유모어의 교육적 적용
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Integrating Humor into the EFL Curriculum

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<국문 초록>

외국어를 가르치는데 있어서 필요한 지도 방법의 하나는 대조분석방법이다. 이 방법은 목표 언어가 가지고 있는 음운체계에서부터 구-구조규칙과 문법과 어휘항목 그리고 문화적 배경에 이르기까지 광범위하게 모국어의 그것들과 대조 비교함으로써 거기에서 나타나는 차이점을 중점적으로 극복해 나가도록 지도하는 것이다.

행동주의 학습이론을 신봉하는 학자들은 이러한 분석방법이 외국어학습의 촉매 역할을 한다고 역설하고 있다.

영어교육에 있어서 문화적 배경을 잘 나타내보여주는 유모어의 효율적 지도는 문화적 항목의 여타 부분의 지도와 마찬가지로 형식(form)과 의미(meaning) 그리고 분포(distribution)에 따라 비교하여 지도되어야 한다.

본 논문에서는 한국어를 모국어로 삼는 영어 학습자가 영어의 유모어를 이해할 수 있는 능력을 습득 시키기 위하여 영어교육 현장에서 필요하다고 여겨지는 표면적 생활양식과 심층적 의식 구조간의 차이에 초점을 맞추어 효과적인 교수방안을 제안하고 있다.

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I. Introduction

Intermediate and advanced students of English as a second/foreign language reach a certain plateau where their competency level does not meet their communication needs on a sociolinguistic basis. As a result, they feel confused, isolated, lost, helpless, and marginalized. More specifically, communication that involves humor most often leaves the second language learner feeling as if they are not full participants in mutual exchanges and attitudes with native speakers, as well as limiting their ability to share group solidarity. Humor assumes a more auspicious role as the non-native speaker realizes that inside jokes develop group identity, create a bond of uniqueness, and smooth out social interaction. In fact, Avner Ziv insists that "humor creates a common language" (33).

However, humor remains largely overlooked as a component of the EFL curriculum. When evaluating the inclusion of humor, the first consideration may be "Why teach humor?" Although this may seem like a rhetorical question, the appropriate response is: "Indeed, why not?" One reason for the limited use of humor according to Marc Deneire is that insufficient knowledge of "its mechanisms to generate it at will and use it in daily teaching" (286). Another hurdle is that thus far most published material tends to be more description than prescriptive and lacked a "well-designed integration into existing or developing teaching methodologies" (Deneire 286).

Nonetheless, it is human nature to want to laugh. Students want to not only be able to express themselves, including their emotions, in another language but laugh, smile, and enjoy life in that language as well.

In fact, there are numerous advantages to using humor as a pedagogical resource.
First, understanding humor leads to a stronger awareness of the manner in which the language works and the way it approaches objects and ideas. For example, studying humor could create motivation to learn more about phonetics, morphology, and syntax in order to facilitate the understanding of the joke. Neal Norrick claims that jokes, wordplay, anecdotes, and sarcasm are not elements that are alien to conversation, but just the opposite: they constitute the very core of everyday talk (1).

When students are able to understand and possibly appreciate humor, their learning becomes more enjoyable and as a result motivation increases and classroom boredom is minimized. Normally when a person finds something amusing, they are more likely to remember it. In the case of the second language learner, when they discover new meaning by themselves, they may be more likely to remember because they laughed.

Acquisition of these skills can be a path to a greater understanding among people and enhance world communication by learning to become more tolerant and by acquiring respect for differences of other cultures. In addition, learning to fully communicate in the target culture and language will enable the second language learner to discover and enjoy richer aspects of the L2 (target language environment) culture. Instead of "hovering" on the periphery of the circle of communication, the SL learner enters and becomes an active participant in the daily life of the target culture. Indeed, humor is more intrinsically linked to cultural context and "should include the knowledge of the cultural environment in which the people who speak that language live" (Laurian 125).

