

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES**

**CREATING AND PILOTING HUMOUR-BASED
ACTIVITY SETS FOR *ON SCREEN B2 AND B2+*
COURSEBOOKS**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The present thesis explores how humour can be used purposefully in upper-secondary English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms to support B1–B2 vocabulary revision and learner engagement. It introduces a set of joke-based slide decks aligned with *On Screen B2/B2+* vocabulary content. Chapter 1 reviews key humour theories, common joke formats, research on humour in classrooms and EFL contexts, and vocabulary-learning principles (spacing, retrieval, linked skills). Chapter 2 describes the design, classroom piloting and iterative refinement of 13 activity sets in face-to-face lessons, using teacher debriefs and learner comments to evaluate feasibility, alignment and Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and Estonian National Curriculum (NC) relevance.

Keywords: humour in EFL; vocabulary revision; joke-based materials; B1-B2 students

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INTRODUCTION

Although in classroom interaction teachers often draw on humour spontaneously, humour can also be used as part of planned learning materials, offering opportunities to notice language, support classroom climate, and benefit participation (Pomerantz & Bell 2007; Nelms 2001; Chabeli 2008). Building on this pedagogical perspective, this thesis explores how humour can be used purposefully in upper-secondary English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms to support vocabulary learning and students' engagement. It develops and pilots short vocabulary-revision activity sets using humour, designed to fit alongside the coursebook vocabulary content and to recycle coursebook vocabulary across a range of topics.

For the purposes of this study, humour is treated as a broad umbrella term for communicative acts, texts, and interactions that create amusement and are often (though not always) accompanied by laughter. Research on laughter highlights that it is socially embedded and communicative, and that laughter is not confined to “jokes” in the narrow sense; humour and laughter therefore overlap in everyday interaction but are not identical phenomena (Scott et al. 2022). Humour is also treated here as ethically situated and context-sensitive: Morreall describes humour as pleasure taken in a playful shift of interpretation and notes that humour may offer attentional and social benefits while still considering content and targets (Morreall 2009: 49; 90–101; 111–121). Drawing on these perspectives, this thesis treats humour as a communicative cue that invites a playful re-interpretation shaped by linguistic and cultural resources.

The empirical component focuses on humour in a specifically classroom-usable form: joke-based materials designed to support vocabulary revision. In this thesis, jokes are

treated as typically short humorous texts intended to amuse and to evoke laughter, characteristically culminating in a punch line (Berger 2013: 45). The materials draw on five joke formats: pun/wordplay jokes (including very short one-sentence “one-liners”), anecdote jokes (short narratives with a punch-line shift), knock-knock jokes (formulaic dialogue relying on repetition plus a final wordplay/misunderstanding turn), yo-momma jokes (insult-based jokes often involving exaggeration and ridicule), and letter-style jokes (extended humorous texts that develop humour across several lines rather than through a single trigger) (Berger 2013: 45–48). These types of jokes with examples will be later discussed in more detail in section 1.1.2. The intention is not to treat humour as entertainment or teacher performance, but to examine whether short, syllabus-linked humorous sequences can be integrated into regular lessons in a way that supports vocabulary revision and learner engagement.

The use of humour-based materials also aligns with curricular expectations. The Estonian National Curriculum (NC) for upper-secondary schools treats language as part of culture and as a tool for understanding cultural phenomena (*Gümnaasiumi riiklik õppekava* 2023). Similarly, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) highlights pluricultural communicative competence, which involves comparing and interacting across cultures (Council of Europe 2020). Because humour is frequently bound to culture and sensitive to register, it offers learners opportunities to notice language in ways that match these aims. For that reason, the empirical component develops and trials joke-based activity sets that revise vocabulary linked to topics from *On Screen B2* and *On Screen B2+*, the coursebooks used in the school where the materials are piloted.

Several developments in language-teaching practice make this focus timely. Earlier classroom discourse research tended to treat the classrooms as primarily serious environments and paid limited attention to non-serious activity; when humour was

discussed, it tended to be teacher-centred and framed as climate management rather than as a designed learning resource (Bell 2017b: 445). Moreover, teachers' practices often reflect the methodologies in place when they began teaching (Johnson 1992: 93-93, 101), and if humour played little role in those approaches, it is unsurprising that it remains underused. In addition, the existing research literature on classroom humour remains limited. Although there are proposals for teaching about humour or for teaching through humour, there is little empirical evidence on the effects of structured humour-related pedagogical interventions (Bell 2017b: 451–452). Where such interventions do exist, results are mixed: humour-enhanced tasks may support recall and perception of the humour, but evidence for improvements in humour production is weaker (Bell 2017b: 451–452). The literature also notes that humour can be difficult to generate on demand and that published work often describes isolated successes rather than offering integrated, prescriptive methodology (Deneire 1995: 285–286). These observations point to a practical gap: there is a need for small-scale, classroom-grounded materials that integrate humour in a deliberate way, rather than relying solely on spontaneous humour during lessons.

At the same time, several findings from applied linguistics motivate the design of the activity sets. Playful language use can support learning by encouraging reflection on how language works and sharpening attention to form and meaning (Aarons 2012: 5, 8). Enjoyment also plays a role: laughter can make lessons more engaging and memorable, contributing positively to both the teaching and learning experience (Tuncay 2007: 2). However, humour needs to be used with care. Studies indicate that humour is most effective when it is closely linked to lesson content, instead of being introduced in ways that are disconnected from instructional aims (Bell 2017b: 445). With these considerations in mind, this thesis examines how humour can be integrated purposefully, in ways that support clear learning objectives and remain sensitive to learners' experiences.

This thesis addresses that gap by designing, piloting, and refining short, joke-based activity sets on different vocabulary topics that (i) support vocabulary revision at B1–B2 level, (ii) draw on humour’s cognitive benefits (retrieval, noticing) and affective advantages (climate, attention), and (iii) remain time-efficient and content-linked. Three research questions guide the work:

1. How can joke-based activities be sequenced so that learners revise vocabulary from explaining it to using it productively?
2. What adjustments (e.g., timing, pre-teaching, prompts) are needed to ensure the activities are time-feasible, closely aligned with the *On Screen* vocabulary targets, and manageable and engaging for B1–B2 learners?
3. How do Estonian teachers of English evaluate the alignment of the created activities with CEFR descriptor scales and National Curriculum aims?

Each research question is answered through a corresponding strand of analysis: research question 1 is addressed by examining whether the task sequencing supports vocabulary revision through movement from explanation to productive use (teacher debrief, see Appendix 2); research question 2 is addressed by identifying which modifications are needed to fit lesson time, strengthen vocabulary alignment, and maintain manageability and engagement (teacher debrief, see Appendix 2); and research question 3 is addressed by analysing teachers’ evaluative comments and alignment notes across trials (teacher debrief and CEFR/NC Alignment Matrix, see Appendix 2 and Appendix 4) .

Methodologically, the empirical component uses an iterative design–trial–refinement cycle with classes in an upper-secondary school in southern Estonia, grouped by proficiency level (B1–B2+). Each set is mapped to *On Screen B2/B2+* topics and to the vocabulary-learning principles (spacing, retrieval, linked skills) outlined later, in section 1.5. After each lesson use, teachers complete a short debrief (see Appendix 2), recording observations,

learner comments, and practical revisions for the next iteration; a short CEFR/NC check documents the competences and the task evidence observed. The evaluation is therefore pragmatic: focusing on usability, lesson alignment, and required modifications, rather than on estimating effect sizes or making broad generalisations.

Given the constraints of the study, the findings are presented as practical insights rather than universal claims. As the activity sets are designed to revise rather than introduce core vocabulary, any benefits should be understood as complementary to the main syllabus. Activities avoid targeting individuals, acknowledging that not all students enjoy the same humour.

The thesis consists of an introduction, two core chapters and a conclusion, followed by a list of references and appendices. Chapter 1 reviews previous studies on humour, from general humour theories and the formats of jokes to classroom-based research, humour in EFL contexts, humour as a learning material, and the core principles of vocabulary teaching that underpin the design of the activity sets. Chapter 2 presents the empirical component: the aims and research questions, the design of the joke-based activity sets, the target group, the piloting outcomes, and the adjustments made during implementation. The concluding chapter summarises the findings and offers recommendations for incorporating humour as a structured, syllabus-aligned resource in EFL classrooms. Appendices provide access to the activity sets (link and QR code), and provide a sample section, the teacher debrief form used for documentation, the *On Screen* module-topic tables, the CEFR/NC alignment matrix, representative before/after refinement examples, and quick-reference tables summarising the CEFR descriptor targets and National Curriculum aim areas used in the analysis.

During the drafting and editing process, AI tools (Microsoft Copilot, ChatGPT) and proofreading software (Grammarly) were used to support brainstorming of the joke-based activity options, to check grammar and spelling, and to generate alternative wording

suggestions that could be adapted and combined. All academic decisions, interpretations, and final formulations are produced by the author, and all cited sources were selected and verified by the author.

1. HUMOUR AND VOCABULARY IN EFL CLASSROOMS

This chapter surveys how humour functions in language education and how these insights have guided the design of the empirical component of the present thesis. Section 1.1 outlines the main humour theories using brief examples to clarify mechanisms of offence, mismatch, and tension release that are relevant to classroom interpretation and use, and discusses the most common formats of jokes. Section 1.2 synthesises research on humour in the classroom overall, highlighting affective gains (lower anxiety, increased motivation), interactional benefits (rapport, participation), and professional cautions to frame where humour can hinder focus or student-teacher relationship. Section 1.3 narrows to EFL contexts, linking classroom humour to linguistic/cultural processing, brief CEFR and Estonian National Curriculum touchpoints, and the studies that show how humour can support target-language use and classroom management while acknowledging comprehension and time-on-task concerns. Section 1.4 shifts from concepts to materials, reviewing the ways jokes can be used as learning input (verbal play, audio-visual clips, performance) and how these modalities map onto communicative aims. Finally, Section 1.5 clarifies vocabulary-teaching principles: planned encounters, spacing, retrieval, productive use, co-occurrence patterns, and word consciousness, and shows how these principles link with joke-based activities developed for the empirical study.

1.1. Humour: theoretical foundations and joke formats

1.1.1. Major theoretical approaches

Academic discourse on humour typically revolves around three dominant theoretical frameworks: the incongruity, superiority, and relief theories. Understanding these theories is essential for analysing how humour functions both in everyday interaction and in

pedagogical settings, as each framework sheds light on different mechanisms that shape humour comprehension, production, and its potential role in language learning.

The superiority theory proposes that the joke is targeted against a specific group or individual (Krikmann 2007: 27; Raskin 1985: 13). This mechanism is common in humour targeting specific social or ethnic groups, potentially reinforcing stereotypes (Raskin 1985: 41-42), and may serve as an expression of nationalistic supremacy (Raskin 1985: 47). Respectively, Davies (1990: 7) emphasises that such humour is especially present in ethnic jokes, and offers temporary superiority among those who create, narrate, or receive the joke. Such jokes attribute an unwanted characteristic onto another group, allowing the audience to mock their supposed shortcomings and feel comforted that these traits do not apply to themselves (Davies 1990: 7). Davies states that joke-telling serves as a method through which people attribute exaggerated and absurd flaws to members of other ethnic groups (1990: 307), identifying two dominant strands of ethnic humour: one targeting groups perceived as unintelligent, clumsy, or uninformed, and the other focusing on groups characterized as shrewd, calculating, and excessively frugal (Davies 1990: 10). These two contrasting stereotypes – “stupid” and “canny” – form the basis of a large number of ethnic jokes compared to other comedic traits; for instance, *“Voice on Irish telephone answering machine: ‘Speak when you hear the green light.’”* (Davies 1990: 13) typifies the “stupid” stereotype, whereas *“Englishman: I hear the price of petrol’s coming down. Scotsman: ooh that’s great news. Englishman: But why are you so pleased? You don’t own a car do you? Scotsman: No but I have a lighter.”* (Davies 1990: 16) trades on the “canny” stereotype.

The incongruity theory, also termed the cognitive-perceptual theory by Raskin (1985: 11), proposes that humour emerges from an incompatibility within a joke’s structure, which nevertheless requires a point of semantic overlap between otherwise disparate elements (Raskin 1985: 12). This view aligns with the observation that humour can be produced

through diverse linguistic mechanisms, including wordplay, ambiguity, hyperbole, and sudden interpretive shifts, where surprise and violated expectations are central (Larkin-Galiñanes 2017: 12). For instance, “*Time flies like an arrow. Fruit flies like a banana.*” (Aarons 2017: 93), where the initial parsing is disrupted and the reader reprocesses the key string under an alternative interpretation. Similarly, in “‘*Call me a doctor.*’ ‘*Why, are you sick?*’ ‘*No, I just graduated from med school.*’” (Oaks 2014: 23) humour relies on a shift in grammatical role and speech-act interpretation (“call me” as summon vs address), forcing reanalysis at the final line. Consequently, the development of refined, witty strategies for engaging an audience has significantly influenced contemporary approaches to humour, with the incongruity theory exemplifying the broader move from affective explanations grounded in ridicule or envy toward a predominantly cognitive analysis of humorous effects (Larkin-Galiñanes 2017: 5).

