Using Humor in didactic Materials for elementary School: Possibilities of Computer Technologies

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Original Article

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Abstract:

The research aims to determine the impact of using didactic materials with elements of humor, developed with the help of computer technologies, in the education of elementary school students. The goal achievement was facilitated by employing a set of research methods: theoretical (study, analysis, and generalization of philosophical, psychological-pedagogical, and

methodological literature), empirical (observation, surveys of teachers and students), and methods of mathematical statistics (quantitative data processing methods were used for analyzing research results, ensuring the reliability of the experimental outcomes). The didactic potential of humor has been determined, relating to the motivational-target, procedural, and effective components of students' cognitive activity and the educational process in elementary school. The impact of humor and the enhancement of its didactic possibilities are intensified with the use of computer technologies (mobile applications, memes, presentations, cartoons, comics, didactic materials, stickers). They activate students' learning work, stimulate their cognitive activity, and serve as an effective means of classroom management. The research presents a program for using humorous didactic materials with computer technology tools at various stages of the lesson in elementary school. It has been established that the use of humorous didactic materials developed with the help of computer technologies in the education of elementary school students can lead to positive results, such as a positive attitude toward learning, an increase in the level of mastering educational material, the development of creative thinking and cognitive interests of students, and the creation of a positive emotional environment in the educational process.

Introduction

Before modern education, numerous issues arose, particularly in ensuring effective and motivated learning for students, especially in elementary school. Humor is one of the unique tools that can enhance the effectiveness and interest in learning. The importance of this approach is determined by several key factors:

Effectively used humor can contribute to the comfort and interest of students in the learning process. This fosters the creation of a positive atmosphere in the classroom, promoting successful learning, especially for younger students who may lose interest in education (1).

The integration of computer technologies for developing humorous educational materials can make learning more interactive and appealing to younger students. The use of animations, videos, and interactive exercises contributes to actively engaging students in learning.

Educational approaches should be based on modern pedagogical technologies, integrating practical tasks, discussions, and reflection to develop critical thinking and ethical standards (2). The use of the latest technologies and interactive teaching methods allows for the effective integration of sustainability and interculturality into school curricula (3).

This topic is particularly relevant, as it not only enhances the effectiveness of learning but also contributes to maintaining a positive psychological climate in the educational process. Considering the needs of the digital generation, the use of humor through computer technologies can determine not only skill development but also play a key role in stress relief, making the learning process more interesting and natural (4).

Among various online activities available on the Internet, it was found that watching videos is the most common activity for both girls and boys. Over three-quarters of Internet-using children watch online videos weekly, often alone or with friends or family. Computer-based educational platforms facilitate the integration of theoretical knowledge with practical tasks, increasing students' autonomy and their ability to learn independently (5).

Modern child, especially a younger school-age student, can't imagine their life without the Internet and gadgets. These technologies have be-

come not only a source of information and entertainment but also an essential tool for learning and communication. They allow students to explore the world, exchange thoughts with friends and peers worldwide, and acquire new knowledge. We believe that isolating a child from these devices is generally unjustified and sometimes even harmful from the perspective of social interaction with peers. Therefore, it is essential to reconsider the perception of computers as enemies and make them allies and helpers, particularly in the learning process.

The use of computer technologies in elementary school enables the effective development of critical thinking, media literacy, and information security skills in children (6), particularly through interactive tasks, gamification, and content creation aimed at identifying manipulative information and fostering resilience to disinformation.

The coordinated use of modern computer technologies and humor allows for the creation of a natural, engaging, and motivating learning process, promoting active knowledge acquisition and the development of creative skills. The growing interest in researching the use of humor in the educational process is driven by the fact that students spend more and more time with their gadgets throughout the day – from morning during breakfast, at school during breaks between classes, after classes, until bedtime. The most popular content is humor.

Research by Garner confirmed that students who listened to humorous comments from the teacher during lessons better absorbed and understood the educational material compared to those who did not hear such comments. This can be explained by the fact that humor contributes to attracting the attention and interest of students, as well as creating a positive atmosphere in the classroom (7).

Humor can be considered as a manifestation of God's creativity. God created the universe, including humans, with their ability for creativity. In their article, Roubalová et al. (8) note that a person, created in the image of God, should reflect their Creator. Similar to how God and His judgment are immortal, every other person should also be immortal. Thus, humor can be regarded as one of the expressions of God's creative princi-

ple. It helps us see the world anew, finding the amusing in what may initially appear serious (9).

