Mizahı ve Mizahın Sınıftaki İşlevlerini Keşfetmek: Bir Türk Dil Sınıfı Örneği

Exploring Humour and Its Functions in the Classroom: A Sample of a Turkish Language Class

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to identify and analyse the functions of humour in naturally occurring interactions through Conversation Analysis (CA) and observation as the methodological framework. The data for this study were collected through audio recordings and regular observations of an adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) class, which was held for two months at a private language school. Observation has been used to complement the information gathered from the audio-recorded data. Sixteen teaching hours have been transcribed and studied to identify the patterns featuring the different functions of humour use, its extent and responses to it. The recorded interactions demonstrate that humour is not only a gratuitous practice, even though it is mostly spontaneous. The study reveals that humour is a common concept in language classrooms, where students initiate humour and the teacher expresses positive reactions. Teachers and learners co-construct and collaborate to achieve humour even if they violate the order of classroom talk and role expectations. Humour encourages students to use language more and practice without hesitation. To summarise, humour serves as an effective aid for facilitating access to L2 cultural knowledge resources embedded in humorous exchanges, building rapport among participants and making the teacher more approachable.

Keywords: Humour, EFL classroom, classroom interaction, conversation analysis.

ÖZ

Bu makale, doğal olarak oluşan etkileşimlerde mizahın işlevlerini Konuşma Analizi (KA) ve metodolojik çerçeve olarak gözlem yoluyla tanımlamayı ve analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın verileri, özel bir dil okulunda iki ay boyunca düzenli olarak yapılan yetişkinlere yönelik İngilizce yabancı dil dersinin ses kayıtları ve sınıfın gözlemlenmesi yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Ses verilerden toplanan bilgileri tamamlamak için gözlem kullanılmıştır. Mizah kullanımının farklı işlevlerini, kapsamını ve buna verilen tepkileri içeren kalıpları belirlemek için 16 ders saati yazıya geçirilmiş ve incelenmiştir. Kaydedilen etkileşimler, mizahın çoğunlukla spontane olsa da amaçsız bir uygulama olmadığını gösteriyor. Mizah, öğrencilerin mizahı başlattığı ve öğretmenin olumlu tepkiler verdiği dil sınıflarında yaygın bir kavramdır. Öğretmenler ve öğrenciler, sınıf konuşmasının ve rol beklentilerinin sırasını ihlal etseler bile mizahı başarmak için birlikte etkileşimi inşa eder ve iş birliği yaparlar. Mizah, öğrencileri dili daha fazla kullanmaya ve tereddüt etmeden pratik yapmaya teşvik eder. Özetlemek gerekirse, mizah, hedef dildeki kültürel bilgi kaynaklarına erişimi kolaylaştırmak, katılımcılar arasında ilişki kurmak ve öğretmeni daha ulaşılabilir kılmak için etkili bir araç olarak hizmet eder.

Daha ziyade mizah, etkileşimlerle bütünleştirilmiş ikinci dil kültürel bilgi kaynaklarına erişimi kolaylaştırmak, katılımcılar arasında uyum oluşturmak ve öğretmeni daha ulaşılabilir kılmak gibi pedagojik nedenlerle sıklıkla kullanılır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mizah, İngilizce dil sınıfı, sınıf etkileşimi, konuşma analizi.

INTRODUCTION

Humour is always considered an important component of a classroom, as its positive effects on learning are undeniable. These effects include capturing and maintaining student interest, fostering a calm and relaxing classroom atmosphere, and building strong bonds among class members. Shatz and LoSchiavo (2006) state that the enjoyable side of language learning should not be ignored, and it should not be seen as the side product of the lesson, since it helps the content delivery and promotes learning by making learning more effective with students' increased interest and attention. However, it is strictly advised that even if it can function as a 'valuable asset for capturing and maintaining students' attention during the lesson, it cannot be relied upon as the sole teaching method (Shatz & LoSchiavo, 2006).

In a language classroom, the positive effects of humour are often outweighed, as humour use can facilitate the learning of the target language. Humour can help the teacher remove all these barriers if students are demotivated, unconfident, shy, hesitant and stressed. Thus, learners benefit greatly if a language class creates a positive and friendly atmosphere. Teachers who use humour become more popular among students, and attention rates in their classrooms are always consistently high; language learners more eagerly join in the lessons that make them feel relaxed. Thus, humour serves as an attention-grabbing aid and humour serves learning as "attracting attention to the teacher and to what he is saying. It may then help to maintain that attention over a period of time" (Davies & Apter, 1980, p. 238). For that reason, a welcoming classroom is a must to make learning less stress-free, threatening or intimidating (Krishmanson, 2000). Creating an inviting atmosphere with activities like sharing funny stories and anecdotes extends students' learning and promotes longer retention. Casper (1999) claims that learning through humour helps keep information in long-term memory. Humour can alleviate all the negative feelings (e.g., anxiety, fear, abandonment, boredom) that students might have as a barrier to learning, and create the optimum atmosphere for students to reach their full learning potential (Walter, 1990). Abdullah and Akhter (2015) claim that "no learning is more beneficial than learning in an ideal environment" (p.18), where anxiety levels are at the lowest so that learning can be at the highest level, and students are not scared of stating their free opinions. Schmitz (2002) claims that skilful teachers employ humour to strengthen the bonds of sincerity and respect between students and teachers, allowing students to enjoy their learning process more.

Students' attitudes and beliefs are another significant issue. Humour about taboo topics such as sex, religion, and gender should be avoided. None of the students should feel excluded by the effect of the humour employed. Schmitz (2002) states that teachers should be good role models and have an inclusive attitude, such as using humour not to harm the sense of community in the class. Furthermore, Sullivan (1992) warns teachers to possess good classroom management skills, as valuable learning time can be wasted if the class is not handled effectively. Humour appropriacy should be considered by the teacher, who is responsible for evaluating and validating the appropriacy of the humour used in the classroom (Bell, 2009). If used appropriately, humour can serve as an effective teaching aid for the pedagogical aims of the lesson. If not, using humour can lead to counterproductive results such as hurting feelings, embarrassment, and low self-esteem. Thus, teachers should know their students well and be so gentle with the humour they employ in the class (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011).

Although humour has been recognised as a valuable resource in language education, research on its role in classroom interaction remains limited, particularly when it comes to understanding laughter and humour as general communicative phenomena. Most existing studies focus on the benefits of humour for motivation, classroom atmosphere, or teacher-student rapport, often neglecting its interactive and pragmatic functions in everyday classroom discourse. Furthermore, while Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) frameworks promote the use of authentic, engaging strategies—including humour—to encourage student participation, empirical evidence showing how humour actually functions in real-time classroom exchanges is relatively scarce. This gap is particularly noticeable in Turkish English as a Foreign Language (EFL settings. Although Türkiye has implemented significant reforms to align its English Language Teaching (ELT) policies with European standards(e.g. the introduction of the European Language Portfolio (ELP)), the practical application of communicative, student-centred methodologies still faces resistance (Kırkgöz, 2007, 2009; Ozsevik, 2010). In classrooms where the teacher is an authority, humour can serve as an effective tool to encourage interaction, reduce anxiety, and promote learner engagement. However, there is a notable shortage of studies based on naturally occurring classroom data that explore how Turkish EFL learners perceive and engage with humour in these contexts. This study aims to fill that gap by examining the functions of humour in classroom interaction, providing insight into how humour may contribute to more communicative and inclusive learning environments.