Finally, the relief theory highlights the psychological response of the recipient, interpreting humour as a mechanism for releasing tension (Krikmann 2007: 28). Drawing on Freud’s notion that laughter discharges accumulated psychic or nervous energy after a period of strain (Raskin 1985: 14), this perspective helps explain the appeal of absurdist joke forms in which grammatically well-formed language produces illogical or nonsensical content. Elephant jokes are often cited as a typical case: “*Why do elephants paint their toenails red? To hide in cherry trees.*” (Noonan 2014: 1). In this example, enjoyment relies less on logical resolution than on the playful release produced by an impossible scenario. In line with this view, many scholars acknowledge that laughter helps to alleviate sadness and boredom, enhances mood, and reduces the pressures of daily life, effects that lie at the core of the relief theory of humour (Larkin-Galiñanes 2017: 4-5).

Overall, the main humour theories highlight that humour is inherently complex, involving cognitive, social, and emotional dimensions. As Krikmann (2007: 28) notes, most

models are essentially blended, and the phenomenon itself is too diverse to be captured by one comprehensive theory. This diversity reinforces the value of including humour theories in this thesis. In designing the activity sets, I have therefore incorporated a range of jokes and anecdotes influenced by all three theoretical traditions – and often by combinations of them – reflecting the multifaceted nature of humour in practice.

1.1.2. Most common joke formats

In humour research, jokes are often categorised not only by topic but also by format; that is, by their structure, length, and the main linguistic or discourse mechanism that produces the humorous effect (Berger 2013: 45-47). Describing jokes in terms of format draws attention to the different kinds of processing they invite; whether the humour is triggered by wordplay, built through a short narrative, or delivered through a dialogue frame. Because these differences shape what learners must notice and how they respond, format distinctions are directly relevant when humour is discussed as classroom material.

First, pun/wordplay jokes rely on ambiguity and typically require a quick reinterpretation at the punch line (Hempelmann & Miller 2017: 95; Aarons 2017: 93). Because the humour hinges on form-meaning relations (often phonological or lexical overlap), puns are frequently treated as a prototypical form of verbal humour (Guidi 2017: 17). A simple illustration for that is as follows: “*What has four wheels and flies? A garbage truck.*” (Oaks 2014: 23), where the trigger word forces reanalysis, making this format especially useful for noticing and rapid vocabulary recycling.

Second, anecdote jokes as used in the current study are short narrative jokes, which build humour over a short sequence of events rather than around a single ambiguous word. Their punch line typically reframes the preceding events, so the audience must revise interpretation at the end. This is consistent with accounts of jokes as short narratives

culminating in a punch line (Müller 2014: 39-40). In discussion of humour and narrative, the interpretive “turn” is linked to mechanisms such as script opposition and punch-line placement (Chłopicki 2017: 149-152). A compact illustration is as follows: “*Why did the moron bring a ladder to the party? He heard the drinks were on the house!*” (Berger 2013: 49). This format supports movement from comprehension to production because learners can summarise the scenario, explain the shift, and evaluate the character’s action.

Third, knock-knock jokes are highly formulaic dialogue jokes with predictable turn-taking pattern (e.g., Knock-knock – Who’s there? – X – X who?), followed by a final wordplay or misunderstanding turn. Because the structure is fixed and familiar, learners can focus attention on the language trigger rather than on complex content. Hempelmann and Miller also note that knock-knock jokes often depend on phonological/ semantic ambiguity, with the format making the punch-line position especially easy to anticipate (Hempelmann & Miller 2017: 98-99). A standard illustration is: “*Knock-knock. Who’s there? Orange. Orange who? Orange (Aren’t) you glad I didn’t say banana?*” (Hempelmann & Miller 2017: 99). Pedagogically, this makes the format useful for low-risk pronunciation, homophone work, and lexical ambiguity in short classroom sequences.

Fourth, yo-momma jokes can be treated as a sub-type of insult/disparagement humour, in that they are built around a clear target and commonly rely on hyperbole and stylised verbal aggression (Stanzak 2012: 7). In his account of contemporary yo-momma joking, Stanzak links the form to the wider tradition of ritual insults and cites, for example: “*Your mother’s so skinny... she can get in a Cheerio and say, ‘Hula hoop hula hoop!’*” (Stanzak 2012: 7). Because disparagement humour is potentially face-threatening, humour studies emphasise that it carries a higher risk of negative outcomes if the interaction is not framed as play (Strain 2014: 16-17), and applied work highlights that humour can also fail or be received as inappropriate (Bell 2017a: 358-365). In the present study, yo-momma jokes

are therefore treated strictly as linguistic material and are framed to avoid personal targeting in classroom interaction.

Finally, letter-style jokes (extended humorous texts) develop humour across several lines and often parody a recognisable genre (e.g., a formal letter, complaint, or report), using a serious frame as a foil for incongruous content (Tsakona 2017: 495-497). Genre-based accounts also emphasise that comedic effects can be sustained through genre conventions (including parody, register contrast, and distributed humorous lines) rather than relying on a single punch-line trigger (Tsakona 2017: 490-492, 494-495). Attardo and Ergül provide an illustration of letter-based humour in an example of an “aggressive letter” from ancient Egypt, where workplace resentment is voiced through an exaggerated complaint: *“What’s the meaning of this negative attitude that you are adopting toward me? I’m like a donkey to you...”* (Attardo & Ergül 2014: 30). Pedagogically, letter-style jokes are valuable because they support the intended progression from recognition to productive use: learners can first identify target vocabulary while skimming, then explain how humour is constructed through sustained genre framing (e.g., metaphor/register contrast), and finally use the vocabulary in guided discussion or short output tasks.

These formats range from compact, fast-processing jokes to longer texts that distribute humour across several lines. This range makes it possible to link humour to different classroom goals, such as quick noticing and brief responses on the one hand, and extended explanation and discussion on the other. Disparagement-based humour, however, is more sensitive because it relies on a target and can misfire if the interactional framing is not clearly playful (Bell 2017a: 358–365; Strain 2014: 16-17).

1.2. Humour in the classroom

This section synthesises research on humour in classroom settings, with emphasis on its communicative and affective functions across subjects. Drawing on empirical studies and practitioner accounts, it shows how humour can facilitate sensitive discourse, support emotional regulation, strengthen teacher–student relationships, and sustain engagement.

Humour operates as a socially acceptable vehicle for addressing sensitive content, easing interaction while shaping positive impressions of speakers. Schaefer (2014: 358) finds that taboo topics that are too sensitive to talk about in a straightforward way are easier to discuss through humour, thus giving the speaker control over the interaction. Strain (2014: 16) calls positive, non-threatening joking harmless humour and, accordingly, she concludes that harmless humour makes communication easier and that, by conveying the message through humour, it is possible to alleviate uncomfortable information. Moreover, she adds that harmless humour gives a positive impression of the person using humour. These observations establish a baseline for the communicative value of humour in classroom interaction more broadly.

In addition, humour contributes to emotional coping and psychological well-being, which in turn bolsters motivation and a positive classroom climate. Bell (2014) and Schaefer (2014) state that humour helps students to overcome difficult situations and conflicts and also to regulate their emotions in a classroom setting. Furthermore, Kuiper (2014: 282) adds that humour functions as a coping mechanism, allowing students to distance themselves from stressful situations, assess them more objectively, view problems as challenges rather than insurmountable obstacles, and perceive those problems as less significant. According to Garner (2014: 558), there are even more psychological benefits for students, such as reducing anxiety, boosting confidence and self-esteem, and making the learning environment more positive. He also assures that the students are more motivated to learn and

more engaged in the study process (Garner 2014: 559). Humour is important for the dynamics of the whole class as a group, as it creates the sense of belonging and oneness (Schaefer 2014: 358). Taken together, these findings link humour to affective support, motivation, and a prosocial classroom climate.

At the level of everyday interaction, Nelms (2001) uses the term “humorous sarcasm” to describe sarcastic classroom talk that can both build affiliation and serve as mild corrective feedback (Nelms 2001: 70-71). Drawing on her analysis of higher-education classroom discourse, she reports that “humorous sarcasm” is used to lighten the atmosphere, increase student interest, build rapport, and also to deliver gentle reprimands (Nelms 2001: 100). At the same time, Nelms cautions that sarcasm is not uniformly positive: whether it strengthens rapport or becomes hurtful depends on how it is framed and received, so it should be used judiciously in classroom interaction (Nelms 2001: 84-85).

The studies further associate humour with relaxed classroom atmosphere, greater teacher approachability, and reported gains in engagement and retention. The results of a survey (Chabeli 2008) conducted among nursing students show that positive humour enhances learning by creating a relaxed atmosphere. Also, it brings a student and a teacher closer together; the teacher seems nicer and more approachable. Other scholars have reached similar conclusions. For example, Derakhshan’s (2016) study, where teachers were trained to use humour in the classroom, received positive feedback from the teachers; when applying humour, the teachers noticed students’ interest and motivation increase, understanding and remembering materials, and even the student-teacher relationship improvement, similarly to Chabeli’s results. These converging findings reinforce the view that humour can be integrated into regular pedagogy with tangible benefits.

Classroom humour emerges both as an interactional resource and as a pedagogical stance that sustains motivation and rapport. For instance, spontaneous verbal humour can

arise organically from unfolding discourse – through teasing, self-deprecation, play about absent third parties, or puns – and many instructors perceive such humour as making lessons more enjoyable and motivating, integral to their teaching style, and helpful for strengthening relationships with learners (Shively & Mir 2019: 94, 102–103). At the same time, Stokke and Fiskum (2025: para 4.1.1.) highlight that close rapport between students and the teacher enables informed judgements about when and how to use humour by clarifying what each learner finds amusing and acceptable; thus, humour should be adapted to suit different individuals.

From an emotional perspective, humour can aid classroom self-regulation. In interviews, teachers from Norwegian primary and lower secondary schools described using humour as a tool for managing students' emotional states (e.g., moving from sadness to happiness, stress to relaxation, or boredom to enjoyment) and to shift between mindsets (e.g., from goal-oriented to present-focused; from in control to caring) (Stokke & Fiskum 2025: para 4). They also note that these states were not framed as positive or negative; rather, the teachers considered them equally necessary and beneficial to switch between (Stokke & Fiskum 2025: para 4).

Evidence from student reports highlights these affective benefits while also emphasising cognitive and social gains. Data collected by Kholmatov (2021: 225) from 18-26 years old university students indicated that humour lowers anxiety and fosters a safe climate in which students feel able to ask questions. Additionally, learners associated humour with better rapport with the teacher, increased motivation, improved understanding and memory of subject matter, and greater peer interaction, participation in group work, and student-initiated joking (Kholmatov 2021: 225). Collectively, these outcomes point to humour as a lever for engagement and shared classroom belonging.

In the Estonian context, a study (Abel 2015: 185–186) was conducted in 2013 to examine how Estonian teachers use humour in the classroom. The sample comprised nine teachers drawn from different Estonian basic schools, teaching Grades 4–9 across a broad range of subjects, such as chemistry, physics, geography, history, Russian, Estonian language and literature, mathematics, and social studies. The results show that even though most teachers agree about the positive effect of humour on a person's mental health (Abel 2015: 188), they do not consider sense of humour as an important element in communication; nor was humour mentioned as an attribute of a good teacher (Abel 2015: 187). On the other hand, teachers support the idea of using humour in the classroom because of its ability to reduce stress, get students' attention and to enhance understanding of the subject (Abel 2015: 190). This pattern suggests a practical endorsement of humour's effects alongside a limited emphasis on humour as a core professional attribute, indicating space for further inquiry.

While classroom humour can be valuable, its use demands caution: jokes should be chosen carefully and kept positive and harmless. Chabeli (2008: 58) emphasises that spontaneous humour should be used sparingly so as not to lose focus, and that humour must not be aimed at any participant directly; attempts to joke in the classroom can go wrong when used incorrectly for both students and teachers. Relatedly, Bell (2014: 673) notes that jokes made by students might not always be well-received by teachers, and Chabeli (2008: 55) warns that if humour used by a teacher is not connected to the subject matter, the learning outcome is minimal. In addition, teacher concerns can constrain the use of humour: Derakhshan (2016: 20) reports that some teachers worry about appearing unprofessional or losing control of the classroom and, furthermore, may be reluctant to change the way they have been working for a long time.

Another risk concerns teasing. Scholars in educational psychology argue that teasing has no place in the classroom, as it is often perceived as hostile rather than playful; although

a few students may respond positively, most interpret such behaviour as aggressive, which can disrupt learning during and beyond the class session (Keltner et al., 2001; Wanzer et al., 2006; Myers et al., 2007; Frymier et al., 2008; cited in Shardakova 2017: 222). Furthermore, Glenn and Holt (2017: 301) note that teasing always contains a serious layer in that it conveys criticism or negative evaluation; those being teased may react to the playful aspect, the critical intent, or both. Collectively, these findings suggest that even good-natured teasing can be double-edged and thus requires particularly careful judgement.