Using humor in teaching materials can promote critical thinking (10, 11, 12) by helping students perceive information in a non-standard way.

Kralik et al. (13, 14) emphasize that it is within the family (between parents and children, husband and wife, etc.) that relationships begin to form, which will later be reflected in society as mutual love, respect, ethics, solidarity, keeping the rules, laws, traditions and compassion. (8, 15, 16, 17, 18) Where these relationships are absent in the family, society eventually begins to wither (19). We understand that the family is the foundation of society. It is within the family that children learn to love, respect, and help each other. Moreover, if there is room for humor in the family, it will only have a positive impact on shaping the child's personality. Of course, humor should be used with caution. One should not laugh at things that can cause pain to others. However, if humor is used in a positive manner, it can become a powerful tool for strengthening family and interpersonal relationships.

In their article, Hamarova et al. emphasize the importance of an individual approach in social services (20), which can be applied to the use of humor in educational materials. Personalized humor, adapted to age groups, can effectively attract attention and motivate children.

The importance of using humorous materials in the educational process is also explained by the fact that it can be a powerful tool for combating socio-pathological phenomena such as aggressive behavior, bullying, and others. In their study, Jarmoch et al. (21) emphasize that schools can play a crucial role in preventing socio-pathological phenomena by providing a safe and supportive environment for students and educating them about the dangers of these phenomena. Thus, the integration of humor into the educational process can be an effective means of reducing socio-pathological phenomena in the school environment, improving the psychological climate, and promoting the overall well-being of students. Additionally, Shcherbiak et al. (22) note that «creating a comfortable educational environment and organizing a student-centered

learning process are extremely important tasks for Ukrainian higher education institutions in wartime conditions. » Humor also impacts the development of emotional intelligence.

The research by Mahrik et al. confirms that an increasing number of experts are talking about the need for emotional and social intelligence, without which it is difficult for a person—even a top expert—to manage personal and professional life, and its formation begins precisely during the primary school period (23).

In school, humor can be used as a tool to create an inclusive environment where every student feels safe and supported. This aligns with the model of social justice and mutual support described in the study by Kralik et al. (24) and the creation of a socially inclusive environment described by Lešková et al. (25). The researchers emphasize that compassion is considered an important virtue that leads to good deeds without expecting a reward. Compassion is the essence of love, charity, and honesty, improving a person's character and prompting good deeds. For example, jokes can help reduce tension and create an atmosphere where students feel more comfortable and are ready to support each other.

Humor also helps to create an environment where the interests and opinions of the child are considered, promoting the development of emotional intelligence and a supportive climate, similar to the role of a guardian ad litem in legal matters. According to Lešková et al. (26), considering the child's opinion during decision-making helps ensure that the best interests of the child are taken into account. This promotes the active participation of children in the educational process.

In the research by Lovorn and Holaway (27), teachers argue that humor can contribute to more effective classroom management. They see humor as a means to capture students' attention, encourage active participation in learning, and create a positive classroom environment. Teachers believe that humor can be more effective than other classroom management methods, such as using punishments or providing rewards.

Therefore, teachers in numerous studies emphasize the benefits of using humor in the classroom. Researchers have also attempted to classify humor instead of trying to define its essence. Humor can be divided into different types, depending on the target audience, context appropriateness, and whether it was prepared in advance (28). Overall, this research allowed for the identification of humor types based on observations.

Despite studies indicating the positive impact of humor in didactic materials for elementary school, the scientific community lacks comprehensive research on its effective utilization, particularly with an emphasis on the potential of computer technologies.

Therefore, the aim of this work was to investigate the role and features of applying computer technologies in the development and use of instructional materials containing humor in the educational process of primary school. To achieve this goal, the following tasks needed to be addressed:

- Determine the didactic potential of humor through computer technologies in primary school lessons.
- Analyze the extent of humor utilization by educational participants.
- Explore the specifics of using computer technologies to create humorous instructional materials in the primary school educational process.

I. Incorporating humor into educational materials for elementary school

A crucial means of creating humorous educational materials is computer technologies.

