

# Designing Humorous Materials in Teaching Vietnamese Language in Primary Schools in the Perspective of Constructivism Theory

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Received April 22, 2019; Revised May 25, 2019; Accepted June 27, 2019

**Abstract** Humorous materials in teaching in general and in teaching Vietnamese language in primary schools in particular are indispensable spiritual food for children. They are also important elements in exciting lessons which connect students and the teacher, and bridge every gap. Humorous materials make the lessons much more interesting and appealing. This article aims at identifying the values of humorous materials and examining the use of humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese in primary schools. With three primary values, namely cognitive value, aesthetic value and entertainment value, humorous materials play an important role in enhancing the teaching quality. Firstly, 83 humorous materials in the primary school textbooks of Vietnamese subject are collected and classified into sub-skill categories. Secondly, the awareness, the resources and the frequency of using humorous materials by teachers in two primary schools in Vinh Phuc and Hanoi are examined. Thirdly, the compatible relationship between the use of humorous materials and constructivist teaching, especially 5E process, is analyzed. Last but not least, a constructivism-based designing process of humorous materials is proposed and the experimental application of this procedure by 38 third-year students in Primary Education Faculty, Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 and 36 primary school teachers is presented. The findings indicate that the designing process of humorous materials is highly workable in teaching Vietnamese language in primary schools.

**Keywords:** *humorous materials, constructivism, primary schools*

**Cite This Article:** Le Thi Lan Anh, "Designing Humorous Materials in Teaching Vietnamese Language in Primary Schools in the Perspective of Constructivism Theory." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 7, no. 6 (2019): 407-417. doi: 10.12691/education-7-6-6.

## 1. Introduction

Constructivism is the theory of students' learning but not teaching, so it is necessary to base on the constructivist learning activities when the process of constructivist teaching is considered. Building the process of constructivist teaching based on constructivist learning process helps teachers identify the experience and knowledge of students, thereby implement student-centered teaching activities, timely support students in gaining new knowledge and help them learn more effectively.

At the primary school level, Vietnamese is an important subject that is the basis for educating people to develop comprehensively in both knowledge and personality. The subject of Vietnamese requires the exploration, the carefulness in using language and the ability to understand the literary language of both teachers and students. Humorous materials are one of the frequently-used components in Vietnamese language. As they are humorous, memorable, understandable and suitable to primary school students, humorous materials help students

learn about the world around them and form positive thoughts and feelings.

Interest in learning plays a very important role for students to acquire knowledge. It is discussed in many studies in the world as well as in Vietnam. The Soviet Union's famous educationist, Svetlov, pointed out "Humor is the most prominent and the first assistant of educationist". To teach Vietnamese in particular and other subjects in general effectively, it is essential to arouse students' interest because their academic success is closely linked to their interest in learning. Learning interest brings about delight and satisfaction for students, which then encourages them to achieve high learning results. Having intensively studied the role and impact of interest on learning efficiency, researchers suggest solutions to improve students' learning interest. One of the solutions to stimulate students relies in learning materials. Researchers have shown the impact of texts and exercises in textbooks on students' enjoyment in learning.

In the article "Jokes and their effectiveness in teaching in primary schools", the author Bui Thanh Truyen generalized the role of jokes as an important factor involved in teaching and learning activities of both

teachers and students [1]. The author also highly appreciated jokes, which are a suitable resource for teachers to make their lessons livelier and more appealing. It is also an interesting opportunity for teachers to experience various rewarding pedagogical situations to establish the position of a teacher – an artist on the podium. The book “Humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese in primary schools” edited by Le Thi Lan Anh [2] clarifies the value of humorous materials in the entire Vietnamese Primary textbooks. It is concluded that collecting humorous stories, jokes, funny quizzes is essential and rewarding.

In 2014, Hoang Nguyen Huy Pham, in his doctoral thesis in Australia, discovered that teachers and students were aware of the role and effectiveness of humor in language teaching and learning. Teachers use humor in a knowledgeable way to make language learning interesting [3]. Ronald A. Berk evaluated the effectiveness of 10 strategic systems in the use of humor as a teaching tool including strategies on materials and textbooks. The author also pointed out humor as a teaching tool to change attitudes, reduce anxiety, and increase achievement [4]. D Tamblyn also proposed 95 ways to use humor to increase teaching and training effectiveness [5]. In 2012, RA Stebbins also studied in depth the role of humor in teaching as a strategy and expression of self [6]. The authors A Fterniati, A Archakis, V Tsakona, Villy Tsakona, with their recent research, agreed that humorous texts are appropriate for students to discover (and possibly embrace) social and cultural variations and corresponding values. The authors proposed a number of teaching activities to improve language awareness for students so that they have the ability to track down and resist linguistic consciousness disseminated in popular culture. At the same time, they tried to ask some questions for students to ponder and explain the potential in the humorous expression of linguistic transformation in texts [7]. J Muñoz-Basols also believed that humor is a tool to create language awareness in the classroom. Understanding and creating humor means that learners can strengthen their knowledge and make progress. Humor can transform the classroom environment when students enjoy sharing their playful strategy with others. When everyone benefits, learning language becomes easy, learners become active and creative [8]. The authors AM Hayati and ZG Shooshtari investigated the relationship between humor (in jokes) and the ability to recall and read in detail. They found out that jokes appearing before reading texts can work as a pre-reading activity. In addition, the findings can help curriculum developers and material designers provide documents with a number of humorous elements [9]. D Rochumorous - Buana Pendidikan pointed out that humor becomes one of the most valuable educational tools in supporting language acquisition as well as the physical and mental development of all learners. Humor in pedagogy is an essential and basic tool, whereby teachers can create a positive and engaging atmosphere in the classroom to promote student learning. Humor has been regarded as reinforcing classroom teaching and learning, a starting point rather than an end point of an interesting and useful language discovery [10]. The article by JL Miller and his colleagues described the way humor can be used to have good effect in creating an online material designed to