The literature presents humour as a versatile instructional resource that, when used judiciously, reduces stress, increases motivation, and supports a positive classroom climate; these benefits extend to sensitive topic discussion, emotional regulation, stronger teacher–student rapport, and gains in engagement and retention. At the same time, the same body of work underscores clear guardrails: humour should be tightly connected to lesson aims to maintain focus (Chabeli 2008), should avoid targeting individuals – especially in the form of teasing, which is often experienced as evaluative or hostile (Glenn & Holt 2017) – and should be deployed with awareness of professional positioning, since concerns about authority and classroom control can make a restrained, purpose driven approach preferable (Derakhshan 2016; Shively & Mir 2019). In practical terms, this means calibrating tone, timing, and target, keeping humour content linked, and signalling opt-in participation so that jokes function as supportive rather than evaluative moves. When these conditions are met, humour is not a diversion but a catalyst for participation and learning, strengthening group dynamics and making communication more effective while preserving psychological safety; thereby, offering a balanced, evidence-based foundation for its mindful use in classroom practice.

1.3. Humour in EFL teaching

Although humour has often been overlooked or marginalised in formal language teaching methodologies, its potential value in the classroom is increasingly recognised. As Deneire (1995: 286) notes, for many beginners, language learning is accompanied by high levels of anxiety, and fear of making mistakes. Such emotional strain can lead to frustration or even defensive reactions, but can be alleviated when teachers, instructional materials, or students themselves introduce humorous moments that release pressure and give a sense of ease (Deneire 1995: 286). In this way, humour not only lightens the atmosphere but also helps learners approach the target language with greater confidence and openness. Understanding how humour functions in the classroom therefore offers valuable insights into creating positive, effective, and emotionally safe learning spaces for foreign language students.

Shifting from affect to form and culture, teaching humour in the EFL classroom is essential because verbal humour often depends on linguistic ambiguity and culturally specific knowledge. Chiaro (2017: 414) emphasises that even when wordplay can be translated directly, cultural references may still hinder full comprehension. Since effective jokes combine language specific features with shared cultural context, learners require familiarity with the source culture to recognise the humorous intent—and even then, whether the joke will be perceived as funny remains uncertain (Chiaro 2017: 414). Thus, jokes offer more than vocabulary practice; they also prompt reflection and discussion about the cultural background of the target language. In a similar way, humour serves as an important lens into both the linguistic and cultural dimensions of a target language, as Bell (2014: 672) and Wagner and Urios-Aparisi (2011: 406–407) argue that humour plays a central role in everyday communication, thereby providing insights not only into the language itself but also into the cultural norms and values of the target community. Accordingly, classroom humour can bridge linguistic instruction with cultural literacy.

At framework level, these observations align with the CEFR's (Council of Europe: 2020) treatment of communicative language competences, particularly sociolinguistic appropriateness and pragmatic competence, and with CEFR Companion Volume scales relevant to audio-visual reception (Council of Europe 2020: 52), mediation (2020: 91-96), and pluricultural competence (2020: 123-127); at higher levels, descriptors explicitly recognise listeners' ability to "get the point of jokes or allusions." (2020: 50). In the Estonian context, the National Curriculum's foreign-language aims at upper-secondary level (*Gümnaasiumi riiklik õppekava*: 2023) emphasise purposeful, culturally appropriate communication and the development of cultural knowledge (2023: 2), and the basic-school English curriculum (*Põhikooli riiklik õppekava*: 2023) highlights authentic materials (2023: 4) and politeness norms (2023: 6): targets that humour-focused activities can advance through work with register, idioms, allusion, and culture-bound references.

Complementing these cultural-linguistic considerations, humour also has benefits to acquiring different language skills more precisely. Manuel Padilla Cruz (2019: 12) presents the opposing view that understanding jokes in a second language is an exceptionally complex and often overwhelming process for L2 learners, suggesting that difficulties in interpreting lexical items, retrieving relevant contextual information, or activating appropriate interpretive frameworks may prevent them from recognising the humour or knowing how to respond. In contrast, Bell (2014: 673) argues that humour can facilitate rather than hinder L2 learning, as it encourages students to feel more connected to the target language and provides opportunities for playful experimentation. Supporting this perspective, a large-scale study conducted at a US university (Pomerantz & Bell 2007: 567, 573) demonstrated that when students engaged humorously with a serious task, they actually produced more target language. During this humorous interaction, one student repeatedly used a particular word across different linguistic contexts, illustrating how repetition within playful language

use can function as a learning technique that strengthens understanding of how a lexical item can operate in multiple ways. Together, these findings suggest that humorous talk can scaffold both fluency and lexical flexibility.

Cabrera (2008: 45–51) argues that humour can support the learning of new vocabulary and grammar, while also highlighting its cultural basis, noting that when students create their own jokes they engage with cultural knowledge by comparing the target culture to their own. Strawhorn's findings similarly show that humour in EFL settings fosters intercultural competence, as non-native speakers often regard humour more as a cultural than a linguistic skill (Strawhorn 2014: 30). In line with this, Pusnei (2016: 136) emphasises that culture-specific humorous features can deepen students' cultural understanding while also providing authentic language input and proficient language patterns that enhance overall language competence and comprehension. This dual contribution – linguistic and intercultural – positions humour as a vehicle for integrated EFL learning.

At the cultural interface, according to Bell (2009: 274), “[c]ulture is present not only in the topic, but in connotations of words, manner of telling, and context in which the humour will be deemed appropriate.” This makes humour an important cultural indicator: Bell (2009: 246, 248–249) found that even proficient students might not understand jokes that have cultural background (fishing jokes, George Bush as Godzilla), which makes humour a perfect tool to teach students about the cultural aspects of the target language. Bell (2009: 249–253) also lists four main reasons to use and encourage humour, both spontaneous and planned, in the classroom: 1) student wants, needs and goals; 2) nature of the classroom itself as a site for experimentation; 3) complexity of humour; 4) potential of humour to facilitate language acquisition.

At the level of specific devices, in their study, Lucas (2005) found that puns proved to be a good resource to spark student conversation about aspects of language and

learner-centred learning with both low-advanced and advanced level students. Puns, therefore, can catalyse metalinguistic noticing and discussion in mixed-ability groups. Moreover, Hackathorn et al (2011) conducted a study where they compared students' language acquisition on three levels according to Bloom's taxonomy – knowledge, comprehension and application – where the teacher was using humorous materials against when the teacher was not using humour. The results indicate that the students got higher scores in comprehension and knowledge when humour was used in the classroom environment. These quantitative gains complement qualitative accounts of increased engagement.

Beyond individual tasks, humour also supports classroom management and target language use. In a case study of a Chinese elementary school English lesson, “joking-actions” during the greeting phase both drew attention for effective management and coordinated with students to facilitate communication in the target language (Wang 2022: 1163). More specifically, the teacher used a singing tone, raised voice, and comic facial expressions to settle a noisy room; students oriented to the performance, indicating regained attention (Wang 2022: 1166). In broader terms, these verbal and nonverbal joking-actions reduced the stress typical of foreign language classrooms and promoted learners' comprehension and application of English (Wang 2022: 1169). In parallel, humour served a management function in English lessons more generally, where teachers addressed and corrected misbehaviour through friendly, good-natured teasing (Kim 2021: 128). Such practices illustrate how humour can be folded into classroom routines without sidelining instructional goals.

Relatedly, humour also intersects with identity and inclusivity. Students were observed to enjoy loudly repeating a teacher's intentionally comic mispronunciation, likely reflecting a collective identity as non-native English speakers who recognise that accented

English can sound different and strange in the Korean context, resulting in a sense of togetherness (Kim 2021: 126). In this way, playful departures from standard pronunciation can become socially binding moments that ease anxiety and invite participation, especially in classrooms where students are negotiating language, identity, and confidence simultaneously.

Humour practices can be equally important from the teacher's perspective. Among Turkish EFL university instructors, the findings proposed that higher foreign language teaching enjoyment (FLTE) is strongly associated with increased use of benign, relationship-oriented humour, which can subsequently influence relationships with students (Solhi & Shirvan 2023: 166). This suggests that cultivating teacher wellbeing may indirectly enhance the quality and relational effects of classroom humour. In short, teacher wellbeing and humour use appear mutually reinforcing.

Several EFL-specific cautions deserve consideration before drawing conclusions. Pomerantz and Bell (2007: 560) found that students might not consider humour, games and language play as serious class work, thinking that they will not be learning much in that kind of class. This perception risk underscores the need to connect humour clearly to task and assessment aims. The anxieties are echoed by instructors who use humour less frequently. Shively and Mir (2019: 103) report that such teachers worry beginners will not understand the humour and might feel uncomfortable due to limited vocabulary; they also worry that humour consumes time needed for essential content and prefer to maintain a professional distance to preserve authority. Concerns about comprehension, time-on-task, and authority therefore shape decisions about when and how to employ humour. Connecting these challenges, humour is vulnerable to communication breakdowns at multiple levels. Bell (2017a: 358) explains that communication failures may arise at any linguistic, pragmatic, or cultural level, and that repairing them is a shared process, regardless of whether the trouble

originates with the speaker or the hearer. She elaborates that humour comprehension entails decoding language and cultural context, but also identifying the incongruity that makes something funny; misunderstandings can occur if the audience lacks necessary background knowledge, if delivery is incomplete or confusing, if attention lapses, or if the joke's style is simply inaccessible to the listener (Bell 2017a: 358–359). In multilingual, mixed proficiency EFL settings, these risks are non-trivial, heightening the need for alignment with learners' linguistic resources and cultural frames. Accordingly, classroom humour in EFL benefits from clear framing, level-appropriate input, and optional participation pathways.

To conclude, the evidence discussed above indicates that humour is more than an entertainment device: it can ease anxiety, promote engagement, and support both linguistic development and intercultural understanding in EFL classrooms. Because humour frequently relies on ambiguity and cultural reference, it provides authentic opportunities to meet vocabulary and structure in context while fostering metalinguistic attention and discussion; quantitative work also suggests gains at knowledge and comprehension levels. At the same time, EFL-specific cautions, such as perceptions that humour is “not serious,” worries about time and authority, and the risk of linguistic/pragmatic/cultural misalignment, argue for clear task-linking, careful level-matching, and explicit invitations (rather than requirements) to participate. When these guardrails are observed, humour functions not as a diversion but as a purposeful resource for participation, retention, and classroom cohesion, offering a balanced, evidence-based rationale for its mindful integration in EFL teaching.

1.4. Using jokes as learning material

Humour can be exploited in multiple ways in the language classroom – bodily performance (gestures, movement), verbal play (puns, double meanings), and media rich input (clips, audio sketches) – each serving distinct pedagogical aims. Within usage-oriented

pedagogy, humour supports real life interaction by situating form within purposeful exchanges rather than isolated drills (Johnson 1992: 86). At higher proficiency, guided inquiry into jokes in the form of researching and discussing improves sensitivity to ambiguity and culturally bound cues (Cruz 2019: 7). The following studies illustrate these modalities in practice across levels and contexts.

In the classroom, learners who prefer a concrete learning style benefit from lively, hands-on activities and materials that feel immediately useful, responding better to varied verbal and visual input than to repetitive written exercises (Knowles 1982; cited in Richards & Lockhart 1996: 60). In line with this learner orientation, humour integrates naturally into function-based teaching, where authentic communication in realistic situations is prioritised over grammatical precision (Johnson 1992: 86). Such instruction focuses on meaningful interaction, teaching vocabulary through context, supporting comprehension of ideas, and prioritising the expression of meaning in writing rather than perfect accuracy (Johnson 1992: 96). Manuel Padilla Cruz (2019: 7) designed a humour-based activity focused on comprehension, aiming to help advanced C1–C2 learners analyse and respond to jokes. Because students at this level can understand linguistic ambiguity, cultural references, and shared knowledge, they are better equipped to interpret humorous intent. His five-step sequence asked learners to research jokes, reflect on them, receive targeted explanations, examine the sources of their humour, and then reassess their initial interpretations.

Empirical classroom examples further illustrate how humour functions across modalities and proficiency contexts. Audiovisual humour drawn from English sitcoms such as *Friends* and *The Simpsons* has been shown to support translanguaging practices and deepen wordplay comprehension among Arab EFL learners in Iran (Ghajarieh et al 2024). Here, “translanguaging practices” refers to learners’ flexible, strategic use of their full linguistic repertoires (Arabic and English) to make sense of, discuss, and build on the

humour. Physical approaches can also help: when a primary teacher in South Korea used humorous movement to teach prepositions, deliberately slowing the pace of instruction to match the students who were struggling with the topic, the lighter atmosphere increased attention and interaction (Kim 2021: 123). Student attitudes are similarly encouraging; Söderström et al. (2022: 107) investigated Swedish upper secondary school students studying English and found generally positive attitudes toward the use of puns in education. Many responses emphasised the entertaining nature of puns, noting that they made lessons more enjoyable. Based on this perception, the study suggests that incorporating puns into instruction may positively influence student motivation. Finally, auditory humour via recorded conversations enabled Malaysian university students to engage with comedic input while illustrating the role of vocabulary, particularly when interacting with speakers from different linguistic backgrounds (Zulazli et al 2024: 170).

