

Use of Humour in an Academic B-learning ESP Course

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Abstract: The subject of the study presented in this chapter concerns ESP presentations delivered by BA students of humanities which include examples of intentional high brow humour based on semantic incongruity and the use of poetic imagery.

The skill of creating humorous messages is perceived in the context of the ability to think critically, as perceived by Don and Alleen Nilsen in the *Linguistic Humor* presentation. The appropriateness of their use is delineated by the boundaries set by Ronald A. Berk in *Professors are from Mars and students are from snickers* and Giseline Kuipers in *Humor and social boundaries*.

In principle, the humour used in presentations does not aim at entertainment. It helps student presenters strive to create and deliver original content according to course principles in order to 1. deepen their own and the listener's understanding of the subject discussed, 2. involve them in individual and group language practice in class and on the e-learning platform.

Action research carried out during classes included the collection of statistical data concerning evaluation of the presentation and of its delivery, and of the use of humour as well as the obtaining of additional information from students' comments.

Detailed analysis of these data shows that the ability to create and purposefully use humorous material is not connected with students' language competence but rather with their ability to think critically and willingness to expend intellectual effort.

Keywords: critical thinking, creativity, original work, persuasive technique, public speaking skills, sense of achievement, future career

I. INTRODUCTION

The B-learning course of English for specific purposes based on student presentations containing intentional humour resulting from semantic incongruity, which will be discussed in this chapter, is a response to the current trends in higher education for giving students an opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills in connection with the subject of their studies and to ensure access to distance learning.

The course was proposed by the lecturer (Danuta Furszpaniak), run and researched by her in six groups at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań (Poland) within a 30-hour English language course in the summer term 2012/2013. It was attended by 72 first-year students doing full-time undergraduate courses in Ethics, Teacher Training and Slavonic Studies and 17 students doing second-year undergraduate extramural studies in Psychology. Two-hour classes were held

at the university once a week. Besides these classes, the students continued to study at any time and place where they had access to a computer and the Internet. The use of an e-learning platform enabled them to have continuous contact with the lecturer and other people in the group.

The course under discussion is an expanded version of the course run a year earlier with two groups of Polish Philology students (levels B1-C1) in the first year of a Master's program at the same university. The principles of that course did not include the need for intentional use of humour in presentations. Adding this requirement is connected with the fact that the students of Polish Philology were really interested in the delivered presentations' content and were keen to participate in discussions. I noticed that this was caused by the fact that many presenters naturally used intentional humour (based on the theory of semantic incongruity) to achieve their presentation objectives. As a rule, they put humorous material in one slide of a multimedia presentation. It contained verbal and iconographic content. Successful use of humour was rooted in students' creativity, high level of divergent, convergent and critical thinking, and in their deep reading and text interpretation abilities. Additionally, those students had a broad knowledge of literature and culture, and the skills to use the word and image in a multimedia dimension.

- Creating original humorous content based on semantic incongruity required from the presenter:
 - Reflection on the presentation issue;
 - Reflection on the content and form of the humorous element in order that it forms an integral part of the presentation;
 - Use of metaphorical language and elements of visual arts.
- Humorous messages based on semantic incongruity contributed to:
 - Inciting the listeners' curiosity;
 - Broadening the presenter's and the listeners' perception of reality;
 - Focusing the listeners' attention on the presentation message;
 - Controlling the presenter's and the recipient's emotions;
 - Keeping the audience interested in the presentation to its end;
 - Activating discussion;
 - Developing critical thinking in the listeners and shaping their own opinions on subjects

connected with future careers;

- Developing public speaking skills in English under semi-professional conditions at the group's cognitive level;
- Causing changes in the opinion of individual students or of the entire group;
- Maintaining the presenter's leading role as an authority in the field of the presented discussed topic to the student and the teacher.

Perception of the above-mentioned benefits of the use of intentional humour in presentations encouraged the teacher to add the requirement of obligatory use of pre-thought/intentional intellectual humour in all presentations in the next edition of the B-learning course, which will be under discussion from this point. As in the case of the Polish Philology students, these courses were carried out within the framework of a one-term thirty-hour general English language course with elements of English for specific purposes. It was attended by 89 students of Ethics, Teacher Training, Psychology and Slavonic Studies. A detailed description of the groups and the course, with the use of the paradigm of action research, can be found in Section 4.

2. BASIC TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

The necessity to teach English for specific purposes in an original, involving and modern way was the primary reason for doing the course. The other one was to give students a chance to improve their cognitive skills through making presentations with elements of humour. Detailed information about the course components is listed in its name: 'The B-learning course of English for specific purposes based on student presentations containing intentional humour resulting from semantic incongruity'. All aspects of the course were discussed with students to make them its subjective participants, aware of the process of learning.

All course participants were doing English for specific purposes for the first time. This is because it is mainly taught to adults who have some knowledge of general English, at tertiary level of education or in professional work situations. "The term 'specific' in ESP refers to the specific purpose for learning English" (Lorenzo 2005) defined by the student's language needs (at linguistic, pragmatic and functional levels) determined by their (future) job position and environment. Students of ESP usually possess subject matter knowledge which makes the context of their language

learning gain verbal and nonverbal English language competence required to perform job-related functions. ESP teaching is learner-oriented and uses 'teaching techniques based on work methods that are part of normal professional activities' (Rodriguez-Pinero Alcala 2012) i.e. case studies, project work, delivering multimedia presentations, making posters etc.

Blended learning formula of the course was suggested to make it attractive for the modern student who perceives the Internet also as Web 2.0 – a platform containing applications (software) enabling the communication and collaborative work of many people (Kaznowski 2014). B-learning allows to integrate traditional teaching methods, based on direct contact with the teacher – F2F (Face to Face), with activities (exercises) done remotely with the help of a computer in a virtual learning environment – VLE (Blended learning 2013). It is important to notice that Blended learning is characterised by high efficacy, because it allows the teacher to prepare the training in a flexible way, taking into consideration goals, topics and the specificity of the students' main subject and participants of the course. (Blended learning 2013, Kuciapski 2008).

In the presentation course F2F learning prevailed and VLE was used by the teacher to communicate with course participants, to place materials and activities for students to be done individually and as a group. VLE environment enabled all students to have access to all presentations as well as to teacher and student presentation-related materials.

This work was done on the e-learning platform – the integrated system in the VLE space, responsible for creating and developing the contents and running of courses. (Kuciapski 2008). Most groups chose and successfully used the intuitive PBWorks which fulfilled all VLE presentation course requirements. Teacher training groups preferred a well-known e-mail box as their workplace. The administering student ordered through it all presentations and materials sent by the teacher and course participants (see 4.3).

Delivering presentations in the F2F class environment was the core of the course. The presentation was defined as a purposeful speech act consisting of announcing information to listeners or to an audience in order to achieve a specific intention e.g. passing on a piece of information, gaining the audience's acceptance, selling them something, raising their empathy or enabling them to make a decision (Hughes, Mallett 2012). In the case of a multimedia presentation, the verbal message is supplemented with visuals and/

or sound. Presentations are delivered in different environments: academic, cultural, business, political, volunteer, neighbourhood etc. They are directed to small groups of people and to crowds of thousands or millions thanks to televisual transmission. The presentation delivered by the student during the course under discussion was to last 2-3 minutes and consist of up to eight slides. The presenter was to focus on one problem only. Additionally, they were to interpret its problem in terms of humour based on semantic incongruity. The humorous message, preferably expressed with the use of poetic imagery (see 5) was to be placed in one slide of the presentation.

