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A RESEARCH ON THE USE OF HUMOUR IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Humour refers to an essential structure of human existence, more specifically to the fact that man is a tragi-comic being (Geybels & Herck, 2011). A great deal of research has documented that it is an effective tool in teaching and learning process at various levels of education. This study was motivated to probe classroom teachers' views on the use of humour in primary education and whether they differ in this concern with respect to gender and length of professional experience. Based on the research objective, the screening model was used in this particular research which was grounded on the quantitative research approach. The participants of the study were 221 classroom teachers who were working at state primary school in the province of Kahramanmaraş and who were selected through the purposive sampling method. Their views on the use of humour in primary education were collected through a scale comprising 22 Likert-type items and an open ended question developed by the researchers and statistically analysed. The research findings revealed that only 2 out of 221 participant teachers held negative views on the use of humour in primary education while 77% and 22% held positive views and conditionally positive views on this concern, respectively. The findings also indicated that humour makes contributions to teaching and learning process such as improving classroom atmosphere, inspiring self-confidence in students, helping students develop positive attitudes toward courses/ school, functioning as an instructional tool, and facilitating communication between teacher and students and among students. The study concludes with practical implications based on these findings and the existing literature, and offers a few suggestions for future research.

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Introduction

Humour is defined as ‘anything that people say or do that others perceive as funny and tends to make them laugh, as well as the mental processes that go into both creating and perceiving such an amusing stimulus, and also the emotional response of mirth involved in the enjoyment of it’ (Martin & Ford, 2018: 3). Research conducted by scholars in various countries have provided evidence for its effectiveness in different educational settings ranging from pre-school to higher education (Ackerman & Dummer, 1982; Sidelinger, 2014; Li, 2015; Lovorn & Holaway, 2015; Nazaruk-Stocika, 2015; Zhou, 2015; Al-Duleimi & Aziz, 2016; Granato, 2016; Hempelmann, 2016; Huss & Eastep, 2016; Kılıç, 2016; Wortley & Dotson, 2016; Bell, 2017; Neff & Rucynski, 2017; Bangsund, 2018; Komariah & Irfandy, 2018; Bakar & Kumar, 2019). As the review of literature indicates that classroom teachers’ views on the use of humour in primary education have not been previously studied, the current research was intended to bridge this gap by seeking answers to the question of whether the classroom teachers significantly differ in their views on the use of humour in primary education with regard to gender and length of teaching experience.

Method

The participants of the study were 221 classroom teachers working at state primary schools in Turkey (Female=97; Male=124). They were chosen through the purposive sampling method, which allows researchers ‘to recognize and explain different phenomena and events in many cases’ (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 135). Their views on the use of humour in primary education were gathered through a scale developed by the researchers. The scale was comprised of 22 Likert items and an open-ended question and its reliability was found quite high (Cronbach’s $\alpha=.935$). The teachers’ responses to the scale items were statistically analysed to reveal both their overall view on the use of humour in primary education and whether they differ in this concern with regard to gender and length of teaching experience.

Results

The overall findings of the study demonstrated that 77% of the participant teachers were highly positive about the educational use of humour in primary classrooms while 22% reported conditionally positive views and less than 1% held negative views in this concern. These results are largely in consonance with those reported in previous research (Sudol, 1981; Korabkin, 1988; Harrs, 1989; Gorham & Cristophel, 1990; Iapoce, 1990; Meyer, 1990; Coleman, 1992; Pollak & Freda, 1997; Aboudman, 2009; Ağçam, 2017) and partially contradict with those in Sullivan (1992) and Chaniotakis (2014). To be more precise, their views on the use of humour in primary education were mostly concentrated on strongly agree for the dimension of teachers’ attitude (4.266) and agree for the dimension of teaching and learning process (3.923 ± 0.643). The independent samples t-test results showed that they significantly differ with regard to gender for the dimension of teachers’ attitude [$t(218)=218, p=.006$] while they do not for the dimension of teaching and learning process [$t(217)=217, p=.230$]. Based