Generally, the studies indicate that humour functions as a set of adaptable practices rather than a single method: physical performances can ease pressure and prompt participation (Kim 2021: 123); puns and other verbal play can heighten enjoyment while directing attention to form–meaning relations (Söderström et al. 2022: 107); and media-based input can scaffold translanguaging, listening, and lexical access (Ghajarieh et al 2024 and Zulazli et al 2024: 170). When embedded in usage-oriented design (Johnson: 1992) and sequenced to proficiency (Cruz 2019: 7), humour supports engagement and comprehension across EFL contexts.

1.5. Teaching vocabulary

Vocabulary is often the aspect where learners see progress most clearly, since lexical growth can be counted and easily noticed, even when improvements in broader skills or grammar feel less visible (Webb & Nation 2017: 6). However, in EFL classrooms

presentation alone is not enough: explicit teaching accounts for only a small proportion of the words learners ultimately acquire (Webb & Nation 2017: 225; Nation 2001: 34). For this reason, vocabulary learning is better approached as a course-design issue, where learners are given structured opportunities to meet, notice, and reuse new items across lessons (Nation 2001: 232–233).

A central principle is that learners need repeated, meaning-focused encounters with vocabulary. Nation emphasises that words must appear in multiple contexts of use, not only in definitions or lists (2001: 43, 148, 154). Research on memory supports this approach: without reinforcement, newly learned material fades quickly, a pattern described by the forgetting curve, which shows how sharply recall drops when items are not revisited (Ebbinghaus 1913/1885: chpt 7-8). To counter this decline, reviews should be spaced over time rather than clustered. Spaced repetition reliably strengthens retention, and the most effective interval depends on how long the learner needs to remember the information (Cepeda et al. 2008: 1099). In practice, this means planning several revisits to vocabulary, with intervals that gradually lengthen across the course.

Retrieval also plays a key role. Learners often recognise a word long before they can use it accurately, so tasks should require them to produce vocabulary in speaking and writing, supported by further exposure through listening and reading (Nation 2001). Such retrieval practice helps move items from passive to active control and supports more flexible use.

As learning is consolidated, repetition and recycling become essential. Multiple, spaced encounters provide the strongest basis for durable retention (Webb & Nation 2017: 231; Nation 2001: 32, 43, 121), so course routines should build in short retrieval opportunities - such as starters, micro-quizzes, or end-of-lesson prompts - that keep vocabulary active over time.

Finally, vocabulary is not learned word by word. Much of what learners need consists of collocations, chunks, and formulaic sequences, which depend on repeated exposure to co-occurring words rather than isolated items. Designing activities that recycle typical combinations and patterns supports more fluent and idiomatic production (Nation 2001: 317–343).

Within that spacing logic, workload and review need realistic staging. For language learners, proposals of learning 20–30-word families per week are often cited, but even then, learning hinges on review: an item may need 6–16 re-encounters to stabilise (Ur 2024: 64). Deliberate procedures divide into two groups: introducing new items and reviewing them to reinforce knowledge (Ur 2024: 65). The best review occurs when the learner still remembers the item but must work slightly to retrieve it; thus, an expanding schedule – next lesson, then a week, two weeks, a month – maps onto memory strength (Ur 2024: 69). Review tasks should foster precise and meaningful learner engagement and thus can harness peer-teaching and creative responses (Ur 2024: 69); in humour-based lessons, this could mean revisiting the same lexical trigger via a new joke, so the spacing is preserved without feeling repetitive.

In parallel with spacing and review, relations among items influence learnability. Sets composed of words that frequently co-occur (e.g., words of the same topic or chunked sequences) can yield more efficient learning than arbitrary clusters (Webb & Nation 2017: 233). In other words, teaching words that are often used in the same theme/pattern helps learners retrieve and recombine language more fluently. This is especially compatible with humour-based activities, where collocation frames and formulaic phraseology frequently underlie the joke mechanism (see 1.3).

Finally, word consciousness - a metalinguistic awareness of what it means to “know” a word - encourages learners to be curious about form, meaning, collocation, connotation, and register. The goal is to make learners keen to encounter and learn new words and to

know how to do so (Webb & Nation 2017: 68–69). For example, brief prompts (e.g., “Why/How does this punchline work?”) can turn routine noticing into a productive classroom habit, especially when jokes spotlight polysemy or register. In sum, when spacing is engineered, review is scheduled, item patterns are foregrounded, and word consciousness is cultivated, *and* when humour supplies compelling reasons to retrieve precisely, vocabulary learning becomes both durable and usable.

2. DESIGNING THE JOKE-BASED VOCABULARY ACTIVITIES

2.1. Aims and design principles of the joke-based vocabulary activities

The empirical component of the present thesis has two main aims. The first is to design 13 activity sets for vocabulary revision using jokes to align with the *On Screen B2/B2+* vocabulary content and with established principles of vocabulary learning. Each set consists of 2 or 3 joke sections, each of which contains 2 to 5 activities. The second aim is to pilot and refine these sets in authentic classroom conditions in order to evaluate their usability and their potential for supporting vocabulary revision at the B1–B2 level.

These aims lead to three research questions:

- 1) How can joke-based activities be sequenced so that learners revise vocabulary from explaining it to using it productively?
- 2) What adjustments (e.g., timing, pre-teaching, prompts) are needed to ensure the activities are time-feasible, closely aligned with the *On Screen* vocabulary targets, and manageable and engaging for B1-B2 learners?
- 3) How do Estonian teachers of English evaluate the alignment of the created activities with CEFR descriptor scales and National Curriculum aims?

The empirical component develops and class-pilots joke-based activity sets (see Appendix 1) that follow the vocabulary content of the *On Screen B2/B2+* coursebooks (see Appendix 3) currently in use in the upper-secondary school in which the materials are piloted, and are targeted at B1–B2 learners. To protect learning focus, humour is used to strengthen learners' grasp of covered content, while the lighter tone promotes comfort and recall (Deneire 1995: 294). In classroom pacing, a brief humorous opener can set tone, settle latecomers, signal enjoyment, and nudge motivation while introducing lesson focus (Richards & Lockhart 1996: 115). More broadly, the aim is to establish a supportive affective climate – attention, engagement and participation (Richards & Lockhart 1996: 129). Some

activities are deliberately experience-centred (e.g., short free discussion around a joke) where the experience itself is the learning goal rather than a narrowly measurable outcome (Richards & Lockhart 1996: 171).

To make the CEFR and National Curriculum (NC) references in this chapter transparent, this section briefly specifies the alignment targets used to plan and evaluate the materials. The activity sets are designed for B1–B2 learners, i.e., learners working within the CEFR “independent user” (Council of Europe 2020: 36) band, where the aim is to support comprehension and interaction while increasing confidence in guided productive use. In piloting and reflection, alignment is tracked using a short CEFR/NC checklist (see Appendix 4) embedded in the teacher debrief (see Appendix 2). The CEFR categories used in this checklist are audiovisual reception, mediation, pluricultural awareness, sociolinguistic appropriateness, reception and pragmatic competence, reflecting the competences required by joke-based activities (e.g., interpreting implied meanings, rephrasing punchlines, maintaining appropriate tone, and sustaining coherent discussion). National Curriculum alignment is tracked in parallel using a small set of targeted aims relevant to this intervention: purposeful, culturally appropriate communication, cultural knowledge, work with authentic materials, and politeness/appropriacy. These aims align with the foreign-language field competence in the upper-secondary NC, which emphasises purposeful communication, mediation/understanding of meanings, and cultural knowledge, and with the broader expectation that instruction draws on authentic materials and supports appropriate language use. For quick reference, Appendix 6 summarises the CEFR B1/B2 descriptor targets for the categories above in a compact table, and Appendix 7 lists the NC targeted aims used in the alignment checks. The per-topic mapping of units to CEFR/NC targets is provided in Appendix 4.

Design choices link directly to vocabulary learning principles described by Webb and Nation (2017). Learners meet the same content across skills (linked-skills design) to build repetition naturally (Webb & Nation 2017: 67, 86–87). Activity-focused, problem-solving interaction is scaffolded in steps, draws on written input for reference, and ends in varied output (Webb & Nation 2017: 84–85). Activities prompt guessing from context during reading/listening (Webb & Nation 2017: 93), use vocabulary-focused comprehension questions to recycle targets in prompts and answers (Webb & Nation 2017: 99–100), and include interactive reading moves (predicting, clarifying, brief read-aloud) to anchor meaning (Webb & Nation 2017: 101). Together, these measures operationalise the course-level goal discussed in section 1.5: engineering repeated, spaced encounters with opportunities for productive use.

The sets are short, plug-and-play sequences that can serve as starters, mid-lesson energisers, or end-of-lesson review, always tied to coursebook content (*On Screen* series) and calibrated to learners' level. As a rule, individual activities are designed to take approximately 2–5 minutes, and teachers may omit or shorten activities to match time constraints and learner needs. The internal sequencing moves from receptive to productive work: reviewing key vocabulary and understanding the humour trigger first, then moving towards guided output (speaking and short responses). Optionality and non-targeting of individuals mitigate risks discussed in earlier sections (e.g., teasing), while the activity set format supports modular use across lessons.

2.2. Context, target group and implementation principles

The implementation takes place in an upper-secondary school with approximately 150 students, in a town in southern Estonia. The learners are in Grades 10–12 and their working proficiency in English ranges from B1 to B2+, as established by ongoing course

placement and teacher judgement. Classes at the school are grouped by language level, so while some groups work comfortably at B2, others are nearer to B1, and within-group variation still occurs. The activity sets are therefore targeted at B1–B2, designed to align with course content, require minimal preparation, and be completed quickly, so they can be easily integrated into regular lessons without disrupting planned coursebook coverage.

Three Estonian teachers of English, including the author, pilot the sets with different class groups. Group sizes range from 3 to 17 students, reflecting both a very small group and typical small class conditions. This design captures a range of learner profiles while remaining deliberately small-scale and manageable. All three teachers have over ten years of teaching experience and are currently working at the selected upper-secondary school, which supports shared curricular expectations and a common understanding of classroom routines. Feedback is collected through brief teacher observation notes and post-lesson reflections, supplemented by immediate learner comments. This arrangement supports iterative refinement while keeping the trial feasible within regular timetables.

2.3. Method and data sources

The empirical component uses an iterative approach in which activity sets are designed and piloted in regular lessons, and then refined in response to teacher and learner feedback. Each activity set is created against the *On Screen* topic map and the vocabulary principles outlined in section 1.5 (linked skills, spacing, retrieval), then implemented as a short lesson segment (starter, mid-lesson, or end-of-lesson), and finally adjusted considering classroom observations and post-lesson comments.

For each piloted set, the primary data source is a one-page teacher debrief (see Appendix 2) completed immediately after the lesson. This debrief consolidates three types of input: (a) brief descriptive teacher observations taken during/after delivery (timings of

steps, participation, points of confusion, risks of going off-task); (b) immediate learner comments elicited through one or two short questions (clarity, interest, perceived difficulty); and (c) the teacher's evaluative, action-oriented judgements (suggested edits, sequencing changes, and any mismatches in level). For analysis, the debrief records where in the lesson the joke sections appeared, how long they ran, and which activities were included or omitted. Completed debriefs are then collated thematically (e.g., clarity of the humour trigger, appropriacy of cultural references, retrieval load, time-on-task) to decide whether the task requires brief pre-teaching of a word or cultural cue (Deneire 1995: 294), whether additional linked-skills steps are needed to strengthen retrieval (Webb & Nation 2017: 86–87), and/or whether activity-focused interaction should be restaged to support both receptive and productive retrieval (Webb & Nation 2017: 84–85; 99–100).

Within the same debrief, a short CEFR/NC check is ticked to document the targeted CEFR scales/competences, the relevant National Curriculum aim(s), together with the observable indicators (e.g., retrieval achieved, L2 use) and the outcome level (Met/Partly/Not observed). Appendix 4 presents the intended per-set alignment, while the teacher debrief records whether the targeted aims were observed in a given lesson.

2.4. Vocabulary basis in *On Screen* textbooks

At the upper-secondary school involved in the present study, English courses across Grades 10–12 are organised around two core coursebooks: *On Screen B2* and *On Screen B2+*, with a transition between them in the middle of Grade 11. Each book comprises eight thematically focused modules that structure lexical progression and recycling. The module-by-module mapping is provided in Appendix 3 (Tables 1–2). To keep the empirical component aligned with the syllabus, the module themes were consolidated into 13 categories reflecting coursebook coverage and classroom needs: *appearance*; *family*; *jobs*;

environment and animals; festivals and holidays; travelling; crime; technology; sports; weather; the arts; food; education. Although some overlap is inevitable (e.g., “jobs” appears in both coursebooks and environmental themes recur at two proficiency stages), these categories provide a stable framework for selecting, sequencing, and comparing sets. Where themes recur, the activity sets can be used with either coursebook (or both), and not every section or every activity needs to be completed within each module. In this way, the sets reinforce ongoing lexical objectives and can be incorporated into regular lesson cycles without compromising coverage or assessment requirements.