Incorporating humor in the EFL curriculum can also provide a learning opportunity for the teacher by providing exposure to new perspectives and insights provided by the students that will assist in an increased awareness of the foreign cultural environment. For example, one student was somewhat shocked when he evaluated a cartoon that contained two "gods without clothing" in a tropical country. He explained that in Korea a "god" would never be portrayed as naked. The student further elaborated that since Korea is a predominantly Buddhist country, all images of Buddha were always clothed and usually in colorful and quite extravagant attire.
This type of insight can be invaluable to a Western language teacher who is introducing new culturally sensitive materials and who themselves may still be learning about the cultural environment of the host country.

These cross-cultural interactions can create a situation that Jin and Cortazzi referred to as "cultural synergy" (qtd. in Flowerdew and Miller 370) whereby both lecturers and students develop a conscious awareness of their own and other cultures. In their three ethnographic studies, Flowerdew and Miller claimed that "by bringing the cultural assumptions of lecturers and students to consciousness, can be of particular value in providing a basis for developing mutual understanding" (346).

In order to recognize and understand humor in intercultural communication, it is indispensable that the learner acquires, develops, and attains sociolinguistic competency, as well as inference skills. Gillian Brown argues that it is more efficacious to teach explicit strategies for making inferences from the language used rather than to teach exhaustive blocks of cultural background information (17). In fact, considering the number of countries where English is either an official language or a lingua franca, this task is unattainable. Brown theorizes that second language learners can then gradually construct knowledge of the target culture in the same manner as native speakers (11).

At the beginning of the learning curve, students may fail to perceive subtle nuances and equate one word with only one meaning. Deneire insists that "a joke (as any other text) is more than the sum of its parts" (291). Indeed, the benefits of teaching inferencing skills as an integral part of EFL may have been overlooked but demand further consideration. Brown advocated the following reasons for including these concepts in the curriculum (17).

1. Teaching inferencing skills makes it quite clear that all the information essential in order to understand the text is not contained on the page, encoded in the language.

2. Use of inferencing skills will demonstrate to second language learners the comprehension they can attain through interpretation without prior, specific cultural knowledge by simply applying what they already know from their own world-view.

3. The essential aspects of background knowledge become both more identifiable and explicit
which, in turn, facilitates recognition and increases the likelihood of recall.

4. Implementation and completion of inferencing skills as a group activity will illustrate that although individual interpretations may vary, there is no such thing as an "incorrect interpretation".

According to Brown, teaching students to "develop limited, constrained inferencing" (16) will foster an awareness of the interpretation process by methodically using all pertinent information. Finally, one of the most valuable benefits is that inferencing helps students to understand discourse, and this applies to interpreting the linguistic message contained in a captioned print cartoon as well.

Not surprisingly, cartoons or comics are an excellent genre to increase the ease of learning because the visual clues help to contextualize the "joke" while facilitating inferencing and second language skills. Huber and Leder described a cartoon as "a drawn joke" (91). Randall Harrison concurred by stating that "essentially the cartoon is a drawing which (a) simplifies, and/or (b) exaggerates" (17). In fact, the visual elements contained in cartoons assist in recognition of cultural symbols that may not be explicit in verbal humor. The genre of cartoons represent an established factor of the culture which are easily accessible in newspapers, magazines, books, and advertising (Huber and Leder 92).

According to Harrison "we live in a symbolic world" (10). In fact, cartoons function as a "caricature of modern mass communication" (Harrison 10) that could inculcate about communication, art, mass media, society, and ourselves. Moreover, the messages which cartoons convey may be social, psychological, economic, political or artistic or even a combination of all these. Although Harrison believed that "the cartoon can educate or irritate, tickle or tease, inform or reform" (31), the primary purpose of the cartoon is communication.

A common presumption is that cartoons are viewed only briefly, usually only about five to ten seconds (Richter and Bakken qtd. in Huber and Leder 93). For this reason the formal construction of the cartoon should be such that the point is as explicit as possible. In other words, the characters should be easily recognizable, indicating exactly who is the speaker in the cartoon, and omitting any unnecessary
details (Huber and Leder 93). This indispensable attention to specific factors assists the second language learner by combining visual elements, in addition to limited and exact language, in order to create the humor message.