Considering the literature on humour studies, this study will explore humorous episodes in classroom interactions and their functions. The related literature discusses several issues, including the inadequate number of studies analysing classroom interaction, unreliable and unsolid methodology, and a primary focus on elementary school-aged children. This study will attempt to discuss these underresearched points by meticulously scrutinising humour in classroom interaction, its function, its frequency and its (co)construction by all class members in an EFL setting.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Humour Use in Classrooms

Besides being an invaluable source of entertainment, humour in the classroom is also an aid to teaching English, as evidenced by a growing body of research (Civikly, 1986). It can easily be observed that when a teacher strategically starts telling a joke or sharing something humorous, they can quickly catch the students' attention, allowing them to begin teaching the lesson content. The existing research suggests that students enjoy lessons that incorporate humour (Berk, 1996; Brown & Tomlin, 1996; Bryant et al., 1997; Pollio & Humphreys, 1996; Ziv, 1988). Humour is viewed as one of the positive attributes of a teacher, and teachers who use humour are considered more effective (Brown & Tomlin, 1996; Kelly & Kelly, 1982; Lowman, 1994). The positive and comfortable environment created through jokes serves as a learning and teaching facility in the L2 classroom. It breaks the day-to-day cycle of recurring lesson flow and aids in curing boredom (Gorham & Christopher, 1990; Loomax & Moosavi, 1998). It is recorded that this stress-free environment also positively affects student attendance rates (Devadoss & Foltz, 1996; Romer, 1993; White, 1992).

Another function of humour is allowing students to show their membership in the class community (Provine, 2000). This way, students feel like group members and can participate in group discussions without fear and anxiety (Pollio & Humphreys, 1996). This is particularly important in language classrooms where communication, participation and interaction are vital for learning the target language. As a pedagogical tool, humour also encourages students to learn, increasing their eagerness and aptitude for language learning (Dodge & Rossett, 1982). When humour is involved in the lesson, they memorise the information easily and retain it longer since

the content associated with a humorous episode stays in the mind relatively permanently. Hill (1988) states that learners generally remember the content better if it is presented with humour. In short, humour lessens pressure, reduces awkwardness, saves face and prevents boredom.

Besides its pedagogical benefits, psychological effects should also be the centre of attention. Students who attempt to learn a new language can feel hesitant and stressed in the classroom, where they must communicate in a language they are not yet proficient in. Affective conditions of the students are vital for learning (Kristmanson, 2000). In a positive atmosphere where humour is used, students can contribute more to the lesson, thereby practising the language more and learning more. However, as a double-edged sword, humour can work contrarily and destroy the class atmosphere if not used skilfully. Using humour effectively is a form of art, as personal, cultural, religious, and contextual factors significantly influence how the teacher and peers perceive it. Everyone in the class might have a unique taste and perception about what is humorous or not (Garner, 2003). While one person finds something humorous, the other can see it as ill-made or trite. Negative humour, such as commenting on students' ethnicity, gender, colour, or religion or passing negative and inappropriate jokes, can hurt students' feelings and negatively affect their motivation. Using humour without care and caution can be destructive to learner-teacher rapport, and the teacher can lose her/his credibility, prestige and popularity this way. Thus, if all the aforementioned factors are considered, for humour to be most effective in the class, contextual, cultural, and personal features should be taken into account.

2.2. Humour and Its Effect on Learning

Humour used in the classrooms has been a hot issue and has been studied by several scholars (Aylor & Opplinger, 2003; Frymier & Wanzer, 1999; Frymier & Weser, 2001; Gorham & Christophel, 1990; Sadowski & Gulgoz, 1994; Wanzer, 2002; Wanzer & Frymier, 1999; White, 2001). However, until the 20th century, teaching was regarded as a serious profession. Thus, humour use in class was not an option (Korobkin, 1988). While some language teachers disregard the use of humour in language classrooms, others argue that it can benefit students. Those who are against it claim that it does not address the teaching aims, puts classroom management at risk, and makes students perceive that teaching and learning are an unserious job. Those who support the use of humour in classrooms claim that it serves the teaching aims by alleviating the monotonous and repetitive learning periods. Claire (1984) also stresses that "the nature of the subject humour ensures enthusiastic student involvement in class conversations. No other subject generates such lively participation, covering so many different linguistic skills" (p.5). Bell (2009) highlights how humour serves the class work multidimensionally. It reduces the stress and anxiety students feel while learning a new language. Laughing is a mutual reaction, and in this way, the teacher gives up her/his authoritarian position and shares the right to speak. Humour can work well with any language teaching method or approach. In other words, humour should be harmonised with the subject matter. However, Watson and Emerson (1988) point out that humour spontaneity is crucial in eliciting the desired reaction (laughter). Thus, they state that

when humour is planned as part of the teaching strategy, a caring environment is established, there is an attitude of flexibility, and communication between student and teacher is that of freedom and openness. The tone allows for human error with freedom to explore alternatives in the learning situation. This reduces the authoritarian position of the teacher, allowing the teacher to be a facilitator of the learning process. Fear and anxiety, only natural in a new and unknown situation, becomes less of a threat, as a partnership between student and instructor develops (Watson & Emerson, 1988, p. 89).

The teacher is responsible for creating a positive environment that fosters ideal learning conditions. Medgyes (2002) supports the idea that learning should be both entertaining and instructional, and that humour can successfully achieve this aim. Hashem (1994) states that humour should help "relieve tension, facilitate students' understanding of materials or content,

and encourage students' participation. Besides, helping to create a more pleasant classroom atmosphere, play and humour make it easier for students to work cooperatively and learn from each other as well as from the teacher" (Hashem, 1994, p.16). Ziegler, Boardman and Thomas highlight the advantages of using humour: "The proper use of humour can promote flexibility, facilitate communication, provide alternative perspectives, and create a feeling of goodwill." (p. 346). Highet (1950) also notes that "the most obvious one is that it keeps the pupils alive and attentive because they are never quite sure what is coming next" (p. 59). By sharing and experiencing the events that occur in the classroom, the class fosters good relationships and promotes a positive classroom atmosphere (Hamilton, 1986). Thus, the teacher is the key to the classroom mood and its direction. To clarify, the ideal classroom environment should be one where all students have the right to speak freely and openly, without feeling threatened, and where a sense of community is promoted. Maurice (1988) claims that humour should not be seen as a side product in the learning environment; it "activates motivation and directs attention, but it can also be used in other events as well, such as "stimulating recall, eliciting performance and providing feedback" (p. 20). Although several studies prove its benefits, Derniere (1995) criticises teachers who do not include humour in their classroom practices. While the lesson is considered the core aim, and anything related to it should be taken seriously, the practices surrounding and between the serious lesson content are seen as tangential. In Waring's terms, humour is the "fluff" of classroom discourse (Waring, 2013, p. 192).

The classroom atmosphere is vital for learning a new language (Cornett, 1986; Fisher, 1997), and humour contributes significantly to it. A relaxed, positive attitude is created, allowing students to talk more, learn more, contribute more, feel less intimidated by mistakes, and have more fun. Dörnyei (2001) highlights three main advantages of using humour in class: its pedagogical value, its social function, and its ability to connect students to the target language and culture. As the first advantage, humour makes the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable and appealing and also lowers the student affective filter. Secondly, humour establishes a classroom culture, develops an identity, and makes one feel that they belong to the classroom community (Reddington, 2015). Finally, humour use in the class can grab students' attention to the target language item (Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005), allow them to experiment with language (Bushnell, 2009), and develop sociolinguistic competence (Bushnell, 2009). Casper (1999) states that students' retention chance increases if the lesson content is supported with humour. Humour has been proven to facilitate general comprehension and retention. Likewise, Kaplan and Pascoe (1977) stressed that students taught with humour, especially concept-related humour, are better at recalling tests. In brief, humour use should be considered an essential component of any learning environment (e.g. Holmes, 1980; Schmitz, 2002).

2.3. Classroom Interaction

Classified as an institutional interaction, classroom interaction has distinct and recognisable characteristics. Some interactional properties that come from the core goal and form the interaction can be listed and give us a better understanding of language classroom interaction (Seedhouse, 2004):

- Language is both the vehicle and object of instruction.

- There is a reflexive relationship between pedagogy and interaction; interactants constantly analyse this evolving relationship.

- The linguistic forms and patterns of interaction that the learners produce in the L2 are potentially subject to evaluation by the teacher in some way.

To sum up, the pedagogical focus decides on the sequence of interaction (Seedhouse, 2005) because "where language use and pedagogic purpose coincide, learning opportunities are facilitated" (Walsh, 2002, p. 5).

