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## The pedagogical power of humor: enhancing reading skills through story jokes

**Boqiyeva Muqaddaskhon Obidjon qizi**

[muqaddasboqiyeva8@gmail.com](mailto:muqaddasboqiyeva8@gmail.com)

Teacher, English Department,  
Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural  
Mechanization Engineers  
National Research University

**Annotation** *This article explores the pedagogical impact of story jokes on the development of reading skills among English language learners. Humor, when used strategically in educational settings, can serve as a powerful tool for engaging students and fostering a positive learning environment. The study examines how story-based jokes not only enhance linguistic competence but also contribute to socio-cultural, compensatory, and speech competencies. By analyzing learners' reactions and academic progress, the research demonstrates how joke stories stimulate students' motivation, improve text comprehension, and encourage deeper interaction with language material. The integration of humor into reading tasks also increases learners' satisfaction and lowers anxiety, making reading more accessible and enjoyable. The study underscores the potential of humorous texts in creating an inclusive, interactive, and effective language learning experience, particularly in developing countries where engagement strategies are crucial to success. Furthermore, it highlights the role of culturally relevant humor in making reading materials more relatable and meaningful to diverse student populations. The findings suggest that incorporating humor-based content can be an innovative strategy to bridge linguistic gaps and build learner confidence.*

**Keywords** *Humor, reading skills, story jokes, language competence, socio-cultural context, motivation, engagement, comprehension, language learning.*

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## Педагогическая сила юмора: развитие навыков чтения с помощью юмористических историй

**Бокиева Мукаддасхон Обиджон кызы**

[muqaddasboqiyeva8@gmail.com](mailto:muqaddasboqiyeva8@gmail.com)

Преподаватель кафедры английского языка,  
Ташкентский институт ирригации и  
инженеров сельскохозяйственной механизации  
Национальный исследовательский университет

**Аннотация** *В данной статье рассматривается педагогическое влияние юмористических рассказов (анекдотов) на развитие навыков чтения у изучающих английский язык. Юмор, стратегически использованный в образовательной среде, может быть мощным инструментом для вовлечения студентов и формирования позитивной учебной атмосферы. В исследовании рассматривается, как юмористические истории способствуют не только развитию языковой компетенции, но и социокультурной, компенсаторной и речевой компетенций.*

*Анализируя реакции учащихся и их академические успехи, автор показывает, что такие истории повышают мотивацию, улучшают понимание текста и стимулируют более глубокое взаимодействие с языковым материалом. Включение юмора в задания на чтение увеличивает удовлетворённость обучением и снижает уровень тревожности, делая чтение более доступным и приятным. В статье подчеркивается потенциал юмористических текстов в создании инклюзивной, интерактивной и эффективной языковой среды, особенно в развивающихся странах, где важны стратегии вовлечения. Кроме того, акцент делается на значении культурно релевантного юмора, делающего учебные материалы более близкими и значимыми для студентов из разных культур. Полученные результаты свидетельствуют о том, что использование юмористического контента может быть инновационной стратегией преодоления языковых барьеров и укрепления уверенности обучающихся.*

**Ключевые слова** Юмор, навыки чтения, анекдоты, языковая компетенция, социокультурный контекст, мотивация, вовлеченность, понимание, изучение языка.

## **Pedagogik hazil qudrati: hikoya-jumorlar orqali o'qish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish**

**Boqiyeva Muqaddaskhon Obidjon qizi**  
[muqaddasboqiyeva8@gmail.com](mailto:muqaddasboqiyeva8@gmail.com)  
Oqituvchi, Ingliz tili kafedrası,  
Toshkent Irrigatsiya va Qishloq Xo'jaligi  
Mexanizatorlari Muhandislari Institutining  
Milliy Tadqiqot Universiteti