on the findings, the female teachers reported statistically more positive views than their male colleagues concerning the dimension of teachers' attitude. This might be attributed to the fact that they are relatively more moderate and less authoritarian in nature. The test results also yielded that length of teaching experience significantly influences the teachers' views on the use of humour in primary education. Namely, the teachers with professional experience of 26 years and above expressed more positive views in comparison to those with 1-5 years and 16-25 years of professional experience in teaching. This could be linked to the fact that they develop and maintain better communication with students and that they are more self-confident with classroom management. Finally, the teachers' responses to the open-ended question concerning the use of humour in classrooms have indicated that humour contributes to teaching and learning process in five dimensions: (i) Functioning as an instructional tool/ method (54%), (ii) improving classroom atmosphere (16%), (iii) inspiring self-confidence in students (11%), (iv) facilitates communication between teacher and students and among students (11%), and (v) helping students develop positive attitude towards school/ classes (8%).

Conclusion and Practical Implications

The present study primarily explored classroom teachers' views on the use of humour in primary education through a scale developed by the researchers. The overall findings have revealed that they hold very positive attitude towards the use of humour in educational settings. Besides, the teachers mostly reported that it should be employed in the classroom mostly because it increases students' motivation. It was also found that they do not significantly differ in their views on the role of humour in teaching and learning process regarding gender while a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups regarding the sub-dimension of teachers' attitude towards humour. The research findings have also indicated that the participant teachers significantly differ in both dimensions regarding length of professional experience. Namely, more experienced teachers displayed a more positive attitude towards the use of humour in primary education.

Moving from the existing literature (e.g. Wortley & Dotson, 2016; Komariah & Irfandy, 2018) and in the light of the afore-mentioned findings, the educational use of humour should be encouraged in an appropriate and careful manner. Students should be informed about the benefits of humour in teaching and learning, and warned about its possible disadvantages in order to eliminate possible negative outcomes. In addition, teachers and students should be encouraged to find and share classroom materials that include elements of humour by considering goals and objectives of the curriculum. Both parties could decorate classrooms with ready-made comics appropriate to the proficiency level of students or create the ones based on related subject matters. Teachers might also be recommended to use carefully selected videos which include humour elements.

Keywords: Humour, humour in education, classroom teacher.

SINIF ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN EĞİTİM-ÖĞRETİM SÜRECİNDE MİZAHIN KULLANIMINA YÖNELİK GÖRÜŞLERİ

ÖZ

Mizah, insan varlığının önemli bir yapısını, daha özelden ise insanın trajikomik bir varlık olduğunu ifade eder (Geybels & Herck, 2011). Mizahın eğitimin farklı kademelerinde eğitim ve öğretimin sürecinde etkili bir araç olarak kullanıldığı birçok çalışmada ortaya konmuştur. Bu çalışmada ise, sınıf öğretmenlerinin mizahın ilköğretimde kullanımına ilişkin görüşleri ile bu konuda cinsiyet ve mesleki kıdem yönünden farklılaşıp farklılaşmadıklarının ortaya çıkarılması amaçlanmıştır. Çalışmada, araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda, nicel araştırma yöntemini esas alan tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Çalışmanın katılımcı grubunu, Kahramanmaraş ilinde devlet ilkokullarında görev yapmakta olan ve amaçlı örnekleme yöntemiyle belirlenen 221 sınıf öğretmeni oluşturmuştur. Katılımcıların mizahın ilköğretimde kullanımına ilişkin görüşleri, araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen 22 Likert türü ifade ve bir açık uçlu sorunun yer aldığı ölçek yardımıyla toplanarak istatistiksel olarak çözümlenmiştir. Araştırma bulguları, katılımcı 221 öğretmenden yalnızca 2'sinin mizahın ilköğretimde kullanımına yönelik olumsuz görüş bildirdiğini, bu konuda %77'sinin olumlu ve %22'sinin ise koşullu-olumlu görüşe sahip olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Çalışma ayrıca, mizahın öğretim sürecine yönelik sınıf iklimini iyileştirme, öğrencilere özgüven aşılama, öğrencilerin okula ve derslere yönelik olumlu tutum geliştirmelerine yardımcı olma, öğretim aracı olarak kullanılma ve öğretmen-öğrenci ve öğrenciler arasındaki iletişimi kolaylaştırma gibi katkılar sağladığını göstermiştir. Çalışma, bu bulgulara ve mevcut alan yazına dayalı olarak geliştirilen uygulama önerileri ve ileride yapılacak çalışmalara önerileriyle son bulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mizah, Eğitim-öğretimde mizah, Sınıf öğretmeni