Semantic incongruity is the last term used in the presentation course title. It is the basis for the existence of a humorous message which consists of the expected and the unexpected elements encoded by the message sender and perceived and decoded by its receiver (Attardo, Raskin, 1991; Kuipers 2009; Rod 2006; Morreale 2009; Oring 2003, Raskin 1985; Ritch 2004; Movement 2008). The moment the receiver resolves the semantic incongruity, they release nervous energy in the form of a physiological reaction: laughter, a smile, a visual sign etc. (Black 2006). The author of a humorous message does not always need to have the intention of provoking laughter. This view is of crucial importance in connection with the use of humour in formal texts and situations (Mulder and Nijholt 2002) and has full application in relation to the use of humour by students in the presentation course.

The humour students use in their presentations is:

- a purposeful social activity (Wagner, 2011: 411) done universally;
- intentional (asynchronous) and tested by the author before its official use in order to exclude any inappropriateness resulting from different interpretations of the encoded content (Bryant 1980b; Berk 1998);
- based on incongruity theory assuming the resolution of inconsistencies between conflicting messages (Asimov, 1971; Muldrer, Nijholt, 2002).

Beside the incongruity theory of humour students learnt two other main theories of humour:

- relief theory of humour – humour is a homeostatic mechanism that reduces mental tension in the body and is intended to overcome socio-cultural inhibitions and repressed (Theories of humor, 2013).
- superiority theory of humour, which claims that man laughs because of the joy of feeling a sense of superiority towards others, less fortunate than

him because of their shortcomings, deficiencies or defects (Theories of humor, 2013).

Yet, they were advised not to make humour based on them to avoid inventing offensive humour; (see 4.5.1, 5, 6).

Although humour is commonly associated with mirth and laughter, for many researchers the somatic reaction to it is of secondary importance (Kuipers 2009). They concentrate on humour's intellectual rather than entertainment dimension due to its complexity and varied reception. Steve Allen (1987 p. 11) says that "Humor isn't even always funny, because what is funny is a matter of personal opinion." Dave Barry (1988 s.10-11), an authority in the field of critical thinking, believes that: "What may seem depressing and even tragic for one person, may seem like an absolute scream to another person."

Considering what has been said about humour in this text so far, it is possible to note that humour is a cognitive challenge in which mental, emotional and volitive processes are involved. According to cognitive scientists who study it in the context of the learning process (Ziv 1979; Wanzer, Frymer 1999; Kelly; Gorham 1988), a humorous message:

- Attracts the recipient's attention and focuses it on itself;
- Stimulates cognitive arousal – i.e. thinking, reasoning and remembering;
- Stimulates cognitive learning (Kelly, Gorham, 1988) i.e. incorporation of personally discovered/learnt new content.

A humorous message attracts the recipient's attention because it raises curiosity. However, the efficiency of finding the internal logic of the humorous message is in direct proportion to the individual's ability to think, their general knowledge, language competence, volitional and emotional involvement.

Making and receiving humour based on semantic incongruity requires highly developed skills of thinking and creativity. Zimbardo claims that thinking is "a complex mental process, involving the creation of new representations by means of transformation of available information. It includes the interaction of numerous mental operations such as drawing conclusions, abstraction, reasoning, imagining, judging, problem solving and creativity." (Zimbardo 1999 p. 403). Intellectual work of making presentations and particularly of inventing humour involves highly developed:

- Divergent thinking which is a thought process or method used to generate creative ideas by reference

to a number of possible solutions. It is characterised by spontaneity and freedom, so that in a short time many new ideas come into being. It is characteristic of brainstorming (Motta 2012).

- Convergent thinking which is a thought process that leads to the finding of the only correct solution. It often occurs after completion of divergent thinking. Its purpose is to organise ideas and information, and to put them into a structure. It is used, for example, when doing a multiple choice exercise (Motta 2012).
- "Critical thinking which is a type of reasonable, reflective thinking that is aimed at deciding what to believe or what to do." (Ennis 1987 pp. 9-26). Scriven (1987 p. 1) emphasizes that this reasoning is an 'intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing and/or evaluating information gathered from or generated by, observation, experience, reflection and reasoning or communication as a guide to belief and action.' Hindery (2001) points out that critical thinking shapes the habit of seeking the truth and openness, of being systematic, analytic, inquisitive, self-confident and prudent in one's judgment of reality. Critical thinking is formed during the whole process of education. However, its consistent development takes place at the stage of academic training and leads to the formation in a student of the way of thinking typical of a highly educated professional.
- Creativity – the ability to form new associations, ideas, concepts, and relationships, with already existing ideas and concepts (Kreatywność 2013). It is a voluntary activity aimed at achieving specific results.

Don Nilsen (2014), an American linguist, academic teacher and co-founder of the International Society for Humour Studies, points out that there is a directly proportional relationship between the abilities of analytic, divergent and critical thinking and the abilities to generate and understand humour (a humorous message). Therefore, he finds the making and use of highbrow humour based on semantic incongruity to be a beneficial exercise which improves students' logical thinking and deepens their understanding of the reality. His opinion gives the first reason why to teach university students to use humour in their presentations.

Another argument is that man's development of humour is correlated with mental development (Mahony and Mann 1992) and the third says that humour preferences depend on the level of the receiver's education. Popular humour, which is obvious and instantly

enjoyable, is attractive for people with basic education but boring for those with college or university one. The latter prefer sharp, reflective, often veiled highbrow humour which makes a joke an intellectual challenge, because the originality and ambivalence of thought provide the possibility of opening new horizons of cognition (Kuipers 2009).

First- and second-year students of first degree studies who did the academic ESP professional presentations course aspired to belong to the group of people with higher education. The course was a proposal aimed at not only improving their language competence and speaking skills but also at cognitive potential. The process of introducing students into the idea of intentional highbrow humour and the ways of its use, the idea of a multi-media presentation, working in VLE, cooperating with the group in class and on the e-learning platform took up to ten hours. Course results are presented by case studies and detailed research analysis in the last part of this article.

3. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

“The experimental B-learning course of English for specific purposes based on students’ presentations containing intentional humour resulting from semantic incongruity” was conducted in the summer semester of the academic year 2012/2013. The date of July 6., i.e. the last meeting with the students (a consultation meeting), is taken as the end of the project. There were 72 students of the 1st year of full-time undergraduate studies: 6 students of Ethics (B1/B2 level), 29 students of Teacher Training (two groups of A2 level), 23 students of Slavonic Studies (B2 level) and 14 students of Slavonic Studies (C1 level) taking part in the project. There were also 17 students in the 2nd year of Psychology (part-time programme, extramural studies) participating in the course in the second semester (B1 level). The project was conducted within a 30-hour English course including general English and English for special purposes. The proposal of a B-learning course met with the students’ acceptance because the course and its syllabus enabled the students to:

- get acquainted with English for specific purposes and to use it, which was a novelty after many years of learning general English;
- acquire new competences in preparing and delivering multimedia presentations of a professional nature;

- learn the ways of coding humorous content and the rules of its use in formal utterances;
- deliver presentations and take part in discussions;
- receive professional advice concerning the presentation from the teacher;
- learn through distance learning demanding the development of the skills of individual and group learning in the digital space;
- learn general English e.g. grammar in the areas requiring competence;
- take partial responsibility for the didactic process.

The course gave its participants the opportunity to play a triple role: as a presenter, listener and student of a foreign language. As a presenter during the class, the student had about 20 minutes at his disposal. During that time he presented the results of his individual work with the use of multimedia. For the majority of the time he was a listener of presentations, obliged to receive their content actively and to do exercises designed by the presenter. For the rest of time he acted as a student, mastering his language competence in cooperation with the teacher.

The multidimensional character of the B-learning course demanded from the teacher a detailed presentation of its rules during a F2F meeting and the uploading on the e-learning platform of materials concerning:

- the organisation of the course;
- the conduct of the F2F classes;
- preparation, delivery and registration of the presentation on the platform;
- the application of humour;
- assessment of the presentation and progress in learning English.