improve academic English skills of international students. The results showed that those materials help students improve their understanding of the topics presented on the website and the humor factor stimulates students' interest in learning [11]. L Kang noticed when teachers know the needs and interests of students, by using their knowledge creatively, at least spending a part of a lesson on using humor properly, the relationship between teachers and students can be improved, the learning atmosphere is better. Students can learn more easily and teachers can improve their teaching and ability to work professionally [12]. H Shimei's article explored humorous teaching strategies by incorporating the author's teaching practices, analyzing the current teaching situation of reading and writing lessons in the classroom, and advocating for teaching humorous English effectively. Humorous language not only stimulates students' thirst for knowledge but also improves teaching effectiveness and creates harmonious teacher-student relationship. The use of humor in English classes has a feature of enjoyment, and we should pay more attention to education [13]. Thus, humorous materials are confirmed by researchers to play a role in arousing interest for learners to acquire knowledge more easily and effectively. This is a favorable condition for teachers to follow constructivism theory. In this approach, as shown by Aliye, E., knowledge is not objectively external; to the contrary, it is formed by personal experiences, observation, explanation and logical thinking of each person. Individuals learn new knowledge by adapting it to their mental structure along with their existing knowledge. In this learning method, students' past experiences form a foundation for learning. This method has a general view that students need to be proactive in the learning process and learning is determined by students. According to the constructivist approach, teachers are the counsellor, who understands his students very well, allows students to get preliminary information by revealing preliminary information, guides students to research and collaborate, and provides the necessary materials for learning [14]. Around 1987 Dr. Rodger W. Bybee and his colleagues worked in Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS) institution, based in Colorado, USA. They proposed an innovative model of teaching biology in primary schools. The 5E model is based on constructivist learning, in which learners build knowledge from the experience process. Through understanding and reflecting on past activities, both personally and socially, learners can integrate new knowledge with previously known concepts. In addition, the model inherits from the development of previous educational models, such as those of Herbart (before the 1900s), Dewey's (around the 1930s), Heiss and his colleagues (about 1950s). In the constructivist approach, students build new knowledge in their mental processes by combining them with previous knowledge and interacting with their environment. Bruner [15,16], Glasserfield [17,18] and many other educators also affirmed that constructivism theory is the learning theory of learners, teachers are facilitators, instructing students to form their own knowledge, qualities, and capacities in two principles of "assimilation" and "accommodation".

In conclusion, the role and significance of humorous materials in creating excitement as well as increasing the efficiency of acquiring knowledge in many subjects and

fields have been studied by many researchers. Constructivist teaching has been researched by many authors. However, no research has been made either on the role and significance of humorous materials in teaching mother tongue at the primary school level or the designing of humorous materials for pupils by future primary school teachers, especially from constructivism theory's perspectives, which means students form their own knowledge from humorous materials; from their foundation understanding, students themselves can design humorous materials. Therefore, this article will hopefully fill the gap.

## 2. Content

### 2.1. Related Concepts

#### 2.1.1. Language Materials

Language materials are those used as a basis for studying languages [[19], p.673]. Language materials can be interpreted as a set of textual or written texts (or phonetically transcribed) used to clarify the basis for linguistic analysis and description.

#### 2.1.2. Humorous Materials

Pleasure is the state of excitement of someone who is having something which satisfies their desires or is having something which pleases them [[19], p.1091].

The combination of "language materials" and "pleasure" is the *language materials that use humorous elements to bring the state of pleasure to elementary students*. In this article, they are referred to as humorous materials.

Humorous materials can be *jokes, fun quizzes, funny stories or funny poetry*.

### 2.2. Humorous Material Selection Criteria in Teaching Vietnamese in Primary Schools

Criteria for selecting humorous materials are: Texts must be consistent with learning themes; Texts must meet the requirements of being imaginative, artistic and suitable to students' cognitive level; Texts must meet the integration requirements including vertical and horizontal integration.

### 2.3. Practical Basis of Teaching Vietnamese through Humorous Materials in Primary Schools

In order to know the amount of humorous materials used in primary Vietnamese textbooks, we used statistical methods and the result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Statistics of humorous materials in the current Vietnamese textbooks

Sub-skills \ Grade	Reading	Dictation	Practicing words and sentences	Writing	Total
1	10	4			14
2	9	1	4		14
3	1	15	3	5	23
4		8	2		10
5		6	15		21
Total	20	34	24	5	83

In total, there are 83 humorous materials used in Vietnamese primary textbooks. Quantity of humorous materials used in each grade is shown in Figure 1.

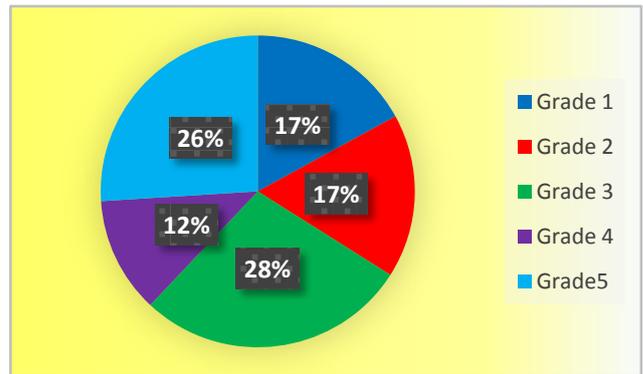


Figure 1. Quantity of Humorous materials used in Grades

The use of humorous materials is different among sub-skills, which is determined by the objective and content of each sub-skill. This is illustrated in Figure 2.

