Humor Scene Writing: Proficiency Matters, But Not That Much

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- (L1) Humor is considered one of the components of creativity àchievement. (Carson et al., 2005)
- Learners' attitudes towards humor in language learning play a pivotal role. (Neff & Dewaele, 2023) • FL proficiency is considered a critical learner factor in the comprehension and interpretation of humor. (Chen & Dewaele, 2018)



24 data-driven categories:

- **3 L2-related:** malapropism, wordplay, vulgar language (fork, shirt...)
- 21 L2-unrelated: intertextuality, situational irony, dramatic irony, irony, slapstick, twit, sarcasm, understatement, exaggeration, dumbness, confusion, misbehavior, caricature/parody in character, sexual jokes, pathos, surprise/plot reversal, comedy comes in 3s, psychological defense, heightened sense of reality, irreverence, somebody's pain

RQ1 quantity / proficiency

h	L2-related	L2-unrelated	Total of
	humor	humor	humor
	devices	devices	devices

Proficiency	L2-related	L2-unrelated	Total of
(N = 82)	humor	humor devices	humor
	devices		devices



	Student Creativity
Comedy Text Production	Humor Perception
	Audiovisual Exposure

			Μ	SD	Μ	SD	Μ	SD
	A1-A2	16	.63	.62	5.31	2.82	5.94	2.74
	B1-B2	44	.93	.97	6.61	3.99	7.55	4.31
	C1-C2	22	.95	.84	7.41	2.84	8.36	2.88
	Total	82	.88	.88	6.57	3.54	7.45	3.74
•	Kruskal-Wo	llis p > .0	5					

RQ1 quantity /	<pre>creativity</pre>
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Creativity variable		N	L2-related humor devices		L2-unrelated humor devices		Total of humor devices	
			Μ	SD	Μ	SD	Μ	SD
Humor	Above	35	.94	.91	7.94	3.97	8.89	4.13
Humor	Below	47	.83	.87	5.55	2.81	6.38	3.04
Creative writing	Above	34	1	.95	7.15	4.16	8.15	4.30
	Below	48	.79	.82	6.17	3.01	6.96	3.24
Theater	Above	48	.90	.97	6.10	3.40	7	3.52
and film	Below	34	.85	.744	7.24	3.67	8.09	3.98

Spearman's rho	.072	.283**	.284**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.518	.010	.010

RQ2 quantity	
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Humor tokens	р	%
Proficiency	.004	8.8
Humor	.001	12.25
Creativity	.336	.092
Theater and film	.116	.250

F(4, 77) = 6.083, p < .001, R2 = .240

What humorous devices (in terms of quantity) do EFL learners use in a written comedy screenplay after being exposed to 10 episodes of a fantasy comedy depending on:

 a) the students' EFL proficiency level?
 b) the students' self-reported creativity in humor, creative writing, and theater and film?

2. To which extent do proficiency and self-reported creativity in humor, creative writing, and theater and film influence the quantity and variety of humor elements in screenplay writing?

Participants

- 82 Catalan/Spanish bilingual EFL learners
- 1st & 2nd year of Media Studies degree
- 3 intact classes of 'Oral and Written Communication in English' subject
- EFL proficiency range A1 to C2, mean of B2 (Oxford Placement Test -Allan, 2004).
- For comparison purposes, the students were divided into three proficiency groups: A1-A2 (n = 16), B1-B2 (n = 44), and C1-C2 (n = 16) 22).

Mann-Whitney tests:

- Humor above average vs below average: L2-unrelated (p = .006) and total (p = .006) .010). Creative writing and Theater and film: p > .05
- 'Above-average humor' always shows a higher use of humor devices than aboveaverage creative writing and theater and film, except for creative writing and L2-related devices, though no significant differences were found between creativity features.



Humor variety	р	%
Proficiency	.002	10.76
Humor	.031	6.6
Creativity	.380	.172
Theater and film	.153	.262

F(4, 77) = 5.038, p < .001, R2 = .207



- Luit unit

Creative Achievement Questionnaire

Episode scene-writing competition!





Shelley Carson Harvard University

I. Place a check mark beside the areas in which you feel you have more talent, ability, or training than the average person.

- visual arts (painting, sculpture)
- music
- dance
- ____ individual sports (tennis, golf) team sports
- architectural design
- entrepreneurial ventures
- creative writing
- inventions
- scientific inquiry
- theater and film
- ___ culinary arts

The producers of *The Good Place* are looking for new ideas!

How is Tahani going to keep Eleanor in The Good Place? What is her plan? Write a conversation between the main characters describing what they are going to say to each other and what they are going to do to save Eleanor. Try to reflect the characters' sense of humor in your screenplay

Write between 200-220 words. Try to use as many phrases as you can from what you heard/read/learnt while you were watching The Good Place show.

Write the first conversation of the next episode using the background story given.

You have 40 minutes to complete the task.



INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE AT THE GOOD PLACE -(TIME?)

Tahani, Chidi, Jason, and both Eleanors break into Michael's office without knocking and interrupt his conversation with Janet. Tahani impatiently sits on the chair and starts explaining her plan. Everyone is listening to her and discusses her plan when she finishes.

• Comedy audiovisual input facilitates humor use in FL.

- Proficiency threshold for the use of humor devices at B1-B2 vs C1 on CEFRL
- L2-related devices are scarce as compared to L2-unrelated ones. • L2-related devices do not correlate with proficiency (only 3 types).
- Humor in one's L1 needed to create humor in FL, both for variety and quantity.

• Creative writing skills also influential for L2-related devices. • Uncontrolled variables:

1. instruction on humor during the term

2. Students' actual L1 humor and other creative skills

- 3. Number of humor types and tokens in the 10 episodes (audiovisual
- input exposure)

4. Students' preference for TV genres



Reference: Suárez, M.M. (in review). Comedy screenplay writing after original version extensive viewing: Proficiency might be necessary, but so are humor skills. In A. Pattemore & F. Gesa (Eds.), Foreign language learning from audiovisual input: The role of original version television. Springer.

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