3.1 Organisation of the course in the classroom

Since the number of students in the groups participating in the experiment was varied, the classes – though conducted with the same didactic resources – were conducted individually. For instance, in a six-student group (because of the low number of presentations) there was more time left for discussion, doing additional lexical exercises and learning general English than in larger groups. In all of the groups within a 30-hour course:

- **it took 10-12 hours to:**

1. learn the formal requirements concerning the B-learning language course;
2. get the students acquainted with the e-learning platform;
3. establish the timetable for delivering presentations and work throughout the semester;
4. get the students acquainted with the theoretical content concerning the presentations and the way of designing humour and exercises accompanying the presentations. It covered:
 - learning the model of a PowerPoint presentation using the example of the teacher's original material: *Fairy tale therapy. Didactic material based on a student's presentation (A2)*;
 - introduction to the idea and structure of a presentation and the means of its delivery and reception on the basis of a book and a DVD recording by Hughs J., Mallett A. (2012) *Successful Presentations. For professionals who use English at work*;
 - learning the idea of applying humour on the basis of the teacher's multimedia presentation *Humour in presentations based on semantic incongruity*, prepared with the use of a presentation by Don & Aleen Nilsen, *Linguistic humor and language play (2012)*, *Humor in business (2012)* and *Computational humor (2012)*;
 - learning to design different types of humorous exercises on the basis of a book by Ronald A. Berk (1998) *Professors are from Mars and students are from Snickers. How to write and deliver humour in classroom and in professional presentations*;
 - doing selected lexical exercises and exercises concerning the structure of a presentation from Marion Grussendorf (2007) *English for presentations*;
 - preparing mini-presentations in order to gain the skills of using the structure of a presentation.
 - - it took 3 hours to revise the structure of positive and affirmative sentences in active and passive voice on a level adequate for the students' command of English. The amount of time devoted to doing syntactic exercises designed by the teacher depended on the students' needs and preferences. The exercises of this type were often done during the time remaining after delivering presentations.

- it took 4 hours to:

- write two tests;
- talk to the students individually in order to discuss and assess the materials uploaded by the students onto the platform. (In the meantime, the students

who did not consult the teacher were designing quizzes concerning their presentations.)

All these class activities lasted up to 19 hours. Assuming that delivering one presentation and doing exercises takes about 20 minutes, a model 20-person group needs about 27 classes to realise the project. It is needless to say that the amount of time left for doing resources outside the presentation course differed in groups having from 6 to 23 students. This was not a problem as the presentation course was either a part of or a form of an original English language course.

3.2 Rules for the use of humour in presentations

The teacher gives rules in class for the use of humour, delivering a multimedia author's presentation *Humour in presentations based on semantic incongruity*:

- The teacher explains the idea of humour, referring to Christian Hempelman's (a researcher in medieval literature) belief that a joke communicated with words, resulting from semantic incongruity, has a highly aesthetic character and that humour is a sublime phenomenon (Hempelman 2008).
- The teacher proposes to create humour arising from semantic incongruity by the use of metaphorical language, means of artistic imagery, fragments of literary works, poetry, music, etc.
- The teacher highlights the fact that a professional presentation is a formal speech which should be inoffensive. Therefore, the humour used in it should be high-brow. Here are seven categories of humour and objectives which should always be avoided:
 - humour that puts down any individual, including popular people from the world of entertainment and politics;
 - humour that puts down any group based on ethnicity, race, gender, religion and sexual orientation;
 - sarcasm and ridicule;
 - sexual content and innuendo;
 - profanity and vulgarity;
 - humour about physical disabilities, mental retardation, appearance and characteristics such as obesity, height, hair colour or pregnancy;
 - humour on very sensitive issues, such as AIDS, abortion, divorce and personal tragedies (Berk, 1998).

- The teacher emphasizes the fact that many presentations given by students will concern sensitive topics as they are covered in the subject of their studies. Therefore, she sensitizes them to maintain their intellectual, moral and emotional discipline at the stage of inventing humour;
- The teacher suggests that students choose visual material for sensitive topics from the resources of cultural heritage (mainly art) to present the problem in a dignified, accurate and understandable way;
- The teacher warns students that humour is a double-edged tool; if used improperly, it turns its blade with vengeance against the user. Consequently, this may lead to a negative response from the listener:
 - tarnishing the presenter's good name;
 - ignoring the presenter;
 - ignoring the humour of the entire presentation;
 - responding in an acute verbal way to the presentation or the speaker;
 - openly expressing anger;
 - inflicting injuries in relation to the speaker;
 - stopping communication;
 - stopping the process of learning (Berk, 1998).
- The teacher stresses the fact that the asynchronous humour used in the presentation should help the receivers perceive the discussed issue from a new perspective, induce reflection or help them make autonomous decisions.

Information on the idea and use of humour in presentations can be found by the student on the e-learning platform.

3.3 Working with the e-learning platform

For practical reasons, two simple tools for recording presentations were selected: PbWorks and an electronic mailbox. They allow the teacher and the students to upload materials and to communicate with one another. The important thing is that in case of both tools, all the materials are visible to all the users. The advantages of Pb Works are that it disables anonymous activities and has an intuitive and friendly interface.

In order to begin the course the teacher uploaded a set of documents to the platform:

1. The teacher's original *Companion to Presentations* (Pl. *Przewodnik po prezentacjach*), containing the rules of the course, the way to prepare the presentations, their delivery and uploading them to the platform.

2. Documents to be downloaded and filled in by the students within individual and group work in specific stages of the project. These were:

- **Table of contents** containing the list of participants of the course, titles of presentations, dates of their delivery and a section for remarks connected with organisational matters;
- **A form in the Word format** entitled *Presentation text, vocabulary, questions, exercises* (Pl. *Tekst prezentacji, słownictwo, pytania, ćwiczenia*), which constituted the text recording of the presentation delivered by the student. In the heading of the document (Table 1.) there is a place for entering the students' personal data and their presentations.

Table 1. Heading of the form containing text recording of the presentation

..... № Student's Surname & Name Subject of Studies Specialisation
..... Title of Presentation Year of Studies/ Level Date/Time of Classes

Below the heading the student enters:

- a list of 20 topic specific words;
- three questions concerning the main threads of the presentation;
- title and text of the presentation;
- bibliography and webgraphy;
- bilingual exercises concerning the subject of the presentation;
- commentary on the content of the presentation edited on the basis of the brief afterthoughts of the audience expressed in written form.

The student is obliged to upload the completed form to the e-learning platform within a week of delivering the presentation. The deadline also applies to the uploading of the PowerPoint presentation with its title and the name of the author in the first slide.

- **Revision** texts containing forms with unified headings: *Revision – vocabulary*, *Revision – questions*, *Revision – summaries of presentations* and *Revision – quiz* (Pl. *Powtórka – słownictwo*, *Powtórka – pytania*, *Powtórka – streszczenia wystąpień*, *Powtórka – quiz*), filled in collectively by the students of a given group.

In the above-mentioned forms, equipped with adequate data concerning the class group, in the boxes next to the title of the presentation the students individually enter information about their own presentations: An English-Polish dictionary, three statements connected with the content of the presentation (see Table 2.) and questions about them, abstracts of the presentations and an 8-10-point quiz in the form of a multiple choice test (Furszpaniak 2013).

3.4 Rules for delivering the presentations

The time allotted for the student to deliver the presentation and do exercises with the other participants of the course is 20 minutes. In order to deliver the presentation a few steps are necessary:

- the student distributes among the audience a photocopy of a shortened version of the *Presentation text* form (containing the list of vocabulary, questions concerning the main threads of the presentation and language exercises concerning the subject of the presentation). The teacher is given a full version of the form also containing the text of the presentation.
- the student reads aloud the vocabulary list and teaches its pronunciation;
- the student asks three general questions, the other students in the group try to answer;
- the student delivers his presentation and then presents its bibliography. The time of delivering the presentation at A2 and B1 levels is basically not longer than 3 minutes. This varies depending on the subject of studies – for example presentations concerning philosophical issues demand more time.
- the listeners do exercises concerning the presentation and then carry out a group discussion;
- the receivers of the presentation write commentaries concerning its content or expand it. They focus their attention on what is positive and valuable, refer to important, new and interesting information. The commentaries, part of which are read during the class, with signatures of their authors, are passed on to the presenter to be compiled and included in the *Presentation text* file and uploaded to the e-learning platform.
- after finishing the presentation, a list of ten words is compiled and included by the presenter in the *Revision* to create a corpus of vocabulary on the e-learning platform.