Introduction

Humour is a broad, multifaceted term that represents anything that people say or do that others perceive as funny and tends to make them laugh, as well as the mental processes that go into both creating and perceiving such an amusing stimulus, and also the emotional response of mirth involved in the enjoyment of it (Martin & Ford, 2018 3). It possesses a powerful potential, allowing the individual not to easily accept the norms and laws of society, but show some flexibility in the interpretation of these norms (Artemyeva, 2017, p. 141). It proved a preventative technique to counteract undesirable behaviours due to its ability to reduce tension (Ackerman & Dummer, 1982). Bangsund (2018) reported that humour can play an important role in coping and maintaining engagement with climate change, and strengthening group cohesion. Sidelinger (2014) indicated a positive association between students' perceptions of instructors' use of relevant humour and student communication satisfaction, and that instructors who use relevant humour in the classroom may overcome students' negative perceptions of inappropriate conversations and maintain student communication satisfaction. Investigating humour in second language development, Bell (2017) notes that it holds students' attention for a greater period of time as it is enjoyable and interesting, and provides them with more opportunity to interact in the second language and on their own

terms. Lovorn and Holaway (2015) explored perceptions of teachers (kindergarten through K–12) on the use of humour as a teaching, interaction, and management strategy in the classroom, and reported that most of the teachers do not deliberately or strategically include humour in the planning or implementation of their lessons even though they are open to the idea of using humour in the classroom. The researchers also revealed that humour is perceived “just happened” in the classroom and that it was considered as part of a teacher’s responsibility to ensure that it did not distract from learning activities. Another significant finding of their study is that many more negative factors were reported by the teachers more frequently than positive factors that influenced their decisions about using humour in the classroom. Li (2015) probed students’ perceptions of teacher’s humour in an intercultural classroom in Hong Kong and yielded that humour largely reduces students’ difficulty in understanding abstract theories, and that some students still expressed negative attitudes towards teachers’ humour contents and its frequency. Nazaruk-Stocika (2015) analysed the comic facilities and their use in education of Polish language particularly for Ukrainian students, and reported that the use of humorous elements are very useful as it helps them to understand better the complex grammatical and lexical questions and makes training more pleasing and interesting. Zhou (2015) conducted a study on Chinese engineering design students’ perceptions of humour in the experiences of creativity development, and reported that they find all humorous people are creative, and welcome humour in project groups. Evidence suggests that the use of humour helps decrease anxiety, stress, and boredom; improves classroom environments; makes learning less threatening and more enjoyable; helps create more positive attitudes with regard to learning; and increases students’ perceptions about how much they have learned (Serafini & Coles, 2015, p. 638).

Granato (2016) examined the use of humour in online courses at a university and found that the humour pedagogy is not often employed due to such reasons as hesitation (fear) to use humour, fear of what students would think, and hesitation (reluctance) to share or recommend humour usage to fellow faculty members. Hempelmann (2016) concluded that humour can provide students with intrinsic motivation, insight into the workings of language, and a window into human interaction in general.

Testing some assumptions about humour as a pedagogical tool, Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2016) concluded that using humour to teach material significantly increases students’ overall performance and that humour may maximize the learning outcomes of the college classroom settings. In a study based on views of faculty members working at a college of education, Huss and Eastep (2016) reported that the faculty members largely consider humour to be an integral part of their teaching plan, and that they believe humour relaxes students, contributes to a more enjoyable classroom climate, and helps students make content connections, in both traditional and web-based classes. Wortley and Dotson (2016) studied the use of instructional humour in higher education settings, and reported that when used appropriately, instructional humour can improve a student’s academic experience and promote physiological and psychological wellness. The researchers conclude that ‘humour not only encourages students’ retention of information but serves to create a hospitable, welcoming atmosphere which makes learning more enjoyable for all involved’ (p. 13). In his attempt to determine the usage level of humour by secondary school Turkish teachers, and their attitudes and opinions regarding humour, Kılıç (2016) indicated that humour may be used as an effective form of communication and socialization tool making the learning environment more attractive and improving the linguistic skills and vocabulary of the students. The researcher also stated that the teachers do not significantly differ in their opinion about the use of humour in secondary school Turkish courses with respect to gender and professional seniority, and that humorous items used in the Turkish textbooks are found insufficient. In a recent scale-adaptation study, Yirci et al. (2016) found that humour orientations of Turkish school administrators’ do not significantly differ regarding such variables as age, gender, type of institution worked for and