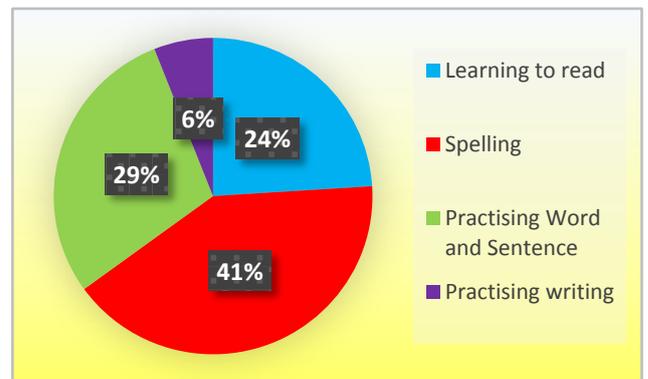


Figure 2. Quantity of Humorous materials used in Sub-skills

In Grade 2, humorous materials are frequently used in the sub-skill of Reading. On average, there is one funny story in the reading part of the second week. These stories aim at sharpening students' reading skills. In Grade 3, humorous materials are often utilized in Writing in order to strengthen students' listening – story telling skills. A lot of humorous materials originate from daily life. In Grade 4, there are 10 humorous materials, 8 out of which are used in Dictation part. In Grade 5, most of humorous materials are used in the sub-skill of Practicing words and sentences, for example exercises on dots, question marks, exclamation marks, quotes, dash. Thanks to humorous materials, knowledge is systematized and students can practice using the knowledge in their daily life.

#### Teachers

First, we investigated teachers' understanding of humorous materials. In order to get accurate and objective results, we used a questionnaire along with having conversations with teachers. (36 Primary School Teachers in Yen Lac Town - Vinh Phuc, Doan Thi Diem Primary School Teacher - Hanoi).

Content of the questionnaire:

Question 1: How do you define humorous materials?

a. Notion 1: Humorous materials are language materials that have humorous elements. These materials convey knowledge through the use of humor.

b. Notion 2: Humorous materials are merely language materials, just like others in textbooks.

The results of the survey are summarized in Figure 3.

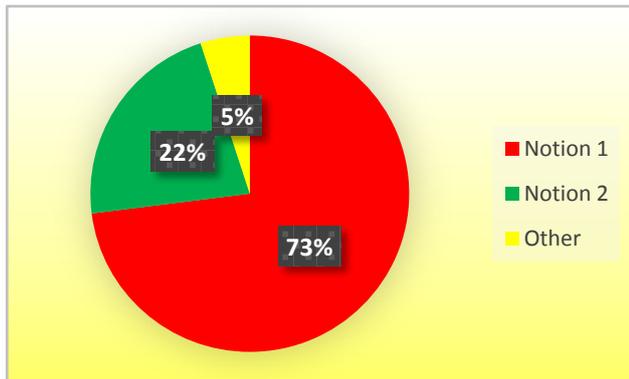


Figure 3. Teachers' awareness of humorous materials

Figure 3 indicates that teachers have certain knowledge of humorous materials. While 73% of teacher participants have the correct understanding of humorous materials, 27% are uncertain or fail to fully understand what humorous materials are about. This happens in a number of primary schools. Apart from having the correct notion of humorous materials, teachers must be well aware of their features so that they can select and use humorous materials in teaching.

The second question is to clarify teachers' awareness of humorous materials' advantages and limitations. The results of the survey are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' awareness of humorous materials' advantages

No.	Content	Selection Result	
		No. of Teachers	Percentage (%)
1	Stimulating students' interest in learning	36	100
2	Creating a pleasant learning atmosphere	32	88,9
3	Integrating social and scientific knowledge	25	69
4	Evaluating students' analytical ability and critical thinking	20	55,6
5	Developing abstract thinking	15	41,7

As shown in the table, it is clear that most of the teachers agree on humorous materials' advantages which are stimulating students' interest in learning and creating a pleasant learning atmosphere (100% and 88,9% respectively). These are outstanding advantages of humorous materials in comparison to other kinds of materials. In addition, 69% teachers agree that humorous materials can integrate social, scientific knowledge and other educational contents. While 55,6% teachers believe in humorous materials' contribution to the evaluation of students' analytical ability and critical thinking, 41,7% teachers are certain that students' abstract thinking is promoted thanks to humorous materials.

The third question is to clarify teachers' viewpoint of humorous materials' importance. (Question 3: How important is the use of humorous materials in your opinion?)

a. Notion 1: Humorous materials must be used because they are designed in textbooks.

b. Notion 2: Humorous materials should be used because they have a number of advantages.

c. Notion 3: Humorous materials should be frequently used because they are suitable to the characteristics of primary school students.

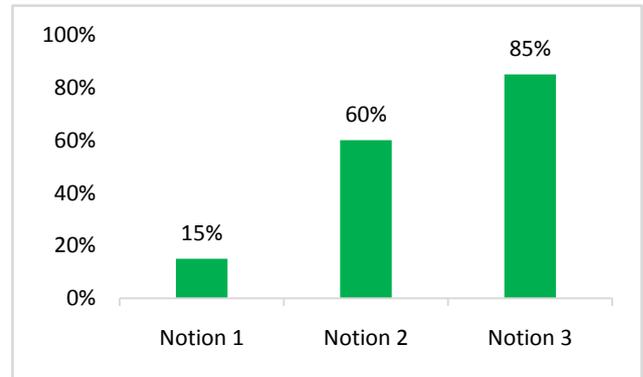


Figure 4. The importance of using humorous materials

It can be seen in Figure 4 that 60% teachers agree that humorous materials should be used because of their advantages. The first notion, humorous materials must be used because they are designed in textbooks, is chosen by 15% teachers while 85% believe that humorous materials should be frequently used because they are suitable to the characteristics of primary school students.