2.5. Developed joke-based activity sets

The joke-based activity sets are delivered as Google Slides, accessible via a link and also a QR code (see Appendix 1), ensuring quick access, easy display, and minimal preparation for teachers. No supplementary worksheets are required, and answer keys are embedded within each set to streamline classroom management and support self-checking where appropriate. The activity sets target B1–B2 learners and are intended to complement the vocabulary content rather than introduce extensive new lexis. They can set a positive tone at the start of a lesson, offer a brief mid-lesson energiser, or serve as a light revision component near the end.

Activity sequences in each joke section are scaffolded. Early activities focus on revising key vocabulary and understanding the humour trigger, while later activities shift towards speaking fluency, creative production, and personalisation (e.g., short discussions, justifications, structured responses). The materials incorporate a range of joke types and draw on humour devices such as absurdity, incongruity, and contrasts between the canny and the naïve. Teachers may omit or shorten activities to match time constraints and learner needs. The topic-based structure enables straightforward mapping to current modules while

also supporting cross-topic recycling. Overall, the design aims to keep preparation minimal, spotlight vocabulary in context, and promote purposeful interaction, so that humour becomes a vehicle for lexical consolidation and communicative practice rather than a distraction from core objectives.

The table below presents the thirteen topic-based activity sets used in the empirical component, indicating for each set (a) the joke sections employed, (b) the number of activities per section, and (c) the principal aims/skills addressed. The sets target B1–B2 learners and are organised thematically to align with the *On Screen B2/B2+* vocabulary content (see Appendix 3). For clarity, section types are described using a consistent shorthand (e.g., puns, anecdotes, knock-knock jokes), and the “aims/skills” column reflects the intended progression from comprehension and humour recognition to productive use.

Table 1. Activity sets by the topic, type of jokes, number of activities, and the main aims

Topic	Joke sections (number of jokes & type)	Activities per section	Main aims / skills
Crime	4 yo-momma jokes; 5 pun jokes	3 / 3	Revise crime and legal-process lexis; interpret misunderstandings and puns in jokes; practise target phrases for realistic actions (e.g., call the police, press charges, under arrest); produce short explanations and crime-related sentences using prompts; apply vocabulary in a mini case-file task and justify a verdict using evidence/statement language.
Technology	9 pun jokes; 1 letter-style joke	4 / 3	Interpret technology puns, riddles, and internet wordplay; revise technology lexis by categorising jokes into topic areas (hardware/software/internet/mobile/cybersecurity/social media) and adding relevant terms; explain literal vs intended meaning and identify humour triggers in short jokes; update jokes by substituting modern tech terms while preserving coherence; analyse an extended letter-style “tech support” text as genre parody (software metaphor for human behaviour); infer meanings from context, identify humour devices, and produce a short tech-support reply in the same style.

Appearance	1 knock-knock joke; 1 anecdote joke; 1 anecdote joke	3 / 3 / 2	Interpret wordplay and joke logic; revise appearance and clothing lexis; categorise items into appropriate dress contexts (workwear vs costume); produce short spoken descriptions using prompts; support brief guided speaking (and optional drawing) to consolidate vocabulary.
Art	6 pun jokes; 6 pun jokes *extra vocabulary section	4 / 3 / 3	Interpret puns and idiom-based wordplay; revise art and media lexis through controlled completion tasks; analyse references and humour triggers in short film/series jokes; practise evaluative language for reviews (e.g., outstanding/spectacular/realistic); apply performance and text-structure vocabulary in guided dialogues and short review choices.
Education	5 pun jokes; 1 anecdote joke; 1 anecdote joke; *extra vocabulary section	3 / 3 / 3	Interpret wordplay and literal twists in school jokes; revise education-system and academic lexis (e.g., curriculum, compulsory, distance learning); practise core administrative verbs (enrol, attend, hand in, drop out, expel, graduate); discuss learning sequences and apply critical-thinking prompts; use university-life vocabulary in controlled matching, dialogues, and decision-point tasks (including study abroad, grants, accreditation).
Environment & animals	6 pun jokes; 4 knock-knock jokes; *extra vocabulary section 1 anecdote joke	4 / 2 / 3 / 2	Interpret animal-based wordplay and knock-knock puns; revise environment and animal lexis through completion, checking, and categorisation; link joke content to topic vocabulary (e.g., habitat, extinction, endangered/at risk, in the wild); produce short informative outputs via animal ID cards; practise environmental problem-solution language (e.g., oil spill, exhaust fumes, deforestation, landfill) and propose actions using set phrases (raise awareness, conserve, preserve, adopt); support guided discussion of values and sustainability through a short extended joke text.
Family	4 pun jokes; 1 anecdote joke; 1 anecdote joke	3 / 3 / 3	Interpret implied meaning and wordplay in family/relationship jokes; identify and discuss emotions and attitudes (e.g., hopeful, critical, bittersweet); build relationship and dating lexis through matching and explanation tasks; produce short mini-conversations and follow-up lines to practise pragmatic response and speaking fluency; prompt brief opinion-sharing on relationship expectations and family perspectives.
Festivals & holidays	4 pun jokes; 1 anecdote joke; *extra vocabulary section	3 / 2 / 1	Interpret puns and misunderstandings in festival/holiday jokes; practise vocabulary-in-context by selecting meanings and using target items in sentences; link jokes to relevant events and apply festival/celebration lexis (e.g., festivity, fancy dress, parade/procession, anticipation); produce short functional outputs (host lines, mini posters) using set vocabulary; extend cultural knowledge through themed matching tasks and optional extra vocabulary practice.

Food	4 pun jokes; 4 pun jokes; 3 pun jokes	4 / 4 / 4	Interpret food-related puns and double meanings; revise taste/texture and food-quality lexis through matching and completion tasks (e.g., bitter, sour, bland, ripe, rotten, peckish); practise food-preparation verbs via action matching and simple recipe logic (slice, chop, grate, swallow); apply preference and craving language in guided dialogues; support discussion and mini-debate by using target vocabulary to justify opinions about food.
Jobs	6 pun jokes; 1 anecdote joke; 1 anecdote joke	3 / 3 / 3	Interpret puns and job-related humour; revise job and workplace lexis through controlled completion and sorting; practise evaluative adjectives for job qualities and workplace behaviour; apply narrative interpretation by discussing a short anecdote and its moral; compare occupations and discuss responsibility and working conditions; practise interview-skills awareness through scenario questions and guided judgement of “good/bad” interview behaviour.
Sports	5 pun jokes; 4 pun jokes; *extra vocabulary section	3 / 4 / 2	Interpret sports puns and literal jokes; revise sport and competition lexis through matching and explanation tasks; apply target vocabulary in short event commentary; consolidate track-and-field vocabulary (lane, track, finishing line, hurdles) through controlled completion; practise training and motivation language (coach, discipline, motivated) via guided dialogue; extend coverage to sport types and extreme sports (categorising activities; float/plunge) and apply safety/roles vocabulary in brief decision tasks.
Travelling	1 anecdote joke; 1 anecdote joke; 5 pun jokes	3 / 2 / 5	Interpret travel humour and identify punchline logic; revise travel lexis for transport and trip planning (e.g., delay, refund, budget); practise functional language through controlled tasks (complaint email, plan-fixing steps, mini itinerary); categorise travel vocabulary by theme (style/problems/places/money) and apply it in short guided choices and justifications; support brief discussion of travel preferences using target expressions.
Weather	4 pun jokes; 4 pun jokes	5 / 5	Interpret weather wordplay and idiom-based humour; build and extend weather lexis through brainstorming and controlled categorisation (rain vs ice/snow); practise key collocations and figurative phrases (e.g., clap of thunder, flash of lightning) via matching and sentence use; apply forecast language by matching descriptions to weather terms; consolidate extreme-weather and disaster vocabulary through a short mini-report completion task; support brief reasoned speaking through idiom-to-situation matching and discussion.

As noted above, Table 1 summarises how the thirteen topic-based sets operationalise a consistent design logic across different humour formats. The table shows that, regardless of topic, activities are organised as short sequences that move from comprehension and humour recognition (e.g., identifying the trigger and interpreting the punchline) towards guided productive use (e.g., justifying choices, completing short dialogues, or producing brief responses). It also highlights two practical design features that support classroom feasibility: modularity (teachers can use one section without completing an entire set) and close alignment with the *On Screen B2/B2+* vocabulary content and module themes (sets can be used alongside the relevant coursebook module and selectively reused for revision). The overview clarifies that variation lies mainly in the humour mechanism and the amount of discourse involved, while the pedagogical sequencing remains stable across topics.

2.6. Piloting outcomes and refinements

Across January–March 2026, the activity sets were piloted in nine regular English lessons, and nine teacher debrief sheets were completed, one immediately after each lesson. The pilots covered Grades 10–12 (Grade 10: three lessons; Grade 11: four lessons; Grade 12: two lessons) and involved groups ranging from 3 to 17 students, reflecting both very small-group and typical small-class conditions. All lessons were conducted in face-to-face classroom conditions, with teachers projecting the slide deck and running activities through whole-class interaction and/or brief pair/group work, depending on the activity. In each case, the materials were implemented as a short segment within an otherwise ordinary lesson (e.g., mid-lesson or end-of-lesson), and teachers selected and adapted sections and activities to fit time constraints and learner level. Because piloting took place with preliminary versions of several activity sets, the summary below records the scope and context of piloting (topic,

grade, group size), rather than the exact activity-by-activity sequence of the final versions presented in Appendix 1.

Table 2. Overview of piloting lessons and completed teacher debrief sheets (January–March 2026).

Trial	Grade	Topic	Students
1	10	Environment/Animals	7
2	10	Festivals/Holidays	14
3	10	Festivals/Holidays	10
4	11	Crime	17
5	11	Crime	6
6	11	Family	11
7	11	Appearance (final version)	3
8	12	Jobs	11
9	12	Jobs	7

Note. The table reports piloting scope and context; activity sequencing in the final versions is presented in Appendix 1.

Across the piloting lessons, several topic-based sets were used, though implementation typically focused on one joke section at a time, and occasionally two. Completing every activity in a full set within a single lesson was rarely feasible, which suggests that the sets function best as modular sequences that can be distributed across lessons or selectively shortened depending on time and group needs. The Jobs, Crime, and Festivals/Holidays sets were each piloted twice, while Family, Environment/Animals, Technology, and the revised Appearance sets were trialled once. In most cases, piloting focused on the first joke section in a set, and occasionally two joke sections were used. Importantly, the designed sequencing from recognition to production is intended as a within-section progression: each section begins with identifying the humour trigger and clarifying key lexis (e.g., understanding the pun, matching the words to their meaning), and then (where feasible) moves towards guided productive use (discussion, justification, brief dialogues). In practice, teachers adapt this progression to group level and lesson time. For groups closer to B1, the earlier recognition and vocabulary-support activities are typically retained to strengthen retrieval, while later, more demanding output activities may be

shortened or omitted if lesson time is limited or students are not confident enough to produce too much L2. For higher-level groups, once the humour trigger is understood, earlier support activities can be reduced so that lesson time is focused on productive activities. When the sets are used across multiple lessons, teachers generally introduce a new joke section in a later lesson rather than continuing the same section, which allows each lesson segment to remain self-contained while still maintaining the overall design logic of moving from humour comprehension towards productive language use. Completing every activity in a full set within a single lesson was therefore rarely feasible, which indicates that the sets function best as modular sequences that can be used selectively depending on time and group needs.

When analysing the observations during the piloting lessons, four main categories emerge: feasibility (timing and task load), learner response (engagement and language use), vocabulary learning processes (receptive vs productive retrieval), and alignment considerations (CEFR descriptors/NC aims and appropriacy). The discussion below summarises these categories in turn. In terms of lesson placement, the activity sets were most often used near the end of lessons and occasionally in the middle. They were not used as starters during the piloting period; however, piloting observations suggest that starter use is a promising option, particularly at the beginning of a school year when teachers are planning lesson routines and may benefit from short, motivating revision segments. Regarding timing, implementation typically took longer than initially planned. This was partly due to the transition from receptive activities (defining vocabulary and understanding the joke) to productive activities (discussion, justification, or extended answers), which can require additional scaffolding. At the same time, longer timing was not necessarily negative; for example, in the Jobs and Family sets, learners sometimes became absorbed in the discussion and produced more L2 than expected, which teachers evaluated as a positive outcome, even if it extended the activity beyond the planned time.

Engagement was generally high. Learners consistently responded positively to activities that felt different from routine coursebook work, and attention levels were reported as high in most trials and medium in a small number of cases, mainly when the joke was not understood. Attention was not reported as low in any trial. Differences between groups largely reflected proficiency level. B2 learners tended to produce L2 more readily because they could focus on idea generation rather than on formulating language. Learners closer to B1 produced less and sometimes relied on L1, especially during extended turns, because they lacked the lexical resources to express ideas fluently. However, when activities were sufficiently engaging, lower-level learners often attempted more L2 output: they asked classmates or the teacher for vocabulary support and then continued their intended message. Teachers noted this as an encouraging indicator of willingness to communicate when the classroom climate felt supportive.