branch, and that their humour orientation was not adequate. Ağçam (2017) investigated perceptions of instructors who teach English as a foreign language at state universities in Turkey on the use of humour in higher education, and revealed that EFL instructors tend to have positive perceptions about the use of humour in language classes; however, they have slight hesitations with its use. They reported that they should accept jokes from students, sometimes make jokes without offending their students, and let them tell anecdotes. Neff and Rucynski (2017) conducted a research with university students across Japan to elicit their views on such areas as the importance of humour for language learning and proficiency as well as its significance in understanding cultural differences. Their findings indicated that most participants strongly favoured inclusion of humour as part of the classroom experience but that cultural differences must be carefully considered by instructors. They also found that learners with more proficiency indicated a greater degree of comfort and cultural understanding from use of in-class humour than others. Fadel and Al-Bargi (2018) found that language play, irony, jokes, and self-defeating humour are the most effective forms of humour for the tertiary level EFL students in Saudi Arabia. In a more recent research by Fata, Komariah and Irfandy (2018), it was revealed that students mostly believe the teacher's humour could prevent them from feeling stress of learning English, develop a better relationship between teacher and students, help them remember and understand the lesson, encourage them to be more active in the classroom and ease them in learning English. Andarab and Kesen-Mutlu (2019) found no significant differences in the humour styles of the Turkish instructors in terms of age, gender and educational level. Nonetheless, they reported that male participants tend to employ affiliative, self-enhancing and self-defeating humour more than their female colleagues who scored a higher mean in aggressive humour style. In a similar study on the use of humour in higher education in New Zealand, Bakar and Kumar (2019) observed the classroom teaching of five award-winning lecturers, who were identified and nominated by students as having a good sense of humour, and interviewed with them using Stimulated Recall Interviews (SRI) to gain an insight into their reflections-in-action concerning specific humorous moments and specific humorous behaviours while teaching. Based on the interview results, the researchers concluded that the lecturers, either intentionally or spontaneously, employ different types of humour in their teaching to enhance student learning or to engage students' attention.

It is stated that teachers' approaches, attitudes towards students and communication styles are very important for students to develop positive attitudes towards lesson, school and the overall education process. Compulsory education in Turkey covers 12 years and primary schooling constitutes the first step of this process. The use of humor in teaching and learning process by classroom teachers, who are the leading figures of this step, is believed to enable students to develop a positive attitude towards school and lessons by making the process more meaningful and enjoyable. Therefore, it is of significance to determine classroom teachers' views about the use of humor in the education. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, this issue has not been previously investigated. Hence, the current research was motivated to bridge the research gap in concern and exclusively aimed to find out whether the teachers significantly differ in their views on the use of humour in primary classrooms with respect to their gender and experience. Based on the research objective, two research questions were addressed:

1. Do classroom teachers significantly differ in their views on the use of humour in education regarding gender?
2. Do classroom teachers significantly differ in their views on the use of humour in education regarding experience?
3. What are classroom teachers' views on the use of humour in education?

Method

The screening model was used in this particular research which was grounded on the quantitative research approach. The model in concern aims to outline a former or existing concern (Karasar, 2009, p. 77) and focuses on identifying intended qualifications of a given group (Büyüköztürk et al., 2013). It was practically employed in the current research as it was motivated to reveal classroom teachers' views on the use of humour in primary education without simplification or abstraction.

Sampling

221 classroom teachers working at state primary schools in the province of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey participated in the research (Female=97; Male=124). They were chosen through the purposive sampling, which allows researchers 'to recognize and explain different phenomena and events in many cases' (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016, p. 135) during 2017-2018 academic year/ spring semester. Their mean ages were calculated 39.2 and 48.3 for female and male participants, respectively. At the time of data collection, they reported various period of teaching experience [1-5 years (N=22); 6-15 years (N=75); 16-25 years (N=47); 26 and above (N=73)]. As for educational background, the majority held a bachelor's degree in teacher training (91.46%) while two participant teachers held a doctoral degree and 12 participants held a master's degree in different graduate programmes.