The use of humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese is not paid enough attention. The reality of using humorous materials and their effectiveness is examined in Question 4. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Resources of humorous materials

Resources	Textbooks	Reference books	Self-designed materials
Percentage %	100	20	2

The result (Table 3) shows that 100% teachers use humorous materials in textbooks and very few teachers self-design exercises including humorous materials in their lessons.

**Students**

What is students' understanding of humorous materials? To what extent are they interested in humorous materials? To find out the answer, we used questionnaire along with discussions.

Figure 5 summarizes the survey result.

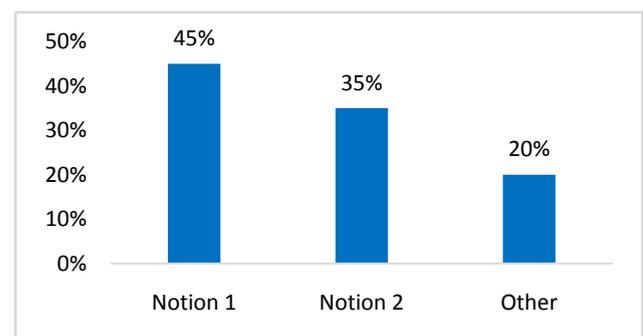


Figure 5. Students' awareness of Humorous materials

In Figure 5, it is seen that students' knowledge of humorous materials is limited. They believe that humorous materials are merely exercises using funny stories and quizzes (45%), humorous materials are reading exercises which make students laugh (35%). There are 20% students who have no notion of these exercises.

To investigate into students' interest in humorous exercises, we ask students Question 2. 95% students agree that they really enjoy lessons with humorous materials. Students believe that these exercises help them learn comfortably, acquire knowledge more easily. They wish their teachers to use humorous materials more frequently not only in Vietnamese subject but in all of the other ones.

## 2.4. Values of Humorous Materials in Teaching Vietnamese in Primary Schools

### 2.4.1. Cognitive Value

Humorous materials bring cognitive value to learners, provides sufficient language materials for the sub-skills in the Primary Vietnamese program and ensure to closely follow the content of lessons and topics in each grade. Humorous materials have educational values, nurture and development. The use of humorous materials not only contributes to providing knowledge and skills in Vietnamese language but also provides students with knowledge about folk culture, literature, culture and life. Humorous materials contribute to educating students' thoughts and feelings, training them to have logical thinking, creativity and life skills. By nature, students are always active and enjoy having fun and exploring. In some cognitive activities, students' learning requires comfort, pleasant, discovery, vividness and fun. Therefore, using humorous materials is very suitable to the characteristics of school-age people who like to create and listen to quizzes, folk songs, funny stories, anecdotes, etc. Humorous materials have humor elements, so they have a great effect on teaching and fostering students in using Vietnamese, helping students to read correctly, reading proficiently and enhancing them listening – story-telling skills, etc. Through funny stories, textbooks lead students into areas of life, thereby enhancing their vocabulary, ability to express themselves about school, family and society. This demonstrates the goal of Vietnamese language teaching in primary schools: forming and developing four skills which are listening, reading, writing so that students are able to learn and communicate in their school-age environment.

#### Example 1: (Vietnamese Grade 5- 1<sup>st</sup> Term- Page 51)

Read the following story and explain why Nam thinks that his father changes his job to work in the bank.

#### Money

Nam: You know what, my daddy has just worked in the bank.

Bác: You said he is a soldier, didn't you?

Nam: In his previous letter, he wrote: "I am at the island." But in this letter, he wrote: "I am keeping money for the country"

Bác: !!!

In this example, the story is funny because the child misunderstands the meaning of the word "guard station".

He thinks it is "money" because these two words are homonyms.

- Meaning 1 : The guard station is in front of the garrison area, facing the opposite side.
- Meaning 2 : Money which is made with metal or paper, used as currency units.

#### Example 2: (Vietnamese Grade 5- 1<sup>st</sup> Term- Page 52)

#### Quiz

Trùng trục như con chó thui  
Chín mắt, chín mũi, chín đuôi, chín đầu  
(What animal is it?)

In this example, students solve the quiz and learn the meaning of homonyms.

The word "*chin*" in the quiz is not number 9, which comes after number 8. It means well-cooked food which can be eaten. In this case, eyes, nose, tail and head of the dog are grilled.

#### Example 3: (Vietnamese Grade 5- 2<sup>nd</sup> Term- Page 70)

Find proper nouns in the following story and clarify how they are written.

#### Antique collectors

In the past, there was a male pupil who was very fond of antiques. One day, someone brought him a torn mat, which Confucius sat on and taught. He was very happy, bringing all of his paddle fields to exchange for the mat.

Very soon after that, someone brought an old stick and said:

- This is the stick Chu Van Vuong used at the time of the war. It is several hundred year older than Confucius's mat. The pupil was so admired at the antique that he sold all his belongings to buy the stick.

Later, someone brought a wooden bowl and said:

- This bowl was made in the Ngu De period. Chu Van Vuong's stick couldn't be compared to this bowl.

Without any consideration, the pupil sold his house to buy the bowl. Then, he had to go begging. He never asked for rice, but screamed:

- Does anybody have Khong Thai Cong's money from Cuu Phu, please give me a dong!

According to *Bi Quyét Song Lau*

In this example, students learn the spelling rules of Chinese-Vietnamese words that are capitalized on the initial letter of all syllables. They also learn the anecdotes about the four great thinkers of China: Khong Tu, Chu Van Vuong, Ngu De, Khuong Thai Cong.

#### Example 4: (Vietnamese Grade 5- 2<sup>nd</sup> term, pp. 134)

In the following paragraph, three commas are put in the wrong place. Correct them

Guinness book records Carol to be the heaviest woman on Earth. Carol weighs 700 kilograms, but she has rickets. In the end of summer, in 1994, she was hospitalized in a hospital in Michigan, America. In order to, take her to the hospital, 22 firefighters were called for help.

