



Developing pre-service English language teachers' comprehension of texts with humorous elements

Ceylan Yangın Ersanlı^{a*}, Abdulvahit Çakır^b

^aOndokuz Mayıs University, Samsun, Turkey

^bGazi University, Ankara, Turkey

Yangın Ersanlı, C., & Çakır, A. (2017). Developing Pre-service English Language Teachers' Comprehension of Texts with Humorous Elements. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 13(1), 123-145.

Submission Date: 15/09/2016

Acceptance Date: 24/02/2017

Abstract

Humour is a universal phenomenon and has been studied in many fields of research such as literature, linguistics, psychology, sociology and philosophy. Humour is often expressed through language and it is little wonder that failure to understand humorous language causes breakdowns in communication. What is humorous might be culturally defined, and therefore it is difficult to grasp or to teach. Yet, people convey too much through humour to be neglected in the language classroom. Even if we need not aim at helping our learners find a piece of foreign language funny and laugh at it, we should help them appreciate humour and see beyond the literal meaning. In other words, pre-service English language teachers should be able to get the message conveyed through humorous texts using related sub-skills of reading effectively. This study investigates pre-service English language teachers' perceptions of humour in English language learning materials and authentic texts and how to improve their comprehension of reading texts with humorous elements with special reference to certain sub-skills of reading comprehension.

© 2017 JLLS and the Authors - Published by JLLS.

Keywords: humour, foreign language teaching, reading skill, sub-skills of reading, pre-service English language teachers

1. Introduction

Humour occupies a great role in social interaction, literature and culture. Humour is so much a part of our lives that we may sometimes take its role in human communication for granted. Humour manipulates language to achieve its effect and therefore can be regarded as a mode of communication. People often make their points clear by humour, namely by practical jokes, satire, irony, wit, sarcasm, puns, verbal humour and so on. Humour is a part of social interaction and we cannot say communication is achieved when the interlocutors fail to understand the language of humour. Following this reasoning, language of humour is significant in language teaching.

Humour is culture-specific. In other words, what is considered to be funny might change from culture to culture. However, not all humour is strictly culture-bound. Communication breakdowns

*Corresponding author. Tel.: +90-505-319-2377
E-mail address: ceylany@omu.edu.tr

occur only when learners of a target language cannot comprehend the deeper surface meanings within a written text or when they cannot get the message conveyed, not when they do not find it funny. Language learners' failure to understand humorous language may result in their misunderstanding and a communication breakdown is inevitable since the intended message cannot be received adequately.

However, the role of humour in language teaching and learning has been overlooked. Most of our students are not aware of what makes a spoken or written text humorous. The majority of language learners, even the ones that we define as upper-intermediate or advanced, often fail to understand the humorous language and they tend to get the message on literal terms. Without knowing the nature of humorous language, they cannot be fully competent in the target language, that is to say, they may not get the intended message without serious communication breakdowns. Therefore, studying on texts with humorous elements with special emphasis on certain sub-skills of reading might help learners develop their humour competence and thus appreciate texts fully. Vega (1989), in her MA thesis "Humour Competence: The Fifth Component", claims that humour competence is a part of communicative competence and since our ultimate aim is to make learners more communicatively competent it should be taught in our schools.

The main focus in this study is to enable language learners in the ELT departments to appreciate humorous texts in the target language. Though they are much more proficient than regular foreign language learners, pre-service English language teachers may tend to perceive the target language on its literary meaning and fail to get the intended meaning by making the necessary inferences. Therefore, unless they are well aware of the dynamics of humour in social interaction, their communicative competence will certainly be incomplete.

This study aims to highlight the importance of humour in communication and also aims at using samples of humorous texts in authentic reading materials to find out whether pre-service English language teachers are able to appreciate the humour or not. In other words it aims at finding out whether they are able to get what is conveyed through humour. This study also intends to help pre-service English language teachers improve their reading comprehension and inferencing skills through comprehension of humorous language in the target language. Finally, the study aims to increase the motivation of pre-service English language teachers in the reading lessons by using humorous texts.

1.1. Literature review

1.1.1. Towards a Definition of Reading Comprehension

The challenge of teaching reading comprehension is increased because students are expected to read a bigger variety of text types, which may often include authentic humorous texts. Effective reading in a second or foreign language requires more than word identification or syntactic knowledge, it requires synthesis and evaluation skills, inferencing, making use of background knowledge, being aware of the communicative value of the text, understanding the implied meanings and what is communicated more within the text, extracting the writer's intention appropriately, and so on. As Goodman and Smith claimed reading can be better modeled as a 'psycholinguistic guessing game', in which the text provides clues for the reader, and in which not only the meaning of the text but also the intentions of the writer have to be guessed (in Goatly, 2000:121). Reading is an interactive process between the reader and the text. Studies reveal that using strategies enhance reading comprehension (Sarıçoban, 2002).

Reading is composed of many skills, and a recent taxonomy of sub-skills of reading is below:

- Comprehending text by using knowledge of the world and by using different skills such as skimming and scanning

- Recognizing the main idea of the passage or the text
- Inferring meaning by making use of textual clues
- Recognizing and understanding relations between parts of a text through references
- Making predictions and intelligent guesses
- Understanding the communicative value of the text and sentences
- Distinguishing between main and subordinate clauses by identifying Subject/Verb/Object (SVO) relations
- Inferring meaning of unknown words through textual clues (Khand, 2004).

Of the above given effective reading skills, those that are particularly related to comprehending humour are discussed below:

Making Appropriate Inferences: Drawing appropriate inferences is especially important in understanding the implied or intended meanings within reading materials. Stebick and Dain define inference as “the process of judging, concluding, or reasoning from some given information” (2007: 72). Drawing appropriate inferences in reading can be called as ‘reading between the lines’. At this point pragmatic awareness plays a vital role. For effective reading students should be able to make inferences, differentiate between literal and figurative language and see the implications not overtly stated. Inferencing involves a set of different skills and processes such as syntactic, semantic, and discursal awareness as well as activating background knowledge. Failure in any component may hinder the inferencing process or result in inappropriate or fault inferences.

Understanding the Purpose, Intention, Attitude or Tone: It is certain that being aware of the function of a reading material has a striking role in comprehension. Thus, one of the very first things students should be taught is to find out whether the text aims at convincing the reader, giving him information, asking him for something, making him laugh, etc. Language learners should practice with activities that focus on the attitude of the writer or the attitude of the characters within a passage, the particular kind of bias or purpose that can be felt through the writing. This is of particular interest in humorous passages.

Tone is often one of the most difficult aspects of a text to grasp. The tone of a text refers to the emotional attitude expressed by it. Fitzpatrick and Ruscica (1995: 263) and Johnson (2001: 309) mean the same thing when they define tone as “a writer’s attitude toward the subject or the material he or she discusses”. A student may understand all the facts within a text and yet may fail to recognize the humour or irony in it. A text's tone can be happy, sad, angry, and so on. Tone is an important element in literary and informational texts. It tells you what the author thinks and helps to create atmosphere. Being able to identify the writer’s tone contributes to the understanding of the text on a deeper level.