Data Collection

The research data were collected through the scale that was developed by the researchers for the purpose of revealing classroom teachers' views on the use of humour in primary education. With this aim in mind, the existing literature was extensively reviewed (Altınkurt & Yılmaz, 2011; Çimen, 2011; Balta, 2016; Lei, Cohen, & Russler, 2010; Ivy, 2013; Jeder, 2015; Makewa, Role & Genga, 2011), and an item pool was constructed accordingly. The expert opinion on content validity was obtained from a faculty member with specialisation in assessment and evaluation. Construct validity of the scale was tested through the exploratory factor analysis. Subsequently, appropriateness of the data set for factor analysis was confirmed through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (>0.60 ; KMO .909) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($p<.05$. $df=210$, $\chi^2=2822.280$) (Pallant, 2005; Can, 2016; Büyüköztürk, 2017). The scale items were subjected to a two-stage exploratory factor analysis. As a result of the analysis conducted in the first stage, 12 out of 33 items were removed from the scale due to such reasons as low factor loads and presence of the overlapping items. The remaining 21 items were subjected to the second stage of the analysis and the related results are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Factor Analysis Results of the Scale on the Use of Humour in Primary Education

Dimension	Item	Factor load	Described variance	Cronbach's Alpha
Teacher's attitude (Eigenvalue=1,781)	Teachers should have a good sense of humour.	,636	17,918	,773
	Teachers should occasionally make jokes in the classroom.	,621		
	Teachers should let students make jokes in the classroom.	,605		
	Teachers should sometimes tell a joke during the lesson.	,813		
	Teachers should joke with students without offending them.	,656		
	Teachers should ask students to share a fun memory during the lesson.	,443		
	Humour increases students' motivation.	,607		
	Humour reduces boredom in the classroom.	,614		
	Humour enhances learning.	,696		
	Humour increases interest in the subject matter.	,645		
	Humour makes complicated concepts easier to understand.	,645		
Teaching and learning process (Eigenvalue=9,595)	Humour helps students feel good.	,628	36,251	,941
	Humour increases students' self-respect.	,787		
	Humour increases the feeling of confidence in the classroom.	,795		
	Humour builds trust between teacher and students, and among students.	,772		
	Humour reduces tension and anxiety in the classroom.	0,547		
	Humour increases respect towards the teacher and among students.	,762		
	Humour creates a relaxing and positive learning environment in the classroom.	,709		
	Humour improves/ encourages cooperation among students.	,724		
	Humour brings students and teachers closer.	,674		
	Humour increases the permanence of the newly learnt items.	,619		
TOTAL			54,169	,935

As shown in Table 1, the factor loadings of the items displayed a distribution between 0.547 and 0.813 values. The relevant literature acknowledges that factor loads ranging from 0.30 to 0.40 can be taken as the lower cut-off point in the formation of the factor pattern (Can, 2016, p. 317; Büyüköztürk, 2017, p. 133). The lower cut-off point was set at 0.50. The described variance of both dimensions of the scale was found 54,169%, which was above the acceptable value in the literature (>0.40). Individual examination of the dimensions revealed that eigenvalue of the teacher's attitude was calculated 1.781 and its described variance was 17.918% while that of teaching and learning process was found 9.595 and its described variance was 36.251%. The alpha model was employed to assess the reliability of the scale. Cronbach's alpha reliability of the scale was found .773 for teacher's attitude dimension, .941 for the dimension of teaching-learning process and .935 for the whole scale. The total item-correlation of the scale is given in Table 2.

Table 2: Total Item-correlation of the Scale on the Use of Humour in Primary Education

Items	Corrected item correlation
Humour helps students feel good.	,730
Humour brings students and teachers closer.	,730
Humour increases students' motivation.	,720
Humour creates a relaxing and positive learning environment in the classroom.	,704
Humour increases the permanence of the newly learnt items.	,692
Humour reduces boredom in the classroom.	,689
Humour enhances learning.	,688
Humour increases the feeling of confidence in the classroom.	,688
Humour reduces tension and anxiety in the classroom.	,680
Humour improves/ encourages cooperation among students.	,680
Humour increases interest in the subject matter.	,677
Humour increases students' self-respect.	,668
Humour increases respect towards the teacher and among students.	,661
Teachers should joke with students without offending them.	,622
Humour builds trust between teacher and students, and among students.	,611
Humour makes complicated concepts easier to understand.	,605
Teachers should sometimes tell a joke during the lesson.	,507
Teachers should ask students to share a fun memory during the lesson.	,502
Teacher should have a good sense of humour.	,487
Teachers should let students make jokes in the classroom.	,482
Teachers should occasionally make jokes in the classroom.	,389

As depicted in Table 2, the values displayed a distribution between 0.389 and 0.730, and the item-total correlation of the scale has a value greater than .30. Accordingly, it could be claimed that all items in the scale were distinctive.