With respect to vocabulary learning processes, receptive retrieval (recognition and comprehension of target lexis) was consistently achieved across trials. Productive retrieval was achieved in many cases but varied by group. It was most challenging in lower-level or shy groups, where learners were initially reluctant to speak; nevertheless, teachers observed that several learners overcame this barrier when activities felt engaging and when they perceived their answers as valid. In relation to CEFR categories, teachers most frequently marked the following areas as achieved on B2 level: audiovisual reception, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic appropriateness, pluricultural awareness. No category was marked as not achieved, meaning no category was considered lower than B1 level. Within the National Curriculum, cultural knowledge and work with authentic materials were always marked as met targets.

Piloting also generated concrete design refinements. The most consistent issue concerned activities requiring learners to invent their own jokes: learners were generally

reluctant to do this, and teachers often replaced such steps with lower-pressure alternatives, such as searching for similar jokes online (e.g., additional yo-momma jokes for the Crime unit), sharing the ones they like, and voting for the class favourite. A content-specific cultural reference also emerged as an issue: the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles “Michelle” joke was reported as difficult for some learners to understand and was therefore recommended for replacement. Teachers reported that the overall internal sequencing of activities from receptive to productive was logical and the instructions were clear, although the Crime set was described as slightly confusing due to lengthy explanations and the placement of the answer key on a separate slide. For the Environment/Animals set, teachers noted that the content leaned more heavily towards animals, and recommended adding further tasks to ensure the “environment” vocabulary is revised as explicitly as the animal lexis.

Finally, piloting suggested practical principles for classroom use. Although a full set can be time-consuming if completed in one sitting, teachers agreed that it is not necessary to complete all sections and activities at once. Sets can be distributed over several lessons, and teachers can select favourite activities while omitting others without undermining the overall learning logic. Learners also expressed preferences for particular joke types: pun/wordplay jokes were frequently cited as favourites, while anecdote-style jokes often generated longer discussion and therefore more speaking. A particularly noteworthy example occurred during the piloting of the revised Appearance set with a small, low-level and shy group (three learners): one learner who enjoyed drawing was asked to visualise descriptions on the board, and classmates spontaneously supplied additional lexis, that was not prompted in the activity (e.g., “floral tie”, “striped tights”). Later, the same learner successfully reproduced newly supplied vocabulary, suggesting that multimodal, low-pressure participation can support recall and confidence. In addition, teachers noted that vocabulary-explanation activities may

be too easy for higher-level groups and can be shortened or skipped in favour of productive stages; this supports the overall design principle of modularity and teacher choice.

Based on the piloting lessons and the teacher debriefs, all activity sets were refined in several systematic ways to improve time-feasibility, clarity, and alignment with the *On Screen B2/B2+* vocabulary content. Across topics, revisions primarily strengthened the link between the humorous stimulus and the target lexis by embedding coursebook vocabulary more consistently into prompts, guided questions, and short output frames, so that learners repeatedly encountered and reused the same items across a section. In addition, activities that required learners to invent original jokes were mostly reworked into lower-pressure, more controlled alternatives (e.g., structured completion, selection/justification, short dialogues, or “repair” tasks), which maintained the humour focus while improving participation across B1–B2 groups. Where joke sections alone did not provide sufficient density of target vocabulary, short “extra vocabulary” sections were added to preserve topic coverage and ensure that the activity set delivered the intended lexical revision.

The examples of these revision types are shown in figures 1 - 2, with further before/after examples are provided in Appendix 5.

Task 3: create your own sports joke

• Instructions:

- Choose a sport or activity (e.g., football, swimming, cycling) and write a short joke using a pun or silly idea.

Examples:

“I tried yoga yesterday. I’m still trying to untangle myself.”

“I went swimming and won gold... in the ‘Biggest Splash’ category.”

“I played football yesterday. The ball won.”

Activity 3: event commentary

Instructions: Choose **two** jokes from SPORTS 1 and give a 1–2 sentence “sports commentary” using at least 2 words from the box.

Box: *athlete / competitor / competitive / event / coach / referee / spectator / to score / discipline / cooperation*

- I threw a boomerang five years ago and it never came back. Now I live in constant fear.
- I'm just back from competing in the 'Sun Tanning World Championship'. I got bronze.
- I just got a new personal best in the 100 metre sprint! 73 meters.
- Just had a water fight on the park with a bunch of local kids. I won! No one's a match for me and my kettle.
- Played frisbee in the park with my dog yesterday. Not much good though, I think I'm going to need a flatter dog....

Examples:

The athlete was very ____ during the event...

The spectators thought ____

Suggested answer:
 “This was not a fair event — the competitor had a kettle! The spectators laughed, and the referee would probably stop it.”

Figure 1. Example refinement: open-ended “create your own joke” task replaced with a controlled alternative to improve time-feasibility and participation.

Activity 4: Mini itinerary

Complete the itinerary using the following words:

to set off / explore / inland / stroll / local / guide book / highlight / stunning / unspoilt / budget

Itinerary:

- Day 1: We _____ early and use a _____ to plan our route.
- Day 2: We _____ the city centre and take a _____ by the river.
- Day 3: We travel _____ to see an _____ beach and try _____ food.
- Day 4: The trip's _____ is a _____ view over a _____ valley.
- Day 5: We keep it on a _____ and pay for souvenirs in the local _____.

Answer key:

Day 1: set off / guide book

Day 2: explore / stroll

Day 3: inland / unspoilt / local

Day 4: highlight / stunning / vast

Day 5: budget / currency

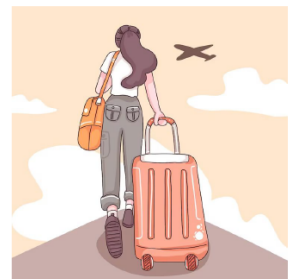


Figure 2. Example refinement: short supplementary vocabulary mini-section added where a joke section alone did not provide sufficient target-lexis coverage.

Figures 1–2 illustrate the two most recurrent refinement patterns that emerged during piloting: reducing activity pressure by shifting from open-ended joke invention to more controlled formats, and strengthening lexical alignment by adding brief supplementary vocabulary activities when a joke section alone did not provide sufficient target-lexis coverage. These examples are not presented as lesson-by-lesson transcripts but as representative instances of broader design adjustments documented across debrief sheets.

Overall, the refinements preserve the central logic of the materials, moving from humour recognition and comprehension towards guided productive use.

2.7. Discussion: answering the research questions

This section interprets the piloting outcomes in relation to the three research questions guiding the empirical component. The discussion draws on the nine face-to-face lesson implementations, and the nine teacher debrief sheets completed immediately after each lesson, supplemented by short learner comments recorded in the same debriefs.

Research question 1 asks how joke-based activities can be sequenced so that learners move from explaining vocabulary to using it productively. Across the piloted lessons, the most robust sequencing pattern was a receptive-to-productive progression: (1) learners first recognised or clarified the vocabulary and the humour trigger, and (2) then used the same lexical items in short, guided output activities (justifications, structured responses, brief dialogues, or discussions). Teachers generally evaluated this progression as logical and instructionally clear, and it helped keep humour “in service of” vocabulary revision rather than becoming a separate entertainment segment.

A consistent observation was that productive activities require more time and scaffolding than receptive activities, particularly when the activities moved from single-sentence responses to longer contributions (e.g., explaining an interpretive shift or sustaining a discussion). When sufficient scaffolding was present (e.g., prompts that recycled target lexis, sentence frames, or structured options), learners were more likely to attempt output even if they were initially hesitant. This supports the design assumption that productive use is most feasible when it is guided and constrained, rather than fully open-ended.

The piloting also suggests that different joke formats support productive use in different ways. Pun/wordplay jokes often led quickly into short, manageable output (e.g.,

identifying the trigger, explaining the double meaning). By contrast, anecdote-style jokes more often generated extended discussion and therefore more speaking, sometimes exceeding the planned timing, but also increasing meaningful L2 use when learners became engaged. Overall, these outcomes support a sequencing approach in which short, form-focused humour can act as a rapid “entry point” into vocabulary work, while narrative humour can be used selectively when the lesson aim prioritises longer discussion and fluency.

Research question 2 asks what adjustments are needed to ensure the activities are time-feasible, closely aligned with the coursebook vocabulary targets, and manageable and engaging for B1–B2 learners. The strongest finding here is that the sets function best as modular sequences rather than as full lesson-length units. In practice, teachers most often implemented one joke section (and occasionally two) within a single lesson, and completing every activity in a full set in one sitting was not feasible. This supports the design principle of optionality: teachers can omit or shorten activities without undermining the underlying learning logic, especially when time constraints or group needs require it.

A second, recurring adjustment concerned activity pressure. Activities that asked learners to *invent their own jokes* were reported as problematic: learners were often reluctant to produce original jokes, and teachers frequently substituted lower-pressure alternatives (e.g., choosing between options, repairing a response, locating similar examples, or voting for favourites). This suggests that, for B1–B2 groups, productive work is more reliable when it is structured and language-supported, rather than requiring creative humour production. Importantly, this adjustment did not remove humour from the lesson; rather, it preserved humour as input and discussion stimulus while reducing the risk of silence or off-task drift.

A third adjustment concerned cultural accessibility and comprehension of the humour trigger. When a joke depended on a reference some learners did not recognise, engagement

and participation dropped. A clear example of that is the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles “Michelle” joke, which teachers reported as difficult for some learners and recommended for replacement. This aligns with the practical principle that classroom humour should minimise reliance on niche cultural knowledge unless it is explicitly pre-taught.

Piloting also highlighted differences in manageability across proficiency levels. B2 learners generally produced more L2 because they could focus on idea generation rather than formulating language, whereas learners closer to B1 were more likely to rely on L1 during extended turns. However, teachers reported that when activities were engaging and the classroom climate supportive, lower-level learners still attempted output by requesting vocabulary help and continuing their messages, which is an encouraging indicator of willingness to communicate under low-pressure conditions.

Finally, refinements also targeted vocabulary alignment. Where a joke section did not provide sufficient density of target lexis, short supplementary vocabulary steps were added (e.g., extra matching, controlled dialogue, or guided prompts using the target items). This strengthened alignment with the *On Screen* vocabulary content while keeping timing manageable by using short activity types.

Research question 3 asks how Estonian teachers of English evaluate the alignment of the created activities with CEFR descriptors and National Curriculum aims. In the debrief-based CEFR checks, teachers most frequently marked categories related to audiovisual reception, pragmatic competence and sociolinguistic appropriateness, and pluricultural awareness; within the National Curriculum, teachers most often noted cultural knowledge and work with authentic materials. This pattern is consistent with the fact that the sets situate vocabulary in contextualised, pragmatic language use (e.g., interpreting humour triggers, inferring intended meaning, responding appropriately) rather than treating vocabulary as isolated items.

Teacher evaluations also indirectly support alignment through feasibility: because the sets were used successfully as short segments near the end of lessons (and occasionally mid-lesson), they can plausibly complement regular module work without displacing core coursebook objectives. In other words, alignment is not only conceptual (skills and competences) but also practical (integration into regular timetables and routines). Teachers' willingness to omit or shorten activities while keeping the overall progression suggests that the design can be adapted to different groups without losing its competence focus.

In summary, the piloting supports a stable design logic across topics: humour works best when it is tightly coupled to vocabulary retrieval and guided output, and when sequencing moves from comprehension and humour recognition towards manageable productive use. The most important refinements involved reducing activity pressure (especially around joke invention), strengthening target-lexis recycling in prompts and outputs, and ensuring cultural references are accessible or supported. These outcomes justify treating the activity sets as flexible, modular resources that can be used selectively depending on lesson timing and learner profile, while maintaining consistent alignment with coursebook vocabulary targets and communicative competence aims.

With regard to the activity sets, the next practical step is to pilot all thirteen sets more evenly, including sections that were not trialled during the present cycle, and to repeat piloting in different lesson positions (starter, mid-lesson, end-of-lesson) in order to identify the most time-feasible implementation patterns. On the basis of such broader piloting, the sets could be further standardised by providing a recommended "core route" (minimum steps needed to secure vocabulary retrieval and humour recognition) and an "extension route" (optional productive stages), which would support consistent use across B1 - B2 groups.

For future research, the materials developed here provide a basis for examining longer-term learning effects, for example by using delayed checks of vocabulary recall and

controlled productive use. Related work could also explore how learner variables (e.g., proficiency level, confidence, willingness to communicate) interact with humour format and activity type, and whether particular formats predict higher participation or richer language use. Finally, the design principles established in this thesis could be transferred to new materials beyond jokes; for instance, humour in short video clips, memes, or classroom discourse routines, while keeping the same focus on sequencing from recognition to guided productive use.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined how humour in the form of joke-based materials can be integrated purposefully into upper-secondary EFL classrooms to support vocabulary revision and learner engagement. Building on classroom discourse research that recognises humour as an interactional and affective resource, the study treated humour as an ethically situated, context-sensitive communicative cue that invites playful reinterpretation rather than as entertainment or teacher performance.