This study utilized single panel cartoons where the end result is that "the picture and the caption combine into a self-contained unit" (Harrison 17). In fact, Harrison claimed that "the seemingly simple cartoon turns out to be a surprisingly complex intellectual problem" because the composite elements of symbolism, complexity, content, and context can vary for any given cartoon. Quite simply, the cartoon invites the viewer to linger and explore. This disguised invitation is apropos for the nonnative speaker who is equally challenged intellectually, linguistically and psychologically, as well as culturally, to delve further into the myriad of non-verbal symbols, semantic options, and the "hidden meaning" of the cartoon in order to decipher exactly what is happening. Or to express it in native speaker vernacular, what is so damned funny?

Finally, one essential detail should not be overlooked. Understanding or comprehension of humor, and in this case print cartoons, is clearly one facet while appreciation is something else altogether. This subjective aspect is true for all speakers of a language, both those who are native speakers, as well as second language learners. Additionally, appreciation of the cartoon will naturally be dependent upon individual sense of humor, a factor that most certainly cannot be taught but may possibly be developed.

Those who still may not be convinced that inclusion of humor is an indispensable component of the EFL curriculum should recall an analogy that is familiar to most English native speakers. An adolescent who hears a sexual joke that they do not understand, may feign laughter in order not to lose face with their peers.

What better reason in order to establish some group rapport in the L2 culture than by letting your hair down, relaxing and relieving the tension generally associated with use of a new language than by experiencing contextual humor in print cartoons? This paper argues a case for inclusion of humor in the EFL curriculum. It then presents the results of a small-scale study using humor realia to aid in the
discovery, awareness, and comprehension of the underlying sociocultural context of the English language and advocates the use of humor as a necessary component in achieving communicative and sociolinguistic competency.

II. Literature

Humor may be seen as a topic that is downright troublesome to assess and tragic to probe. In fact, experts in the field disagree on the exact facets and parameters of humor theory, including the semantics involved in its definition and explanation. Victor Raskin asserts in chapter one of his often quoted 1985 Semantic Mechanisms of Humor that "no prior research is available on the linguistics of humor and no formal theory of humor has ever been proposed" (1). In contrast, Avner Ziv claimed that more than a hundred theories of humor exist and inferred that previous research had simply been given new names (viii).

In his 1994 treatise Linguistic Theories of Humor, Salvatore Attardo provided a critical survey of most of the available literature on the linguistics of humor. While this extensive treatment contained over 900 sources in the bibliography, Attardo commented that the field of linguistics research on humor is plagued by repetition of acquired results by researchers unaware of previous research, and by the fact that often a scholar will make one contribution to the field, but will not follow up on his/her idea(s) (16).

One further point may present a more sweeping perspective. Raskin referred to humor theory as an "enormously complex subject" ("Semantic" 30). He then devoted no less than ten pages in his book, Semantic Mechanisms of Humor to the technical analysis of one joke 1 that contained three short sentences.

While an exhaustive review of humor theory is outside the scope of this paper, a more practical and brief overview of the pertinent literature will be presented as a coherent perspective for classroom teachers, the intended audience who may, in fact, be more concerned with meeting the demands of their daily lesson requirements.

Having made this disclaimer regarding humor theory, we now launch into our best
effort at clarity of the main concepts.

First and foremost, researchers in the field are unable to agree on a concise definition of humor itself and presently more than 600 definitions exist (Ziv 23 and Cummings 75). In 1971, Mindess introduced a workable concept by referring to it as "a frame of mind, a manner of perceiving and experiencing life. It is a kind of outlook, a peculiar point of view, and one which has great therapeutic power" (qtd. in Raskin, "Semantic" 7). Additionally noted humor theorist, Avner Ziv, described humor as "a social message intended to produce laughter or smiling" (ix) which "fulfills certain functions, uses certain techniques, has a content, and is used in certain situations" (ix).