Understanding the Main Idea of a Text or Paragraph: One of the most important points to keep in mind when teaching reading comprehension is the recognition of main ideas. For effective reading readers are expected to demonstrate that they can identify the subject of a reading text. Finding the main idea of a text is closely related to its purpose. Johnson states that “Usually it is helpful to determine the main idea and how it is stated before you determine the author’s purpose” (2001: 281). For effective reading readers have to comprehend the gist of any reading material. Otherwise, it is possible that they can miss some very important message within the text.

Critical Reading, Making Synthesizing and Intelligent Guesses: Spache and Berg (1984: 143) remark that reading critically is “the ability to read with analysis and judgment”. Synthesizing is an important part of reading critically. The term is defined by Boyles (2004) as “a matter of seeing how the details fit together to draw a conclusion, how the details solve a mystery, or how they bring

characters (and readers) to a new understanding”. It is an ongoing process and is necessary for effective comprehension. A good synthesis leads to accurate understanding of a given text.

Guessing the Meaning of Words from Context: Efficient readers are able to use context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words. In this way “you identify the correct meaning belonging to a specific word by recognizing and interpreting other words in the surrounding context” (Johnson, 2001:65). If a reader can accurately find the word which describes a character or a particular situation depicted in a given text, this means he comprehended the text successfully.

1.1.2. Linguistic Approaches to Humour

1.1.2.1. Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity as a Source of Humour

Lexical and syntactic ambiguities may contribute to semantic confusion. As opposed to the numerous studies related to linguistic ambiguity (Hirst, 1987; Franz, 1996; Ravin & Leacock, 2000; Gorfein, 2001), very few studies focus on ambiguity as a source of humour. Attardo (1994) analyzed the strategies used to create ambiguity-based humor. Bucaria (2004) analyzed lexical and syntactic ambiguity as a source of humor in newspaper headlines. Oaks (1994:378) also studied structural ambiguity in jokes. Oaks defines lexical ambiguity as conveyed by “a word with more than one possible meaning in a context”. Syntactic ambiguity is created by confusion between different parts of speech. Consider the following example:

Man in Restaurant: I’ll have two lamb chops, and make them lean, please.

Waiter: To which side, sir? (Bucaria, 2004: 291).

The word “lean” is an adjective meaning “meat not having much fat on it”. Yet, the waiter took it as a verb meaning moving or bending something in a particular direction. The humour is based on a confusion of different possible meanings of the word.

1.1.2.2. Semantic Script Theory of Humour

The Semantic Script Theory of Humour was proposed by Victor Raskin (1985). It is the most well-developed linguistic theory of humour. According to Martin (2007: 89) the theory incorporates ideas about scripts and is also influenced by Noam Chomsky’s concepts of transformational generative grammars for relating the deep structure, or underlying meaning of a text to its surface structure (the actual words that are used). His theory provides a formal model of humour competence; i.e. how a text can be recognized as humorous.

Raskin’s theory conceives of scripts as graphs with lexical nodes and semantic links between nodes. In theory, all the scripts make up a single multi-dimensional semantic network. Words in a sentence are thought to evoke a script or scripts with which they are associated. Many researches have been conducted to analyze the role of scripts in humorous communication (Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Attardo, Hempelmann & Di Maio, 2002; Brock, 2004; Morreall, 2004; and Hempelmann, 2004).

Ruch, Attardo and Raskin (1993:124) summarized the main hypotheses of the theory as follows:

- A text can be characterized as a single-joke-carrying-text if both of the following conditions are satisfied:
- Each joke must contain two *overlapping* scripts (that is, the joke must be interpretable, fully or in part, according to two different scripts);

- The two scripts must be *opposed* (that is, they must be the negation of each other, if only for the purpose of a given text), according to a list of basic oppositions, such as real/unreal, possible/impossible, etc.

See the following joke to illustrate this point (Attardo, 1991:249):

A young lady was talking to the doctor who had operated upon her. “Do you think the scar will show?” she asked. “That will be entirely up to you”, he said.

As is seen, the passage goes from the Medical script to the Nudity script.

1.1.2.3. Pragmatic Theories of Humour

Pragmatics can contribute to explaining how people construct humour and process meaning. Kotthoff states that in humorous activities “non-standardized inferencing forms the core of the humorous potential. It arises either from a sort of script opposition or from playing with formulation standards and expected ways of speaking within conversational sequencing” (2005:271). In this respect, the Gricean cooperation principle and its maxims for the analysis of humour should be addressed.

Humour researchers, following Grice’s suggestion, state that “irony and humor might be connected to violations of the conversational maxims” (Attardo, 1993:538).

Grice (1975) explains conversational implicature as a means of expressing a message indirectly. Participants in a conversation, Grice says, expect each other to make their contributions to that conversation truthful, relevant, clear, and sufficiently informative, which are the attributes referred to by her *maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner* respectively. If the literal meaning of something that is said or written fails to meet these expectations, the listeners or readers search for another possible meaning for that utterance in that particular context and if they find one, they assume the latter meaning to be the message the speaker, or writer intends to convey. Grice names these inferential paths as implicatures. He also distinguishes conventional from conversational implicatures: conventional implicatures are lexicalized; conversational implicatures are calculated each time the speaker and the hearer interact (Attardo, 1993).

One basic assumption within humour research is that a large number of humorous texts involve violations of one or more of Grice’s maxims. Consider the following example that violates the maxim of quantity by not providing enough information (Attardo, 1993: 541):

“Excuse me, do you know what time it is?”

“Yes.”

As is well known, speakers and writers make choices not only in what they say, but also in how they say it. Kotthoff explains that “most humorous activities invite non-standardized inferences as the core of humour. Their inner dynamic comes from playing with scripts, inviting unusual associations, disappointing expectations, and creating sense in nonsense...” (2005:273). Humorous communication is one of the means of achieving this. See the following examples:

(1) In an examination the teacher creates humour by saying that “I deliberately asked all of you the same questions so that you won’t need to wonder what’s written in others’ papers!”

(2) A rich but a very stingy man was on the point of dying. Throughout all his life, he had made the people around him live in discomfort. There was a religious man near him. The stingy man asked him (groaning): “Ah.. I wonder, can I take all the gold to where I am going?”. The man shook his head and said: “That would be an effort in vain. Your gold will melt there.”

In example (1) the teacher violates more than one maxim of conversation. He violates maxim of relation and maxim of manner. The teacher creates obscurity of expression, but at the same time he warns students not to cheat. The students are expected to infer the implicit message within the text. Although he used a humorous way to assert his opinion, he warns his students. In example (2) the text of humour is not its literal meaning. The religious man instead of saying that nobody would need any gold after his death, willingly violates the maxim of quantity. The implicated meaning of the text is that the dying man is going to hell.