Data Analysis

The data were obtained from 221 classroom teachers through a scale comprised of 22 five-point Likert items measuring their attitudes from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The elicited teachers' views constituted the quantitative data of the research. The teachers' agreement levels in the scale items and the range of scores are demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Teachers' Agreement Levels in the Scale Items and Range of Scores

Score range	Agreement level
1.00-1.79	Strongly disagree
1.80-2.59	Disagree
2.60-3.39	Undecided
3.40-4.19	Agree
4.20-5.00	Strongly agree

Based on the research objective, frequencies, percentages and arithmetic means were calculated during the data analysis process; subsequently, the independent-groups t-test and the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) were performed in order to see whether the participants significantly differ in their attitude towards the use of humour in primary education. Their responses to the open-ended item were examined through content analysis, 'a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use' (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18).

Results and Discussion

This section is intended to outline the quantitative and qualitative findings derived from the participants' responses to the scale items as well as the open-ended question related to the use of humour in primary classrooms. Their responses to the question 'Do you think humour should be used in teaching? Why or why not?' have shown that 77% of the participant teachers were highly positive about the educational use of humour while 22% reported conditionally positive views and less than 1% held negative views in this concern. These findings largely coincide with those reported in previous research (Sudol, 1981; Korabkin, 1988; Harrs, 1989; Gorham & Cristophel, 1990; Iapoce, 1990; Meyer, 1990; Coleman, 1992; Pollak & Freda, 1997; Aboudman, 2009; Ağçam, 2017) and partially contradict those in Sullivan (1992) and Chaniotakis (2014). A male teacher with 21 years and a female teacher with 14 years of teaching experience conditionally accepted its use in primary classrooms stating,

"It gets people together. In the classroom, it encourages teacher-student rapport. It should be used once setting, participants and time are settled appropriately." (P40)

"It should be employed without offending students, and causing distraction in the classroom. I associate it with salt. When it is added to the meal more than enough, we could not eat it. Similarly, when humour is used overmuch, it might destroy classroom control and learning". (P133).

Another male teacher with 19 years of experience in teaching warns, "it might be used as an attention-gathering tool in learning as long as it is carefully employed and taking moral values into account." (P52)

Table 4 includes the quantitative findings concerning the teachers' views on the use of humour in primary education.

Table 4: Teachers' Views on the Use of Humour in Primary Education

Items	x	sd	Agreement level
Humour increases students' motivation.	4,39	,789	Strongly agree
Humour reduces boredom in the classroom.	4,39	,856	Strongly agree
Humour enhances learning.	4,01	,865	Agree
Humour increases interest in the subject matter.	4,33	,802	Strongly agree
Humour makes complicated concepts easier to understand.	4,26	,747	Strongly agree
Humour helps students feel good.	4,17	,743	Agree
Humour increases students' self-respect.	4,22	,720	Strongly agree
Humour increases the feeling of confidence in the classroom.	4,25	,719	Strongly agree
Humour builds trust between teacher and students, and among students.	4,10	,645	Agree
Humour reduces tension and anxiety in the classroom.	4,23	,640	Strongly agree
Humour increases respect towards the teacher and among students.	4,15	,698	Agree
Humour creates a relaxing and positive learning environment in the classroom.	4,28	,670	Strongly agree
Humour improves/ encourages cooperation among students.	4,04	,770	Agree
Humour brings students and teachers closer.	4,08	,734	Agree
Humour increases the permanence of the newly learnt items.	4,13	,725	Agree
Teacher should have a good sense of humour.	4,27	,659	Strongly agree
Teacher should occasionally make jokes in the classroom.	3,93	,795	Agree
Teacher should let students make jokes in the classroom.	4,15	,696	Agree
Teacher should sometimes tell a joke during the lesson.	4,05	,826	Agree
Teacher should joke with students without offending them.	4,20	,768	Strongly agree
Teacher should ask students to share a fun memory during the lesson.	4,08	,848	Agree