**Annotatsiya** *Ushbu maqolada ingliz tilini o'rganayotgan talabalar orasida o'qish ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda hazilga asoslangan hikoyalarning (hikoya-jumorlar) pedagogik ta'siri o'rganiladi. Ta'lim muhitida hazilni strategik tarzda qo'llash talabalarni darsga jalb qilish va ijobiy o'quv muhitini shakllantirishda kuchli vosita bo'la oladi. Tadqiqot shuni ko'rsatadiki, bunday hikoyalar nafaqat til kompetensiyasini, balki ijtimoiy-madaniy, kompensator va nutqiy kompetensiyalarni ham rivojlantiradi. Talabalar reaksiyasi va o'quv yutuqlari tahlili asosida hikoya-jumorlar o'quvchilarning motivatsiyasini oshirishi, matnni chuqurroq tushunishga yordam berishi va til materiallari bilan faolroq ishlashga undashi isbotlangan. O'qish mashg'ulotlariga hazilni kiritish darsdan qoniqish darajasini oshiradi va o'quvchilarni tashvishdan xalos etib, o'qish jarayonini yanada oson va maroqli qiladi. Maqolada ayniqsa rivojlanayotgan mamlakatlarda til o'rganishda samarali va interaktiv muhit yaratishda hazilning salohiyati alohida ta'kidlanadi. Bundan tashqari, madaniyatga mos hazil turlari matnlarni talabalarga yanada tushunarli va qiziqarli qilishda muhim ahamiyat kasb etadi. Tadqiqot shuni ko'rsatadiki, hazilga asoslangan kontentdan foydalanish til to'siqlarini yengib o'tish va o'quvchilarda ishonchni shakllantirishda innovatsion yondashuv bo'lishi mumkin.*

**Kalit so'zlar** *Hazil, o'qish ko'nikmalari, hikoya-jumorlar, til kompetensiyasi, ijtimoiy-madaniy*

*kontekst, motivatsiya, jalb qilish, tushunish, til o'rganish.*

## Introduction

The process of reading plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's personality, worldview, and communicative competence. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, reading not only contributes to the development of receptive language skills but also serves as a medium through which learners expand their active and passive vocabulary, reinforce grammatical structures, and gain deeper insights into the cultural context of the target language (Lems et al., 2010). Effective reading instruction fosters critical thinking, promotes learner autonomy, and enhances overall language proficiency.

However, one of the major pedagogical challenges in teaching reading is the selection of appropriate texts and the organization of engaging and purposeful reading activities. In many traditional classrooms, reading materials are often limited in variety and fail to stimulate students' interest or meet their linguistic and cognitive needs (Harrison, 1996). Therefore, the modernization of outdated teaching approaches and the implementation of innovative, learner-centered strategies have become essential in today's educational landscape.

This research is situated within the broader framework of improving educational practices and addresses the need for effective, motivating methods that align with contemporary learners' goals and expectations. The study explores the pedagogical potential of integrating humor-based content—specifically story jokes—into reading instruction as a means of enhancing comprehension, retention, and engagement. The practical significance of the research lies in the development and application of a set of reading exercises and strategies

tailored for learners in the Tashkent region. These strategies were implemented during pedagogical practice and designed to improve students' reading skills in EFL lessons through entertaining and contextually meaningful materials. The findings aim to contribute to the methodology of foreign language teaching by offering an accessible and enjoyable approach to reading that can be adapted across diverse educational settings.

## II Background knowledge

In recent years, an increasing body of research has emphasized the pedagogical benefits of incorporating humor into the educational process, including in the context of foreign language learning. Humor is no longer seen as merely a source of entertainment; rather, it is now recognized as a cognitive, social, and emotional catalyst that facilitates learning and classroom engagement. Its multifaceted role has been shown to positively influence memory retention, reduce learner anxiety, increase motivation, and create a psychologically safe learning environment (Djorayeva et al., 2022).

One of the primary advantages of using humor in language instruction is its ability to foster a comfortable and spontaneous classroom atmosphere. Humor contributes to a sense of immediacy—a pedagogical concept that refers to the degree to which instructors minimize psychological distance with their students. A classroom characterized by immediacy is marked by warm interpersonal interactions, openness, and mutual respect. This environment encourages students to take intellectual risks, engage more fully with course content, and develop a positive attitude toward both the subject and the instructor. Ultimately,

this leads to increased motivation and a deeper, more meaningful learning experience (Petrovsky, 1925).

Secondly, humorous content enhances memory retention by activating emotional and cognitive responses (Yuldashova et al., 2022). As supported by educational psychology, material associated with humor is remembered more effectively than information presented in a strictly formal or serious manner. Humor functions similarly to mnemonic devices in that it creates distinct mental associations, making abstract or complex language structures more accessible and memorable. However, educators must ensure that humor is closely related to the content being taught; irrelevant or excessive humor may distract learners rather than support their understanding. The key is to use humor judiciously—to emphasize key concepts without overshadowing core material.