1.1.3. *The Communicative Value of Humorous Texts*

As is stated above, most humorous texts violate one or more of the maxims. Therefore, one may expect them to be uncooperative and lose their meaning. Nevertheless, fully competent language users understand and perceive them as well-formed texts. To account for this, Raskin (1985) suggests that humorous texts have different kind of communication mode, governed by a different set of maxims. In literal reading there may seem some violation of maxims. However, in a true processing of a humorous text, the reader will discover a second sense. The script theory proposed by Raskin (1985) describes this phenomenon as the ‘discovery of a second script’. Sometimes the violation of maxims gives way to the unexpected presence of a second script. The text producer uses the violation of maxims to mislead the text processor into believing that reliable information is provided until an element is encountered that defeats that sense and forces a reinterpretation of the text. This dynamic process is schematized below:

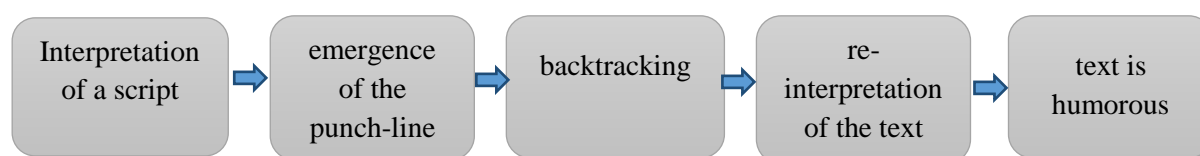


Figure 1. Reinterpretation of a Text

As is depicted above, the reader has two options. He may either discard the text as ill-formed, or nonsense, and therefore will think that the text does not convey any meaning and information, or he may backtrack and reevaluate and check for possible inferences. Only this way can he fully comprehend the writer’s intended message within the text.

Readers frequently have difficulties in reading comprehension. This is often attributed to poor ability to draw inferences during reading and to inadequate access to relevant knowledge. Implied meaning is a meaning that isn’t explicitly stated. In humorous texts it is a well-known fact that some part of the information must be left implicit. Explanation reduces the humorous effect within texts. Texts lose their humour when the narrator explains the punch line. “It is precisely because part of the information is present only in the implicit part of the text that the joke acquires one of its characteristics” (Attardo, 1991:248). In other words, for the text to be humorous, some information must be left unsaid. This means that the reader is required to perform some cognitive task and to infer the implicit information. Another fact is that the punch-lines of humorous texts frequently come unexpectedly towards the end of the texts. The decoding of humorous texts is a structured process in which the elements of texts are organized in a linear order. For example, the presence of a second sense (for example the emergence of a second script) should not be introduced early in the text in case the reader may actualize the second sense via inferential channels.

1.2. Research questions

The following research questions have guided this study:

- 1- Are pre-service English language teachers able to comprehend reading texts with humorous elements adequately?
- 2- Can pre-service English language teachers improve their comprehension of reading texts with humorous elements through studying effective sub-skills of reading?
- 3- What are pre-service English language teachers' perceptions about studying reading texts with humorous elements?

2. Method

2.1. Design

This study is an 8-week experimental study based on classroom research carried out in an EFL reading class.

Both quantitative and qualitative data gathering methods are used in the study. The names of the statistical analyses used in the study are Mann-Whitney U tests, Covariance Analyses and K-R (20). The independent variable in the study is the eight-week instructional program and the dependent variable of the study is improving pre-service English language teachers' comprehension of texts with humorous elements, their reading comprehension and communicative competence.

2.2. Sample / Participants

This study is conducted at Gazi University, Department of English Language Teaching Program (ELT). The subjects are 53 pre-service English language teachers. They are all first graders. They are adult students with an age range of 18 to 20. These students have three hours of reading classes each week. Their levels range from upper-intermediate to advanced level. The native language of these students is Turkish. They are chosen randomly for the study.

2.3. Instructional Materials

As discussed before, the use of authentic texts is highly recommended in language classrooms. Therefore, in the instructional process, the reading texts with humorous elements are chosen from sources other than those developed with the aim of language teaching and learning. While selecting the texts, the researcher is careful to take the criteria proposed by McGrath (2006: 106) into consideration. The texts' relevance to humour, to what extent they can motivate students intrinsically, if the cultural elements within the texts hinder students' comprehension or not, the texts' linguistic appropriateness, length, and so forth are all taken into account while designing the procedure. An 8-week program is developed for the experimental group by the researcher. In each week, one hour of their regular reading courses is spared for the study of humorous texts (a total of 8 hours at the end of the study) while the control group is attending to their regular reading courses. The experimental group has continued their regular course book study in the remaining two hours. Each week, at least two texts with humorous elements are introduced to the students in the experimental group. In the chapters of the course-book studied by both of the groups some sub-skills of reading have been focused on; namely, scanning, skimming, working out the meanings of words from their contexts,

inferring meaning when it is not stated directly, relating the contents of an article to its title, and identifying the purpose.

2.4. Data Collection Tools and the Procedure

The *Multi-dimensional Sense of Humor Scale (hereafter MSHS)* developed by J. A. Thorson and F. C. Powell (1993) is administered to the subjects in order to obtain a general humour sense profile of the students.

Later, a 43-item reading test with humorous texts is developed. Then, this test is revised by five experts to ensure its *face validity*. Their suggestions are taken into account and necessary changes are made. Later, it is administered to a total of 100 students other than the experimental and control groups. The results are statistically evaluated in terms of their reliability and validity. Eleven questions are eliminated. The remaining 32 items constitutes the final reading test. This *32-item reading test with humorous elements* has 0.81 reliability and it is used as pre and post-tests for the experimental and control groups (See Appendix).

Table 1: The Sub-skills assessed in the Reading Test

Subskills	Items
Inferencing: understanding less or not explicitly stated information	1, 5, 10, 14, 16, 17, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31,32
Understanding the purpose, intention, attitude or the tone	2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 18, 20, 25, 29
Understanding the main idea, gist of the text	8, 13, 22, 23, 24
Critical Reading: synthesizing and making intelligent guesses	15, 19, 21
Guessing Meaning from Context: recognizing synonyms, antonyms, guessing meaning from context, finding a word/phrase that best describes a person or situation	3, 6

Next, the pre-test is administered to both of the groups to find out to what extent students have appreciated the humour in the reading materials and whether they have got the intended message or not. An analysis of the findings of the pre-test sheds light on what is missing and what should be emphasized. The results indicate that both the experimental and the control groups have problems in getting the message conveyed through humour, and their performances are below average.

During the instructional procedure, a rich variety of humorous text examples from the internet and authentic reading resources are analysed to design humorous texts to be used in the reading classroom. Throughout eight weeks, reading texts with humorous elements are studied with the experimental group with special emphasis on related sub-skills of reading in order to improve their reading comprehension, humour awareness and communicative competence. The students are expected to become more competent in looking at a text from a number of aspects. It is hoped that the students in the experimental group will be able to go beyond surface meaning and to discover the deeper meaning of a given text, and to make appropriate inferences. Finally, the post-test is administered to both of the groups to see if the students in the experimental group have improved in getting the message conveyed through humour. The results of both of the groups gathered from pre and post tests are statistically evaluated to see the effectiveness of the instruction.

Finally, a student evaluation form is developed and given to the experimental group to obtain a clear view of their perceptions of the process and to see whether they are more intrinsically motivated.