Time limitation makes it impossible for the teacher to assess the presentation thoroughly. Grammatical and syntactic mistakes can be discussed in front of the whole group before the students start doing exercises. Individual remarks can be given to the presenter while the other students do the exercises or write their commentaries. The course of the discussion after the

Table 2. Revision form in the Word format

Subject of Studies Year of Studies Degree

Level of English Day and Time of Classes

Academic Year / Semester

QUESTIONS

No	Title of Presentation	Statements / Questions
		[Statement]
		[Yes/No question]
		[WH-question]
		[Subject/object question]

presentation depends on the listeners' degree of interest raised by the presentation, their language skills and the remaining time (Furszpaniak 2013).

3.5 Presentation assessment criteria

After students finish doing the exercises or after the discussion, the teacher evaluates the presentations according to the criteria presented in Table 3. (below).

3.5.1 Criteria for evaluation of humour in a multimedia presentation

The teacher, assessing humour in a multimedia version of the presentation, takes into consideration the semantic incongruity basic to it, the originality of the humour and the student's work input. For humorous material on the slide a student can receive:

- 2 points – if the humour:
 - is rooted in the deep structure of the presentation;
 - is based on semantic incongruity and is expressed in verbal or verbal and visual forms;
 - results from the use of poetic imagery;
 - results from the presentation of the text in a visual form;
 - is formed by a juxtaposition of two unoriginal humorous slides.
- 1,5 points – if:
 - the humour is rooted in the deep structure of the presentation;
 - the slide contains unoriginal humorous visual and verbal material in which the presenter made changes or correctly translated comments into English;

- 1 point – if the slide contains unoriginal humorous visual and verbal material, in which the presenter did not make any changes.
- 0,5 points – if the slide contains unoriginal visual humour (without a verbal comment) correlated with the issue of the presentation.
- Zero points for unoriginal visual material unrelated to the issue of the presentation.

0,5 to 2 points are given for humour on the condition that it enables the listeners to look at the issue discussed in the presentation from a new perspective and encourages them to participate in the post-presentation discussion.

3.5.2 Criteria for evaluation of Exercise 2.

• Exercise 2 has a playful character. It aims at synthesizing presentation content and providing an opportunity to master new vocabulary in an entertaining way. For writing this exercise, the student may receive:

- 2 points for writing correctly:
 - a multiple choice exercise in which each of the four possible answers is a sentence;
 - a scenario of a scene or pantomime for the listener to act out;
 - a keyword expressing the main idea of the presentation, in which vowels are missing;
 - an acronym with a hint allowing the disclosure of its meaning;
 - a crossword with a password;
 - a puzzle based on the presented material;
 - a list of 16-20 antonyms, related to the content of the presentation, which should be matched;
 - a list of 8-10 words relevant to the content of the

Table 3. Presentation assessment sheet

Correctness		Presentation text	Humour in PowerPoint	Ex. 1 (summary)	Ex. 2 (contains elements of humour)	Communicativeness of the utterance	Total
of filling in the questionnaire	of preliminary questions						
1 pts	1,5 pts	5 pts	2 pts	2 pts	2 pts	1,5 pts	15 pts

The total number of points includes the following marks: 13,5-15 pts = excellent (5 = bdb); 13 pts = very good (4 = db+); 11-12,5 pts = good (4 = db); 10,5 pts = sufficient (3+ = dst+); 9-10 pts = insufficient (3 = dst); 0-9 pts fail (2 = ndst).

presentation, which should be matched with definitions in English;

- an exercise in which pictures and captions or titles should be matched;
- 1,5 points – for preparing:
 - a diagram in which 10 key words are hidden;
 - 10 words relevant to the content of the presentation with missing vowels;
 - a crossword without a password;
 - an exercise in which words from the presentation are to be arranged into semantic families.

Exercise 2. should help develop creativity. Therefore, language mistakes, unlike in Exercise 1., have no significant impact on its assessment.

4. POETIC IMAGERY USED BY STUDENTS TO CREATE HUMOROUS CONTENT BASED ON SEMANTIC INCONGRUITY

Experience gained in class has led to the conclusion that students have a good ability to recognize sensitive content. When proposing a presentation on a sensitive subject, they usually add that they would avoid deriving humour from it because of the delicacy of the issue. The teacher is willing to share their opinion, if the humour used in the presentation was to arise from the application of superiority or relief theories. The situation is different when humour based on semantic incongruity results from the use of poetic imagery and of iconographic material of high artistic value. The presentation *Humour in presentations based on semantic incongruity*, which the teacher delivers during an introductory class to humour, gives students an idea of how they should make humorous material based on poetic imagery in their presentations. Students are given definitions of over ten figures of speech and suitable examples of humorous material produced with their use. For the reader to evaluate students' creativity in scope of humour we will first give the definition of a figure of speech the student learned and then an example of a student's humorous message from their presentation.

- Chiasmus is rather unknown by Polish native speakers but is often used by English native speakers both in spoken and written English. Its idea is to repeat words in a sentence in a reversed order, which results in a change in the meaning. (Chiazam 2013). Chiasmus was used to produce a humor-

ous message in connection with high risk humour subject of euthanasia. The statement: 'The idea of euthanasia is either to help people to die or to die to help people' showed the audience the social side of death upon request. This opened a new perspective for a discussion.

- Symbol is a conventional sign (perceived sensually) which has a literal meaning and an infinite number of hidden ones (Symbol 2013). It had its visual realisation in a student's presentation concerning euthanasia. The audience was shown two versions of the doctors' and pharmacists' logo: a snake winding a stick and a snake winding a cup filled with poison. Divergent interpretations of the logo provoked a discussion on the ethos of the doctor's and the pharmacist's professions in the context of euthanasia.
- The issue of human organ transplantation also belongs to the group of high risk humour topics. The use of antithesis – juxtaposition of opposing concepts in a surprising manner to achieve one of greater expression (Antithesis 2013) – gave way to formulating the claim: 'Transplantation: death, which is the end of the donor's life is the beginning of the recipient's life.' The achieved high level of generalisation gave ground to a multi-faceted discussion.
- Metaphor belongs to the names of figures of speech which students most often heard, but not necessarily understood, during their high school poetry classes. From the presentation delivered by the teacher they learned that a metaphor is the expression or understanding of one concept in terms of another by way of analogy (Aristotle 1989, p. 1457b in: Wikipedia 2013). To create it you can look for similarity in dissimilar things. The author of the presentation about the role of school trips in education (Górecka 2012) comments on the row of bottles of 'Finlandia' vodka in the photo saying: 'School trips are a form of education which gives their participants the opportunity to gain new knowledge.' She develops this thought in the next highly ironic slide in which clear sexual context is noticeable. The slide presents a photograph of two pairs of teenagers' feet lying next to each other, toes up, sticking out of a quilt. The commentary on the slide says: 'During school trips kids get to know each other MUCH better'. The listeners, who knew the reality of school outings from the educators' point of view, spontaneously reacted to the presenter's view.
- The ability to use eponyms requires knowledge of culture: history, literature, drama, film etc. An

eponym is a word formed from a proper name as well as the name of a historical or fictional person from which the name of another thing, phenomenon, place or locality comes (Eponim 2013). It is obvious that the text takes on new meaning when selected words are consistently replaced with eponyms. In the presentation passage on the influence of reading books on child development and strengthening of family ties (Maciejewska 2012), the presenter substituted selected words with eponyms which had a positive meaning and then with ones which had a negative meaning. Consequently, a positive and then a negative image of the family emerged. This exercise helped students realise the creative power of the word.