Modern educational materials increasingly reflect this understanding. Many contemporary language textbooks incorporate humorous illustrations, jokes, and comic-style dialogues to enhance learner engagement and reinforce comprehension. These visual and textual elements serve not only as aids to understanding but also as motivational tools that sustain interest and break the monotony of traditional instruction. Numerous studies affirm that such integrated humor increases learners' intrinsic motivation and willingness to participate in language learning activities.

Nevertheless, the application of humor in the classroom requires careful consideration. Not all forms of humor are pedagogically appropriate. Aggressive humor—such as sarcasm, ridicule, or culturally insensitive jokes—can alienate or embarrass students and should be strictly avoided. Furthermore, young learners may lack the cognitive maturity to interpret humor correctly, leading to misunderstandings or the internalization of distorted messages. As

noted by M. Rod (2009), overly novel or abstract humor can leave a lasting impression on children's memory, often outlasting the intended lesson or context.

From a competence-based perspective, humor has the potential to support the development of several key areas:

**Speech Competence:** British English, in particular, is rich in humor used across both formal and informal contexts. Exposure to various humorous forms enables learners to recognize, respond to, and even produce humor appropriately in real-life conversations—an essential skill in cross-cultural communication.

**Language Competence:** Humor in English often exploits puns, idioms, and linguistic ambiguities that challenge learners to think critically about language structure and meaning. This not only deepens their understanding of English but also exposes them to linguistic phenomena absent in their native language, fostering analytical thinking.

**Socio-Cultural Competence:** Humor serves as a cultural mirror, reflecting a society's values, beliefs, and way of life. Studying humor helps learners understand the target culture and compare it with their own, thereby enhancing intercultural sensitivity and empathy.

**Compensatory Competence:** In intercultural communication, humor can defuse tension, bridge misunderstandings, and offer alternative ways to navigate complex or uncomfortable interactions. This adaptive use of humor is vital for building resilience and flexibility in foreign language users.

Moreover, English humor—often characterized as subtle, intellectual, and refined—contributes to the aesthetic education of learners. Engaging with such humor helps develop students' appreciation of irony, wit, and satire, which not only enriches their language skills but also their emotional intelligence and cultural literacy.

### III Methodology

By experimenting and comparing the data obtained, the analysis process was based on quantitative research methods. The following methods were essentially used according to the subject classes, such as the different approaches in teaching reading skill, gap-filling exercises, multiple choice tasks, interactive methods of teaching reading skill by using story jokes, accessible evaluation applications. They used in the study process are the incorporation of approaches to improving the competency of learners in reading skills and their use in education.

The researcher used various approaches to collect data on accomplishments. The researcher asked the chosen students questions and took notes of their responses. The questions were asked in order to find out the attitude of students in their lessons towards using different story jokes. With the help of story jokes instruction, one of the groups should be developed reading skills, while the other group should be usually taught in a traditional way of improving reading abilities.

#### A. Object

The object of the study is to use of story jokes instruction in teaching reading skills and to identify its impact, affecting the language capacity of learners as a current trend in English Language Teaching. The results of pre and post-tests, questionnaires on the application of language teaching use during the classes, are the data from this report. The data sources in this analysis are case, descriptive and documentary.

#### B. Subject

Lesson plans, some reading texts, questionnaires and quizzes were given for the subjects of these courses. Students practiced reading, vocabulary, translation and grammar aspects in every lesson in order to use them to develop their reading abilities in class. To

identify the efficacy of story jokes in developing reading skills in EFL classes, the researcher wanted to compare the results of the participants of one group with other group students who were taught with the help of reading strategies instruction and at the end of the analysis, the researcher intended to compare the results of the two groups on learned topics.

#### C. Materials and equipment

Questionnaires, lesson plans, schedule, various materials from course books were the study materials. Student's book, Work Book and Dictionary were used during the research process. In this report, various types of required lesson equipment such as: board, projector, laptop, loudspeakers, markers, stickers, paper, activity cards, handouts, pictures and others were also used within the materials. Each of these devices was used effectively: boards were used for brainstorming, reading criteria, rules and formulas, clustering and evaluating an object in a wide range of its usage; stickers visually in front of the view of learners; activity cards helped to coordinate different leveled and targeted steps of the lesson, while handouts and photographs for individual compositional tasks; the projector was used to play video materials as well as power point presentations, the laptop proved its necessity by sounding lexeme pronunciation, and was used in various repairs, the computer room was used by the installed quiz makers for the entire target group to practice improvement of reading abilities through the lessons.