2.5. Limitations of the Study

Humour is a vast area of research and can be used in many forms such as cartoons, TV sitcoms, comedy shows, humorous books and so on. However, this study is only limited to humorous texts since they are the most frequently found materials in foreign language learners' course books and skill books.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The multi dimensional Sense of Humour Scale (MSHS)

The MSHS is administered to 53 pre-service English language teachers at Gazi University. The control group consists of 25 students, while 28 students constitute the experimental group. A statistical analysis program, Mann-Whitney U test, is used to see if the students in both of the groups have statistically equal sense of humour. The following table demonstrates the statistical results obtained from the scale.

Table 2: The Statistical Results Obtained from the Multi Dimensional Sense of Humor Scale (MSHS) Administered at the Beginning of the Study

	n	X	S	Mean Rank	Z	Level of Significance
Experimental Group	28	14,14	4,24	26,21	-3.393	Insignificant*
Control Group	25	14,76	3,98	27,88		

*p>.05

The two groups, namely the experimental and the control groups are compared statistically to see if they are equal in term of their sense of humour by a statistical analysis program named Mann-Whitney U test. Table 2 reveals the statistical results obtained from MSHS. The results reveal that the difference between their senses of humour is statistically insignificant.

3.2. The Reading Comprehension Test

The quantitative data in the study is collected through the reading comprehension test which consisting of texts with humorous elements. In order to give correct answers to questions the students are expected to use the above given sub-skills of reading comprehension effectively. Moreover, the researcher is careful that the humour within the texts is not merely built upon on target language culture, and that the students are given a glossary related to the texts within the test. This is especially important in that the test does not aim at assessing students' knowledge of cultural aspects of the target language but rather aims at finding whether the students are able to make the necessary inferences, think critically, and whether they are able to understand the tone and purpose of the text, or the intention of the characters within the texts or the intention or attitude of the writer.

The test is used as a pre-test to determine whether the two groups are statistically equal in terms of reading comprehension with humorous texts and if they need any training to comprehend texts with humorous elements more effectively. Later the same test is used as post-test at the end of the instructional procedure to assess the effectiveness of the training process. The statistical findings of

the pre and the post-test applied to the groups will be evaluated by Covariance Analyses and will be discussed in a more detailed way below.

Table 3: The Statistical Results Obtained from the Pre-Reading Test to Compare the Overall Success of the Experimental and the Control Groups and Mann-Whitney U Test Scores

	n	X	S	Mean Rank	Z	Level of Significance
Experimental Group	28	72,10	9,71	30,84	-1.91	Insignificant*
Control Group	25	67,16	8,53	22,70		

*p>.05

As Table 3 reveals that both the control and the experimental groups demonstrate statistically similar performances on the test, and no statistically significant difference among the students' scores can be found. Therefore, it can be claimed that both of the groups are equal in terms of pre-test results. It appears that their levels of reading comprehension and their effective and appropriate use of the sub skills of reading are at the same level in terms of the pre-test results.

The following table shows the statistical results obtained from the pre and post reading tests comparing the overall success of the groups.

Table 4: The Statistical Results obtained through Covariance Analysis on Pre and Post-Reading Test comparing the Overall Success of the Experimental and the Control Groups

		Sum of Squares x	Sum of Product	Sum of Squares y	Corrected Sum of Squares y	sd	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	1	5,03	-30,23	181,65	215,04	1	215,04	18,31*
Within Group	51	867,99	475,61	847,90	587,29	50	11,75	
Group n	52	873,02	445,38	1029,55	802,33	51		

*P<.001

In Table 4, the statistical analysis of the pre- and post-test scores of the experimental and the control groups are given. As is seen, there is a statistically significant difference in favour of the experimental group. In other words, the experimental group is more successful than the control group. Therefore, it may be concluded that pre-service English language teachers may comprehend texts with humorous elements better if they study on such texts than those who are only instructed by texts with no humorous elements.

The following table shows the performances of both groups with regard to the sub-skills assessed in the pre and post-test. The sub-skills are (a) *understanding less or not explicitly stated information*, (b) *understanding the function, purpose or tone, understanding the author's, characters or the text's intention, attitude or purpose*, (c) *understanding the main idea or gist of the text or paragraph*, (d) *synthesizing and making intelligent guesses*, (e) *guessing meaning from context*, and *finding a word or phrase that best describes a person or situation*.

Table 5. The Statistical Results Obtained from the Pre and Post-Reading Test through Covariance Analysis on Subskills Assessed

Between Groups	sd	Sum of Squares x	Sum of Product	Sum of Squares y	Corrected		Mean Square	F
					Sum of Squares y	sd		
Making Appropriate Inferences- Understanding Less or Not Explicitly Stated Information	1	9,38	-7,30	5,68	10,67	1	10,67	4,18*
Understanding the Purpose or Tone, Understanding the Author's/Characters' Intention or Attitude	1	2,28	9,20	37,09	28,87	1	28,87	9,29*
Understanding the Gist - Main Idea of the Text or Paragraph	1	0,36	1,44	5,75	4,84	1	4,84	4,34*
Critical Reading, Synthesizing and Making Intelligent Guesses	1	0,43	-0,82	1,55	1,76	1	1,76	4,19*
Guessing Meaning from Context - Recognizing Synonyms and Antonyms, Finding a Word or a Phrase that Best Describes a Person, Situation	1	0,41	-0,87	1,85	2,56	1	2,56	5,05*

*P<.05

According to the results presented above, the experimental group achieved a better progress than the control group in terms of *Making Appropriate Inferences and Understanding Less or Not Explicitly Stated Information*. In the pre and post-tests, the questions 1, 5, 10, 14, 16, 17, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, and 32 assess how successfully the students infer the humorous effect which is created with the help of contradictions, script oppositions, unexpected endings (surprise effect), and violations of one or more of the conversational maxims, and so on. Writers deliberately use language in this way in order to get the hidden messages within the texts across their readers. As discussed before, readers have to infer these messages which are not explicitly stated through the help of their inferential channels. Otherwise, an efficient comprehension cannot be achieved.

When we look at the pre and post-test results of both groups (for questions 2, 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 18, 20, 25, and 29), the control group is found to have progressed much less in *Understanding the Purpose or Tone, Understanding the Author's/Characters' Intention or Attitude* than the experimental group.

The statistical values obtained through the pre and post reading tests in terms of *Understanding the gist, main idea of the text*. Questions 8, 13, 22, 23, and 24 are prepared to assess students' reading skills. The table indicates that the experimental group is more successful in using these reading skills than the control group.

Questions 15, 19, and 21 are aimed to assess students' critical reading skills. The Table reveals that after the instructional process, the experimental group students are more successful in reading texts with humorous elements more critically.

The statistical results obtained from the pre and post-reading test in terms of guessing meaning from context, recognizing synonyms, finding a word that best describes a person, etc. (questions 3, 6). According to the Table, the experimental group performed better in the post test than the control group. It can be concluded that studying certain sub-skills of reading such as inferencing, guessing

meaning from context, critical reading, understanding gist, purpose or tone of the text help improve students' comprehension of humorous texts.