Chapter 1 framed the study through three complementary strands of research. First, major humour theories (superiority, incongruity, and relief) were reviewed to clarify how humour can rely on targets, interpretive shifts, or tension release; these are the mechanisms that become particularly salient in classroom settings where appropriacy and comprehension matter. Second, research on humour in classrooms and EFL contexts highlighted both opportunities (e.g., rapport, reduced anxiety, increased willingness to participate) and cautions (e.g., potential offence, failure, time-on-task concerns, and cultural accessibility), supporting the need for carefully framed, learning-linked humour. Third, vocabulary learning principles (repeated encounters, retrieval, linked-skills recycling, and guided productive use) provided the pedagogical foundation for designing short activities that repeatedly reactivate coursebook lexis while remaining feasible within ordinary lessons.

Chapter 2 presented the empirical component: the design, piloting, and refinement of thirteen topic-based activity sets aligned with the *On Screen B2/B2+* vocabulary content and calibrated to B1–B2 learners. The materials were built as modular, “plug-and-play” sequences, typically moving from recognition and humour comprehension to guided output. Piloting was conducted in nine face-to-face lessons (January–March 2026) with three experienced Estonian teachers of English, supported by nine post-lesson teacher debrief sheets that captured timing, participation, points of confusion, learner comments, and suggested revisions.

Across the piloting lessons, the findings indicated that the most reliable way to sequence humour-based vocabulary work is to combine a clear receptive-to-productive progression with explicit scaffolding. When activities recycled target lexis in prompts and provided structured response formats (e.g., choice-and-justify, short dialogues, “repair” tasks), learners were more likely to attempt productive use, including in lower-level or quieter groups. By contrast, open-ended activities requiring learners to invent original jokes were consistently less workable and often needed redesign or substitution, confirming that humour can be difficult to generate on demand and is better treated as input that triggers language work than as an output requirement.

In terms of feasibility and classroom fit, the piloting also showed that activity sets were not completed in full within a single lesson; teachers typically used one section (and occasionally two), supporting the principle that these materials function best as modular sequences that can be shortened, omitted, or distributed across lessons. Engagement was generally high, but comprehension and participation were sensitive to cultural references and to the clarity of the humour trigger, reinforcing the importance of accessible input when needed. Teacher evaluations further suggested that the sets align with CEFR descriptor scales and National Curriculum aims, particularly where activities required pragmatic interpretation, appropriate response, and culturally situated understanding.

The significance of the thesis lies in its pragmatic contribution: it demonstrates how humour can be operationalised as short, coursebook-aligned vocabulary revision sequences that promote interaction without demanding performance comedy or extensive preparation. At the same time, the study remains deliberately small-scale and context-bound; its value is therefore best understood as providing design insights and classroom-tested principles rather than broad generalisations. Future work could build on these materials by examining whether vocabulary gains persist over time, by comparing different ways of using the sets in lessons

(e.g., whole-class vs pair work, starter vs end-of-lesson), and by exploring which humour formats work best for different learner groups.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. The joke-based vocabulary activities

Link to Google Drive folder:

https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1s6XZfCnFR8qWjKjLg_g8xp7-JfbzbvMQ

QR code to Google Drive folder:



Example activity section:

FOOD
section 2



Activity 1: Pun Detective**Find the word that makes each joke funny and explain its double meaning:***Suggested Answers:*

Time-consuming → means “taking a long time” and literally “eating time.” Also “seconds” = more servings of food.

Cheesy → means tasting like cheese and also “corny / silly.”

Date → means a romantic meeting and a type of fruit.

Latte → sounds like “a lot.” Espresso & coffee → love metaphors.

Have you ever tried eating a clock? It's really time-consuming, especially if you go for seconds.

Wanna hear a joke about pizza? Never mind. It's too cheesy.

I had a date last night. It was perfect. Tomorrow, I'll try a grape.

You are the coffee to my espresso. And I love you latte.

Activity 2: Match to the Action and recipe logic**Match:**

1. to slice
 2. to chop
 3. to grate
 4. to swallow
- a) cut into thin pieces
 - b) cut into small pieces
 - c) rub food into tiny pieces (e.g., cheese)
 - d) move food from your mouth down your throat

Answer key:

1-a, 2-b, 3-c, 4-d

Complete the recipe using the verbs:***slice / chop / grate / swallow*****Mini recipe:**

1. _____ the onion into small pieces.
2. _____ the cheese on top.
3. _____ the tomato into thin pieces.
4. Now eat it — don't just _____ it whole!

Answer key:

- 1 chop
- 2 grate
- 3 slice
- 4 swallow

Activity 3: Cravings

Choose the best word/phrase for each blank:

peckish / crave (for) / have a sweet tooth / munch / a bite to eat / almonds

A: "I'm a bit _____. Want _____?"

B: "Yes! I _____ something _____. Maybe _____."

A: "Nice. I don't _____, but I can _____ something salty."

Suggested answer key:

A: peckish; a bite to eat

B: crave; crunchy; almonds

A: have a sweet tooth; munch



Activity 4: "Food Compliments" Speaking Activity



In pairs, create two new food-themed compliments like "You are the coffee to my espresso."
They can be romantic, friendly, or humorous.



Examples for inspiration:



"You're the butter to my toast."



"You're the sprinkles on my donut."



"You're the cheese on my pizza."



Students share and compare which ones sound sweet, silly, or strange.

Appendix 2. Teacher debrief

Teacher Debrief (use per unit & class)

Unit title: _____ Class / Group: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Teacher: _____

Lesson slot: ☐ Starter ☐ Mid-lesson ☐ End-of-lesson

Steps used (tick):

Joke 1 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Skipped: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Joke 2 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Skipped: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Joke 3 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 Skipped: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

Timing (planned → actual): _____ → _____ minutes

Engagement / language use:

- Attention: ☐ High ☐ Medium ☐ Low
- L2 use: ☐ Mostly L2 ☐ Mixed ☐ Mostly L1

Clarity / difficulty (tick any):

- ☐ Joke trigger unclear ☐ Cultural cue needed ☐ Instructions unclear
☐ Too difficult ☐ Too easy ☐ Off-task risk

Retrieval achieved:

- Receptive (listening/reading): ☐ Met ☐ Partly ☐ Not observed
- Productive (speaking/writing): ☐ Met ☐ Partly ☐ Not observed

CEFR / NC check (use Appendix 4):

- CEFR scales targeted (from Appendix 4): ☐ Audio-visual reception ☐ Mediation
☐ Pluricultural awareness
☐ Sociolinguistic appropriateness ☐ Pragmatic competence ☐ Other: _____
Outcome: ☐ Met ☐ Partly ☐ Not observed
- NC aims targeted (from Appendix 4): ☐ Purposeful, culturally appropriate communication
☐ Cultural knowledge ☐ Authentic materials ☐ Politeness/appropriacy
Outcome: ☐ Met ☐ Partly ☐ Not observed

Design decisions for next run

- ☐ Add 20–30s **pre-teach** (lexis/culture) ☐ **Re-order** steps ☐ **Shorten** step ____
☐ **Add** a retrieval prompt (receptive/productive) ☐ **Swap** joke/text ☐ **Clarify** instruction
☐ **Register** cue (politeness/tone) ☐ **Keep as is**

Other note(s):

Learner comment(s):

Appendix 3. On Screen B2/B2+: Vocabulary topics by module

Table 1: On Screen B2

Module 1 <i>People</i>	appearance personality clothes and fashion jobs daily routine; free-time activities
Module 2 <i>The Environment</i>	our natural world of animals environmental problems & solutions
Module 3 <i>Travel & Holidays</i>	types of holidays means of transport accommodation; facilities/services holiday problems
Module 4 <i>Festivals & Celebrations</i>	festivals & celebrations activities feelings
Module 5 <i>Crime</i>	breaking the law crime & punishment law breakers
Module 6 <i>Technology</i>	technology gadgets the Internet
Module 7 <i>Sports & Fitness</i>	sports & fitness sports places & equipment
Module 8 <i>Nature Attacks!</i>	natural disasters extreme weather temperature

Table 2: On Screen B2+

Module 1 <i>Work</i>	jobs & money lifestyles character
Module 2 <i>Travel & Shopping</i>	travel experiences going places travel money shopping
Module 3 <i>Our World</i>	environmental problems social issues natural disasters the weather
Module 4 <i>Moods & Feelings</i>	body language stages in life moods & feelings

	hobbies
Module 5 <i>Art</i>	film/theatre TV/radio music/the arts media/books
Module 6 <i>Food & Health</i>	illnesses, accidents & injuries food & nutrition
Module 7 <i>Civilisations & Science</i>	mysteries space
Module 8 <i>Education</i>	school life types of schools school/college subjects

Appendix 4. CEFR/NC Alignment Matrix for Study Units (B1–B2)

<i>Unit</i>	<i>CEFR scales / competences targeted</i>	<i>Estonian NC aims addressed</i>
<i>Crime</i>	Mediation (explain/rephrase punchlines); Sociolinguistic appropriateness (register/tone in joking); Pluricultural awareness (culture-bound references).	Purposeful, culturally appropriate communication; cultural knowledge.
<i>Technology</i>	Mediation (explain how the humour works in a letter-style anecdote); Pragmatic competence (coherence/repair in re-writing); Audio-visual/reading reception as applicable.	Purposeful communication with authentic materials; politeness/appropriacy in responses.
<i>Appearance</i>	Reception (reading short jokes); Mediation (plain-English rephrasing); Sociolinguistic appropriateness (sensitive descriptors).	Purposeful, culturally appropriate communication; politeness norms.
<i>Art</i>	Mediation (interpreting idioms/allusions); Pragmatic competence (coherence, thematic development in repair activities); Pluricultural awareness.	Cultural knowledge; purposeful communication using authentic/semi-authentic texts.
<i>Education</i>	Mediation (explain-the-punchline; cultural notes); Sociolinguistic appropriateness (school-context register); Reception (short texts).	Purposeful communication in school contexts; politeness norms.
<i>Environment & animals</i>	Reception (reading/listening to jokes); Mediation (summarise message); Pluricultural awareness (values, priorities).	Cultural knowledge and purposeful discussion of topical issues with authentic materials.
<i>Family</i>	Sociolinguistic appropriateness (tone/intent); Mediation (explain implicit meaning); Pragmatic competence (coherence in discussion).	Purposeful, culturally appropriate communication; politeness norms.
<i>Festivals & holidays</i>	Pluricultural awareness (cultural contexts of celebrations); Mediation (rephrase/interpret); Reception (short texts).	Cultural knowledge; purposeful communication around authentic cultural content.
<i>Food</i>	Mediation (resolve polysemy/metaphor); Pragmatic competence (persuasion/description); Reception (pun recognition).	Purposeful communication; authentic materials supporting vocabulary development.

<i>Jobs</i>	Listening descriptor includes “get the point of jokes or allusions”; Mediation (explain/rephrase); Sociolinguistic appropriateness (workplace register).	Purposeful, culturally appropriate communication related to working life.
<i>Sports</i>	Reception (short texts/puns); Pragmatic competence (comparatives in discussion); Mediation (clarify wordplay).	Purposeful communication with authentic/semi-authentic materials.
<i>Travelling</i>	Audio-visual/reading reception (where clips/texts used); Mediation (summarise/advise); Pluricultural awareness (travel norms/allusions).	Cultural knowledge; purposeful, culturally appropriate communication.
<i>Weather</i>	Reception (idioms/figurative language); Mediation (paraphrase explanations); Pragmatic competence (reasoned speaking).	Purposeful communication using authentic idiomatic input.

Appendix 5. Illustrative before/after examples of refinements to the activity sets

1. Target vocabulary integrated into guided output prompts:

Task 3: weather idiom match-up

Below are the beginnings and endings of six common weather-related idioms. Match each beginning to the correct ending:

1. Under the ...	2. Every cloud ...	3. If it rains, ...
4. A storm ...	5. Come rain ...	6. Chase ...
a)... in a teacup	b) ... has a silver lining	c) ... or shine
d) ... weather	e) ... it pours	f) ... rainbows

Answers:

Under the weather
Every cloud has a silver lining
If it rains, it pours
A storm in a teacup
Come rain or shine
Chase rainbows

Activity 3: weather idiom match-up

Below are the beginnings and endings of six common weather-related phrases. Match each beginning to the correct ending:

1. Under the ...	2. A clap of ...	3. A flash of ...
4. A gust of ...	5. A ray of ...	6. A sheet of ...
a)... sunshine	b) ... thunder	c) ... wind
d) ... weather	e) ... ice	f) ... lightning

Answers:

Under the weather
A clap of thunder
A flash of lightning
A gust of wind
A ray of sunshine
A sheet of ice

2. Open-ended joke creation replaced with controlled alternatives:

Task 3: create your own sports joke

• Instructions:

- Choose a sport or activity (e.g., football, swimming, cycling) and write a short joke using a pun or silly idea.