Presently most of the researchers in the field of humor are psychologists, and the majority of literature has settled on the classification of humor theories into three large classes. The first is known as cognitive-perceptual which is usually associated with incongruity. This approach focuses on the fact that two seemingly incompatible phenomena are brought together. Inappropriateness, paradox, and dissimilarity also characterize this concept. The second class is social-behavioral which deals with disparagement (hostility, superiority, malice, aggression, or derision). Finally, the third is referred to as psychoanalytical. Advocated in several forms, this classification is generally known as suppression/repression or release theory. Its basic principle is that laughter provides relief for mental, nervous, and/or psychic energy where well-being is restored after tension or struggle (Raskin, "Semantic" 23).

Based on his research, Raskin offered an expanded interpretation by stating that "incongruity-based theories make a statement about the stimulus; the superiority theories characterize the relations or attitudes between the speaker and the hearer; and the release/relief theories comment on the feelings and psychology of the hearer only" ("Semantic" 40).

In the same vein, Raskin introduced his own semantic theory of humor which has gained substantial acceptance among the recognized literature in the field. He contends that two conditions are "necessary and sufficient for a text to be funny" ("Semantic" 99). One is that "the text is compatible, fully or in part, with two
different scripts; the two scripts with which the text is compatible are opposite” ("Semantic" 99). In other words, a text is considered to be funny if the two opposed and overlapping scripts exist in it.

In 1988 Hertzog elaborated on Raskin’s theory which is briefly summarized as follows:

The key concept in all cognitive approaches is incongruity, defined as the presence of at least two potential meanings in the humor stimulus, one normal or expected and the other incompatible and therefore unexpected. Incongruity resolution, the sudden perception of the second meaning and the realization that it does fit the situation, results in the humor response. (597–598)

Since Raskin’s theory examined how a text conveys humor rather than why something is funny, he concluded that it was “designed to model the native speaker’s intuition with regard to humor, or in other words, his humor competence” ("Semantic" 58). Simply stated, this theory stressed that it “matches a native speaker’s ability to use and understand language” (Raskin, "Jokes" 34).

Another requisite component in the second language learner’s arsenal to grasp a more comprehensive understanding of all aspects of humor is the ability to recognize instances of "broken or merely bent" linguistic rules. Consider the following example from Opie and Opie:

‘How many ears has Davy Crockett?’
‘Two, hasn’t he?’

‘No, three. He’s got a left ear and a right ear and a wild frontier.’ (qtd. in Chiaro 13).

Recognition and comprehension of the humor message clearly requires, not only sufficient linguistic knowledge, but a rather high standard of proficiency in order to master the ambiguities and nuances of the language. For this reason, Chiaro concluded that to understand a joke, competence was essential in three systems that interact with each other: linguistic, sociocultural, and ‘poetic’ (13). Richard Alexander defined poetic competence as the "ability to recognize the ways in which linguistic options can be maneuvered in order to create a desired effect" (qtd. in Chiaro 13). In other words, the recipient of a joke is in a comparable position to the
reader of poetry; both need to discern how the comic or poet has played with the language. Without a doubt, this is a tall order for a non-native speaker.

Additional concepts of humor that must be taught to non-native speakers include "what scripts are available in a given culture for humorous purposes, which scripts are unavailable (tabooed), and in which settings humor is considered appropriate" (Attardo 213). Native speakers know that social requirements may determine what is funny, and likewise, what is inappropriate. Deneire proposes that "different categories of social experience correspond to different categories of perception and thought to make up culturally defined schemata" (291). Consequently, the social rules of the L2 culture that regulate the use of humor may be troublesome for a second language learner.

On the other hand, Ziv argued that humor enforces the social order and contributes to the structure and hierarchy of society (x). For example, higher-status individuals make jokes about those considered to be lower-status. This factor is especially advantageous for the second language learner since Ziv stressed the role of humor as a key to opening and enhancing personal relations, in testing for shared knowledge, and narrowing social distance (ix). Group bonding, acceptance, and rapport can minimize the feelings of isolation that are common to most non-native speakers.