3.3. Responses of the Experimental Group for the Student Evaluation Form administered at the End of the Study

As to the difficulty level of the reading lessons with texts with humorous elements, 14.29 % of the participants found the lessons easy, and 21.43% of the participants found the lessons difficult, however, most of them (64.29 %) thought that the lessons were neither easy nor difficult. When the participants were asked to rate the difficulty level of the texts with humorous elements in tests (pre and post), most of the pre-service English language teachers (75.00%) found the texts neither easy nor difficult. This shows although the texts are authentic, they are manageable (neither easy nor difficult) and are chosen according to their level of proficiency. All of the participants found texts very interesting (60,71%) or interesting (39,29%). We may conclude that using humorous texts in reading activities will enhance pre-service English language teachers' motivation to read. All of the participants in the experimental group thought that they developed their reading skills in terms of understanding the intention of the writer. 53.57% of the participants marked the option '*very much*' for understanding the writer's intention and the rest of the participants (46.43%) thought they could use the same skill adequately/enough. None of the pre-service English language teachers thought that they had not benefited from the instruction in terms of understanding the intention of the writer. This result reveals the effectiveness of the instructional procedure. The pre-service English language teachers also believed that humorous texts helped them deduce what was communicated within a passage.

As to motivation, 82.14% of the pre-service English language teachers stated that they found the humorous texts "completely" motivating and the rest (17.86%) stated that they found them "adequately" motivating. The participants also agreed on the idea that "humorous language is a very effective way of communication". All of the pre-service English language teachers agreed on this idea (85.71% completely agree, and 14.29% adequately agree). This result clearly indicates the importance of using humorous texts in reading courses.

The pre-service English language teachers also stated that because of the complexity of the texts they sometimes had difficulties in understanding the implied, hidden meanings. Some participants also stated that they had problems in comprehending the texts since they were not familiar with such reading passages. Some of the participants stated that they could not understand the author's purpose at first, but later they learnt how to identify it by studying on texts. Some of them wrote that they sometimes had trouble in understanding the humorous effects of the texts and how they are created. Nearly all of the pre-service English language teachers stated that they did not read such kind of texts before. This result supports the need to conduct such a study in reading courses.

4. Conclusion

Humorous language is a very effective means of communication. People prefer to use it in many aspects of their lives either because of its face-saving potential or because they can convey too much information with very limited linguistic input, or simply to make people laugh at something. The non-native reader can be confused by the occurrence of humour within passages. They need to be guided towards the understanding and appreciation of humour. In this study, it was aimed to develop the students' comprehension of humorous reading texts through several texts with humorous elements with particular emphasis on certain sub-skills of reading.

Vega (1989) claims that the connections between humour and foreign language teaching are numerous. Her main hypothesis is that humour competence-the capacity of understanding humour in L2- is part of communicative competence at large, and hence should be taught in language classrooms. According to scholars “the use of humorous texts for teaching foreign languages has been suggested, both for the positive associations that humour carries and for the linguistic materials it offers in itself” (cited in Attardo, 1991:183-184).

In our study an instructional model in which reading instruction is intertwined with texts with humorous elements has been put into practice with pre-service English language teachers at Gazi University in an EFL setting. The current research indicates that participants have some difficulty in comprehending humorous texts and in using certain reading skills necessary to comprehend humorous texts. One conclusion we can draw is that reading lessons should include various types of authentic humorous reading materials to develop learners’ humorous text comprehension, their humour appreciation, their overall reading comprehension and to motivate them to the courses more. An integration of texts with humorous elements into reading courses is essential to achieve the best results for effective reading.

In the study, the aim is to develop pre-service English language teachers’ humour comprehension, *not production*. Pre-service English language teachers’, who are quite proficient in the target language, need not laugh at the reading materials in the target language, we should help them comprehend the humour and the unstated information within the text and manage to see beyond the literal meaning. Communication is successful only when the message from the sender is accurately decoded by the receiver. Humorous language is used in every aspect of our lives and we cannot say communication is successful when the readers fail to understand the language of humour. Following this reasoning, language of humour deserves to be an essential part of language teaching.

5. Implications for Pre-Service English Language Teacher Education

Instructors should make use of humorous texts more to develop pre-service English language teachers’ comprehension of texts with humorous elements, their reading skills and their overall communicative competence accordingly. The use of authentic reading materials should be fostered. Finally, language teachers should be given in-service teacher training programs on how to use humorous language in the classrooms to develop target language skills of students more effectively.

Course book developers should take the findings of this study into consideration while choosing reading texts and designing activities. For interdisciplinary studies, the findings of this study will also shed light for those who are interested in personal development studies, effective communication, and linguistic studies.

Acknowledgements

This study is a revised part of the unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation titled “*Developing Prospective English Language Teachers’ Comprehension of Texts with Humorous Elements*” submitted by Ceylan Yangın Ersanlı (2010) to Gazi University Institute of Educational Sciences.

References

- Attardo, S. (1991). *From linguistics to humor research and back: applicatios of linguistics to humor and their implications for linguistic theory and methodology*. Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis. Purdue University.
- Attardo, S. & Raskin, V. (1991). Script theory revis(it)ed: Joke Similarity and Joke Representation Model. *Humor*. 4-3/4, (293-347).
- Attardo, S. (1993). Violation of Conversational Maxims a Cooperation: The Case of Jokes. *Journal of Pragmatics*. 19, (537-558).
- Attardo, S. (1994). *Humor Research, Linguistic Theories of Humor*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Attardo, S., Hempelmann, C. F. & Di Maio, S. (2002). Script Oppositions and Logical Mechanisms: Modelling Incongruities and Their Resolutions. *Humor*. 15, 1 (3-46).
- Boyles, N. (2004). *Constructing Meaning Through Kid-Friendly Comprehension Strategy Instruction*. Gainesville, FL: Maupin House.
- Brock, A. (2004). Analysing Scripts in Humorous Communication. *Humor*, 17, 4 (353-360).
- Bucaria, C. (2004). Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity as a Source of Humor: The Case of Newspaper Headlines. *Humor*, 17-3, (279-309).
- Fitzpatrick, C. H. & Ruscica, M. B. (1995). *Reading Pathways*. Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company.
- Franz, A. (1996). *Automatic Ambiguity Resolution in Natural Language Processing. An Empirical Approach*. Berlin: Springer.
- Goatly, A. (2000). *Critical Reading and Writing*. London: Routledge.
- Gorfein, D. S. (ed.). (2001). *On the Consequences of Meaning Selection: Perspectives on Resolving Lexical Ambiguity*. Washington DC: Ameical Psychological Association.
- Grice, P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. In Cole, Peter & Jerry Morgan (eds.), *Speech Acts (Syntax and Semantics 3)*. New York: Academic Press, (41-58).
- Hempelmann, C. (2004). Script Opposition and Logical Mechanism in Punning. *Humor*. 17, 4 (381-392).
- Johnson, B. E. (2001). *The Reading Edge: Thirteen Ways to Build Reading Comprehension*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Khand, Z. (2004). Teaching Reading Skills: Problems and Suggestions. *Journal of Research (Faculty of Languages and Islamic Studies)*. Vol.5, (43-56).
- Kotthoff, H. (2005). Pragmatics of Performance and the Analysis of Conversational Humor. *Humor*. (271-304).
- Martin, A. R. (2007). *The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach*. California: Elsevier Academic Press.
- McGrath, I. (2006). *Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Morreall, J. (2004). Verbal Humor without Switching Scripts and without non-bona fide Communication. *Humor*. 17, 4 (393-400).