As seen in Table 4, the participants agreed with 10 items and strongly agreed with 11 items in the scale. The items “humour increases students’ motivation” and “teachers should occasionally make jokes in the classroom” were rated with the highest and lowest scores, respectively ($\bar{X}=4.39$; $\bar{X}=3.43$). Concerning its motivating role in education, a male teacher with 15-year experience in teaching notes,

“Humour makes people smile. Smiling contributes to positive thinking. It increases motivation and attention of the depressed students, and encourages them to be actively involved in classroom activities. There is always such risk as loss of classroom control. However, it’s quite hard to proceed without taking risks. Nasreddin Hodja is the best evidence for the beneficial use of humour in education. The lessons he gave survive even today because they are simplified and they include humour elements.” (P7)

Subsequently, their responses were separately analysed for the sub-dimension of teacher’s attitude and that of teaching and learning process. The related results are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Dimensions of Teachers’ Views on the Use of Humour in Primary Education

Dimensions	$\bar{x}$	sd	Agreement level
Teacher’s attitude	4,266	,546	Strongly agree
Teaching and learning process	4,152	,539	Agree

As indicated in Table 6, the classroom teachers’ views on the use of humour in primary education were mostly concentrated on *strongly agree* for the dimension of teachers’ attitude (4,266) and *agree* for the dimension of teaching and learning process (3.923 ± 0.643). Highlighting its significance in teaching and learning, a female teacher with 13 years of professional experience asserts,

“I strongly believe that humour is needed. People tend to learn something from those who make laugh them. A tough educational system is heavily based on memorization, boring and offer knowledge likely to be forgotten. Humour should be an essential element of our teaching if we want it to be permanent”. (P12)

The independent samples t-test was administered to the data in order to see whether the teachers significantly differ in their views on the use of humour in primary education with respect to gender. The related results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: Teachers’ Views on the Use of Humour in Primary Education regarding Gender

Dimensions	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	ss	sd	t	p
Teacher’s attitude	Female	96	4,381	,508	218	2,797	,006
	Male	124	4,177	,559			
Teaching and learning process	Female	96	4,202	,51987	217	1,203	,230
	Male	123	4,113	,55277			

As illustrated in Table 6, the teachers’ views on the use of humour in primary education differ with regard to gender for the dimension of teachers’ attitude [$t(218)=218$, $p=.006$] while they do not for the dimension of teaching and learning process [$t(217)=217$, $p=.230$]. More specifically, it was revealed that female teachers had more positive views than their male colleagues concerning the use of humour in primary education. Besides, the difference in concern was found statistically significant for their general attitude towards humour in education whereas it was not for its use in teaching and learning process. The latter finding seems in consonance with Kılıç (2016) and Yirci et al. (2016). A female teacher with 11 years of experience in teaching notes,

“I strongly believe that it is needed especially for the primary school students who have problems with school orientation and who are less confident. Humour helps them strengthen sense of belonging to class and school, and improves self-confidence. Teachers with no sense of humour cannot reach their students effectively”. (P34)

ANOVA was administered to the teachers’ responses in order to reveal whether they significantly differ in their views on the educational use of humour concerning length of professional experience. The results are given in Table 7.

Table 7: Teachers’ views on the use of humour in primary education regarding length of professional experience

Sub-dimensions	Source of variance	Sum of squares	sd	Mean of squares	f	Sig.	Significant difference
Teacher’s attitude	Between groups	6,046	3	2,015	7,280	,000	1-5, 26 and over 16-25, 26 and over
	Among groups	58,685	212	,277			
	Total	64,731	215				
Teaching & learning process	Between groups	3,696	3	1,232	4,433	,005	16-25, 26 and over
	Among groups	58,630	211	,278			
	Total	62,325	214				

As illustrated in Table 7, the classroom teachers’ views on the use of humour in primary education significantly differ in the sub-dimension of teachers’ attitude [$F(3-212)=7.280$, $p=.000$] and that of teaching and learning process [$F(3-211)=4.433$, $p=.005$]. The Scheffe Test was applied to the teachers’ responses to reveal how they differ in their related views. The test results indicated that the teachers with the professional experience of 26 years and above hold more positive attitude on the use of humour in primary education in comparison to those with 1-5 years and 16-25 years of professional experience. A male teacher with 35 years of experience in teaching posits that *‘monotony appears in the absence of humour. No one gets pleasure in school setting’* (P28).