#### IV Data collection and analysis

The researcher's qualitative approach is used in observation sheets. It is designed to observe the entire lessons in detail. In addition, needs assessment is structured to consider the needs, desires and attitudes of learners towards the teaching of group work. Pre and post-tests consist of lessons in reading skills. At the start of

the teaching process, the pre-test is taken and the post-test is taken at the end of the learning process. Experimental courses were used to perform the present research. First, before beginning to work with them and having pre and post-tests, the researcher wanted to observe some lessons from experimental courses in order to compare the findings at the end of the study.

Observations The researcher prepares sheets for observation. The investigator followed lessons from experimental and control courses for about two weeks in conjunction with the measures and directions of the observation sheets. The actions of teachers and the techniques they used were examined and the mistakes were also noticeable when studying the lessons of others. In addition, learners were also relaxed with the observer at the lesson through the days, making it easier to perform the coming lessons. Since the students must have learned and adapted to the new teacher already.

Questionnaires Two separate questionnaires were used in this study. Questionnaires were made by researcher. The questionnaire was administered with teachers, firstly, and then with the students. The questionnaire demonstrates the learners and teachers' personal views and desires. This is important for the research as well. Since the instructor should pay attention to the needs and desires of the learners while preparing the lesson.

Questionnaire for teachers The first questionnaire was for teachers to collect required ideas, teaching reading thoughts, teaching through story jokes instruction methods and traditional ways of teaching. The questionnaire included 10 teachers. The researcher gave the questionnaires to the English teachers at the very education she/ he was in. The researcher obtained the answers and gathered from them the overall information.

Questionnaire for students The next one was aimed at getting information about their needs and difficulties in English classes from the learners. Since most of them had some trouble interpreting the context of the questions, this process took more time. The researcher helped them understand the context and choose the answer, taking this into account.

The researcher was able to obtain a lot of valuable information for the report. Gathered ideas and thoughts were taken into account in the analysis after reviewing the learners' questionnaire documents.

Pre-test It was created to check and assess the learners' current knowledge of reading skills as well as their context. This test enables the researcher to choose appropriate tasks for the following lessons. To begin with, appropriate tasks for the B1 level were chosen for the exam, as their level was expected to be B1 according to their teachers. Before the students took the test, the researcher outlined what they could do with these tests. Students were assessed based on the following criteria:

5 (excellent)	4 (good)	3 (satisfactory)	2 (bad)	1 (too bad)	0 (not done)
Only 3-4 incorrect answers	No more than 5-8 mistakes	Over 9-13 incorrect answers	Approximately 14-18 mistakes	19-25 incorrect answers	Over 26-30 mistakes

**Table1.** The criteria for assessing reading skills of the learners in the Pre-test stage

Post-test After practicing in two months with two group students' reading skills it was the time to check their developed final

knowledge. As teaching students' reading skills in two ways, final post-tests were prepared and conducted. Experimental and Control groups

submitted the post-test examination with doing reading activities through story jokes instruction based ones. It's crucial to compare post-test

results to pre-test results, and it's simple and straightforward to see the progression after comparing percentage scores.

<b>5 (excellent)</b>	<b>4 (good)</b>	<b>3 (satisfactory)</b>	<b>2 (bad)</b>	<b>1 (too bad)</b>	<b>0 (not done)</b>
Only 3-4 incorrect answers	No more than 5-8 mistakes	Over 9-13 incorrect answers	Approximately 14-18 mistakes	19-25 incorrect answers	Over 26-30 mistakes

**Table2.** The criteria for assessing reading skills of the learners in the Post-test stage

### V Result and discussion

The results of this study confirmed that English teachers believe their concerns, questions and English teaching problems in EFL contexts are not adequately discussed. The study's participants discussed the drawbacks of

teaching English as a foreign language. As a result, more emphasis should be placed on research that focuses on the unique characteristics of English learning and teaching in EFL settings.