Examples:

"I tried yoga yesterday. I'm still trying to untangle myself."

"I went swimming and won gold... in the 'Biggest Splash' category."

"I played football yesterday. The ball won."

Activity 3: event commentary

Instructions: Choose **two** jokes from *SPORTS 1* and give a 1–2 sentence "sports commentary" using at least 2 words from the box.

Box: athlete / competitor / competitive / event / coach / referee / spectator / to score / discipline / cooperation

- I threw a boomerang five years ago and it never came back. Now I live in constant fear.
- I'm just back from competing in the 'Sun Tanning World Championship'. I got bronze.
- I just got a new personal best in the 100 metre sprint! 73 meters.
- Just had a water fight on the park with a bunch of local kids. I won! No one's a match for me and my kettle.
- Played frisbee in the park with my dog yesterday. Not much good though, I think I'm going to need a flatter dog....

Examples:

The athlete was very ____ during the event...

The spectators thought ____

Suggested answer:

"This was not a fair event — the competitor had a kettle! The spectators laughed, and the referee would probably stop it."

3. Added comprehension/discussion questions formulated with target lexis to strengthen recycling:

Task 2: Explain the Pun

Explain why each joke is funny in one sentence.

Suggested Answers:



"Crabs" means both the seafood and "crabby" (grumpy) people—so the waiter pretends the question is about rude customers.



"Can" means both "to be able to" and "to preserve food in cans."



"Beast" and "feast" rhyme; a carrot is food for rabbits (a bunny feast).



The joke interprets the fridge light as a sign you should eat at night.

"Waiter, do you serve crabs here?" asks a customer. "We serve everybody. Just have a seat at this table, sir."

What do you do with 100 peaches? You eat what you can, and you can what you can't.

What is the difference between a unicorn and a carrot? One is a funny beast and the other is a bunny feast.

If you're not supposed to eat at night ... why is there a light bulb in the fridge?

Activity 2: Explain the Pun

Explain why each joke is funny in one sentence.

Suggested Answers:



"Crabs" means both the seafood and "crabby" (grumpy) people—so the waiter pretends the question is about rude customers.



"Can" means both "to be able to" and "to preserve food in cans."



"Beast" and "feast" rhyme; a carrot is food for rabbits (a bunny feast).



The joke interprets the fridge light as a sign you should eat at night.

"Waiter, do you serve crabs here?" asks a customer. "We serve everybody. Just have a seat at this table, sir."

What do you do with 100 peaches? You eat what you can, and you can what you can't.

What is the difference between a unicorn and a carrot? One is a funny beast and the other is a bunny feast.

If you're not supposed to eat at night ... why is there a light bulb in the fridge?

Questions:

1. If you open the fridge at night, are you probably peckish or rotten?
2. What is a better idea: a bite to eat or a full meal?
3. Choose one snack for the fridge: almond / mushroom. Why?

4. Added short supplementary vocabulary mini-section where joke content under-covered targets:

FESTIVALS AND HOLIDAYS section 3

***Extra vocabulary
practice**



Activity 1: Festival vocabulary map

Match the festival item to the most likely
festival/holiday.

1. **bonfire** → ____
2. **shamrock** → ____
3. **to carve** (a pumpkin) → ____
4. **gladiator** → ____
5. **fireworks** → ____
6. **to festoon** (streets with flags/lights) → ____
7. **procession / parade** → ____
8. **lavish** (celebration) → ____

Festival options: Halloween / St Patrick's Day /
New Year / local town festival / historical festival
(Rome) / Guy Fawkes Night / any national holiday

Suggested answers:

1. bonfire → *Guy Fawkes Night*
2. shamrock → *St Patrick's Day*
3. carve (pumpkin) → *Halloween*
4. gladiator → *historical festival (Rome)*
5. fireworks → *New Year / national holiday*
6. festoon → *local town festival*
7. procession/parade → *national holiday /
local festival*
8. lavish → *New Year / major festivity*

5. Added vocabulary-linked task step within a joke section to increase encounters:

Activity 4: Mini itinerary

Complete the itinerary using the following words:

to set off / explore / inland / stroll / local / guide book / highlight / stunning / unspoilt / budget

Itinerary:

- Day 1: We _____ early and use a _____ to plan our route.
- Day 2: We _____ the city centre and take a _____ by the river.
- Day 3: We travel _____ to see an _____ beach and try _____ food.
- Day 4: The trip's _____ is a _____ view over a _____ valley.
- Day 5: We keep it on a _____ and pay for souvenirs in the local _____.

Answer key:

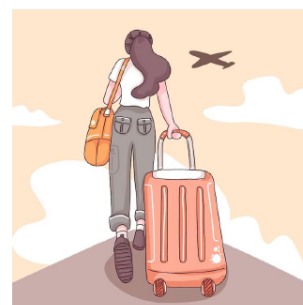
Day 1: **set off / guide book**

Day 2: **explore / stroll**

Day 3: **inland / unspoilt / local**

Day 4: **highlight / stunning / vast**

Day 5: **budget / currency**



Appendix 6. CEFR B1–B2 descriptor targets used in the study

<i>CEFR category (Appendix 2)</i>	<i>Scale name in CEFR</i>	<i>B1 descriptor</i>	<i>B2 descriptor</i>	<i>CEFR page(s)</i>	<i>How it appears in the activity sets</i>
<i>Audiovisual reception</i>	Watching TV, film and video	Can catch the main points in media on familiar topics when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.	Can extract the main points from the arguments and discussions; Can understand media in the standard form of the language or a familiar variety.	p. 53	Learners correctly interpret a joke/punchline ; identify the trigger; answer comprehension questions.
<i>Mediation</i>	Mediating a text: Expressing a personal response to creative texts	Can explain why certain parts or aspects of a work especially interested them. Can explain briefly the feelings and opinions that a work provoked in them. Can describe the personality of a character.	Can give a clear presentation of their reactions to a work, developing their ideas and supporting them with examples and arguments. Can give a personal interpretation of the development of a plot. Can describe their emotional response to a work and elaborate on the way in which it has evoked this response.	p. 106-107	Learners paraphrase the joke in plain English; explain why it is funny; restage a line in their own words.
<i>Pluricultural awareness</i>	Building on pluricultural repertoire / Facilitating pluricultural space	Can explain in simple terms how their own values and behaviours influence their views of other people's values and behaviours. / Can help develop a shared communication culture, by exchanging information in a simple way about values and attitudes to language and culture.	Can generally interpret cultural cues appropriately in the culture concerned. / Can encourage a shared communication culture by expressing understanding and appreciation of different ideas, feelings and viewpoints, and inviting participants to contribute and react to each other's ideas.	p. 125 / p. 115	Learners recognise cultural references (when accessible or pre-taught) and discuss appropriacy/interpretation.
<i>Sociolinguistic appropriateness</i>	Sociolinguistic appropriateness	Is aware of the salient politeness conventions and acts appropriately.	Can express themselves confidently, clearly and politely in a formal or informal register, appropriate to the situation and person(s) concerned.	p. 137	Learners choose non-targeting wording; discuss tone; avoid offence in responses.
<i>Pragmatic competence</i>	Pragmatic competence :coherence & cohesion / propositional precision / fluency	Can link a series of shorter, discrete simple elements into a connected, linear sequence of points. / Can express the main point they want to make comprehensibly. / Can keep going comprehensibly	Can use a variety of linking expressions efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas. / Can communicate the essential points even in more demanding situations, though their language lacks expressive power and idiomaticity. / Can produce stretches of language with a fairly even tempo	p. 141 / p. 141-142 / p. 142	Learners justify choices, give reasons, complete structured dialogues, sustain discussion.

Appendix 7. National Curriculum aims used in the alignment check

<i>NC aim area (Appendix 2)</i>	<i>NC basis</i>	<i>NC page(s)</i>	<i>How it appears in the activity sets</i>
<i>Purposeful, culturally appropriate communication</i>	The learner understands and mediates what is presented in the foreign language and communicates purposefully and according to circumstances in speech and writing, and creates/presents different text types.	p. 1	Learners respond meaningfully to prompts (not only single words); complete guided outputs (e.g., justified choices, completed short dialogues); sustain brief interaction aligned with the task aim; stay within the playful frame without personal targeting.
<i>Cultural knowledge</i>	The learner knows the culture of communities where the target language is spoken and understands similarities/differences between cultures, valuing linguistic and cultural diversity.	p. 1	Learners recognise/explain a cultural reference or humour convention when it arises; compare interpretations or discuss “why this is funny/appropriate”.
<i>authentic materials</i>	Teaching/organisation principles specify the use of authentic language material and contemporary learning resources (including digital materials).	p. 3	Learners work with short joke texts/idioms and infer meaning from context; paraphrase or explain meaning (a mediation-like move); use target lexis from the humorous text rather than treating it as entertainment only. Teachers evaluate the jokes as authentic and contemporary learning material.
<i>politeness / appropriacy</i>	The curriculum frames foreign-language learning as communication appropriate to circumstances / stresses a respectful, safe, supportive learning environment	p. 1 / p. 4	Learners maintain non-targeting interactional norms during humour work; show awareness of tone/register (e.g., commenting on why a joke might offend or misfire); respond appropriately in guided discussion.

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Bret Černišova

Creating and piloting humour-based activity sets for *On Screen B2* and *B2+* coursebooks

Naljapõhiste tegevuskomplektide loomine *On Screen B2* ja *B2+* õpikute tarbeks ja nende piloteerimine

Magistritöö

2026

Lehekülgede arv: 75

Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva magistritöö eesmärk on uurida, kuidas huumorit saab kasutada sihipäraselt gümnaasiumi inglise keele võõrkeelena tundides sõnavara kordamise ja õppijate kaasatuse toetamiseks. Töö lähtub arusaamast, et huumor on suhtluses ja klassiruumis kontekstist sõltuv ning eetiliselt tundlik nähtus, mis võib soodustada tähelepanu, osalust ja positiivset õhkkonda, kuid mille kasutamine eeldab sobivat raamimist ja selget seost õpieesmärkidega. Töö esimeses peatükis antakse ülevaade huumori põhiteooriatest, huumori rollist õpetaja ja õpilaste suhtluses klassiruumis ning huumorist inglise keele õppe kontekstis. Lisaks käsitletakse sõnavara õpetamise põhimõtteid, mis on materjalide loomise aluseks.

Empiirilise uurimuse raames kavandati 13 lühikest naljapõhist sõnavara kordamise tegevuskomplekti, mis on seotud õpikute *On Screen B2* ja *On Screen B2+* teemade ja sõnavaraga ning mõeldud eelkõige B1–B2 taseme õppijatele. Tegevuskomplektid koosnevad lühikestest, moodulitena kasutatavatest osadest (2–3 naljalõiku teema kohta), milles liigutakse järjepidevalt mõistmisest ja huumori äratundmisest juhitud produktiivse kasutuseni (nt lühivastused, põhjendamine). Metoodiliselt kasutati iteratiivset disaini–katsetamise–täiendamise tsüklit: tegevused piloteeriti ühe kooli gümnaasiumiastmes (klassid 10–12) üheksas kontaktõppetunnis ajavahemikus jaanuar–märts 2026. Pärast iga tundi täideti õpetaja tagasiside leht, kuhu märgiti tähelepanekud ajakasutuse, osaluse, arusaadavuse ja vajalike muudatuste kohta ning lisati õppijate vahetud kommentaarid; õpetajad märkisid ka tegevuste seose CEFR-i ja riikliku õppekava (RÕK) sihtidega. Gruppide suurus varieerus 3 - 17 õppijani.

Tulemused näitasid, et naljapõhised tegevused toimivad kõige paremini lühikeste ja paindlike moodulitena: ühe tunni jooksul rakendati enamasti üht (vahel kahte) naljalõiku. Kõige töökindlamaks osutus ülesehitus, kus esmalt toetatakse sõnavara ja huumori mõistmist ning seejärel suunatakse õppijaid juhitud produktiivsesse kasutusse. Piloteerimine tõi esile vajaduse kohandada avatud „loo ise nali“ ülesandeid kontrollitumateks vormideks (nt valik ja põhjendamine, lünkharjutused, „paranda vastus“), sest õppijad olid originaalnaljade loomisel sageli tõrksad. Mõnes komplektis lisati eraldi lühike sõnavaraosa, kui naljamaterjal ei pakkunud piisavalt sihtleksika katvust. Õpetajate hinnangul toetasid tegevused eelkõige pragmaatilist ja sotsiolingvistilist pädevust, audiovisuaalse teksti mõistmist ning kultuuriteadlikkust, ning sobitusid praktikas tavapärase tundide ajaraamidesse juhul, kui õpetajal oli võimalik osi valida.

Märksõnad: huumor võõrkeeleeõppes; sõnavara kordamine; naljapõhised õppematerjalid; B1–B2 õppijad

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

Mina, Bret Černišova,

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) enda loodud teose

Creating and piloting humour-based activity sets for *On Screen B2* and *B2+* coursebooks, mille juhendaja on Natalja Zagura,

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