Guindal believed that humor represented a fertile reservoir for language learning by introducing "lateral aspects of language such as irony, sarcasm, mockery, elision, ellipsis, and euphemism" (3). Since humor can be created through many different means, this situation may pose special problems for the second language learner. In addition to trying to decipher what is humorous, the learner must also discern what form or genre is being employed. Salvatore Attardo proposed that since the form may be different than those in the L1, "the learner will have to become accustomed to the L2 "genres" of humor, if he/she is to achieve complete communicative competence" (213). For example, the verbal jokes known as "knock-knock" in the U.S. are completely unknown in Italy and the francophone countries (Attardo 213). Another example which specifically relates to print cartoons includes the pervasive use of political cartoons in the United States. Other countries that may not view the
political scene with quite as much leeway for interpretation may restrict this genre entirely.

Claire Dickinson suggested that the schemata (script) "that individuals have available are a function of the culture or subculture to which they belong" (4). Her research showed that people from different language backgrounds would differ in what they perceived as funny, and the difference would be related to culture rather than lack of language proficiency. Likewise, Deneire claimed that "cultural competence reflects cultural knowledge as well as the capacity to use that knowledge both interpretively and creatively" (296). In the same vein, Habermas referred to the acquisition of cultural knowledge as a shared background knowledge cultivated with others in a lifeworld (157). Consequently since this "lifeworld is minimally shared between people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Lee 142), intercultural communication can be adversely affected. By necessity, the second language learner will need to acquire a certain level of cultural competence in the target language.

One final aspect that must be included in a discussion of pertinent research is the theory that formed the basis of communicative competency proposed by Canale and Swain (qtd. in Deneire 292). This framework includes four elements: linguistic, sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competencies. Linguistic competence refers to the knowledge of the usage of the language such as morphology, phonology, sentence formation, and semantics. Sociolinguistic competence refers to the social rules of language use and implies the ability to use language appropriately both in meaning and form. These would include such elements as topic, register, situation, and norms of interaction. Strategic competence includes the knowledge of verbal and nonverbal strategies such as paraphrase or circumlocution that may be utilized to compensate for inadequate knowledge of another area of competence or if an indirect factor such as fatigue or distraction limits production. Finally, discourse competency refers to the way sentences are connected to construct unified written or spoken text.

Furthermore, utilization of these basic competencies are instrumental in the second language learner’s ability to reconstruct meaning of a text that may contain
incomplete information. Indeed, “failure to understand a joke often reflects a failure in perceiving its implied meaning” (Deneire 293).

Amy Carrell introduced another critical facet regarding linguistic competence by describing it as "the abstract system of elements and relations of a language, including the rules, that a native speaker has internalized, and linguistic performance is the empirical manifestation and verification of the native speaker’s linguistic competence" (173-174). Carrell stressed that a native speaker’s linguistic competence includes two distinct constituents: joke competence and humor competence. Joke competence is the native speaker’s intuitive language abilities to recognize a text as a joke. Then, humor competence is used to pass judgment as to whether or not the text is humorous. Additionally since they are part of an individual’s linguistic competence, they likewise usually operate at an unconscious level. Carrell proposed that “the constructs of joke competence and humor competence are necessary and yet discrete components of an individual’s linguistic competency” (184).

III. Method

III-1. Subjects

Sixty-six upper division full-time undergraduate students at a four year Korean university participated in the study (18 women and 48 men, ranging in age from 21 to 25 years). All were enrolled in three Level 5 (highest possible) elective English conversation classes that were taught by a native speaker. The majors of the informants represented all fields at the university, and all were native Korean speakers.

Levels of oral proficiency were judged to be between high-intermediate and advanced as each informant had studied English for approximately six years in middle and high school, and the majority had studied, traveled and/or lived in an English speaking environment for a period ranging from one month to one year. Proficiency levels of the informants were not formally measured.
III–2. Materials

The participants examined single-panel captioned print cartoons that represented categories of visual and verbal humor.