There are several differences between naturally occurring conversations and classroom talk. While naturally occurring talk is "permeable and uncertain" (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 28), classroom talk is more orderly. The teacher adopts the role of moderator and decides whose turn to speak in a quasi-conversational mode'" (Drew & Heritage, 1992, p. 28). Contrary to any social conversation, in classroom talk, "most utterances are completed, and most speakers seem to know their lines and to recognise their turn to speak" (Edwards & Furlong, 1978, p. 14). The teacher decides who is going to speak and when s/he is going to speak and finish speaking. Like an orchestra conductor, the teacher manages to engage the floor by making the most of the valuable classroom time with no gaps or overlaps.

The most striking difference between conversation and class talk is the distribution of talk. The teacher controls the order of the talk as s/he holds the right to speak the most, which supports the assumption of a particular exchange structure operating in the class. For that reason, the IRF (Initiation, Response, Feedback) cycle is recorded as the most salient interaction pattern in classroom interaction (Cazden, 1988). Only the teacher has the right to initiate the IRF exchange. As van Lier (2004, p. 153) states, "the pupil turn is sandwiched between the two teacher turns," highlighting the restricted turn-taking students are allowed to grab in classroom discourse. In other words, the teacher initiates with a question to which she already knows the answer (Nassaji & Wells, 1999; Stubbs, 1983). The next speaker, who will answer the question, is chosen by the teacher again. The student can typically give a short, incomplete answer. In the final move, the teacher confirms the answer or recasts it to make it more desirable by presenting it in a complete sentence.

The first two moves (I and R) go hand in hand and are relevant to each other mainly in the form of an adjacency pair; the final move often stands alone since the feedback is generally given very quickly and mostly in the form of an approving "ok" and a shift to the next part is made. Briefly, there are numerous interactional patterns beyond the common IRF patterns. The orderliness of the classroom is generally disrupted by a student's question, a student's joke, or a student who grabs the floor without being selected by the teacher. All of which ends with unexpected interruptive stretches of overlapping talk, which would be described as 'chaos' by many teachers (Stubbs, 1976, p. 151).

2.4. Humour in Classroom Interaction

This section provides an extensive review of studies focusing on humour in classroom interaction. The majority of the studies were conducted at the tertiary level (Çopur et al., 2021; Davila, 2019; Liang, 2015; Matsumoto et al., 2022; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011; Reddington & Waring, 2015; Tong & Tsung, 2020; Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2013). CA was often preferred as the most practical and beneficial methodology to examine naturally occurring classroom interaction data (Çopur et al., 2021; Liang, 2015; Matsumoto et al., 2022; Norrick & Klein, 2008; Petitjean & González-Martínez, 2015; Reddington & Waring, 2015; Roth1 et al., 2011; Tong &Tsung, 2020). Most of the studies explored humour's function and role in teaching (Dávila, 2019; Liang, 2015; Matsumoto et al., 2022; Petitjean & González-Martínez, 2015; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011; Roth1 et al., 2011; Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2013). Some studies have closely examined and investigated humour strategies (Tong & Tsung, 2020), while others have carefully explored whether humour distracts learners' attention from the lesson content (Norrick & Klein, 2008). Some studies focused primarily on the humour initiated by teachers and its benefits (Çopur et al., 2021). Several studies showed that shared history and culture are prerequisites for humour (Poveda, 2005; Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2013); it also builds rapport by improving social skills (Davila, 2019; Matsumoto et al., 2022; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011; Rothl et al., 2011).

Table 1

Recent Studies about Humour in Language Classroom

Study	Focus	Participants	Context	Method	Results
Poveda (2005)	Role of humour during classroom interaction	31 public primary school students	Spanish primary school context	Video recordings and field notes	The shared history of participants is a prerequisite for humour, it generally emerges naturally and so classroom discourse is unanticipated.
Norrick and Klein (2008)	Types of humorous disruptions	Elementary school learners	An American school in Germany	Audio-recorded classroom interaction data through line-by-line analysis	Humorous disruptions can function as an aid to express individual identity
Roth1, Ritchie, Hudson and Mergard (2011)	Interactional functions of laughter	Seventh grade learners	An Australian secondary school	Video recorded classroom interaction data through CA	Rapport between participants develop and redevelop through humour, laughter softens the serious tone of the classroom.
Pomerantz and Bell (2011)	humour as a particular communicative mode	Spanish conversation course students	American ESL tertiary context	Audio recordings, fieldnotes, and interview	Humour is seen as a pedagogical safe zone, humour gives feedback about learners' communicative competence.
Ziyaeemehr and Kumar (2013)	Functions of EFL instructors' humorous verbalizations	University ESL lecturers and students	Malaysian tertiary context	Audio-recordings through inductive analysis and classroom observations	Humour in L2 classrooms facilitates L2 linguistic and cultural knowledge.

Liang (2015)	humour and its interactional effects in peer interactions	four groups of adult English L2 students	Taiwanese tertiary context	Audio-recorded classroom interaction through CA	Humour is created through low linguistic abilities, learners orient each other to complete tasks sometimes in competition or collaboration.
Petitjean & González-Martínez (2015)	Functions of laughter and smiling	Lower and upper-secondary level students	Swiss secondary school context	Video-recorded French first-language lessons through CA	Students adapt their interactional competencies for managing trouble.
Reddington and Waring (2015)	How humour is done in naturally occurring interaction	Adult ESL classes at a community English program	American ESL context	Video-recorded classroom interaction data through CA	Moments of humour can create opportunities for language learning.
Dávila (2019)	Humour and playful talk in the translanguaging practices	ESL high school students	Adolescent multilingual African immigrant learners in America	Audio- and videotaped recordings with three semi-structured interviews	Humour helps negotiate marginalisation at and outside of school, and achieve group unity and raise learners' metalinguistic awareness.
Tong and Tsung (2020)	Humour strategies in L2 classroom	40 undergraduate students	Australian tertiary context	Naturally occurring classroom data through CA and student interviews	Humour challenge traditional norms about education. However, it motivates learners to use language more.
Çopur, Atar and Walsh (2021)	Humour initiated by teacher for repair	5 English teachers and 70 international learners	English tertiary context	Video-recorded classroom interaction data through CA	Teachers can use humour as an aid in dealing with repair.
Matsumoto, Lee and Kim (2022)	Embodied explanations elicit laughter	13 international students in the writing course	American ESL tertiary context	24 hours of video recordings and ethnographic notes through CA	Humour has positive effects on students' close attention to teacher explanations.

Meryem & Dounia, 2024	Teachers' and students' perceptions towards the use of humour in EFL classrooms	15 teachers and 129 third-year students	EFL tertiary context	a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative interviews	Humour fosters a healthy learning atmosphere if employed moderately.
Damanik et al., 2025	Humour in listening courses and to analyze its impact on motivation, engagement, and listening comprehension	56 English Literature students	EFL tertiary context	observations, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews,	more enjoyable and engaging listening activities. However, it challenges cultural sensitivity, linguistic complexity, and the lack of structured training.

Furthermore, participants construct their identities when they produce humour in the class (Norrick & Klein, 2008). If integrated into the lesson content, humour has advantages for students, such as creating space for language learning (Davila, 2019; Liang, 2015; Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2013) or developing metalinguistic awareness (Çopur et al., 2021; Tong & Tsung, 2020) since humour allows students to experiment with their linguistic knowledge, which generates motivation. Additionally, students utilise humour as a form of interactional competence for effective communication (Matsumoto et al., 2022; Pomerantz & Bell, 2011). For example, students benefit from humour (as a face-saving act) for managing trouble (Petitjean & González-Martínez, 2015). Moreover, teachers can use humour strategically to repair student mistakes (Çopur et al., 2021) without causing a face-threatening act.