The teachers’ responses to the open-ended question concerning the use of humour in classrooms have indicated that humour contributes to teaching and learning process in five dimensions: (i) Functioning as an instructional tool/ method (54%), (ii) improving classroom atmosphere (16%), (iii) inspiring self-confidence in students (11%), (iv) facilitates communication between teacher and students and among students (11%), and (v) helping students develop positive attitude towards school/ classes (8%). In this concern, Kılıç (2016) previously reported that humour may be used to make the learning environment more attractive and improve the linguistic skills and vocabulary of the students as an effective form of communication and socialization tool. Likewise, Wortley and Dotson (2016) asserted that it encourages students’ retention of information and serves to create a hospitable, welcoming atmosphere which makes learning more enjoyable for all involved. Furthermore, Fata, Komariah and Irfandy (2018) noted that humour could prevent students from feeling stress of learning English, develop a better relationship between teacher and students, help them understand the lesson, encourage them to be more active in the classroom and facilitates their learning English. The following section is intended to summarize related results and offer practical implications in the light of these results as well as a couple of directions for further research based on the limitations of the current research. The following section is intended to summarize related results and offer practical implications in the light of these results as well as a couple of directions for further research based on the limitations of the current research.

Conclusion

The present study primarily explored classroom teachers’ views on the use of humour in primary education through a scale comprising 22 Likert-type items and an open-ended item developed by the researchers. The overall findings have revealed that they hold very positive

attitude towards the use of humour in educational settings. They mostly reported that it should be employed in the classroom mostly because it increases students' motivation. The study specifically investigated whether they significantly differ in their views on the use of humour in education regarding gender and length of teaching experience. The research findings indicated that they do not significantly differ in their views on the role of humour in teaching and learning process regarding gender while a statistically significant difference was found between the two groups regarding the sub-dimension of teachers' attitude towards humour. In other words, the female teachers display more positive attitude toward the contribution of humour to the teaching and learning process. This might be attributed to the fact that they are relatively more moderate and less authoritarian in nature. The research findings have also indicated that the participant teachers significantly differ in both dimensions regarding length of professional experience. Namely, the teachers with the professional experience of 26 years and above hold more positive attitude on the use of humour in primary education in comparison to those with 1-5 years and 16-25 years. This could be linked to the fact that they develop and maintain better communication with students and that they are more self-confident with classroom management.

Wortley and Dotson (2016) postulate that instructors can engage their students through many methods of integration: instructor delivery of humour, incorporation of visual humour through YouTube videos, and appropriate humour usage; thereby enabling students to absorb and retain more content focused information (p. 17). In a similar vein, Komariah and Irfandy (2018) argue that teachers need to build a good relationship and mutual trust with students and understand students' interests, likes and dislikes prior to applying humour, so that the humour would be more likely to be welcomed and it would not cause emotional and psychological impact such as bullying and etc for the students. Moving from these viewpoints and in the light of the afore-mentioned findings, the educational use of humour should be encouraged in an appropriate and careful manner. Students should be informed about the benefits of humour in teaching and learning, and warned about its possible disadvantages in order to eliminate possible negative outcomes. In addition, teachers and students should be encouraged to find and share classroom materials that include elements of humour by considering goals and objectives of the curriculum. Both parties could decorate classrooms with ready-made comics appropriate to the proficiency level of students or create the ones based on related subject matters. Teachers might also be recommended to use carefully selected videos which include humour elements.

Further Directions

The present research was confined to the sampling size (N=221), subject area of the participant teachers (classroom teaching) and the type and level of institutions they were working at the time of data collection (state primary schools affiliated to MoNE, Turkey). Hence, further research could be conducted with the participation of a higher number of teachers of other subject areas who are working at state or private secondary and higher education institutions. Alternatively, future research might explore the views of students attending different levels of educational institutions on the use of humour in classroom settings.

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