- Oaks, D. D. (1994). Creating Structural Ambiguities in Humor: Getting English Grammar to Cooperate. *International Journal of Humor Research*. 7(4), (377-401).
- Raskin, V. (1985). *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor*. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: D.Reidel.
- Ravin, Y., & Leacock, C. (eds.). (2000). *Polisemy. Theoretical and Computational Approaches*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruch, W., Attardo, S. & Raskin, V. (1993). Toward an Empirical Verification of the General Theory of Verbal Humor. *Humor*. 6-2, (123-136).
- Hirst, G. (1987). *Semantic Interpretation and the Resolution of Ambiguity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sarıçoban, A. (2002). Reading strategies of successful readers through the three phase approach. *The Reading Matrix*, 2 (3), 1-16.
- Spache, G. D. & Berg, P. C. (1984). *The Art of Efficient Reading*. New York: MacMillan Publishing Company.
- Stebick, D. M. & Dain, J. M. (2007) *Comprehension Strategies for Your K-6 Literacy Classroom, Thinking Before, During and After Reading*. California: Corwin Press.
- Thorson, J. A. & Powell, F. C. (1993). Development and Validation of a Multidimensional Sense of Humor Scale. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*. January, 49/1, (13-23).
- Vega, G. (1989). *Humor Competence: the Fifth Component*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis. Purdue University.

Appendix

Pre- and Post- Reading Test

Text 1

Wife, reading husband's fortune card from scale: "You are a leader, with a magnetic personality and strong character. You are intelligent, witty and attractive to the opposite sex." She paused. "It has your weight wrong, too."

(Reader's Digest January 1976: 55)

1- The wife _____

- a) thinks her husband has a strong character but a bit overweight.
- b) finds her husband handsome.
- c) believes that fortune cards can really tell
- d) does not have a very high opinion of her husband

2- The wife has a/an _____ attitude to her husband.

- a) indifferent
- b) arrogant
- c) humiliating
- d) sympathetic

Text 2

"We want a **responsible** man for this job," said the employer to the applicant. "Well," said the young fellow, "I guess I'm your man. No matter where I've worked, whenever anything happened, they always said I was **responsible**."

(Reader's Digest December 1975: 80)

3- Which of the following does NOT have a similar meaning to "responsible" as used in the text?

- a) accountable
- b) guilty
- c) mature
- d) at fault

4- What is the tone of the text?

- a) happy
- b) sad
- c) persuasive
- d) humorous

Text 3

Boss: "You know our beautiful stenographer, Marco?"

Assistant: "Yes, sir."

Boss: "Have you ever taken her out? Made a pass at her? Written a love note to her? Called her up?"

Assistant: "No, sir."

Boss: "Good. Then you can be the one to fire her."

(Reader's Digest December 1975: 81)

5- It can be inferred from the text that _____

- a) the stenographer is envied by a lot of people in the workplace because of her beauty.
- b) the stenographer has had affairs with everyone but the assistant.
- c) the boss wants to fire her as she hasn't flirted with him.
- d) the assistant is the only person who can fire her as he doesn't like her at all.

6- Which adjective describes the stenographer?

- a) loose
- b) virtuous
- c) efficient
- d) naive

7- What is the author's main intention in this passage?

- a) to entertain the reader
- b) to shock the reader
- c) to criticize society
- d) to teach readers something about work life

Text 4

A businessman of rather shabby reputation was interviewing applicants for the job of chief accountant. He asked each, "How much is two plus two?" The first two applicants replied, "Four." Neither got the job. The third was hired.

When asked the sum of two plus two, he got up, closed the door, drew the blinds, leaned across the desk and said "How much would you like it to be?"

(Richard C. Gerstenberg, Quoted in the Wall Street Journal)

8- Find a title for the text above.

- a) Honesty Always Pays
- b) Bend it to Win
- c) Bad at Maths, Still got the Job
- d) Credible Accountant

9- What is the author's intention in this text?

- a) to annoy the reader
- b) to shock the reader
- c) to criticize the society
- d) to amuse the reader

10- The last applicant said "How much would you like it to be?" because - _____

- a) he did not know the answer and would want a hint.
- b) he knew the first two applicants could not get the job when they said four.
- c) he wanted to imply that he could modify the figures when needed.
- d) he wanted to shock the businessman with a tricky response.

11- What is the applicant's intention in saying "How much would you like it to be?"

- a) He is being mysterious.
- b) He does not want anyone to hear.
- c) He is about to propose something indecent.
- d) He wants to keep it a secret.

Text 5

A young man and a girl were sitting on a low stone wall, holding hands, gazing out over a lake. For several minutes they sat silently. Then finally the girl looked at the boy and said, "A penny for your thoughts, Angus."

"Well, I was thinking... perhaps it's about time we kiss."

The girl blushed, then leaned over and kissed him lightly on the cheek. Then he blushed. The two turned once again to gaze out over the lake. Minutes passed and the girl spoke again. "Another penny for your thoughts Angus." "Well, I was thinking perhaps it is high time for us to hug."

The girl blushed, then leaned over and hugged him for a few seconds. Then he blushed. Then the two turned once again to gaze out over the lake. After a while, she again said, "Another penny for your thoughts, Angus." "Well, I was thinking perhaps it's about time you let me put my hand on your leg."

The girl blushed, then took his hand and put it on her knee. Then he blushed. The two turned once again to gaze out over the lake before the girl spoke again.

"Another penny for your thoughts, Angus."

The young man glanced down and flushed. "Well, no" he said, "my thoughts are a bit more serious this time."

"Really?" said the girl in a whisper, filled with anticipation.

"Yes," said the man, nodding.

The girl looked away in shyness, began to blush, and bit her lip in anticipation of the ultimate request. Then he said, "Don't you think it is about time you pay me the first three pennies?"

(Adapted from <http://www.scotlandvacations.com/scottishhumour.htm>)

12- What is the purpose of the text?

- a) to entertain and to inform
- b) to criticize and to annoy
- c) to teach a moral and to raise awareness
- d) to persuade and to inform

13- What might be an appropriate title for the above given text?

- a) Virtue
- b) Disappointment
- c) Courting
- d) Embarrassment

14- The underlined sentence "in anticipation of the ultimate request" means _____

- a) eager to move one step further in their love making.
- b) embarrassed for being in an awkward situation.
- c) ashamed of not being able to afford the money to be requested.
- d) afraid that a more intimate flirt that she cannot tolerate is upcoming.

15- What CANNOT be said about the boy's final behavior?

- a) He thinks it is high time for the girl to pay him the money promised.
- b) He is too naïve in terms of relations with the opposite sex.
- c) He is not very bright nor is he a womanizer.
- d) He is looking forward to getting more intimate with the girl. 154

Text 6

Two men were pushing one another outside a pub when along came a huge Irishman who started taking his coat off.

"You are fighting about Ireland, aren't you?" he demanded.

"No, no," said both men in unison. "Honestly, it's a personal matter, nothing to do with Ireland at all."

"Huh," muttered the big man, and shuffled off. Two seconds later he was back, tearing off his coat saying:

"So Ireland is not worth fighting about, eh?"