Cartoons were selected using the following criteria:
1. The genre was 22 different single-panel captioned and non-captioned cartoons from widely distributed print media of western culture, specifically the U.S. version. All cartoons had been created for a literate, adult audience of native English speakers, and all references to author identity and source were removed.
2. The sampling was created from a variety of sources which reflected diverse styles and sufficiently broad topics.
3. Eight of the 22 cartoons were judged to contain universal themes (See Appendix C).
4. Difficulty was decided by the researchers 3 and further confirmed by a native speaker sample group (N=20). The final 22 selections were judged to be of medium challenge.
5. Contents of all cartoons were free of sexual, racial, or scatological overtones which may have been considered offensive.

Procedure
The procedure consisted of five steps:
1. Each student received one cartoon and a five-part questionnaire (See Appendix A) to evaluate as homework.
2. Each student then presented their evaluation in class. All class members received a booklet containing a copy of all 22 cartoons in order to actively participate in the discussion phase.
3. Following each presentation, all class members then contributed their own interpretations.
4. If the entire class did not understand the cartoon, the native speaker teacher encouraged further discovery by supplying additional linguistic and/or cultural clues.
5. At the conclusion of all tasks, the students were requested to complete a short
questionnaire that rated the usefulness of the exercises of the study. Additionally, participants were not requested to assign a rating as to the degree of humor of each individual cartoon as this factors did not fall within the main focus of the study.

III-3. Process

The most common response by a native speaker upon hearing a joke is either positive, "I got it", or negative, "I don't get it". Likewise, this often repeated response becomes part of the repertory of the second language learner. In order to simplify the concept of teaching humor and the ease with which it can be integrated into the EFL curriculum, a visual and easy workable formula was created. This is referred to as the "Got It Process" ("G.I. Process" - See Table 1), and the specific details of each point will now be reviewed.

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<th>THE GOT IT PROCESS</th>
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<td>Visual + Verbal + Missing Element = Got It</td>
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<td>V1 + V2 + ME = GI</td>
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Table 1

All print cartoons contain three elements which interact in order to produce humor: visual, verbal, and a missing element. A native speaker can recognize, process/analyze, and understand each of these elements. At this point, the native speaker will decide whether or not the cartoon is humorous. The final step of appreciation will follow if the cartoon is considered humorous.

Let us examine in detail each element of the process. First, visual refers to a recognized (sometimes unseen but implied) symbol(s) of the target culture such as an object (for example a flag or form of dress), a type of action, or an expression of emotions. This element was illustrated by a cartoon in which the main object is a
flying witch’s broom and by another cartoon which shows a missing person on the side of a milk carton.

Next, the verbal element refers to the linguistic message that is either stated or implied. A example of this was illustrated by a cartoon which contains a father shark commenting to his son while viewing a group of swimmers who are missing parts of their legs and feet, "This is it, son – my old chompin’ grounds...Gosh, the memories."

Finally, the missing element refers to the subtle meaning or implicit nuance that is omitted but clearly implied and recognized by a native speaker. The identification, analysis/categorization, evaluation, and comprehension of this element is almost a subconscious process for a native speaker. They employ their native speaker culture competency, sociolinguistic skills, and their world-view inference skills to determine the missing element and complete the equation in order to understand the joke. This element(s) could be linguistic or even non-verbal or a combination of all or part of these facets intertwined together. A cartoon which shows a young boy waiting to see the dentist who is busy putting on a human mask over his monster face clearly illustrates the implied element that people, mostly children, think that all dentists are monsters.

Now, let us consider application of the same procedure to a second language learner of English. A non-native speaker who has a proficiency level of high–intermediate or above can identify, analyze, and understand the humor genre of print cartoons in a manner comparable with native speaker fluency.