According to *A Window to the World*

In the above example, learners know how to use commas properly in a sentence. Moreover, this humorous material provides them with information about the Guinness, the world record of Carol Yager, a 31 year-old-woman who is the heaviest woman on Earth.

**Example 5:** (Vietnamese Grade 4- 2<sup>nd</sup> term, pp. 151)

*Add subject and predicate in the incomplete sentence:*

Why do rats often chew hard objects? Unlike the teeth of human and other animals, rat teeth keep growing frequently until they die. If their teeth keeps such growth, they will be in trouble. *In order to make their teeth sharp...*

*According to Pham Van Binh*

From the above examples, students learn such sentence elements as subject and predicate. In addition, they are provided with information on the behaviors of some animals: Rats have the habit of chewing hard objects, they do it frequently to sharpen their teeth since the teeth keeps growing. Rat teeth can grow up to 1 centimeter a month. Their teeth are so sharp and hard that rats can use them to break aluminum cans. If they are not sharpened often, the teeth will make the rat unable to eat. According to the world record, there are up to 450 types of rats, and in zoology, they are called “rodents”

**Example 6:** (Vietnamese Grade 5 - 1<sup>st</sup> term, p. 53)

*Funny story*

#### **Buying glasses**

There lives an illiterate boy due to his laziness. When seeing people wearing glasses to read, he thinks that he can read if wearing glasses. One day, he goes to the shop to buy glasses. He opens a book and starts reading. Despite his effort to try several different glasses, he is unable to read. The seller asks in surprise: “Do you know how to read?”. He replies: “If so, why do I need to buy glasses?”. The seller laughs: “There are no such magic glasses. You need to learn how to read first”.

*According to QUỐC VĂN GIÁO KHOA THU*

The above story sophisticatedly advises students not to mislead that they will be able to read just by wearing glasses. In fact, glasses only assist with some eye problems such as shortsightedness, astigmatism, and presbyopia. There are no such magic glasses that make people be able to read. When realizing the paradox in the story, students will understand that the only way to be able to read is to learn how to read.

#### **2.4.2. Aesthetic Value**

According to linguists, language is the very first form of communication in human society. Language is a tool of thinking and the direct realization of thoughts. Therefore, aesthetics is reflected in the beauty and it is the creation of literature in terms of language, and the art of words creates aesthetic utterances. Aesthetic utterances are different from the ordinary ones in the fact that they are able to bring about profound impacts which include images and emotions. Aesthetics in wording is reflected in different forms.

In literature, the works are the art of words. It takes a long journey of sharpening and molding of the artists to make ordinary language become a literary work, and language has its own principles. The crucial rule in wording in literature lies in the choice of appropriate forms to achieve the aesthetic values. Therefore, such funny materials used in textbooks are for the purpose of assisting learners build up and enhance their basic understanding of the beauty of language. From that basis,

learners are assisted to improve their emotions about beautiful things in life.

**Example 1:** (Vietnamese - Grade 4- The 2<sup>nd</sup> term, pp. 154)

*Listen - Write:*

#### **Nói ngược**

*Bao giờ cho đến tháng ba  
Ếch cắn cổ rắn tha ra ngoài đồng.  
Hùm nằm cho lợn liềm lông,  
Một chục quả hồng nuốt lão tám mươi.  
Năm xôi nuốt trẻ lên mười,  
Con gà, nậm rượu nuốt người lao đao.  
Lươn nằm cho trùn bò vào,  
Một đàn cào cào đuổi bắt cá rô.  
Thóc giống cắn chuột trong bồ,  
Một trăm lá mạ đổ vỡ con trâu.  
Chim chích cắn cổ diều hâu,  
Gà con tha quạ biết đâu mà tìm.*

(folk poem)

With the above spelling exercise, learners are introduced with the inverted form of saying which is relatively frequently used in daily life as well as in literary works with the effects it creates.

#### **2.4.3. Entertainment Value**

Humorous materials can bring about entertaining values that motivate readers to acquire. They are familiar forms of language used in daily life, the way of rhyming, thinking games, creative explanations, and laughs. All the features reflected in word puzzles, proverbs, folk songs, funny stories, anecdotes positively contribute to motivate active acquisition of knowledge and abstract and concrete concepts of language.

Most of the humorous stories included in the textbooks are familiar pieces of stories in daily life of primary school students. They are appropriate for the children acquisition. The majority of the stories have simple details which are easy to remember, to retell, and easy to find funny details, and many of them express the innocent characteristics representing their age. The stories offer learners a lot of fun and they contribute to enhance learners' sense of humor, intelligence, critical thinking and logics. Especially, from the discovery of paradox in humorous phenomena, learners are able to self-adjust their behaviors, to identify the right things to do. It can be said that this is an interesting area of content to be included in the syllabus of Vietnamese subject.

**Example:**

*In the following funny piece of story, how does the seller misunderstand the customer? In order to avoid confusion, which punctuation should the customer add into his message? and where should the punctuation be places?*

#### **Because of forgetting a punctuation mark**

A customer comes to the store to order a wreath. He tells the seller to write on a tape attached to the wreath: “Tribute to Mr. X”. However, when coming home, he thinks the writing seems to be way too simple, then he asks his child to send the seller a message: “Could you please add into writing if there is place your spirit will go to the heaven”. When the wreath is brought to the funeral, the customer is so surprised. On the attached tape, it is

carefully written: “Tribute to Mr. X. If there is a place your spirit will go to heaven”.

In the above story, learners recognize the importance of the colon. Humorous details are created when the seller misunderstands the message because he misidentifies the position of the colon in the message. The customer means “Could you please add into the writing if there is place: “Tribute to Mr. X, your spirit will go to heaven”.