- Much English humour is based on the use of homonyms – ‘ words with the same sound as the other one but different meaning’ (Homonym 2013). On a slide illustrating accurate changes in awareness and mental health which affect persons belonging to youth subcultures, the author of the presentation posted a picture of a punk trying to engage in a dialogue with a rooster. Using the English homonym ‘mohawk’ to name both a rooster’s and a punk’s head decoration, the student inserted a comment ‘Mohawk in two ways’ (Stróżniak 2012). The humorous material instigated a discussion on subcultures from psychological, cultural and educational perspectives.
- Students of ethics used metonymy to enliven a Socratic dialogue with humour. By association they gave a new name (‘pepper’) to the concept of ‘love’ discussed in the dialogue.

Each of us can be a Socrates

Socrates: Excuse me, Sir. May I take you a minute?

Matthew: Sure. Why not, Socrates?

Socrates: Dear Friend: What is pepper for you?

Matthew: It is a feeling.

Socrates: And what is a feeling?

Matthew: It is an emotion such as attachment, fear, devotion or care.

Socrates: Is care for another person the same as pepper?

Matthew: Yes, that’s right. You are saying it right, Socrates.

Socrates: And when you pepper, doesn’t care for another person give you more pleasure than care for yourself?

Matthew: Mmm.... You are right, my Friend.

Socrates: So isn’t making the other person more worthy than yourself, true pepper?

Matthew: Hm,... now I see that making the other person more important is true pepper. Thank you, Socrates, I have understood what pepper really is.

Socrates: Dear Friend, I very tell you that the knowledge about pepper was in you.

I only helped you to elicit it. (Dulat, Karcz, 2013)

For the reader the dialogue would be even more humorous, had its authors substituted ‘Matthew’ with an unusual name that creates humorous image such as Bubba, Dudley, Purvis etc. (Berk 1998).

- Obviously, personification is presentation of animals and plants, inanimate objects, phenomena or ideas as people (Jaworski 2001). In terms of personification it is not uncommon for abstract notions to make speeches. In the presentation on animal-assisted therapy (Żołeńska 2013), a wise dog with empathetic eyes, whose pictures appear at the beginning, in the middle and the end of the presentation, takes the role of a narrator who competently discusses the idea and role of animal-assisted therapy. This method of communication was particularly compelling for listeners who, like the presenter, see dogs as their close friends.
- Another figure of speech which relates to animal world is animalisation. It is used to give things or persons animal qualities (Animalizacja 2013). The author of the presentation ‘Art Therapy. Draw me how you feel’ uses animalisation to tell, in a discreet and slightly humorous way, a truth which is difficult to accept for an alleged patient (Drożan 2013). On the ‘Thank you for your attention’ slide, the student includes a drawing of a pompous black cat, indicative of accumulated anger in its psyche, and a part of the drawing on the cover of a children’s book, indicative of the author’s tranquility and harmony.

The comment 'Angry cat at art therapy class' in the context of iconographic material makes a clear and direct introduction to a discussion about the idea and efficacy of this therapy.

- Economical use of words while texting is the natural environment for using acronyms i.e. 'words formed by shortening an expression comprising two or more words' (Acronim 2013). The acronym stu + dying (from 'student' and 'dying') written on a piece of paper covered with mathematical formulae, appears in the first slide of the presentation about the impact of proper nutrition on students' intellectual development. (Matysiak 2013) The gap between the scientific style of the presentation and the roguish question: 'What to eat during studies, so as studying did not mean dying?' gives the presentation, burdened with scientific data about a healthy diet, jocular spirit. It launched the students' spontaneous exchange of dormitory cooking experiences.
- The ability to create myths allows their author(s) control individuals, social groups and whole societies. This is why myth is not only common in mass media, advertising, movies, show business but also in presentations. Students were given a basic definition of myth: 1) 'a literary form of a story which passes ideas of a given community about the world and people' (Myth 2013); 2) a program, which justifies events, ideas and ideologies (Wellek, Warren 1980). Today, various human communities and individuals make various stories aimed at creating and sustaining the false image of a group or an individual (Mit 2013) They aim at reshaping the reality according to their plans.

The presentation 'Welcome to Sarajevo' (2013) is a mythical representation of the aspirations of inhabitants of the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to: 1) forget the atrocities of the city's siege and extermination of residents by the Serbs in the 1990s; 2) return to normal life. The message of this presentation has a symbolic character and is understandable only to the recipient who has knowledge of the history of the city and the region. The presentation starts with the dazzling brightness of the title slide background, against which 'Welcome to Sarajevo' is written in big black letters. It corresponds to the blood-red slogan, in the style of the Coca Cola logo, saying 'Enjoy Sarajevo' placed on the wall of a destroyed building in the last slide of the presentation. The messages of both slides are highly ironic as the city, which – before the war during the Olympic Games – had been a place of entertainment for the Western world, was ignored by

it in the name of their own interests, during the several years of the siege (Sobolewski 2013). The other slides of the presentation contain pictures and comments which respond to the official Bosnia and Herzegovina myth policy of forgetting about the trauma of the war and enjoying a normal life. For students of Slavonic studies the message of this presentation was fully understandable.

Students' humorous material derived from the use of figures of speech mainly concerns sensitive issues from moral, psychological, social and political perspectives. It neither arises laughter nor depreciates individuals or social groups but rather opens the audience's new horizons and deepens understanding of human nature.

5. VERBAL AND VISUAL MESSAGES IN HUMOUR RESULTING FROM SEMANTIC INCONGRUITY

5.1. Symbolic drawing giving a point to a presentation

The author of the presentation on the architecture of Bucharest – 'Paris of the East' – highlights the fact that its inhabitants believe that they are able to perform the impossible. She forwards this idea by presenting a humorous symbolic drawing. Cunning and elusive Buka – the hero of a popular Romanian cartoon – is shown imprisoned by the inhabitants of Bucharest. The truth of the fact is verified by the comment "Bucharest". This slide provoked the audience's laughter who appreciated the relevance of the punch line. (Józwiak 2013).

5.2 Visual Commentary

The author of the presentation on educational toys for children of specific ages (Ratajczak 2013), complements verbal information on slides with pictures of children at varied stages of mental development and in different emotional states. A child's body language (often humorous) is a visual (and the only) evaluation of a toy's adjustment to the child's age. Preparation of this presentation required from its author deep factual knowledge and reflection to visualise a child's relationship with the surrounding world – the toy in particular. The listeners had a chance to look at toys from the perspective of child development psychology.

5.3 Illustration in a presentation on a sensitive subject

The presentation 'Psychological disorders' (Skrabulski 2013) is worth mentioning because of its author's highly cultured way of discussing (with the use of elements of humour) the sensitive subject of mental disorders belonging to the category of topics to which humour shall not be applied. The author presented, in a systematic way, 10 mental disorders on individual slides with an intense willow green background. On the left side of the slide there is a description of the disease or phobia, and on the right a photo illustrating either the emotional state of the persons affected by it or their typical reaction to specific circumstances. For example, the case of schizophrenia is illustrated with a highly artistic black and white photo of three facial expressions of the same man (in different emotional states) put together as one face. In this way factual information is supported by the visual one, giving an insight into the dynamics of the patient's psyche. Arachnophobia is the last mental disorder discussed in the presentation. Its academic description is supplemented with a photo in which an athletic man is running away from a mascot spider lying on a tarmac alley.