Studies on the role of humour in language classrooms reveal functions and interactional importance. Early research, such as Poveda (2005) and Norrick and Klein (2008), found that humour often arises naturally in classroom discussions and can be used to express individual identity. Similarly, Roth et al. (2011) and Petitjean & González-Martínez (2015) highlighted the relational aspects of humour, showing how laughter helps build rapport, softens the seriousness of classroom interactions, and manages conversational difficulties. These studies, mainly conducted through conversation analysis (CA) of classroom recordings, stress the spontaneous and context-dependent nature of humorous episodes in language education settings.

Additionally, humour has been found to play a significant role in teaching and learning. Studies by Pomerantz and Bell (2011), Ziyaeemehr and Kumar (2013), and Reddington and Waring (2015) have demonstrated that humour provides a safe space for learners, enabling more effective feedback, encouraging open communication, and enhancing language and cultural understanding. This idea is further explored in Liang (2015), which found that humour initiated by peers can promote collaboration and task completion among learners, even when their language skills are limited. Other research, such as Dávila (2019) and Tong and Tsung (2020), has examined the wider social benefits of humour, highlighting how it enables marginalised learners to assert their identity, take control, and challenge traditional classroom norms, while also motivating language use.

Recent research has broadened this focus to teacher-led humour and learners' perceptions. Çopur et al. (2021) and Matsumoto et al. (2022) found that instructors often use humour to

manage classroom issues and maintain student attention. Meryem and Dounia (2024) provided evidence that both teachers and students value humour as a tool to create a healthy learning environment, especially when used in moderation. Lastly, Damanik et al. (2025) identified the role of humour in increasing engagement and motivation in listening courses, while also acknowledging challenges related to cultural sensitivity and teacher training. Together, these studies reveal humour as a dynamic and context-sensitive communicative resource that supports both relational and instructional goals in language classrooms.

2.5. Research Questions

The body of research on humour studies is abundant, and the benefits of humour in L2 classrooms have long been recognised. However, not much is understood about laughter as a general communicative phenomenon. Also, there is a dearth of evidence from studies based on data collected naturally in Turkish language classrooms. Despite the ongoing reforms in Turkish ELT policy, numerous classrooms continue to encounter challenges in transitioning from traditional and teacher-centred teaching (Kırkgöz, 2007, 2009; Littlewood, 1981; Spada, 2007). The resistance of learners to student-centred activities persists as a significant issue, often stemming from deeply rooted educational habits (Ozsevik, 2010). Although humour has been acknowledged as a beneficial tool for fostering communicative, student-centred learning environments (Forman, 2011), its role in Turkish EFL classrooms, has garnered insufficient empirical attention. This study aims to address this gap by examining how humour functions in classroom interactions and how Turkish university-level EFL learners perceive it. Considering the literature reviewed in the previous section, this study will address these crucial issues:

1. To what extent is humour used in the English language classroom?
2. If used,
   a. is humour teacher or learner-initiated in the English language classroom?
   b. is the created humour lesson-related or not?
   c. how is humour created in the English language classroom?
   d. what interactional functions does humour accomplish?
   e. how does the teacher react to learner-initiated humour?

This paper will investigate the frequency and nature of humour (T or L-initiated, lesson-(un)related), how humour occurs, how it is reacted to, and what interactional functions it accomplishes. Therefore, actual classroom data will be meticulously studied to describe classroom behaviours and their effects. Furthermore, the role of laughter as both a source and a product in sequentially analysed classroom interactions in EFL classrooms will also be given particular attention.

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

Nine university students participated in a private language school. Depending on their scores in the placement exam conducted at the beginning of the term, the students were placed in the B1 class. The class consists of nine students (six male, three female), aged between 19 and 23. The participants are all native Turkish speakers and learning English as a foreign language. Learners' spoken interactions were recorded while they completed various tasks individually, in pairs, or groups. The educational context in which the data was collected does not follow a set teaching methodology. Instead, lessons are designed to give equal emphasis to developing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. Although institutional guidelines encourage using the target language (L2) as much as possible, teachers and learners often switch between the learner's first language (L1) and L2. This bilingual approach is used to improve learner

understanding and provide opportunities for students to express themselves in both languages as needed.

3.2. Humour Episodes Analysis Criteria

Humour episodes are described as "discursive event or action sequence delimited from prior and subsequent discourse and internally bound together by a coherent topical trajectory and a common activity" (Korolija & Linell, 1996, p. 800). As mentioned in the literature review, humour should be assessed in its own unique environment and episode because it is highly contextualised. If decontextualised, it may not be amusing at all. In this study, laughter is the determining factor for an episode to be considered humorous since laughter signals the participant(s)'s reception and uptake of humour since participants can react to humour in different ways (e.g. confirming and playing along or unconfirming, ignoring or reprimanding). However, other studies (Chen, 2013; Giles & Oxford, 1970) also claim that laughter is often employed along with others. In brief, it can be accepted as the most common reaction to humour.

It is worth mentioning that only the humour discourses shared, heard, and reacted to by the majority of the classroom were included. The laughter in small student groups or pairs was discarded as it was impossible to gather details about who initiated it, how many students reacted, and how attentive they were, etc. Another point should be noted here: The episodes that receive a chuckle or a smile at some point when there is nothing humorous were also not counted. The data were examined meticulously to determine whether humour is the primary reason for laughter. Some were evaluated as one long episode as they were linked and counted as one humorous episode. This paper focuses on the deliberate use of humour in L2 classroom discourse in the Turkish EFL context. However, if humour is created accidentally but used strategically later on, it is included in the data. After considering all these criteria, a total of 281 humorous episodes were traced from moments of laughter in classroom talk.

3.3. CA as a Methodology

This study employs Conversation Analysis (CA) to investigate humour in language classrooms. CA focuses on a close, turn-by-turn examination of interaction, enabling patterns and meanings to emerge naturally from the data rather than imposing preconceived categories (Wei, 1998; Markee, 2000). Meaning is seen as context-dependent and constructed by participants during interaction, rather than being inherent in the utterances themselves. Unlike the Markedness Model, which relies on the analyst's external interpretation and often overlooks the interactional significance of code-switching, CA treats code-switching as an interactional resource. It serves as a contextualisation cue that conveys social meaning and helps participants navigate identity, relationships, and communicative intent (Wei, 2002). Our analytical framework is based on three key CA principles: relevance (findings must align with participants' perspectives), procedural consequentiality (meaning emerges through interaction), and a balance between social and conversational structure (examining how social factors, such as identity and stance, are negotiated in conversation). This study, therefore, explores how participants use code-switching and humour to respond to and influence each other's utterances, taking into account the sequential and contextual aspects of their contributions.

3.4. Validity and Reliability

This study ensures validity and reliability through the principles and practices of Conversation Analysis (CA), which prioritises rigorous, data-driven interpretation. Validity is achieved by basing all analytical claims on a detailed, sequential examination of naturally occurring interaction (Peräkylä, 1997). To avoid misinterpreting meaning in code-switching, no predetermined categories were applied; instead, patterns emerged directly from the participants' turn-by-turn contributions. The Jefferson transcription system (1984) was used to ensure consistency and standardisation (See Appendix for transcription notations). To enhance

transparency, transcripts include both the original language and English translations, allowing readers to evaluate interpretations and offer alternative readings. Repeated listening enabled a deeper familiarity with the data, developing a "professional vision" (Goodwin, 1994), while background information provided before each transcript further contextualised the interactions. This emic, participant-centred approach ensures that meaning is demonstrably relevant to the speakers themselves (Seedhouse, 2004), rather than being imposed externally.

Reliability was enhanced through various strategies, including collecting 16 hours of recorded classroom data over a two-month period. The repeated and collaborative review of transcripts allowed for comparison and refinement. Combining recordings, observations, and questionnaires through triangulation enabled cross-validation of findings (Mills, 2003; Richards, 2001). High-quality recording equipment ensured technical clarity, and participant anonymity was strictly maintained. The purposeful selection of relevant excerpts and contextual information helped ensure that findings were grounded in meaningful and representative interactional data. Although the study does not aim for broad generalisability, it provides reliable insights into the local dynamics of humour in classroom discourse.