(<http://www.emailgoodies.faketrix.com/funny-jokes-email-comedy.htm>)

16- Based on the text above which one is TRUE?

- a) He is clearly looking for trouble.
- b) He is furious that the two men are disrespectful to his country.
- c) All Irishmen appear to be troublesome.
- d) He finally agrees that there is no point in fighting for the sake of Ireland.

17- The line “So Ireland is not worth fighting about, eh?” means _____

- a) Irish people should be peaceful, not troublemakers.
- b) Irish people do not care much about their countries.
- c) The Irish man is trying to pick up a fight.
- d) That it was a personal matter was a lie.

18- What is the tone of the text?

- a) criticizing
- b) sad
- c) persuasive
- d) funny

19- In the texts (7-10) below, the last lines are missing. When you match the last lines with the texts, which is the correct order? There are more lines than you need. (*Reading Games* by Jill & Charles Hadfield 2000)

- a) d e b a
- b) d e c b
- c) e a b c
- d) e a c b

Text 7

A lady was carrying out a survey of drinking habits. She rang the bell of a house and an army colonel answered. She explained: “I am doing a survey into people’s drinking habits. Would you mind giving me some information about yours?” “Not at all,” replied the colonel. “In fact I haven’t had a drink since 1945.” “Congratulations!” said the lady, “That is quite an amazing achievement.”

Text 8

A very unpleasant man went to stay with his friend. After dinner his friend said, “Would you like a coffee?” “No-tea,” he replied. Later his friend asked him, “Would you like a whisky?” “No-brand,” he replied. Next morning his friend asked, “Would you like a cup of tea with your breakfast?” “No-coffee,” he replied. His friend asked, “Would you like your eggs scrambled or fried?” “One fried, one scrambled,” he replied. After breakfast his friend asked, “Did you enjoy your breakfast?”

Text 9

A man walked into the doctor’s surgery and bumped into a very young and pretty girl coming out, but she was crying bitterly. “Come on,” he said, “It can’t be that bad.” She said, “Oh, but it is, the doctor’s just told me I’m pregnant.” The man turned to the doctor and asked “Is it true?” The doctor said,

Text 10

All good stories, should be short and to the point. This was well known to at least one small boy who was asked to write a story in class containing elements of Romance, Royalty, Mystery, and Religion, and completed the task in thirty seconds. When asked by the teacher, he read out,

- a) “Of course not,” he replied. “That proves it works.”
- b) “God,” said the duchess, “I’m pregnant. Who has done it?”
- c) “No, but, it’s cured her hiccups.”
- d) “I know,” replied he, looking at his watch. “It is already 20.00 hours.”
- e) “No”, he replied. “You scrambled the wrong egg.”

Text 11

How to do Battle with Grownups
Par. 1

In the unending battle between children and adults, the grownups win most of the times, not because they are smarter or morally

- superior, but because they were kids once themselves and know all of the enemy's secrets. To redress the balance, I would like to offer some advice to the children.
- Par. 2 Let's exemplify this with a kid named David and his parents Mr. and Mrs. Smith. It is about 8 p.m., and David has been playing quietly with a truck on the living-room rug. Suddenly, Mrs. Smith announces, "Eight o'clock, honey. Time for bed."
- Par.3 She has sugar-coated her voice as if she were offering David a ride in a helicopter or a second Christmas. David should not be fooled. Grownups frequently tell children they want them to go to bed because it is good for their health and will eventually make them successful at school. However it is either because they want television to themselves, or they want the children out of the way so they can stop pretending they are responsible and wise.
- Par. 4 The point is that David should never confront the Smiths directly. He must always give the appearance of retreating before superior power, when in fact he
- Par. 5 "I am going," David says. "I told you."
"It does not look me like you're going," Mrs. Smith says. "It looks to me you're playing with your truck."
"I just have to finish this."
Mrs. Smith is somewhat put off, since she cannot figure out exactly what it is that David has to finish. So she says, "All right, but don't take too long."
It will be not quite ten minutes more before she says, "Okay, that's enough."
"I'm not finished."
"I don't care. That's enough. Now hop into your pajamas." She is beginning to lose her temper.
Now David sets the trap. "You said I could finish."
Mrs. Smith pauses at a moment to get a grip on her temper. "Finish what?" she says.
- Par. 6 The trap is sprung. With a little imagination, David can expend as long as half an hour explaining the nature of the game, with demonstrations and elaborate elucidation of the rules, which he makes up as he goes along. David can stretch it out to 9:15 before his lights are extinguished. To be sure, he ends up in bed eventually; but, by the rules of domestic warfare, any time a child is still up one hour after his being told to go to bed, he can claim victory.

(Adapted from Reader's Digest May 1974:
128-131)

20- What is the intention of the writer?

- a) to inform and entertain
- b) to give a moral lesson and warn
- c) to shock the reader and offer suggestions
- d) to criticize and teach the reader something

21- Which of the following sentences from the text is the *most biased one*?

- a) To redress the balance, I would like to offer some advice to children. 157
- b) She has sugar-coated her voice as if she were offering David a ride in a helicopter or a second Christmas.
- c) They want the children out of the way so they can stop pretending they are responsible and wise.
- d) Now David sets the trap.

22- Choose the option which best describes the main idea of the first paragraph.

- a) We should always take sides of the children against adults.
- b) It is clear that adults are not as clever or ethical as generally thought.
- c) Although they are often defeated, the children never give up the battle with grown-ups.
- d) Adults have the upper hand in their conflict with the kids as they have been there before.

23- Choose the option which best describes the main idea of paragraph 4.

- a) What children must do is pull back as if retreating, and then, draw the opponent onto new ground and attack again.
- b) Children should never yield the urge to argue with parents, instead, they should wait until their parents forget about it.
- c) Not confronting the parents directly, children can please their parents and will gain extra time in return.
- d) Well-behaved children should never argue with their parents and please them.

24- Choose the option which best describes the main idea of paragraph 6.

- a) Eventually it is always the children who lose the battle.
- b) Detaining the time for bed even for some time can be regarded as a success for children.
- c) In the war between the grownups and children, the rule is there is no winner!
- d) Even if they are sent to bed in the end, playing a game with elaborate rules and lots of imagination can be regarded as victory.

Text 12

A Day at the Seaside

Every year about this time, my wife wakes me up with a playful slap and says, "Let's go to the seaside."

"What for?" I will say warily.

"It will be fun," she will insist.

"I don't think so," I will reply. "People find it disturbing when I take my shirt off in the public. I find it disturbing."

"No, it will be great. We'll get sand in our hair. We'll get sand in our shoes. We'll get sand in our sandwiches and then in our mouths. We'll get sunburned and windburned. And when we get tired of sitting, we can have a paddle in water so cold it actually hurts. At the end of the day, we'll set off at the same time as 37.000 other people and get in such a traffic jam that we won't get home till midnight. I can make interesting observations about your driving skills, and the children can pass the time sticking each other with sharp objects. It will be such fun."

So when, last weekend, my wife suggested that we take a drive to the sea, I put my foot down and said. "Never-absolutely not," which is of course why we ended up, three hours later, at Kennebunk Beach in Maine.

