating a joyful atmosphere in which they can learn about cultural facts that are embodied in humour and are required in language acquisition. In this sense, the stated hypothesis, which is that if students were provided with humorous tasks, their culture learning would improve, is confirmed.

IV- Conclusion:

The findings of the present study confirm the importance of humour and culture in learning a foreign language. The theoretical review of this paper, which proves that humour is a convenient vehicle to bridge the gap between the mother culture and the target one, meets the results which are drawn from the students' responses to the questionnaire items; subsequently, the questions probed earlier are answered by means of the findings. This work, then, promotes implementation of diversified humorous forms to develop the students' sensitivity towards the cultural issue of otherness as well as self. It also recommends humour to be a motivational tool which meets various learning needs.

Appendices: Questionnaire

Dear student,
This questionnaire is part of a research work. We will be very grateful if you answer the following questions.
When answering, please tick (✔) the right box or answer in full statements when required.
General Information
1. Age: ……..   Sex: male ☐   female ☐
2. How many years have you been studying English?
Part One: Culture
1. We often hear expressions like Arabic culture, foreign culture, and so forth. In your opinion, what is the meaning of the word 'culture'?
2. Have you ever had a conversation with an English native speaker (over the phone, in a Facebook chat, or in a physical meeting)?
Yes ☐   No ☐
3. As an EFL learner (a learner of English), how would you rate the importance of culture learning?
Not at all important ☐   rather unimportant ☐   rather important ☐   very important
4. To what extent do you support the following?
When in Rome, do as the Romans do (i.e. you have to adapt to a new culture)
I do not do at all ☐ I rather do not ☐ I rather do ☐ I fully do ☐
Par Two: Humour
1. How would you define humour?

☐ Something that results in laughter
☐ Being in a joyful atmosphere
☐ A serious business
☐ All of the above

Explain your selection.

2. How do you generally feel in classrooms where you have serious teachers ?
☐ Anxious
☐ Bored
☐ Serious
☐ Happy and motivated

Explain your selection.

3. How do you generally feel if your teacher is using humour?
☐ Frustrated
☐ Interested
☐ Bored
☐ Amused but confused

Explain your selection.

4. In your opinion, what is the ideal humour that should be present in classrooms?
☐ Verbal humour (puns, riddles, jokes…)
☐ Non-verbal humour (games, role plays…)
☐ Both forms

Explain your selection.

5. What do you think of the following statements? Tick (✔) the right column.

Statements	Strongly agree	Rather agree	neutral	Rather disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I am more likely to skip class where I find the lectures typically boring					
2. I remember more information if there is a joke or a joyful learning atmosphere					
3. Using humour inside the classroom reveals a lack of seriousness					
4. The teacher's role is to teach, not to amuse					
5. I enjoy classes in which humour is present					
6. I am more immersed in my studies, if the teacher is using humorous tasks such as games, role plays, jokes…					
7. Humour enbales learners to know more about the foreign culture					

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