Therefore, humorous materials have a number of values, but the most typical ones are the cognitive value, aesthetic value and entertainment value. They have an important role in enhancing learners’ soul and develop their personality.

**2.4.4. Humorous Materials with the “5E” process**

5E stands for Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. The model of “5E” is built on the basis of cognitive constructivism of the learning process in which learners develop new knowledge basing on the prior knowledge or experience. Rodger W. Bybee (America) is the founder of this model. He has a number of studies conducted with the use of this model [20,21] (Figure 6).

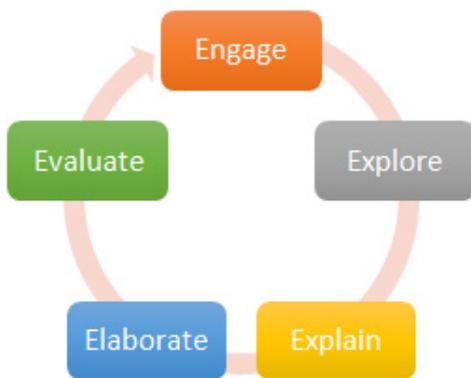


Figure 6. 5 E Model (Source: Internet)

- This model is mainly applied to teach natural science subjects or STEM, but we find that it is very feasible to use of the process in this model to teach language. For instance, in the first step - Engagement, we have to motivate learners through the act of activating their curiosity, raising questions, clarifying answers or discovery that learners have already known or thinking of humorous materials as a useful tool. In the second step, Exploration, teachers play the role of a consultant, making a list of “need-to-know-things”; In the next step, teachers encourage learners to give explanation on concepts and definitions in their own understanding. In step 4, teachers encourage learners to apply or expand concepts and skills in the new situations, and ask them to look for explanation. In the last step, teachers evaluate learners’ knowledge and skills. All of these steps can be used in social science. When coming back to this topic, we will conduct a further study on the teaching of language using the model of 5E.

**2.5. Designing Humorous Materials in Teaching Vietnamese in Primary Schools**

**2.5.1. The Principles of Designing Humorous Materials**

Humorous materials should:

- Be appropriate with the psychology of primary students.

- Reflect the representative features of the subjects.
- Be suitable with learners, but contribute to improve their motivation.
- Be aligned with the topics in the textbooks.
- Be aligned with the theoretical content in the syllabus to consolidate the theories.
- Be aligned with the content and learning outcomes of each lesson.
- Be diverse and appropriate with the learning and communication of primary school students.

**2.5.2. Steps in Designing Humorous Materials in Teaching Vietnamese in Primary Schools**

The steps in developing humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese in Primary schools are presented in Figure 7.

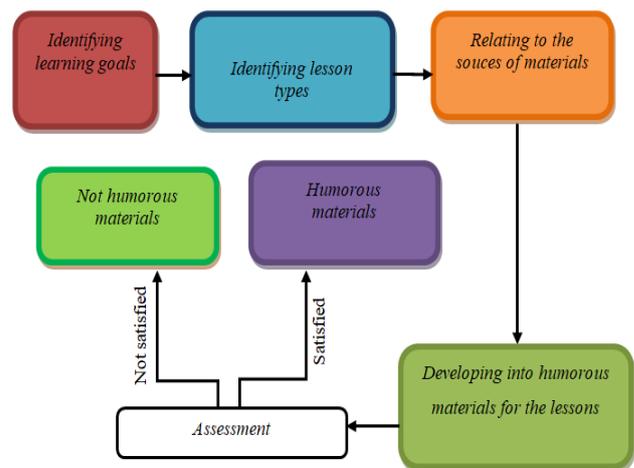


Figure 7. Steps in designing humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese in Primary schools

**2.6. Experimenting Designing Humorous Materials in Teaching Vietnamese in Primary Schools**

**2.6.1. Overview of the Experimental Process.**

a. *Objectives:* Assessing the feasibility of the process of designing humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese in Primary schools, and the ability of designing word puzzle games of preservice and in-service primary school teachers.

b. *Participants:* The experiment is conducted with the participation of 36 in-service primary teachers at 3 different primary schools and 38 senior pre-service primary education teachers at Hanoi Pedagogical University 2 (Random sampling)

c. *Content and scope of the experiment:* Methods of the degree of humorous materials the participants use in two sub-division of Vietnamese subject which are Spelling and Word and Sentence practice. (Finding materials, adjusting materials, self-creating the bank of humorous materials)

d. *Method:* Exercise sheets, observation, analysis, interview and summary.

e. *Rating scale:* Within 240 minutes, the participants design:

- >10 types of humorous materials (3 points)
- 6-9 types of humorous materials (2 points)
- 1- 5 types of humorous materials (1 point).

Table 4. List of exercises on vocabulary and sentence practice

<b>1. Exercise to enrich vocabulary repertoire</b>		
1.1	<b>Exercises to teach vocabulary *</b>	
1.1.1	Meaning explanation through visualization	
	1.1.1.1	Exercises requiring to identify the similarities between the given vocabulary and the picture.
	1.1.1.2	Exercises requiring to find words based on the given picture.
	1.1.1.3	Exercises requiring to name objects which are hiddenly drawn in the pictures. These are funny exercises with pictures.
	1.1.2	Meaning explanation through comparing and contrasting words
	1.1.3	Meaning explanation through synonyms and antonyms.
	1.1.4	Meaning explanation through analysis of phonemes and explanation of the phonemes.
	1.1.5	Meaning explanation through definition
1.2	<b>Exercises to systematize vocabulary repertoire</b>	
	1.2.1	Exercises requiring to find words.
	1.2.1.1	Exercises requiring to find words of the same themes
	1.2.1.2	Exercises requiring to find words of the same meaning layers.
	1.2.1.3	Exercises requiring to find words of the same part of speech
	1.2.1.4	Exercises requiring to find words of the same structural characteristics
	1.2.2	Exercises to categorize words
1.3	<b>Word usage exercises (activating vocabulary repertoire)</b>	
	1.3.1	Gap filling exercises
	1.3.2	Word replacing exercises
	1.3.3	Word building exercises
	1.3.4	Making sentences
	1.3.5	Paragraph writing
	1.3.6	Error correction exercises
<b>2. Exercises on knowledge and skills of vocabulary and sentences</b>		
2.1	<b>Exercises requiring to identify, classify and analyze</b>	
2.2	<b>Exercises to build and synthesize (Utterances)</b>	
	2.2.1	Exercises following models
	2.2.2	Exercises on structures and error correction
	2.2.3	Exercise on creation