The impact of computer technology on life is examined in a study by Pavlikova (22). She emphasizes the influence of media on the perception of reality, showing how media can affect human emotions and perceptions of the world. During the pandemic, computer technology in schools became indispensable tools for ensuring education, maintaining social contacts, and providing psychological support. They helped schools and families adapt to new conditions, ensuring continuity of education and supporting the well-being of students (29). They can provide teachers with new opportunities to develop creative and engaging lessons with elements of humor.

Research by Králik et al. (13) discusses the need for innovations in teacher training and the integration of new teaching methods for the internalization of sustainable development values. Computer technologies can be part of these innovative methods, helping students better absorb material and develop critical thinking skills.

The use of computer technologies in elementary school contributes to the creation of a modern educational and developmental environment (30), that supports and stimulates independence, self-regulation, and interest in learning among students.

With increased access to computer technologies, new possibilities arise for integrating humorous elements into education. Let's explore how humor can be used in the educational process through computer technologies.

A. Multimedia Presentations

Teachers can create educational presentations that incorporate humorous images, memes, or animations to reinforce information. When designing the presentation layout, it is essential to adhere to defined requirements, ensuring unity in stylistic elements (such as the use of vibrant colors, contrasting images, selection of an appropriate color palette, and fonts), and avoiding information overload (clear labeling, citation of sources, logical slide structure) to ensure a logical and effective use of humor elements.
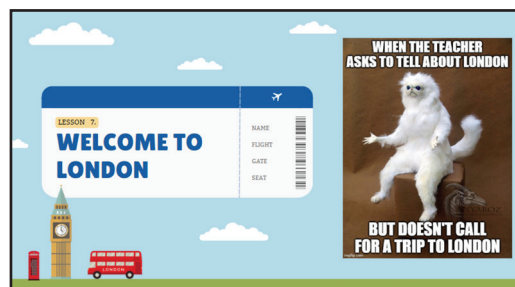
Figure 1 Slide from a multimedia presentation used in the lesson "Exploring the World," 3rd grade.

(Text on the slide: Topic: Dangerous Situations on the Street. Reminds mom to follow safety rules. Follows safety rules himself.*)*

Source: Own research.

Figure 2 Slide from a multimedia presentation used in the lesson "English Language," 4th grade.

Source: Own research.

Let's provide examples of developing multimedia presentation slides for elementary school students using humor (Figure 1, Figure 2).

Considering the age-specific characteristics of elementary school students, it is important to contemplate their interests and use humor in multimedia presentations that are understandable and appealing to children. When using humor in multimedia presentations in elementary school, the following aspects should be considered:

- Use humor that will be understandable and amusing to the majority of students.
- Review the presentation with others to ensure that the humor is clear and non-offensive.
- Avoid using humor that may be offensive to specific groups of students.

B. Educational Material

When using computer programs, humor can become an effective tool for creating engaging tasks. It can be implemented in various ways: adding comic illustrations to educational materials that reflect the concept or theme of the lesson; incorporating a humorous undertone into tasks or problem-solving exercises; creating humorous puzzles or riddles that require the use of mathematical skills to solve; introducing humorous characters used to explain complex concepts or theories; using humorous comparisons to explain complex educational ideas.

Let's provide examples of developing educational materials with elements of humor for elementary school students (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Educational material with elements of humor used in mathematics lessons.

(*Text on the left image:* Multiplication of multi-digit numbers. After studying the multiplication table. *Text on the right image:* Components of subtraction. Find and write the subtrahend in the empty cells. Minuend. Subtrahend. Difference.)   Source: Own research

C. Mobile Applications

Mobile applications for children can prove to be an effective learning tool. However, it is crucial to choose services that have received recommendations from educational institutions or independent teacher groups. Educational platforms specifically designed for learning can also be integrated into the educational process. Services offering game-based learning can be utilized during leisure time.

Let's provide examples of the interface of educational applications with the display of humorous elements in them (Figure 4).

D. Educational Cartoons

Cartoons can be an effective means of capturing attention and teaching in various life situations and academic subjects.

Research by Rule and Auge (31). suggests that students show more interest and grasp more concepts when cartoons are used, with characters illustrating scientific material.

Cartoons are an effective teaching tool as they help students better understand abstract concepts, foster critical thinking, and enhance motivation to learn. In study by Van Wyk (32) argue that cartoons contribute to the development of various skills and competencies, including constructive and contextual learning, social skills, cooperation, critical thinking, and learning in small groups.

Let's provide examples of cartoons with humorous elements used in our study (Figure 5).