3.5. Data, Recording, Transcription

As a part of a more extensive ethnographic study of classroom interaction, the data were collected at a private language school in southern Türkiye. The recordings comprise the lessons of a female teacher, in which she teaches various skills to help students improve their English as a foreign language. The transcription could assist in locating speech that provoked laughter in a larger conversational context. Distinguishable sounds (such as 'hehehe' and 'hahaha') supported with laughter variations (e.g. volume, pitch and duration) were included in the description of humour episodes. The data were transcribed, and humorous episodes were identified. CA lens allows the analyst to identify sequences of classroom talk and examine how speakers perform various roles through their talk, focusing on the process rather than the end product achieved by the social interaction (Sacks et al., 1974). Thus, CA can be a good asset for understanding and exploring humour (Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011). This study will examine humorous episodes in classroom interaction, how they are reacted to, why they are reacted to in a certain way, and what interpersonal functions they serve in these episodes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Although this study is qualitatively based on an interpretive approach, the quantitative information recorded is also worth mentioning. Sixteen hours (approximately 40-45 minutes each) of classroom talk have been transcribed (approximately 640 minutes excluding break times) and studied to identify humour episodes.

Table 2

Frequency of Humour

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Frequency of Humour	34	14	29	16	13	20	18	7	24	18	11	5	17	31	13	11	281

Table 2 shows that 281 humorous episodes were identified, which can be interpreted as class participants bursting into laughter every three minutes on average. This proves a high frequency of intended conversational humour in the classroom (RQ1).

Table 3

Frequency of Humour Initiators

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Teacher-initiated	14	4	8	8	6	6	9	4	14	6	3	2	12	9	3	8	116
Student-initiated	20	10	21	8	7	14	9	3	10	12	8	3	5	22	10	3	165
Total	34	14	29	16	13	20	18	7	24	18	11	5	17	31	13	11	281

Table 3 reveals that 41.3% of humour episodes were started by the teacher herself (116 instances), and 58.7% were started by the students (165 instances). Thus, it can be interpreted that all speakers co-construct classroom talk to create humour. It should be noted that the contributions of teachers and students varied primarily depending on the lesson content (RQ 2a).

For example, while as many as 34 (Lesson 1), 31 (Lesson 14) or 29 (humourLesson 3) humorous episodes were identified in some class sessions, very little humour was recorded in another class (5 episodes in Lesson 12 and 7 in Lesson 8), which was worth investigation. When the data were analysed in more detail to understand what triggered these lessons, in which more and fewer humour episodes were observed, it was found to be closely related to the lesson content taught and the teaching method used. When the lesson is dominated by receptive activities, such as reading texts or listening to dialogue and answering comprehension questions, students work alone, and minimal interaction among students is expected. When they engage in oral or written productive activities, such as pair or group discussions, writing a short story, or making a presentation, students can interact multidirectionally (with other students and the teacher). The data reveal that the teacher does not adopt a strict and authoritarian mode of lesson presentation. Instead, s/he benefits from humour in the instructional format as a handy tool for pedagogy. Another reason students are more interactive and humorous is that the lesson topics can be interesting, such as technology and shopping (e.g., technology in Lesson 1, shopping in Lesson 3).

Table 4

Frequency of Humour-relatedness

Lesson	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Total
Lesson-related	27	9	28	14	10	15	17	4	21	11	2	4	14	30	9	4	219
Lesson-unrelated	7	5	1	2	3	5	1	3	3	7	9	1	3	1	4	7	62
Total	34	14	29	16	13	20	18	7	24	18	11	5	17	31	13	11	281

Table 4 illustrates that among 281 episodes, the majority of them were lesson-related (78%, 219 instances) and only 22% were lesson-unrelated (62 instances). The mean frequency per forty-five-minute class time was 2.56, which means that, on average, participants attempted lesson-related humour about every fifteen minutes (RQ 2b).

The findings provide insights that teachers' and students' positive attitudes towards creating humour in the classroom construct an untraditional classroom atmosphere ubiquitous with humour, laughter, and fun. In such a learner-centred atmosphere, turn allocation is more evenly distributed, and students are encouraged to initiate or engage in the humorous discourse of their own free will. How teacher/student-initiated, teacher-(un)confirmed humour is produced and how it occurs will be analysed as follows (RQ 2c).

Sample Extracts

A detailed analysis of the selected extracts is provided here.

Extract 1 (Lesson 5) Student-initiated T-unconfirmed (uncoordinating)

1   "T: it's the money currency used in Japan

2   L1: umm *Japonca* [tr: Japanese]

3   T: so it's ↑ Japanese yen yen huh uh

4   L2: *yen* [*bildiğin yen* [tr: that's yes you know yen]

5   LL: [yen

6   L2: *Japon yeni* [tr: Japanese yen]

7   L8: *yenmekte var yenilmekte var* [tr: you can win or lose] (strategically ignored S-initiated humour episode)

8   T: huh uh Japanese yen good ok part ↑two listen to patsy"

This extract is taken from a lesson that aims to teach shopping vocabulary. In the unit, they are covering various currencies such as the dollar, euro, lira, cent, and pound, and they struggle to find one in the picture. The teacher scaffolds, but students cannot uptake it as yen functions as a false friend for Turkish learners, meaning 'win'. L2 acts as a class clown and has the reputation of engaging the floor aimlessly most of the time. L2 jokes around "yen" by using the homonym and seeking attention. S/he protests the learning process at the personal risk of taking reprisal from the teacher. The speaker seeks an audience and gets some giggles from the students sitting nearby, recorded in the data. As the student has a sense of humour as one of his character traits, the teacher decides not to play along with linguistic and paralinguistic cues, such as summarising 'good' and 'ok,' and highlights a shift to a listening activity in the book by stressing 'two'. L2's joke is considered an interruption and ignored strategically. It can be because L2 is recorded as an intrusive student who tries to make fun of anything or because the teacher does not prefer the students to get out of the task.

In particular, some students who are daring or easily bored can continuously distract from the lesson flow and disrupt the regular IRF interaction design of the classroom (McHoul, 1978; Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975). When the class's attention is directed to improper and unplanned exchanges between them, the teacher can risk losing control of the classroom.

Extract 2 (Lesson 4) S-initiated, T-confirmed

1   "L1: *burda biri vardı böyle* you are familiar *dedi* [*bana*

     [tr: there was somebody here and he said to me 'you are familiar']

2   L4:   [neydii?[tr:what was it?]

3   T: ummm

4   L1: *huh ben yok dedim çünkü onun ailesinden değilim diye*

     anladım[tr:I said no because I thought that I was not (a member)of his/her family]

5   L2: family ((laughter))"

In Extract 2, the word 'familiar' is being used in the text as the target vocabulary, and L1 remembers a personal experience about this word and grabs the floor, takes a turn and shares it

with the class. The student makes his turn more interesting by quoting the original production and language. Myers-Scotton (1993) accepts quoting as a ubiquitous bilingual behaviour employed to achieve an aesthetic effect. L2 students, like bilinguals, can use all their multimodal repertoire (e.g. mimicry, voice, mocking someone's talking) and different languages to make their speech richer. In this way, speakers use any aids from their personal multimodal repertoire in their communicative performance. Making their discourse "polyphonic" makes their speech more operative (Lüdi & Py, 1986, p. 158). Alfonzetti (1998) claims that speakers "depersonalise" themselves by reporting for the content value (p. 204).

In line 4, L1 completes the story by explaining the misunderstanding. In line 5, L2 initiates humour by repeating 'family' in the target language, which leads to laughter at the story, including the teacher. Students' "off-task" performance deviates from the teacher's lesson plan (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011). Students can consciously use humour to alleviate or lessen such face-threatening exchanges (Poveda, 2010; van Dam, 2002). Here, the teacher does not prefer to dismiss the student but instead coordinates with him. In this way, the teacher validates L1's taking over the floor, shares the story and sees no risk of confirming the humour initiated by a student in this episode as it serves the pedagogical purpose of the lesson.

Extract 3 (Lesson 10) Teacher-initiated

1   "L5: humm I can't live without *mp üç player mi dicem?* [tr: shall I say mp3

        player?]