At the end of the presentation, using self-deprecating humour, the author distances himself and the receiver from its content. In the last slide below 'Thank you J' the listener reads 'I used to have super powers but my therapist took them away.' He is led out from a university hospital lecture room, where he met people suffering from mental disorders, to the reality of the English class. When preparing the presentation, he used his well-developed critical thinking ability as well as his persuasive and multi-media skills.

5.4 Humorous interpretation of the main idea of a presentation

The presentation 'The Balkans as a tourist region' (Klimczuk 2013) is a reflection on the reoccurrence of history and the rich culture of the Balkan nations. The presentation is bound by the visual and verbal content of two postcards. In the first one, a photo of the bridge at the border of Bosnia and Serbia is complemented with a sarcastic comment 'The famous bridge on the Drina'. The title of a satirical drawing in the other one says: 'The Balkans as a tourist region. A short history of the Balkans 20,000 BC-2000 AD'. The drawing consists of two parts. On the left side a powerful primitive man, with a club on his shoulder, is standing on a boulder. On the right side the same man is riding a tank

shaped like a boulder. In the context of the war after the collapse of Yugoslavia the message is simple: despite the lapse of 22,000 years, people's mentality has not changed. Additionally, the stone bridge located on the border river Drina, a witness to the turbulent history of the region, is a visible symbol of the immutability of relations between Bosnia and Serbia and of the region's relationship with the West and the Orient. The ability to interpret the messages encoded in both postcards is the key to understanding this presentation. Student listeners proved to be competent recipients while the teacher needed to do some reading afterwards.

6.5 Juxtaposition of aesthetic values

The author (Biadała 2013) of the presentation 'The Baby-sitter' made an assumption that humour concerning the discussed problem can be invented at an aesthetic level by juxtaposing beauty and ugliness. She illustrated the presentation about the work of qualified nannies with photographs of attractive young women caring for children with commitment. At the end of the presentation she showed a black and white photo of a disgusting, slovenly woman with a naked plastic doll (a caricature of a child) on her arm. This image, in the context of the whole presentation, was absolutely shocking in moral and aesthetic terms and closed communication with the audience.

6.6 Other ways of expressing intentional humour in presentations

Students who were not able to incorporate humour in the deep presentation structure placed it:

- in separate slides either in the middle or at the end of a presentation in a sort of appendix entitled 'Humour'. They presented humorous pictures and photos, satirical drawings, quotations (including dialogues) from literary works, jokes, anecdotes, legends, advertising slogans and witty trivia;
- in the 'Thank you' slide illustrations which they found humorous (red hearts, coloured flowers or sweet doves)

Due to the fact that this study does not concern this type of humour, it won't be discussed in detail. It should be only noted that many of these presenters were not able to say what the main idea of their presentation was and what they wanted to achieve by giving it.

7. THE ROLE OF MENTAL OPERATIONS IN INVENTING AND PLACING HUMOROUS CONTENT IN PRESENTATIONS

In principle, the originality of humour and its consistency with the presentation text is proportionally dependent on the presenter's creativity and ability to think critically. The more consistent the humorous material with the main idea of the presentation is, the deeper it is rooted in the presentation structure and the better critical thinking skills the presenter has. This skill allows them to 1) define the main idea of the presentation which shall be interpreted with the use of humour; 2) to invent humour based on semantic incongruity, in other words to formulate the opposing meanings which make it. In students' presentations they were expressed verbally, visually or verbally and visually (see par. 5.1-5.6, 6.1-6.5;).

The message created by the resolution of incongruity in most cases was not designed to evoke laughter and it did not (cf. 5.1-5.3, 5.5-5.6, 5.8-5.11, 6.2-6.5). In the case of several presentations only the listener with a keen mind managed to decipher the encoded messages in terms of humour (cf. 5.1-5.3, 5.5, 5.11, 6.2, 6.4). The average marks which students got for the use of humour in multimedia presentations and the results of interviews with students at the end of the term indicate that the task of creating original humour with the use of critical thinking turned out to be difficult for many of them (see Table 4¹).

Only students of Ethics, who got an average mark of 83% for humour, showed a high level of logical thinking and creativity. The average scores of students in the other groups (42% – 58,3%) indicate that the humour used in multimedia presentations was unoriginal. In general, a student got a 50% score for unoriginal, unchanged humorous material, which corresponded to the presentation content and supplemented it.

The 41% difference between the average scores obtained by the groups using humour in Power Point in the best and the worst ways was not dependent on students' language skills. In all A2-C1 groups, besides the group of students of Ethics, the discrepancy between the score for language competence and efficiency of creating humorous content ranges from 29,3% in the case of Teacher Training A2 I group to 39,1% in the Slavonic group (see Table 5²) in favour of linguistic competence.

All students had the opportunity to consult the text with the lecturer at university and online. The only explanation for the high critical thinking and creative abilities of students of Ethics is that only they had classes in logic and studied philosophical thought in a systematic way.

The use of humour, based on semantic incongruity and with the use of poetic imagery, was a big challenge for first year students because:

- the definition of humour was an idea which was new and difficult to understand for most of them;

Table 4. Average scores for humour in PowerPoint presentations

Ethics B1-C1	Teacher Training A2 I	Teacher Training A2 II	Psychology B1	Slavonic Studies B2	Slavonic Studies C1	Average score
83%	58,3%	42%	45,8%	44,3%	57,7%	55,2%

Table 5. Average scores for language competence

Ethics B1-C1	Teacher Training A2 I	Teacher Training A2 II	Psychology B1	Slavonic Studies B2	Slavonic Studies C1	Average score
92,6%	87,6%	75,7%	84%	80,4%	91,8%	85,4%

¹ In Table 4. there are percentages representing average scores obtained by students for the use of humour in Power Point Presentations. A student could receive a maximum of 2 points for this activity. The average score for the task (the sum of points obtained by all students divided by the number of students) has been changed from points to percentages. So the calculated results are rounded to one decimal place.

² The average score for a group's ability to write questions, the presentation text and the communicativeness of its delivery (cf. Table 5).

- the definition of humour, proposed by the teacher, required a change in their mind-set concerning the aim of the use of humour. Many students, till the end of the semester, did not accept the fact that humour is a rule-guided intellectual phenomena;
- they were unable to follow the logical operations typical of inventing highbrow humour;
- the creation of a humorous message requires the accurate use of at least verbal and/or visual material to express the thought precisely.

Nevertheless, all students applied elements of humour in their presentations, which means that they met this intellectual challenge.

7. EVALUATION OF THE RESULTS OF THE EXPERIMENTAL COURSE

7.1. Participants of the course

“The experimental B-learning course of English for specific purposes based on students’ presentations containing intentional humour resulting from semantic incongruity” was carried out within a General English course in the summer semester of the academic year 2012/2013. The project was closed after the last pre-holiday consultation for students. The presentations were delivered by 82 out of 89 participants of the course. A student of Teacher Training and three students of Psychology (including one who improved his grade from fail to excellent) delivered their presentations in September. The remaining three students did not apply to obtain the credit for the English course. Among the students who delivered their presentations, there were 8% who did not continue their studies in the following semester: two students of Psychology did not successfully complete the year, one student of Slavonic Studies group (B2 level) was crossed out from the list of students, one student from the same group and three students from the Slavonic Studies group (C1 level) were not admitted. The data in Table 5. contain information concerning 82 students.

Columns **4.-10.** contain values in percentages representing the average of grades received by students of a given group for selected exercises. The maximum number of points for these exercises is given in Table 3. The average result of the group for an exercise (the sum of points received by all the students of a given group divided by the number of students) was converted from points into percentages. The results are rounded to one decimal place.

Column **11.** contains values in percentages representing the average grades of a group for a *Presentation without the use of humour*. The average result of a given group for this exercise (the sum of percentages received in a group for 5 exercises – columns 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10 – divided by the number of exercises) is presented in percentages.