Using computer technologies can be an effective means of creating instructional materials that are not only interesting but also motivate students to actively engage in learning. One method to enhance the attractiveness of such materials is by incorporating humorous content.

Figure 4 Comic elements in educational applications used by elementary school students.

Source: Own research.

Figure 5 Comic elements in cartoons used by elementary school students.

Source: YouTube

(*Text on the top image:* Planets of the Solar System. Interesting facts about the planets. Telling children about the planets. 4 Mars. *Text on the bottom image:* Cartoon "Paw Patrol." Episode 5. "Fire.")

Therefore, numerous studies highlight that the use of humor as an instructional tool can be effective in improving the quality of education. However, for instructional materials with humorous content to be effective, they must be well-thought-out and developed, taking into account the age-specific characteristics of students.

The program we developed involved the use of humorous instructional materials at various stages of the lesson, aligned with different instructional goals. Consequently, the primary objective of the experimental research is to confirm theoretical assumptions and assess the impacts of using humorous instructional materials (utilizing computer technologies) actively applied in elementary school lessons on the formation of students' knowledge, skills, and competencies.

Based on the analysis of educational, psy-chological-pedagogical, and foreign studies, the relevance of the problem and ways of developing and applying elements of humor (using computer technologies) in the primary school educational process have been identified. The key ideas of these transformations include defining the didactic potential of humor through computer technologies in primary school lessons. The results of implementing these ideas have provided the opportunity to specify the technologies of using humor at different stages of the lesson.

Computer programs with elements of humor can be adapted to the needs of each student. This can help them better understand the material and achieve success in learning. However, it is important to adhere to certain limitations in this matter, meaning to use humor judiciously and carefully so that it does not distract students from learning.

Table 1 Use of Humorous Instructional Materials at Different Phases of the Lesson with the Application of Computer Technologies

	Phase of the Lesson	Application of Instructional Material	Recommended Humor Tools
(1)	Class motivation. Activation of prior knowledge	Establishing class rules or lesson organization rules Announcing the lesson topic Stimulating active learning	Memes, presentations, cartoons
(2)	Control, correction, and consolidation of students' knowledge	Activating prior knowledge Posing a problem	Presentations, cartoons, comics
(3)	Studying new material	Learning new material (Explanation and narration)	Presentations, cartoons, comics
(4)	Consolidation of learned material	Checking acquired material (practical tasks)	Mobile applications, instructional materials
(5)	Summing up the lesson. Assignment of homework	Creating assessment/ self-assessment sheets	Memes, stickers, instructional materials

II. Research methods

A. Participants

The research sample was formed based on selected groups of students who actively participated in the study, along with teachers and coordinators implementing the program we developed for using computer technologies as a means of creating and implementing humorous instructional materials for elementary school students.

Throughout the research, teachers and students from primary schools in Lviv, Ternopil, and Khmelnytskyi (Ukraine) were surveyed. A total of 42 teachers and 243 students were involved in the diagnostic cross-section.

B. Research procedure

This research was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved establishing the theoretical foundation for the research and summarizing the results of previous studies in this field. The second stage focused on studying the practical experience of using computer technologies with elements of humor in primary schools, identifying both positive and negative aspects of this experience. The third stage involved an experimental study of the effectiveness of using hu-

morous instructional materials developed with the help of computer technologies.

The research was conducted following all necessary ethical norms. The materials used in the research were thoroughly reviewed and had a high degree of reliability, accuracy, repeatability, and validity.

C. Data Collection

The research addressed three main research questions:

RQ1: Does the didactic potential of humor through computer technologies help cultivate motivation for successful learning activities?

RQ2: What factors hinder students from showing initiative in the learning process?

RQ3: How do students, with the help of computer technologies, control the quality of task performance?

The surveys aimed to elucidate the state of the researched problem in the practice of primary schools, gather the opinions of respondents (teachers) on how effectively they use computer technologies to create humorous instructional materials in the educational process of primary schools and assess the level of students' ability to use and understand humor. The sur-

veys consisted of both open-ended and closed statements.

III. The results

The research presented in this work focused on three main aspects of primary school students' perception of humor: the role of humor in learning, the use of instructional materials created with the help of computer technologies that incorporated elements of humor, and the impact of humor on the classroom atmosphere. The student questionnaires consisted solely of closed-ended questions, while multiple-choice questions were included in some sections for the teachers.