2   T: mp three is it this? ((T displays an MP3 player)) (laughter)

3   L5: *ağız alışkanlığı* [mp three player [tr: habitual experience mp3 player]

4   T: [mp three player"

This excerpt is extracted from a speaking activity focusing on students' priorities in life, so they are given the prompt "I can't live without..." and start a conversation. The teacher nominates L5 but is not ready to talk yet, so the learner starts the talk with a discourse marker 'humm', marking the student's need for more time for speaking. Then, s/he attempts to produce a sentence with the given prompt. However, as the student is unsure of the accuracy of their sentence, they nominate the teacher to confirm if the sentence is correct. In line 2, the teacher focuses on a common mistake that language learners make due to habitual experience, rather than the structure the lesson is aiming at. The teacher takes advantage of correcting a common mistake by displaying and vocalising the word. It is clear from the episode that the students produce the number unconsciously in their mother tongue as they use "mp *üç* player" in their social lives. Sert (2005) states that learners can shift between languages as an "automatic and unconscious behaviour" (p. 4). The teacher becomes aware that learners must recycle the pronunciation of "mp3 player". The episode ends with L5's jocular completion of "*ağız alışkanlığı*" (habitual act) and the teachers' repetition of the problematic expression. All the members, including the teacher, react with laughter; even if the teacher could ignore this mistake, she prefers to correct it by restating it and expects L5 to uptake the correction. All members of the class realise the problem, and it results in laughter.

Extract 4 (Lesson 4) Naturally-initiated

1   "T: Why? So when you do your homework, that's how you get dut dudut ((T shows

        Ss her detailed feedback))

2   L1: ohh

3   T: I write loads of notes for you so?

4 →   L1: *hepsini İngilizce mi yazdınız?* ((laughter)) [tr: did you write them all in

       English?]

5   T: are you asking?"

When the teacher starts the lesson, she returns the checked student writing assignments and shows the feedback s/he has given. In line 2, L1 shows his surprise after seeing the long feedback given by using the 'oh' discourse marker. In line 3, the teacher confirms that s/he gives detailed feedback and ends her/his turn with a conclusive 'so'. L1 takes a turn and continues to express her/his bewilderment, and L1's shock creates humour naturally. This shock can be due to the time the teacher spends on feedback or the time it will take to read and understand the students' side.

As an ineluctable fact in nearly all jocular utterances, the teacher attempts to turn extraneous talk into enjoyable moments for all classroom community members by adopting the role of entertainer, in addition to their teaching role (RQ 2e). Unless it interrupts the lesson totally and irreversibly, the teacher sees humour as an opportunity for a creativity-stimulating, energy-boosting, rapport-building and boredom-killer tool (RQ 2d). Briefly, the teacher turns disruptions into contributions. To sum up, this section has elucidated how learners contributed to the lesson by constructing humour in their interaction. Humour allows them to test newly learned vocabulary or expressions through trial and error, experiment with the prescribed rules, see the language in use, construct their multicultural identities and negotiate meaning for their communicative purposes.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to investigate the frequency and nature of humour in naturally occurring interactional data from language classrooms. As seen from the data, humour is a ubiquitous tool used in the lessons; thus, it deserves more attention. Teachers 'reactions can change depending on humour appropriateness, timing, initiator and lesson-relatedness. The teacher's responses to the humour set the scene for constructing a positive atmosphere Meryem & Dounia, 2024. The teacher may affiliate with and play off the humour initiator, benefiting from it about the lesson's pedagogical focus, such as providing repair (Çopur et al., 2021) or managing trouble (Petitjean & Gonzalez-Martinez, 2015). Alternatively, the teacher may disaffiliate and ignore (as is in Extract 1) or reprimand the initiator(s). Alternatively, some disruptions can be so funny that the teacher can laugh and then reset the scene. There can be moments when the teacher strategically ignores a student's humorous attempt, and it goes unremarked, so some students can only laugh sotto voce in the form of a subtle communication. Teachers have control of the classroom and also the right to confirm which jokes will be affiliated and get positive responses from the teacher (RQ 2e).

The teaching style the teacher adopted in this class is open to the inclusion of humour. Thus, any student can self-select and take a turn contributing to the class by commenting, answering, or sharing a joke. Turn-taking is symmetrical as the distribution of talk is almost equal and lateral, and students can easily self-select and take a turn without causing any communication breakdown (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011). The teacher does not solely impose control over the speakership; they undertake this responsibility collaboratively, allowing students to construct their identities (Norrick & Klein, 2008). The data show that humour often emerges naturally from student contributions; thus, instances are not designed by teachers or students but spontaneous, like real-life interactions (Poveda, 2005) (RQ 2c). This also shows that students actively listen and react when not speaking. Most humour episodes are created with no hesitation markers by various students, as they do not allocate time for producing humour.

Humour helps teachers quickly capture students' fleeting attention (Matsumoto et al., 2022). The data reveal that students listen with their rapt attention. Also, participants are well aware of the rules of classroom interaction. Their turns rarely overlap, or simultaneous talks do not often occur, so they know one person at a time, even if they self-select most of the time. Students grab, hold, and leave the floor smoothly to the next speaker; they do not engage with it without a purpose. Turn transitions are well-designed and efficient. Students are conscious of the turn-taking system, so they can masterfully plan potential completion points, take a quick interruption-proof turn and finally get a word in. Their competition for grabbing the floor shows their eagerness to gain the floor. However, they do not shout out or interrupt each other's talk. The teacher also confirms this collaborative speech style, as long as their contribution, in the form of humour, is not offensive, constant, or untimely.

It can be suggested that humour should not be considered mere fluff in classroom interaction, but rather a valuable tool for creating propitious circumstances. This is because it adds energy and helps build rapport. The teacher should consider humour as a pedagogical tool, and their use of humour should be encouraged and praised. In this way, they can make their classroom more enjoyable, participatory, and engaging (Domanik et al., 2025). As seen in this study, it does not require any preparation on the teachers' side since most humour episodes emerge naturally and unintentionally. Instead of being so authoritarian in the class, considering humour attempts as disturbances, teachers can take advantage of these emerging opportunities. While students are mentally alert, an effective teacher can capitalise on this opportunity to review previously learned material, correct mistakes, reinforce key points, and introduce new concepts. Therefore, the importance of humour in second/foreign language acquisition should be remembered by language instructors, who should think about strategically using humour in their lessons (Domanik et al., 2025). With such an attitude, the instructor might be able to welcome light-hearted and humorous conversations, creating a classroom culture rich in laughter. For that reason, pre- and in-service teachers should be given training on strategies to mitigate the affective factors, and humour can be introduced as an effective strategy. Given that the traditional teacher image still predominates in Turkish classrooms even though, as recent curricula mention, the intended outcome is actually the exact opposite, Turkish EFL teachers should consider this as well.

It is noted that the teaching style in Turkish language classrooms is traditional and teacher-centred (Ozturk, 2011). This study suggests that humour enables teachers to establish a less authoritarian teaching approach, create an affirming and relaxing environment, and reduce affective filters among learners. It also motivates students to participate in the class and take turns (Tong & Tsung, 2020; Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2014). This type of teacher role often produces a rigid classroom atmosphere, in which students adopt a more passive role and teacher-learner interaction is limited, resulting in limited rapport between the parties and low motivation and participation in the lesson content (Rothl et al., 2011). Humour serves as an aid for teachers to build rapport with students by creating a more student-friendly atmosphere (Rothl et al., 2011; Ustunoglu, 2007), which positively affects the learning process. As students engage with the language, their metalinguistic awareness increases (Davila, 2019), and they test whether what they have learned is correct or incorrect (Reddington & Waring, 2015). Mental processing with language through humour can transfer it into long-term memory (Bell, 2009). Parallel to previous findings in the literature, humour increases students' motivation to speak more in class (Tong & Tsung, 2020) (RQ 2d).