<b>Tests</b>	<b>Pre-test</b>	<b>Post-test</b>	<b>Difference between the scores</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
	Mean	Mean		
Experimental group	18.1	24	5.9	3.25
Control group	19	22.7	3.7	1.94

**Table3.** The Pre and Post-test scores and Percentage of change for each group

Finally, the testing cycle was ended with positive results of the experimental and control groups. The experimental group's result was higher, with the help of teaching their reading skills through story jokes, in comparison with control group, but also their attitudes also shifted towards improving to positive side. According to the table, experimental group's pre-test mean score was 18.1 and the post-test mean score was 24 and the difference between the scores was 5.9. The researcher achieved his goal with improving experimental group's percentage to 3.25% with utilizing their reading skills lessons. When it comes to control group, the group's pre-test mean score was 19 which had been higher than experimental group and post-test mean score was 22.7. The difference between the pre and post-test scores was 3.7 and the percentage of the group was raised to 1.94% because the researcher used traditional

way of teaching reading with classroom textbooks, handouts and others.

Here are several suggestions to make this study more useful for teachers and researchers in order to enhance reading achievement using story jokes methods in the future. First and foremost, the teacher must carefully prepare the lessons before implementing them in the classroom. It is critical to consider the correct procedures/steps for each technique by consulting expert theory. Second, since the lesson plan guides the teacher in implementing activities in the classroom, it is best if the practices in the lesson plan are synchronized with the implementation in the classroom. Third, by using story jokes approach to teach English, the teacher should accept and demand the use of target language in any classroom activity so that students are encouraged to use English as their primary mode of communication. Finally, given the limitations of this study, further

research is needed to perform experimental studies on the best story jokes based practice for improving reading skills of learners.

## VI. Conclusion

This qualification paper presents the development of a methodology aimed at enhancing reading skills in a foreign language, particularly English, through the incorporation of story jokes as an instructional tool. The proposed approach is based on the idea that humor, when appropriately integrated into reading tasks, can significantly improve students' motivation, comprehension, and overall engagement with the text. However, despite the potential pedagogical benefits of story jokes, several systemic and practical barriers hinder their effective implementation in English language classrooms.

One of the key challenges identified through the research is the *limited availability of time and resources for teachers*. Due to high workloads, teachers often struggle to design, adapt, or implement creative instructional materials such as humorous reading texts or story-based joke exercises. The lack of institutional support, including access to curated humorous content and professional development on how to use it effectively, further exacerbates the issue. To overcome this, *teacher workloads should be reduced*, and schools should allocate time within their schedules for the preparation and sharing of innovative teaching resources. Furthermore, teaching conditions must be improved through reforms in workload distribution, training opportunities, and support from educational authorities.

Another significant concern addressed in this research is the *overemphasis on grammar-based assessments* in the current educational and examination systems. Standardized testing regimes in many institutions primarily focus on discrete-point grammar and vocabulary

knowledge, often at the expense of more holistic language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This imbalance shapes classroom practices, forcing teachers to prioritize test preparation over communicative and interactive learning strategies—like reading through humor—that could foster deeper language acquisition.

To address this, a *reform of the assessment framework is urgently needed*. While grammar and vocabulary remain important, equal emphasis should be placed on assessing communicative competencies, particularly reading comprehension. This requires a shift from purely summative, large-scale exams to more flexible and continuous *formative assessment practices*, which can more accurately reflect learners' reading development over time. Such formative tools could include reading journals, interactive reading tasks, peer evaluations, and performance-based assessments, many of which are well-suited to the integration of humorous content.

Moreover, *student placement and academic tracking decisions should not rely solely on the results of summative exams*. Instead, a more balanced approach that includes continuous assessment of reading proficiency—possibly through story joke-based activities—would offer a more comprehensive view of a student's linguistic ability. This could lead to fairer and more accurate educational decisions and encourage students to engage with reading in meaningful and enjoyable ways.

Finally, the successful implementation of story jokes in reading instruction depends not only on systemic reforms but also on a *shift in pedagogical mindset*. Teachers and curriculum designers should recognize humor as a legitimate and powerful teaching strategy rather than an occasional diversion. By incorporating culturally appropriate and pedagogically relevant humor into reading tasks, educators

can create more inclusive and dynamic language classrooms.

In conclusion, this research calls for a multifaceted approach to educational reform—one that supports teachers, diversifies assessment methods, and promotes innovative

reading strategies like story jokes. These changes have the potential to transform both teaching and learning practices, making the development of reading skills more effective, engaging, and enjoyable for EFL learners.

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