In the communication sent to the respondent, it was noted that the survey was anonymous, and all fields were required to be filled out. The objective was stated: to determine the role of humor in education. The task was formulated as follows: please read the questions carefully and try to provide your answers as detailed and accurate as possible. The survey included the following questions:

- Do you think it is appropriate to use humor techniques in the educational process?
- How often do you use humor in your teaching activities?
- In your opinion, on which subjects should humor be most frequently used as a means of teaching and educating younger students?
- At which stages of the lesson, in your opinion, should humor be most frequently used as a means of teaching and educating younger students?
- How does your sense of humor manifest itself during the lesson?
- How do you feel about children's pranks and mischief?
- Do computer technologies help you use humor to achieve educational goals in the lesson?
- Provide examples of using humor from your own experience.
- Does the use of humor help you resolve conflict situations in the student environment?
- What is the result of using humor during lessons?

Having analyzed the respondents' answers to the survey questions, we can draw some conclu-

sions regarding the use of humor in didactic materials for primary school students. Let us now proceed to analyze the results obtained.

Younger students hold the following opinions: 75% of the surveyed students believe that school should be fun; during funny situations, they experience joy, happiness, and confidence; 95% enjoy solving tasks with elements of humor. Thus, based on the survey data, we confirm the idea that children want to attend a school where there is laughter, jokes, a cheerful mood, and positive emotions. 55% of children noted that humor (jokes, laughter) helps them better understand and remember the study material, but 25% of respondents have experienced being the target of teasing or mockery at school.

We were also interested in finding out how often teachers and students use computer technologies in the educational process. 74% of students confirmed the use of computer technologies by teachers, and 55% of younger students use computers during independent work, contributing to faster and higher-quality task completion and bringing positive emotions. 65% of students liked that the teacher often uses the computer, presenting funny stories, cartoons, presentations, making lessons less boring, and they felt positive changes in the educational process.

Having obtained this data, one can conclude that if the majority of children have the opportunity to laugh joyfully during lessons, feel positive emotions during funny situations (indicating that students understand the content of the joke and it is adapted to their age characteristics), behave freely during the educational process (indicating that the teacher has created conditions for the manifestation of children's activity and reacts adequately with humor to discipline violations), and remember new information better through humor (indicating that the teacher successfully used computer technologies with humorous tasks and organized their execution and analysis correctly), then it is worth considering that the conditions for using humor are indeed effective, as they have led to a positive dynamic in educational activities.

As for teachers, it became significantly easier for them to work with children after they

started incorporating elements of humor. For 95% of surveyed teachers, humor helps resolve conflict situations and highlights positive changes in the behavior and learning of students after actively using humor in their pedagogical activities. 57% of teachers claim that students better perceive and remember educational material of a humorous nature. Additionally, 88% of teachers continue to strive to use humor in their teaching activities, indicating the effectiveness and appropriateness of using humor in achieving educational goals.

The results of the conducted experimental research have demonstrated that humor effectively fulfills important functions in pedagogical activities (educational, developmental, health-preserving, stimulating, organizational, emotional, and informational). Thus, it can be argued that humor is an effective means of activating the educational process when teachers adhere to psychological and pedagogical conditions during its use. In conclusion, it can be stated that the experiment was successful and yielded positive results.

Through observation and surveys, we were able to analyze the relationships within the student community and the interactions that developed between the teacher and students (33). This includes how educators effectively use humor and computer technologies in their activities, such as selecting educational material of a humorous nature, creating funny situations, and responding indulgently to students' disciplinary violations or successful jokes.

Conclusions

The research provided answers to the posed questions. In addressing the main inquiry, the study demonstrated that humor holds significant didactic potential, encompassing motivational, procedural, and result-oriented components of the educational-cognitive activities of primary school students. An essential condition for the use of humor is considering the needs, interests, and developmental level of younger students.

Among the primary computer technologies used to integrate humor into lessons in elementary school are mobile applications, memes, presentations, cartoons, comics, didactic materials, stickers, and other educational resources. These technologies serve as factors for activating students' learning activities, stimulating their cognitive engagement, and acting as effective classroom management tools. (34, 35)

The research introduces a program for implementing humorous didactic materials at various stages of lessons in primary school, incorporating the content of educational activities and recommending humor resources.

Acknowledgement

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