To summarise, considering the existing literature, the aims of the current study and the results revealed in the previous section, the research questions are attempted to be answered. First, humour was undeniably a ubiquitous concept in this Turkish EFL classroom, which can be easily observed from the number of humorous episodes (Table 2) and the jovial classroom atmosphere. Second, humorous episodes are not only constructed by the teacher; the students contribute considerably to the enjoyable classroom environment by initiating humour as frequently as the teacher does (Table 3) (RQ 2a). The teacher's use of humour and her positive reaction to humour

initiated by students heartened students to start or continue the pre-initiated humour with no pressure (See the extracts). All classroom members have the right to use humour, so they all co-constructed classroom talk to create humour (RQ 2e). Third, most of the humour created in the class serves the lesson content since most are related to the lesson aim (about 80%) (RQ 2b). Fourth, teachers and learners co-constructed and collaboratively achieved humour by violating the sequential order of classroom talk and role expectations (RQ 2c). Fifth, the humour encouraged students to use language more and practice it without hesitation (RQ 2d). Finally, the data showed that the teacher often acknowledged the humour and coordinated. However, there were instances where humour did not serve the pedagogical aims of the lesson studied, so the teacher strategically chose to ignore it. Thus, it is evident from the interactional classroom data that the lesson aim and flow are always prioritised, and thus, humour validation was determined by the teacher accordingly.

CONCLUSION

Teachers use humour in the classroom for various reasons, including engaging students, creating a welcoming environment, and building relationships between them. This study provides a more detailed understanding of laughter as a form of communication from multiple perspectives. It extensively examines the role of laughter in classroom interactions and how human interaction is coordinated. We also argue that coordinating human interaction is closely tied to laughter, although laughter may not be the only factor at play. By combining quantitative and qualitative data, we gained valuable insights into students' perceptions of the classroom, teaching methods, teacher-student interactions, and language learning. However, this study has its limitations. The data in this study comes from a single classroom, and different humour patterns may exist in different classroom settings. Additionally, collecting video-recorded data could have provided more information about multimodal laughter features, in addition to the audio-recorded data.

This research presents several practical recommendations for incorporating humour into language teaching, especially within the Turkish educational framework. One key recommendation is the need to cultivate positive relationships between teachers and students. In classrooms where rigid, teacher-centred methods prevail, student interaction often suffers, which can lead to low motivation and limited engagement (Bell, 2009; Kocaoluk & Kocaoluk, 2001; Ustunoglu, 2007). Humour, however, can act as an effective means to ease tension and create a more interactive and supportive learning atmosphere. To harness this potential, both future and current language teachers must be educated on the emotional aspects of language learning, including how to use humour intentionally to enhance communication, motivation, and classroom rapport. For this reason, teacher education programmes should incorporate elements on using humour in language teaching. Hands-on workshops and courses can provide teachers with specific techniques suited to their students' interests and needs. A learner-centred approach, guided by student profiles, can help teachers pinpoint suitable moments for humour and use it effectively as a teaching tool. This approach would be particularly beneficial in Turkish EFL classrooms, but it also has value in similar educational settings worldwide.

Although the study offers valuable insights, its findings are limited to a specific group of medical students, which hinders broader generalisation. Future research could build on these findings by involving students from various academic disciplines, such as engineering, tourism, or law. Long-term studies examining how teacher humour changes over time or affects students' emotions and learning would also be helpful. Furthermore, comparative studies in different regional and sociocultural contexts across Türkiye (urban, suburban, rural) could enhance our understanding of how humour is received and its effectiveness. Lastly, empirical research on humour training programmes for teachers could evaluate the feasibility and impact of such interventions on classroom practice.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Mizah her zaman sınıfın önemli bir bileşeni olarak kabul edilir, çünkü mizahın öğrencilerin ilgisini çekmek ve tutmak, rahatlatıcı bir sınıf atmosferi yaratmak, sınıf üyeleri arasında bağ kurmak gibi öğrenme üzerindeki olumlu etkileri yadsınamaz. Shatz ve LoSchiavo (2006), dil öğreniminin eğlenceli yanının göz ardı edilmemesi ve mizahın dersin yan ürünü olarak görülmemesi gerektiğini, çünkü öğrencilerin artan ilgisiyle mizahın öğrenmeyi daha etkili hale getirerek içeriğin anlaşılmasına yardımcı olduğunu ve öğrenmeyi teşvik ettiğini belirtmektedir. Bununla birlikte, öğrencilerin dikkatini derse çekmek ve ders esnasında bu ilgiyi sürdürmek için kullanılan iyi bir araç olarak görülse bile, mizaha tek öğretim yöntemi olarak güvenilmemesi tavsiye edilir (Shatz & LoSchiavo, 2006).

Bir dil sınıfında, mizah kullanımı hedef dilin öğrenilmesini kolaylaştırabileceğinden, mizahın olumlu etkileri fazladır. Öğrenciler motivasyonsuz, özgüvensiz, utangaç, tereddütlü ve stresliyse mizah, öğretmenin tüm bu engelleri kaldırmasına yardımcı olabilir. Dolayısıyla, bir dil sınıfı olumlu ve samimi bir atmosfer yaratırsa öğrenciler bundan çok faydalanır. Mizahı kullanan öğretmenler öğrenciler arasında daha popüler olur ve sınıflarındaki dikkat oranları her zaman yüksektir, dil öğrenenler kendilerini rahat hissettiren derslere daha istekli katılırlar. Böylece mizah, dikkat çekici bir yardımcı olarak hizmet eder ve mizah, "dikkati öğretmene ve söylediklerine çekmek" olarak öğrenmeye hizmet eder. Bu daha sonra öğrenmeye yardımcı olabilir. Daha sonra bu dikkatin belirli bir süre boyunca sürdürülmesine de yardımcı olabilir" (Davies & Apter, 1980, s. 238). Bu nedenle, öğrenmeyi daha az stressiz, tehditkar veya korkutucu hale getirmek için sıcak bir sınıf ortamı şarttır (Krishmanson, 2000). Komik hikayeler ve anekdotlar paylaşmak gibi etkinliklerle davetkar bir atmosfer yaratmak, öğrencilerin öğrenmesini arttırır ve öğrenilenlerin daha uzun süre akılda kalmasını sağlar. Casper (1999) mizah yoluyla öğrenmenin bilginin uzun süreli hafızada tutulmasına yardımcı olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Mizah, öğrencilerin öğrenmeye engel olabilecek tüm olumsuz duygularını (örneğin kaygı, korku, terk edilme, can sıkıntısı) azaltır ve öğrencilerin tam öğrenme potansiyellerini gerçekleştirmeleri için en uygun atmosferi yaratır (Walter, 1990). Abdullah ve Akhter (2015), "hiçbir öğrenmenin, öğrenmenin en üst düzeyde gerçekleşebilmesi için kaygı düzeylerinin en düşük olduğu ve öğrencilerin özgür fikirlerini belirtmekten korkmadıkları ideal bir ortamda öğrenmekten daha faydalı olmadığını" (s.18) iddia eder. Schmitz (2002), becerikli öğretmenlerin, öğrenciler ve öğretmenler arasındaki samimiyet ve saygı bağlarını güçlendirmek için mizahı kullandıklarını ve bu sayede öğrencilerin öğrenme süreçlerinden daha fazla keyif alabildiklerini iddia etmektedir.

Öğrencilerin tutumları ve inançları burada değinilmesi gereken bir diğer önemli konudur. Bazı öğrenciler için öğretim ciddiye alınmalıdır çünkü öğrenme kolay değildir. Bu nedenle, cinsiyet, din ve toplumsal cinsiyet gibi tabu konular hakkında mizah yapmaktan kaçınılmalıdır (Morrison, 2008; Wagner & Eduardo, 2011). Hiçbir öğrenci, kullanılan mizahın etkisiyle kendini dışlanmış hissetmemelidir. Sınıfta kullanılan mizahın uygunluğu öğretmen tarafından kontrol edilir (Bell, 2009). Uygun şekilde kullanılırsa mizah, dersin pedagojik amaçları için etkili bir öğretim yardımcısı olarak hizmet edebilir. Aksi takdirde, mizah kullanımı duyguların incinmesi, utanç ve düşük öz saygı gibi ters etki yaratan sonuçlara yol açabilir. Bu nedenle, öğretmenler

öğrencilerini iyi tanımalı ve sınıfta kullandıkları mizah konusunda çok dikkatli olmalıdır (Pomerantz & Bell, 2011).