### 2.6.2. The experimental Process

The participants are provided with the instruction/guidance of

- Method, process of designing word puzzles of proverbs for primary school students
- Discussion on steps in the designing process
- Types of exercises using humorous materials

Table 5. Forms of phonemes and rhyme

STT	Form
3.2.1	Gap filling
3.2.2	Identifying words of the same spelling characteristics and having certain meaning (Or identifying which part of speech a word belongs to basing on the spelling characteristics)
3.2.3	Identifying words' spelling
3.2.4	Solving quizzes to find words with the spelling characteristics that learners need to learn
3.2.5	Drawing conclusions from the spelling exercises
3.2.6	Identifying and correcting spelling mistakes

### 2.6.3. Experimental Results

Humorous materials are rated on the basis of criteria and principles and yield the above-presented results (Table 6). From the observation, we can see that both groups of participants understand methods of designing humorous materials. However, their choice of humorous materials is mostly at satisfying level, and they are not really interesting and appealing. Most of the participants design humorous materials by finding resources and modifying the exercise requirement instead of creating new exercises. In the process of designing humorous materials, they flexibly develop a variety of mini exercise

from one material. All of them are excited in every single step of the process. The learning process following the constructivist theory is clearly reflected here: They think, analyze, discuss, or even argue to prove their products; they evaluate and appreciate the work of others. The number of humorous materials designed by pre-service and in-service teachers is very high (919). From the mean  $x=2,8$ , we can conclude that the participants are able to design humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese when they understand the role and the importance of humorous materials and the process of designing them.

Table 6. Results on the design of humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese of pre-service and in-service primary education teachers

Humorous materials	In-service teachers (n=36)		Pre-service Teachers (n=38)		Total	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1.2.1	29	80,6	31	81,6	60	81,1
1.2.2	36	94,7	38	100	74	100
1.3.1	27	75	29	76,3	56	75,7
1.3.2	33	91,7	36	94,7	69	93,2
1.3.6	33	91,7	33	86,8	66	89,2
2.1	25	69,4	27	71,1	52	70,3
2.2.1	33	91,7	35	92,1	68	91,2
2.2.2	34	94,4	35	92,1	69	93,2
2.2.3	27	75	30	78,9	57	77
3.2.1	28	77,7	30	78,9	58	78,4
3.2.2	30	83,3	31	81,6	61	82,4
3.2.3	31	86,1	33	86,8	64	86,5
3.2.4	32	88,9	33	86,8	65	87,8
3.2.5	24	66,7	28	73,7	52	70,3
3.2.6	24	66,7	24	63,1	48	64,9
Total	446		473		919	
$\bar{x}$	2,75		2,84		2,8	

## 2.7. Some Examples of Humorous Materials Designed by Pre-service and In-service Primary Education Teachers

### 2.7.1. Humorous in Spelling Exercises

**Exercise 1:** Fill in the gap with “ch” or “tr”:

...ùng ...ục như con ...ó thui  
...ín mắt, ...ín mũi, ...ín đuôi, ...ín đầu  
(Which animal?)

**Exercise 2:** Fill in the gaps with “c”, “k”, or “q”

...ây gì chỉ có một hoa  
...uanh năm ...ết trái nỡn nà vàng thơm  
Lá to, che rợp góc sân  
Sum xuê ...on châu, ...uây ...uần bên nhau  
(Which plant?)

**Exercise 3: Find the proper names in the following story and capitalize them appropriately**

#### Pen Business

The French famous writer Victor Hugo once visited Prussia. When approaching the border between France and Prussia, a customs officer from Prussia asked:

- Could you tell me your occupation, please?
- I write.
- I want to ask what you do for living?

This time, Victor Hugo replied:

- With pen

The officer nodded his head and seemed to understand. He then wrote in the entry visa: “Hugo, a pen businessman”

**Exercise 4: Choose the correct words in the bracket**

#### The story in a barbershop

- Bác thợ! Sao bác chỉ kể (*chuyện/ truyện*) ma, chuyện (*giết/ diết*) người, cướp của vậy. Bác không thấy là tôi đã sợ đến mức (*dựng/ rụng*) hết cả tóc gáy lên à!

- Bác chẳng biết (*đi/ gi*) hết! Sau gáy bác, tóc đã mọc lại mọc (*sát/ xát*) đầu, (*rát/ dất*) khó cắt.

**Exercise 5:** Fill in the gap with “l” or “n” to complete the following story

#### THE MEETING OF LIARS

A man returns his village after a long time working in a distance place. When visiting him, the villagers believe that he must know a number of new stories and ask him to retell them. This is a good chance for him to lie.

- I have witnessed many strange things, but the most unusual one is about the boat. It is such a long boat that the length is unmeasurable. There was a person in his twenty somethings moving forward to the drive from the deck where he was standing. When reaching the mast, he was so old that his hair turns white. He continued to go until his death but he never reached the drive.