The second language learner can easily initiate the process by evaluating and identifying one element. Identification of any one of the variables can assist in the identification and classification of the second. A second language learner of high–intermediate level or above possesses sufficient skills to use two elements for discovery of the third. The goal is thus completed by attaining complete comprehension. While the learner may identify all three variables and easily reach the GI, utilization of this framework assists all second language learners including those who are able to identify only one or two variables.
IV. Results

A review of the total 66 possible responses (See Appendix D) to whether or not the cartoon was considered humorous (three classes of 22 students each) indicated 36 positive responses (Yes = 36). Less than half of the replies were negative (No = 28), and only two responded (U = 2) that they were undecided or did not understand.

Six cartoons of the total 22 cartoons received unanimous 'yes' responses when asked whether or not the cartoon was funny (See Appendix B). Only one cartoon from the entire group received a unanimous 'no' response.

Following the evaluation and class discussion segment, the participants completed a final questionnaire in order to assess the applicability of the study (1 = lowest and 5 = highest). The results in Table 2 reflect that 95% of the informants responded with an evaluation of 4 or above that the methods utilized in the study had increased their ability to understanding humor.

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Table 2

V. Discussion

Despite the fact that the participants of the study were high-intermediate to advanced students, a sampling of the written and oral responses disclosed that the students lacked sufficient linguistic skills to respond appropriately to even the simplest question of the survey: Do you think the cartoon is funny? These
introductory comments illustrate the critical limitations of the students at the initial phase of the survey exercises. A sample of the comments included the following:

I’m funny not so much.  I try to feel funny.
That made me funny.  Caption and picture made me funny.
No proper reason to giggle.  I want to feel funny.

In responding to whether or not the cartoon was funny, six of the total 22 cartoons received unanimous ‘yes’ responses. Although there was no discernible connection between the ‘yes’ responses and the particular cartoon themes, four of the six represented cartoons that had been preselected because they were not culture-specific but contained universal themes (See Appendix C). This strong correlation suggests that themes which were either familiar or could be considered as universal seemed to be more readily understood and appreciated by participants of the study. These results further support the importance of teaching inference skills through the G.I. Process for future exposure to contextual humor so that students will be able to draw conclusions when faced with unfamiliar and diverse cultural background topics.

However, only one cartoon received a unanimous ‘no’ response. This cartoon showed a synchronized group of skaters dressed in Medieval uniforms with the caption "The Ice Crusades". This cartoon which had been chosen due to its intensive Western cultural content was clearly too culture specific. Moreover, interpretations of other cartoons which had been chosen for the same purpose, were judged as not being humorous or were also not understood. These responses support the assertion made by Chiaro who stated that "when a comic situation is too cultural specific it will not be seen as amusing outside the culture of origin" (10).

A portion of the questionnaire used in the study (See questions 3–5 in Appendix A) was specifically designed to raise awareness of cultural similarities and differences in order to further enhance the discovery process. One enlightened student replied to this section as follows:

Every culture has its hidden meanings. If someone wants to understand the culture, he has to know the cultural and social background of its events or
phenomena. So, even though I know the superficial meaning of the cartoon, it’s not funny for me.

Finally, the overwhelming response rate of 95% in assessing the applicability of the study serves as direct confirmation from the respondents themselves of the positive benefits of inclusion of humor in the EFL curriculum.

Most native speakers would not dispute that explanation kills the appreciation of humor. Prado considered the analysis of humor as "basically an attempt to find something essential in humor which can then be explained or described in neutral terms" (156). Interestingly enough, in all three classes, most explanations resulted in laughter, irregardless of whether the explanations were provided by students or the native speaker teacher. Hugh Foot concurred by stating that "there seems little danger that the intrinsic pleasure of humour will be destroyed by our serious attempts to comprehend and exploit it" (282). However, the researchers do not rule out the distinct possibility that this laughter and likely appreciation could be construed as "relief" after the laborious discovery task of comprehension.