On arrival, our youngest- I'll call him Jimmy in case he should one day become a lawyer- surveyed the scene and said "Ok, Dad, I really need the toilet." By the time we found a toilet, little Jimmy didn't need to go any more, so we returned to the beach. By the time we got there, some hours later, I discovered that everyone had gone off for a swim, and there was only one half eaten sandwich left. I sat on a towel and nibbled the sandwich.

"Oh look, mummy," said my daughter gaily when they emerged a few minutes later. "Daddy's eating the sandwich the dog had."

"Tell me this isn't happening," I began to whimper.

"Don't worry, dear," my wife said soothingly, "It was an Irish setter. They're very clean."

I don't remember much after that. I just managed to get so sunburned that a dermatologist invited me to a convention in Cleveland the following week as an exhibit.

We lost the car keys for two hours, the Irish setter came back and stole one of the beach towels, then nipped me on the hand for eating his sandwich. It was a typical day at the seaside, in other words.

"Lovely," said my wife. "We must do that again soon."

And the heartbreaking thing is she really meant it.

(Adapted from *Notes From a Big Country*, Bill Bryson

cited in the coursebook *Inside Out* by Sue Kay and Vaughan Jones 2001:69)

25- How is the author's attitude towards his day at the seaside?

- a) amusing
- b) shocking
- c) criticizing
- d) persuasive

26- What does that mean "*By the time we found a toilet, little Jimmy didn't need to go any more.*"?

- a) Jimmy has probably peed in his pants.
- b) Jimmy has probably relieved in the toilet.
- c) Jimmy has probably given up the idea.
- d) Jimmy has probably told a lie to irritate his father.

27- Which one of the following is TRUE?

- a) His son's name is Jimmy.
- b) He expects his son to become a lawyer one day.
- c) The writer calls his son with a nickname so that he won't be sued one day.
- d) His son seems to be a compromising child when he cannot get what he needs.

28- What does the writer mean by saying "*I just managed to get so sunburned that a dermatologist invited me to a convention in Cleveland the following week as an exhibit.*"?

- a) He got sunburnt so seriously that a dermatologist in Cleveland has to take care of him.
- b) He is expected to be an exhibit in a dermatology convention.
- c) It has been the worst sunburn that he has ever had in his life.
- d) He is just exaggerating to create a dramatic effect.

Text 13

The Canine Cruncher

The day Mr X took delivery of his new van was the day his dog, Willy, decided to start out on a new career. Previously a docile creature, Willy turned into Lex Flex, the Canine Cruncher, in the time it took its owner to eat a three course meal.

Having left his trusty companion to keep an eye on the smart new van, Mr X returned from lunch to find that his new mode of transport had been completely remodeled. The roof had been torn back as if with a tin opener, an air conditioning system had been thoughtfully provided by the removal of the windscreen and the seats had been given a new look, which might have been described as „ripped and torn“. Exhausted by all his hard work, Willy was having a quick nap when his owner reappeared. Speechless, Mr X rushed towards his dog with his hands outstretched. Waking up with a jump, Willy sat up to greet his owner and barked with excitement. However, being a modest sort of dog and not thinking it necessary for his devoted owner to thank him so profusely, he jumped through the shattered windscreen and took off down the street. Mr X's voice could be heard fading into the distance behind

him as he raced away. Overcome with emotion, the van owner returned to survey the full extent of the new design.

These days it's not uncommon to see Mr X driving round the streets of the city looking for his absent friend. Numbed by the efficiency of his new air-conditioning system, he's often seen delivering the parcels under the protection of a warm blanket. Rumour has it that he's bought a small shotgun to give Willy when they are reunited, just as a small sign of his appreciation.

(Adapted from the coursebook *Inside Out Advanced* by Ceri Jones & Tania Baston with Jon Hird, 2001:59)

29- What is the tone of the text?

- a) humorous
- b) sad
- c) critical
- d) argumentative

30- When he comes back from lunch, Mr X _____

- a) is happy to find his new van transformed into a new model through a great deal of work.
- b) finds that, to his surprise, a new air conditioning system has been installed into his new van.
- c) finds that, to his disappointment, his loyal companion, Willy the dog, has been missing.
- d) discovers that his dog, though not very likely of its docile nature, has done irreparable harm to the new van.

31- Mr X rushes towards his dog with his arms outstretched probably because _____

- a) he wants to give a hug to his trusty companion.
- b) he wants to hold his dog, which is about to jump to greet him.
- c) he is far too relieved to find his dog safe and sound.
- d) he is in a range seeing the full extent of the destruction.

32- "Rumour has it that he's bought a small shotgun to give Willy when they are reunited, just as a small sign of his appreciation." means _____

- a) Mr X feels miserable as his loyal friend has been missing for days.
- b) Mr X has no intention of letting his dog get away with what it has done.
- c) Mr X is looking forward to finding his dog, Willy, and longing to share the warm blanket with his best friend.
- d) Mr X has bought a gun to protect himself and his van from any more vandalism.

İngilizce Öğretmen Adaylarının içinde Mizahi Öğeler Bulunan Metinleri Algılamalarını Geliştirmek

Öz

Mizah evrensel bir olaydır ve edebiyat, dilbilim, psikoloji, sosyoloji ve felsefe gibi bir çok alanda çalışılmıştır. Mizah genellikle dil aracılığı ile ifade edilir. Dil öğretimi açısından mizahi dili anlamada yaşanan başarısızlık iletişimde sorunlara yol açabilir. Neyin mizahi olduğu kültürel olarak tanımlanabilir ve bu yüzden de açıklanması ve öğretilmesi güç olabilir. Yine de, kişiler mizah aracılığıyla oldukça fazla bilgi iletmektedirler ve bu nedenle mizah yabancı dil sınıflarımızda göz ardı edilmemesi gereken bir unsurdur. Bu şu anlama gelmektedir; öğrencilerimiz yabancı dilde mizahı eğlendirici bulmayabilirler ve çeşitli kültürel ve sosyal sebepler ile gülmeyebilirler ancak biz mizahı anlamalarını ve yüzeysel sözcük anlamının ötesini görmelerini hedeflemeliyiz. Başka bir deyişle, yabancı dil öğretmen adayları ilgili alt okuma becerilerini etkili bir şekilde

kullanarak mizahi metinler yoluyla iletilen mesajı alabilmelidirler. Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretmen adaylarının İngilizce öğrenim materyallerindeki ve özgün metinlerdeki mizahi öğeleri anlamalarını ve içinde mizahi öğeler olan okuma metinlerini algılamalarını belirli okuma alt becerileri yolu ile geliştirmelerini araştırmaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: mizah, yabancı dil öğretimi, okuma becerisi, okuma alt becerileri, İngilizce öğretmen adayları

AUTHOR BIODATA

Dr. Ceylan Yangın Ersanlı is an Assistant Professor at Ondokuz Mayıs University, ELT Department. Her research interests include teacher training, young learners, materials and curriculum development.

Prof. Dr. Abdulvahit Çakır is currently the director of the School of Foreign Languages at Gazi University and head of the ELT Department. Among his interests are training English language teachers, language testing, course design and Turkish as a foreign language.