Column **13.** contains values in percentages representing the average grades of a group for a *Presentation with elements of humour*. The average result of a given group for this exercise (the sum of percentages received in a group for 7 exercises – columns 4 to 10 – divided by the number of exercises) is presented in percentages.

The average grade for the English course (column 16) received in a given group is the sum of grades received by the students of a given group divided by the number of students.

Semestral average based on USOS is the sum of average grades from USOS³ received by all the students of a given group taking part in the experiment, (excluding the ones not admitted in some subjects or crossed out of the list of students), divided by the number of students.

The average in % in all groups – columns 3.-11. and 13. contain values in percentages representing the average of grades received for an exercise in all groups. The average result for an exercise in all groups (the sum of average number of per cents in all groups divided by the number of groups) is presented in percentages.

The average of grades in all groups and in columns 11,13 and 16 was achieved by comparison of grades in percentages with adequate grades according to the grading system in the AMU Language School.

7.2 Assessment of students’ language competences

The grades the students can get for selected exercises within the presentation motivate them towards intentional language activity. Groups received the highest values in the category *Average in % in all groups* for filling in the Word form (91,4%) and for the typically linguistic exercises: for writing the text of the presentation (90,7%), communicativeness of the utterance (84,9%), correctness of the three questions concerning the main threads of the presentation (80,5%) and for designing an exercise in the form of

³ University System for Students Services (Pl. *Uczelniany System Obslugi Studenta (USOS)*).

Table 6. The average of grades for the presentations, language and intellectual development of the students

Group	Number of students	Number of presentations (percentage)	The average of grades for:													
			Filling in the form	Questions	Exercise 1	Exercise 2	Presentation text	Humour (Power Point)	Communicativeness	Presentations without elements of humour	Grade for presentation without elements of humour	Presentations with elements of humour	Grade for the presentation with elements of humour	The English course	Grade for the English course	Semestral average based on USOS
-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-	-5-	-6-	-7-	-8-	-9-	-10-	-11-	-12-	-13-	-14-	-15-	-16-	-17-
Ethics B1-C1	6	100	91,6	88,9	83	58	100	83	88,9	90,5	bdb	84,7	db	76,4	db	4,2
Teacher Training A2 I	15	100	96,7	84,4	50	71,6	87,3	58,3	91	81,9	db	77	db	82	db	4,1
Teacher Training A2 II	14	92,9	73	76,9	51,9	86,5	78,5	42	71,8	70,4	dst	68,7	dst	74	dst+	3,7
Psychology B1	17	70,6	91,7	75	75	45,8	88,3	45,8	88,9	83,8	db	72,9	dst+	74	dst+	3,5
Slavonic studies B2	23	100	95,5	75,8	85	55,7	91,4	44,3	73,9	84,3	db	74,5	dst+	70,4	dst	4
Slavonic studies C1	14	92,9	100	82	98,1	53,9	98,5	57,7	94,9	94,7	bdb	83,6	db	76	db	4
Average in % in all groups		92,7	91,4	80,5	73,8	61,9	90,7	55,2	84,9	84,3		76,9		75,5		
Average of grades in all groups (according to grading system in the School of Languages AMU)			bdb	db	dst+	dst	bdb	ndst	db	db	db	db	db	db	-	Semestral average of groups based on USOS 3,9

Grading system in AMU Language School, Poznań (Pl. Szkoła Językowa UAM): 90%-100% = excellent (5 = bdb); 86%-89% = very good (4 = db+); 75%-85% = good (4 = db); 71%-74% = sufficient (3+ = dst+); 60-70% = insufficient (3 = dst); 0-59% = fail (2 = ndst).

a summary of the presentation (73,8%). This exercise turned out to be the most difficult for the students at A2 level (50% and 51,9%) and B1 level (75%) because it required independent work in constructing the sentences with the use of specific grammatical structures.

It has to be emphasised that the value in the category *Average in % in all groups* (85,4%) for the typically linguistic exercise: constructing three questions concerning the presentations, writing the text of the presentation and for communicativeness during the presentation (the sum of *Average in % in all groups* for the exercises mentioned above divided by the number of exercises) is high. This means that linguistic competence not only allowed the students in all groups to prepare and deliver presentations at their appropriate language levels but also that the students did their best to prepare the texts of presentations and deliver them in a communicative way.

7.3 Assessment of intentional humour in multimedia presentations

In all the groups, the most difficult task was the designing in the PowerPoint programme of original humorous content as an integral part of the presentation (see Criteria for evaluation of humour in a multimedia presentation 4.5.1-4.5.2). *The average in % in all groups* for this task is only 55,2% and it varies from 42% in Teacher Training A2 II group to 83% in Ethics B1-C1 group.

The highest average grade for this activity is received by the students of Ethics, although their task to create humour was most difficult because of the subject of studies. These students created humorous content in connection with highly theoretical and often sensitive subjects such as euthanasia, religion, ethnic differences etc. The 83% result shows that they used critical thinking much better than students from all other groups – that they were persistent seekers of new messages with its use.

The way the students of Psychology applied humour (average grade of 45,8%) is worth considering as well. Almost all of them perceived it from the perspective of a relief theory. They mainly included in their presentations ready-made materials downloaded from the Internet which illustrated the discussed subject and focused the receiver's attention on the discussed message. Students of Psychology cared, first of all, about the aesthetics of slides and humorous pictures. Generally they failed to create original humorous ma-

terials resulting from the use of poetic imagery. They also seemed not to have critical thinking skills and creativity developed at the level which would enable them to invent humour based on semantic incongruity expressed in verbal and visual forms.

Many students of Teacher Training (A2I – 58,3% and A2II – 42%) and Slavonic Studies (B2 44,3% and C1 – 57,7%) associated humour with the effect of laughter and did not apply the principles of humour use as defined in the course. Therefore the humour included by them in multimedia presentations was graded low.

7.4 Assessment of intentional humour in Exercise 2.

In Exercise 2. the evaluated skill was the ability to design, according to the given model, an exercise in the form of a multiple choice test, rebus, crossword, cross-off task etc. *The average in % in all groups* for this activity was 61,9%. The average of grades in the groups ranges from 45,8% (Psychology B1) to 86,5% (Teacher Training A2 II). Some of the students of part-time (extramural) Psychology, because of their mode of studies and an examination session which was extended by a few months, prepared this task in a shortened version – getting for it an adequately lower grade. It caused the lowering of *The average in % in all groups*.

Students of Ethics who achieved the highest average grade for applying humour in PowerPoint (83%), got a low average grade (58%) for Exercise 2. They underestimated this task, regarding it as banal. They suggested that students of Teacher Training would certainly be specialists in it. This was confirmed by the outcomes of the research. Students of Teacher Training received the highest average grades of all groups for Exercise 2: A2 I – 71,6% and A2 II – 86,5%. Presentations which were especially attractive artistically and conceptually were prepared by the students from group A2 II. Getting high grades for Exercise 2. was to them a kind of compensation for low grades for humour in PowerPoint (42%) and the effort of learning sentence structures in class. The group received an average grade of satisfactory (3+, Pl. *dst+* (71%-74%)) for the semester of the English class.

7.5 Comparison of the average grades

7.5.1 Comparison of the average grades for the presentation with elements of humour and without the application of humour

The percentage which was possible to achieve for the application of humour in the PowerPoint presentation and in Exercise 2. constituted 27% of the total percentage possible for the presentation. Therefore, the ability to apply humour had a significant influence on the final grade for the presentation with elements of humour.

In individual groups the average grades for presentations without humour are higher than for the ones with elements of humour. The least difference between them is to be found in the groups with the lowest level of language (A1), i.e. among the students of Teacher Training, and it is not higher than 5%. In the group of students of Ethics (B1-C1), the difference is less than 6% (it would be smaller if the students had not underestimated the value of doing Exercise 2.), and in the other groups it reaches around 10%.