There is another liar in the village. When hearing the story, he immediately tells another story

- That is not much amazing! I used to see a tall tree in the forest. A bird on the tree dropped a seed of a banyan tree. When falling down, the seed was watered with the rain, and it grew into a banyan tree. The banyan tree developed, flourished, had fruit. The seed of the banyan

tree fell down and continued another cycle. It took seven generation for the banyan seed to reach the soil.

The first liar argues:

It is unbelievable. There is no such tree!

The second liar laugh:

If so, where are the woods to make such a long boat?

**Exercise 6:** Fill in the gaps with “x” or “s” to complete the following story:

#### Sợ gì

Khách ngồi chơi quá lâu. Chủ nhà nhìn trời, nói:

- Trời ơi quá. Không khéo mưa to! Khách đáp lại:

- ... mưa rồi à? Thế thì phải chờ đến lúc tạnh mới về được.

Chủ:

- Nhưng bây giờ mây tan rồi, không mưa nữa đâu. Khách mừng rỡ:

- Thế thì còn ... gì nữa mà phải về ...

#### No Need To Be Afraid

The visitor spends a long time with the host. The host looks at the sky and says:

- It is too hot. It is likely to rain.

The visitor replies:

- Is it going to rain? Then I will stay here until the rain stops.

- But there is no cloud now, so it won't rain.

The visitor replies happily: So, there is no need to be afraid of the rain.

**Exercise 7: Fill in the gap with *ong* or *oong*?**

#### Boiling eggs

Niu-ton định luộc mấy quả trứng. Ông lấy đồng hồ ra xem giờ. Một lúc sau ông múc từ tr... x... ra không phải mấy quả trứng mà là chiếc đồng hồ đã luộc chín.

(Newton intends to boil some eggs. He uses the coins to see the time. A few minutes after, he takes out of the spot the fully-cooked watch instead of the eggs.)

### 2.7.2. Humorous Materials in Vocabulary and Sentence Practice

**Exercise 1:** Put the punctuations in the appropriate places.

#### Student Record Book

- Daddy, is it true that your glasses make everything bigger

- Yes, baby

- So, please put on your glasses and sign in my communication book

**Exercise 2:** \* When rewriting the following story, a student used some punctuation marks incorrectly. Help him/her correct the mistakes

#### So lucky

A man lost his donkey, and he hurried to find it, but he could not find it anywhere. Suddenly, he yelled out in happiness.

- How lucky?

His neighbors were very surprised. They asked:

- Why are you happy?

- Why not. It was very lucky that I was not sitting on the donkey back, otherwise both the donkey and I got lost?

**Exercise 3:** Find proper nouns and 3 common nouns in the following paragraph

### Causes

One day, Becnaso met a cleric who was humorous and very fat. The cleric saw that Becnaso was so skinny, then he joked:

- I wish you were not that skinny. When seeing you, people may think that England remains a poor country.

Becnaso replied:

- I wish you were not that fat. People may think you are the cause of the poverty of England.

**Exercise 4:** *Correct the wrong punctuations in the following funny story. Explain your correction.*

#### Bécnasô

Some men asked Becnaso whether it was easy or difficult to quit smoking. The writer replied:

- Piece of cake?

- You say it is easy, why can't you quit smoking.

- Hard jobs are those which can be done once or can't be done at all. However, in this case, have I quit smoking dozens of times?

**Exercise 5:** *Find and analyze the structure of compound sentences in the following funny story*

#### What to eat first

Two brothers talk to each other

The older brother asks: If you had a chocolate car, which part of the car would you eat first?

Younger brother: I would eat the wheels first.

Older brother: Why?

Younger brother: I have to eat all of the wheels so that the car cannot run away. What if I eat other parts of the car and it runs away?

**Exercise 6:** *Find the action verbs in the following funny story:*

#### Axe soup

There lived a selfish woman who did not want to share anything to others. A soldier came back from the battle, and he was so tired. Since he understood the woman's selfishness, he borrowed her an axe to cook soup. What to lose when lending him an axe? The woman agreed. The soldier cleaned the axe, put into a pot and boiled it. He tasted the soup and said "It would be better if you put in some powder. And I will invite you a special bowl of soup". The woman gave him some powder. He tasted the soup again and said, "If only there were some salt to add to the soup". The woman gave him some salt. In the end, the soldier invited her to eat the soup. While eating the soup, she questioned herself of how the man made such delicious soup. The soldier was eating and laughing silently.

**Exercise 7:** Find antonyms in the following story and explain why they make you laugh

People are very funny. When seeing me, they often ask: "How tall are you?". When I answer how tall I am, they laugh and say that I am short. From that, I think instead of asking how tall, people should ask how short a person is.

These are several examples of humorous materials designed by pre-service and in-service primary education teachers. That is also the first step in fostering the most frequent use of humorous materials in teaching Vietnamese.

## 3. Conclusion

Humans are born with cries, so they seek for laughs for the whole life. Henri Bergson, a French writer, wrote: "The sense of humor is associated with human nature". Humorous materials in teaching in general and in teaching Vietnamese in primary schools in particular are indispensable spiritual food for children, and they are also important elements in exciting lessons which connect students and the teacher, and bridge every gap. Humorous materials make the lessons much more interesting and appealing. "It is an exciting opportunity for teachers to experience various pedagogical situations from which they show their role of a teacher, an artist on the board" [1]. This paper once again confirms the role and the importance of humorous materials in teaching at primary schools. The results reveal the ability of both pre-service and in-service teachers to design these kinds of materials. Through getting primary school students engaged into the lesson with the use of humorous materials, teachers are able to guide them to construct knowledge for themselves. The utmost purpose of teaching is making learners change, and humorous materials have such significant contribution in the process of realizing that goal.

## Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks would go to in-service teachers at two Primary schools and pre-service teachers at Faculty of Primary Education course 41 and 42 for their enormous assistance in the experiment. I would also like to express my deep thanks to anonymous critics who provided me with constructive feedback on the draft of this paper.

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