The study indicates that the inclusion of humor in the EFL curriculum produced the following results:
1. The respondents utilized the G.I. Process to identify, evaluate, and interpret the print cartoons in order to determine if they were humorous.
2. The respondents increase their comprehension of humor by implementing inferencing skills in situations where the contextual, linguistic, or the "missing element" factors required further discovery.
3. The respondents utilized their own world-view and background knowledge to attain an increased awareness of other cultures in contrast to their own.
4. The informants responded favorably to the exercises utilized in the study as evidenced by the post-testing questionnaire.

In conclusion, the findings confirm Deneire’s assertion that “the necessity to perceive different strata at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, and semantic levels justifies the popular claim that the understanding of jokes in a foreign language reflects a fairly high level of proficiency” (291).
VI. Conclusion

We live in a global community where international borders have vanished and communication contact is just a modern way. As educators and EFL teachers, our responsibility is to prepare our students with skills that are commensurate with the demands and challenges for participation in this multicultural world where English may be the recognized lingua franca.

This study and the suggested activities have shown that integration of humor in the EFL curriculum is a vital link in meeting the cultural versatility needs of our students. In fact, learning to recognize and appreciate humor can provide a gratifying way to gain insight into the meaning and subtle nuances of language while simultaneously empowering students to take the initiative for their own discovery and learning. Basically, humor or more specifically, cartoons which reflect aspects of society, provides an opportunity to expand intercultural awareness by using a form of behavior that is common to all people.

As Genelle Morain said "students know that people in other cultures eat different foods, speak different languages, and get married, harried, and buried in different ways. But one of the hardest things for them to grasp is that people in other cultures laugh in the special way their cultures have taught them to laugh" (397).

Indeed, inclusion of humor as a pedagogical resource is not designed to prompt loud and sustained laughter in the EFL classroom. However, "getting the joke" enables the second language learner to not only understand the linguistic message but serves as a pathway to achieving enhanced and indispensable sociolinguistic skills. Attainment of these skills, either fully or partially, or realization of some steps toward awareness is definitely something to smile about.
Notes

1See Raskin ("Jokes" 37 and "Semantic" 134-47) for a full analysis of the following joke:

‘Is the doctor in?’ the patient asked in his bronchial whisper.

‘No,’ the doctor’s young and pretty wife whispered in reply. ‘Come right in.’

2For a more extensive review of humor theory, see Raskin ("Semantic") and Attardo.

3The researchers (one Korean native speaker and one English (U.S.) native speaker) evaluated and assigned the level of difficulty of the cartoons based on extensive reading of English print media, thirty years combined ESL/EFL teaching experience of undergraduates to post-graduate students from 27 countries, fluency in six languages, and residence experience and acquisition of three other cultures outside their native countries.
Works Cited


APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Do you think the cartoon is funny?  Yes // No

   If yes, please explain why you think the cartoon is funny.

   If no, please explain why you think the cartoon is not funny.

2. Do you understand the cartoon?  Yes // No

3. Please indicate if any of the cultural aspects represented in the cartoon are similar/different to the culture in your country.

4. What are the similarities?

5. What are the differences?
APPENDIX B

Cartoons which received unanimous 'yes' responses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cartoon Number</th>
<th>Main Cartoon Object</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number 3</td>
<td>gods</td>
<td>'dumb tourist'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 7</td>
<td>chef</td>
<td>'dieting'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 10</td>
<td>suicide</td>
<td>'meeting others'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 18</td>
<td>ducks</td>
<td>'going on a tropical vacation'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 19</td>
<td>giraffes</td>
<td>'location of missing child'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 22</td>
<td>doctor's fee</td>
<td>'money'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Cartoons containing Universal Themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cartoon Number</th>
<th>Main Cartoon Object</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'I know nothing'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Number 7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'dieting'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'marriage'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Number 10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'meeting others'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 11</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'fear of the dentist'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number 12</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'losing one's good looks'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Number 18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'going on a tropical vacation'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Number 22</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>'money'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Indicates unanimous 'yes' response
APPENDIX D

Responses tabulated according to Class:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Class 1:</th>
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<td>No</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 2:</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class 3:</th>
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<th>15</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>