The average in % in all groups for presentations without the application of humour is 84,3%, and for

presentations with elements of humour – 76,9%. These values are situated within the borders of a good grade (4, Pl. *db*) – 75%-85% (according to the grading system of AMU Language School), which means that ultimately *The average in % in all groups* for their presentations with and without the elements of humour are situated within the borders of the same grade – good (4, Pl. *db*).

The fact that in all of the groups the students received lower grades for the presentations with elements of humour than for the ones without them indicates that their language skills (at a given level) were better shaped than their ability to create humorous messages.

7.5.2 Comparison of average grades for presentations with elements of humour and for the language course as a whole

Grades for applying humour in the PowerPoint programme and in Exercise 2. constituted only 5%-6% of the final grade for the semester of the foreign language course, and the grades for presentations with elements of humour constituted 20%-23% of (see Table 7.).

Table 7. Components of the grade for the foreign language course

Group	Total number of points for the foreign language course	Tests	Presentations with elements of humour	Elements of humour in PowerPoint Presentations and in Exercise 2.	Exercise in PbWorks	General English homework	Reading and translating texts
-1-	-2-	-3-	-4-	-5-	-6-	-7-	-8-
Ethics B1-C1	75	55	20	5	x	6	19
Teacher Training A2	75	55	20	5	6	x	19
Teacher Training A2	75	55	20	5	6	x	19
Psychology B1	65	77	23	6	x	x	x
Slavonic Studies B2	65	69	23	6	8	x	x
Slavonic Studies C1	65	69	23	6	8	x	x

Column 2. contains the total numbers of points possible for the English course during the whole semester. Columns 3-8 contain values in percentages which students could get for exercises (the number of points – established by the teacher at the beginning of the semester – is replaced by percentages).

The final grade for a semester consists of grades for a test and a final test, lexical and grammatical exercises done in the PbWorks programme, homework, and reading a professional text in English and translating it into Polish. It has to be emphasised that the last component (reading and translating professional texts) was very popular in the groups, because if done well or very well, it could raise the grade for the English course. The groups themselves decided whether to do this exercise or not. Group B1 of Psychology students resigned from doing it because of time limitation. It was also rejected by the Slavonic Studies groups, beginning the language course in the summer semester, consciously ignoring the possibility to raise their grades.

The data in Table 6. show that in three groups – Ethics B1/C1, Slavonic Studies B2 and C1 – the average grade (expressed in percentages) for the presentations with elements of humour is higher than the average grades (expressed in percentages) for the language course for the semester. The greatest difference – 8,3% – is to be noticed in the group of students of Ethics, and the least – 4,1% – in the group of students of Slavonic Studies B2. The average grades, expressed in percentages, for the presentations with elements of humour in the other three groups (Teacher Training A1 I, A2 II, and Psychology B1) is lower than the average grades for the language course. The greatest difference – 5,3% – is to be noticed in the group of students of Teacher Training A2 II, and the least – 1,1% – in the group of students of Psychology B1.

The grades, (calculated according to the grading system of the AMU Language School), for presentations with elements of humour and for the semester are identical in four groups: Ethics, Teacher Training A2 I, Psychology B1 and Slavonic Studies C1. The group of Teacher Training students A2 II achieved a grade for the semester which was 0,5 points higher (3+) than for the presentations with elements of humour (3). The students received high grades for the grammatical exercises in the PbWorks programme and for the translation of a text from English to Polish. The students of Slavonic Studies B2 received a grade (3) for the language course which was 0,5 points lower than the grade for presentations with elements of humour (3+). 63% of the students taking part in the

experimental course received grades below 4 for the final test. The group decided not to translate a text from English into Polish.

While comparing in all groups the average grades in percentages for presentations with elements of humour (76,9%) and for the semester of the language course (75,5%), a slight difference between them can be noticed. The percentage points, interpreted according to the grading system of the AMU Language School, constitute a good grade (4). On the basis of the presented data, it can be stated that the requirement of the application of humorous elements in the presentations, (despite the fact that it constituted 14% of points possible for the presentation), did not have a significant influence on the final grade for the language course. The number of points possible for the ability to apply humour in the text of the presentation constituted only 2,5%-3% of all points possible for the language course. It means that this additional conceptual task, which was difficult for the students and gave the course an original character, did not lower the grade for the language course. However, it contributed to drawing the attention of the students (1st or 2nd year of undergraduate studies) to the necessity of developing their critical thinking skills and increasing their creativity.

7.5.3 Comparison of average grades for the semester of the language course and average grades for all subjects on the basis of USOS

In five groups the average grade for the semester – for all the subjects – on the basis of USOS is identical to the average for the summer semester of the language course. The level of achievement of students in the subjects not directly connected with the major of their studies oscillates within the average of achievements of the students in all of the subjects. In the group of Slavonic Studies (B2), the difference between the grades is 1 point to the advantage of the average of grades of all of the subjects for the semester. The grade reflects in a reliable way the students' attitude to learning English during the course and the achieved command of general and professional English.

8.5.4 Comparison of the average grades for all subjects of all groups on the basis of USOS and selected average grades of all groups

The average grade of all the groups for all the subjects (on the basis of USOS) is 3,9. The average grade

of all the groups for the language course, for the presentations with elements of humour and without them (after transferring percentages into points, according to the grading system of the AMU Language School) is similar – good (4,0). The average grade of all the groups for all the subjects, on the basis of USOS, is 2 points higher than the average grade of all the groups for humour in the PowerPoint presentations (original humour resulting from semantic incongruity and expressed in verbal or verbal and visual forms, or with the use of poetic imagery). The ability to apply this kind of humour is connected, first of all, with the ability to think critically and create new ideas. On the basis of the obtained results we can conclude that the students of the first year of full-time undergraduate studies and second year of part-time, extramural undergraduate studies are in the initial phase of shaping the ability to think critically in the context of the subject of studies.

The average grade of all the groups for all the subjects, on the basis of USOS, is 1 point higher than the average of all the groups for humour in Exercise 2. consisting of editing a multiple choice task, a rebus, a cross-off task etc. Designing the exercise, depending on its complexity, demanded different levels of the ability to think logically (the highest in the case of the multiple choice test and the lowest in the case of the cross-off task) and precision of expressing thoughts in a foreign language. In most cases, the students designed the easiest tasks conceptually and linguistically. This may be evidence of the students' lack of will to apply intellectual effort (in the case of a logical task), or a susceptibility to choosing the easiest tasks.

9. CONCLUSION

The giving of presentations by students during academic English classes is common nowadays. The purpose of the B-learning course of English for specific purposes based on student presentations containing intentional humour resulting from semantic incongruity was to help students move away from compiling their presentations and start preparing original ones. The extra-linguistic requirement of humour use – according to the course rules – did not have a significant impact on the students' score for the language course, which the detailed results analysis proves. The greatest benefit of the course is that within the framework of a university English language class, students managed to do independent creative work preparing them for their future jobs. Although their sense of achievement was an individual matter, all of them:

- realized the potential of their creative subjectivity;
- became more conscious and responsible authors and recipients of verbal and visual messages;
- became more sensitive to the power of the word, image and sound;
- learnt several rules on which humour is based and reflected on them;
- learnt the ideas of critical, divergent and convergent thinking;
- used their rules to prepare their presentations to the best of their intellectual capacities;
- learnt basic ideas about text structure and writing;
- improved their 'public speaking' skills in English in connection with the subject of their studies and future job both as presenters and participants in discussions;
- strengthened the persuasive power of their speeches due to the use of humour;
- became more thoughtful and sensitive recipients of discourse, with a basic knowledge of multimedia manipulation techniques;
- made an attempt at individual and group B-learning – took on the challenge of using Web 2.0 applications and improved their personal skills of self-reliance, self-discipline and openness to cooperation with other course participants.

The multifaceted benefits the course make it an interesting educational proposal.

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