Metot

Bu çalışma, mizahın sıklığını ve doğasını (öğretmen veya öğrenci tarafından başlatılan, dersle ilgili olan/olmayan), mizahın o an nasıl ortaya çıktığını, nasıl tepki aldığını (öğretmen veya öğrenciden) ve hangi etkileşimsel işlevleri yerine getirdiğini araştıracaktır. Bu nedenle, sınıf içi davranışları ve bunların etkilerini tanımlamak için gerçek sınıf verileri titizlikle incelenecektir. Ayrıca, İngilizcenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği sınıflarda arka arkaya analiz edilen sınıf etkileşimlerinde kahkahanın nasıl hem bir kaynak hem de bir ürün olabileceğine de özellikle dikkat çekilecektir.

Veriler, Türkiye'nin güneyindeki bir dil okulunda iki ay boyunca toplanmıştır. Ses kaydına alınan veriler, Jefferson'ın (1984) konuşma analizinde (KA) kullanılan Jeffersonian Conversation analysis kurallarına göre yazıya dökülmüştür. Öğretmenlerin ve öğrencilerin hepsinin anadili Türkçe'dir. Kayıtlar, bir kadın öğretmenin, öğrencilerin yabancı dil olarak İngilizcelerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olmak için farklı beceriler öğrettiği derslerden oluşmaktadır. Transkripsiyon, daha geniş bir konuşma bağlamında kahkahaya neden olan konuşmanın yerini bulmaya yardımcı olabilir. Ayırt edilebilir sesler ('hehehe' ve 'hahaha' gibi) kahkaha varyasyonları (örneğin ses seviyesi, perde ve süre) ile desteklenerek mizah bölümlerinin saptamasında kullanılmıştır. KA merceği, analistin sınıf içi konuşma dizilerini tanımlamasına ve konuşmacıların konuşmaları aracılığıyla çeşitli rolleri nasıl yerine getirdiklerini incelemesine olanak tanır (Sacks vd., 1974). Dolayısıyla, KA mizahı anlamak ve keşfetmek için iyi bir araç olabilir (Wagner & Urios-Aparisi, 2011). Bu çalışma, sınıf etkileşimindeki mizahi bölümleri, bu mizaha nasıl tepki verildiğini, neden belirli bir şekilde tepki verildiğini ve bu bölümlerin hangi işleve hizmet ettiklerini inceleyecektir.

Sonuçlar ve Tartışma

Bu çalışma, dil sınıflarında doğal olarak ortaya çıkan etkileşimsel verilerde mizahın sıklığını ve doğasını incelemeye çalışmıştır. Verilerden de görülebileceği gibi, mizah her derslerde kullanılan bir araçtır, bu nedenle de ilgiyi hak etmektedir. Öğretmenlerin tepkileri mizahın uygunluğuna, zamanlamasına, başlatıcısına ve dersle ilgili olmasına bağlı olarak değişebilir. Öğretmenin mizaha verdiği tepkiler, olumlu bir atmosfer oluşturmak için sahneyi belirler. Öğretmen, mizah başlatıcısına bağlanabilir ve onunla oynayabilir ve onarım sağlamak (Çopur vd., 2021) veya sorunu yönetmek (Petitjean & Gonzalez-Martinez, 2015) gibi dersin pedagojik odağı için mizahtan yararlanabilir. Alternatif olarak, öğretmen uyumlanmayabilir ve görmezden gelebilir (ilk alıntıda olduğu gibi) veya azarlamak gibi tepki gösterebilir. Ya da bazı aksaklıklar çok komik olabilir ve öğretmen ve öğrenciler hep birlikte kahkahaya boğulabilir ve ardından tekrar sınıfı toparlayabilir. Öğretmenin bir öğrencinin mizah girişimini stratejik olarak görmezden geldiği ve dikkat çekmediği anlar olabilir, bu nedenle bazen öğrenciler sessizce gülebilir. Öğretmenler sınıfın kontrolüne ve aynı zamanda hangi şakaların onaylayıp onaylamayacağına karar verme hakkına sahiptir.

Öğretmenin bu sınıfta benimsediği öğretim tarzına mizahı dahil ettiği açıktır, bu nedenle herhangi bir öğrenci kendini seçebilir, yorum yaparak, cevap vererek ve şaka yaparak sınıfa katkıda bulunmak için söz alabilir. Konuşma dağılımı neredeyse eşit olduğu için sıra alma simetriktir. Mizah, öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin yetersiz dikkatini çok hızlı bir şekilde çekmesine yardımcı olur (Matsumoto vd., 2022). Veriler, öğrencilerin pür dikkat dinlediklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, katılımcılar sınıf içi etkileşim kurallarının da farkındadır. Sıraları nadiren çakışır veya eş zamanlı konuşmalar sıklıkla gerçekleşmez, bu nedenle çoğu zaman kendi kendilerini seçseler bile her seferinde bir kişi konuşması gerektiğini bilirler ve bu kurala uyarlar. Öğrenciler sözü kapar, tutar ve bir sonraki konuşmacıya sorunsuzca bırakır, amaçsızca gündemi meşgul etmezler. Sıra geçişleri iyi tasarlanmış ve etkilidir. Öğrenciler sıra alma sisteminin

bilincindedir, böylece potansiyel tamamlama noktalarını ustalıkla planlayabilir, kesintiye uğramadan hızlı bir dönüş yapabilir ve sonunda söz alabilirler. Söz almak için gösterdikleri rekabet, söz almak için istekli olduklarını gösterir. Ancak birbirlerinin konuşmalarını bağırarak kesmezler. Bu işbirlikçi konuşma tarzı, mizah biçimindeki katkıları saldırgan, sürekli veya zamansız olmadığı sürece öğretmen tarafından da onaylanır.

Mizahın sınıf içi etkileşimin bir parçası olarak görülmesi, enerji kattığı ve öğretmen öğrenci arasında yakınlık kurmaya yardımcı olduğu için elverişli koşullar oluşturduğu için sınıf içi etkileşime dahil edilmesi önerilebilir. Öğretmen mizahı pedagojik bir araç olarak görmeli ve mizah kullanımı teşvik edilmelidir. Bu şekilde, sınıflarını daha eğlenceli, öğrencilerini daha katılımcı ve daha dikkatli hale getirebilirler. Bu çalışmada da görüldüğü gibi, çoğu mizah olayı doğal olarak ve plansızca ortaya çıktığı için öğretmenler açısından herhangi bir hazırlık gerektirmez. Öğretmenler sınıfta çok otoriter davranıp mizah girişimlerini rahatsızlık olarak değerlendirmek yerine, ortaya çıkan bu fırsatlardan faydalanabilirler. Öğrenciler zihinsel olarak tetikteyken, etkili bir öğretmen bunu bir avantaj olarak değerlendirebilir ve daha önce öğrenilen öğeleri onarabilir, bir hatayı düzeltebilir, bir noktayı gözden geçirebilir ve yeni bir öğe öğretebilir. Bu nedenle, mizahın ikinci/yabancı dil edinimindeki önemi, derslerinde mizahı stratejik olarak kullanmayı düşünmesi gereken dil eğitmenleri tarafından hatırlanmalıdır. Böyle bir tutumla eğitmen, neşeli ve esprili konuşmaları hoş karşılayabilir ve kahkahalarla dolu bir sınıf kültürü yaratabilir. Bu nedenle, hizmet öncesi ve hizmet içi öğretmenlere olumsuz duyuşsal faktörleri azaltma stratejileri hakkında eğitim verilmelidir ve mizah onlara etkili bir strateji olarak tanıtılmalıdır.