

HUMOR IN LEADERSHIP DISCOURSE

Leadership Discourse and Role of Humor in It: A New Orientation of Business

English

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Abstract

The role of English cannot be ignored in global business. Humor, in its quintessence, bears numerous multi-faceted benefits for business and should be taken seriously. Discourse constitutes a crucial aspect of leadership performance. It has even been pointed out that ‘Imagining leadership outside of language is all but impossible’ (Lyons & O’Mealy, 1998). Indeed, it appears that many of the central leadership activities, such as creating and communicating a vision or mission statement, encouraging, motivating and guiding subordinates, setting a goal and ensuring subordinates’ compliance all involve language (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). In spite of this long-winded relationship between leadership and language, there are amazingly few studies which view leadership performance from a linguistic standpoint (Wodak, 1997; Mullany, 2007). This paper aims at addressing this new orientation by illustrating some of the ways through which analysis of leadership discourse especially that involves humor will be carried out. The data analyzed in the paper proves that humor has a positive and productive effect in leadership discourse. CEO’s may encourage this feature in their negotiations, daily written and verbal interactions and may feel the difference by miraculous impact of humor in their leadership practices.

KEY WORDS

Leadership Discourse, humor, global business, productivity, employee relations, working environment

Introduction

Humor, without least suspicion, is considered, even in a corporate set up, one of the prime and key elements of distinctive leadership, which, in addition to valor, decision and acumen, is described as being essential for leaders. This claim is verified by a number of recent surveys which also report that humor is professed as being a productive skill for leaders: not only do subordinates have strong liking for leaders who recurrently utilize humor but having a sense of humor is also viewed as one of the motives contributing to leaders' triumph. (Tourish, and Jackson 2008)

Statement of the Objectives

The objective of this paper is to evaluate the place of humor in leadership discourse and analyze how this new orientation is impacting global business. This paper's findings are going to be helpful for the business leaders in order to know how humor can assist in maintaining office decorum even by pleasing others and being happy. Misunderstanding, on the other hand, found, if any, will also be removed about non-seriousness charge leveled against using humor in leadership discourse.

Materials and Methods

Qualitative research method is going to be used for this paper. Review of previous literature will prove helpful in determining the core issue. Researchers are going to use case study method in collaboration of qualitative method. Certain extracts from official discourse of business leaders both in formal and informal manners is going to be helpful in determining usage of humor which will be analyzed and elaborated for conclusion.

What is Leadership

Leadership is a multifaceted concept, and academicians and practitioners, whether belonging to any corporate segments, alike have long been perusing its complexity. Not astonishingly, then, researchers across several disciplines are persistently trying to gain a better knowledge of what constitutes efficient leadership and which factors have an impact on successful leadership. Their theoretical and practical approaches to this topic replicate general trends and innovations in leadership and organizational research: early postulations that leaders are born rather than made were subsequently swapped by theories which concerted on the traits or behaviors exhibited by ‘effective’ leaders. Researchers also started to reflect on various situational restrictions in an appraisal of leadership performance. In recent years, however, a new tendency has started to come to surface, which concentrates on a predominantly important aspect of successful leadership performance, namely, discourse.

Although it has long been documented that discourse comprises of a decisive feature of leadership performance (Mintzberg, 1973), only recent studies have unequivocally focused on this vital perspective (Ford, 2006). This inadequacy is chiefly astounding since a number of researchers have proposed that discourse is more than merely an auxiliary perspective of leadership performance – it impacts leaders’ efficacy on various stages and it lies at the heart of the leadership progression (O’Connor, 1997). It has even been illustrious that ‘imagining leadership outside of language is all but impossible’ (Bligh & Hess, 2007). In fact, it appears that many of the essential leadership activities, such as developing and conveying a vision, motivating, encouraging and steering subordinates, setting an achievable and target oriented goal and guaranteeing subordinates’ compliance;- all involve language (Bennis & Thomas, 2002). However, in spite of this convoluted connection between leadership and language there are amazingly few studies which look at leadership performance from a linguistic standpoint (Mullany, 2007; Kendall, 2003).

Defining Leadership Discourse

Because leadership is a multifaceted notion which often mystifies (Yukl, 1989), there is little consensus among scholars concerning its definition and meaning. In fact, there are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have endeavored to define it (Decker & Rotondo, 2001). However, majority of researchers agree that in order to confine the multifarious and multifunctional nature of this perception, it is helpful to examine leadership as an activity or a process rather than as a position of power or as a personal attribute (Heifetz, 1998).

The behaviors in which leaders typically engage cover an extensive gamut including acquiring transactional aims and performing relationally oriented behaviors (Robbins et al., 1998). Transactional behaviors portray activities that first and foremost aim to get things done, solve problems and achieve set goals, while relationally oriented behaviors ponder over ensuring group synchronization and creating a fruitful working environment. Both activities are fundamental aspects of the leadership process that can always be alienated from each other (Ferch & Mitchell, 2001). Instead, leaders frequently competently mingle transactional and relational objectives in their discourse.

In order to investigate the primal role of discourse in the performance of leadership, this paper conceptualizes discourse as having a twofold meaning: firstly, discourse is defined as ‘language above the sentence’ (Cameron, 2001), and secondly, on a more intangible level, it is comprehended in the Foucauldian sense as ‘practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak’ (Foucault, 1972). In implementing the first meaning of discourse, Cameron (2001: 11) analyzes the ‘patterns in units which are larger and more extended, than one sentence’ – that is, leaders’ interactions with a variety of people they work with. This implication of discourse, as Baxter (2003: 7) notes ‘almost certainly overlaps and intersects

with another conventional linguistic definition of discourse as “language in use”. This associated meaning of discourse refers to the particular ways in which language is used in exacting contexts. Speaking in around way, it may transpire the ways leaders verbally involve in interactional communication with their executive level colleagues and subordinates in the specific situation and context of their workplaces in order to achieve diverse leadership objectives.

As far as the second dimension is concerned which is more abstract definition, discourses are ‘narrowly linked with “discursive practices”’, that is, ‘social practices that are produced by/through discourses’ (Baxter, 2003). Discursive practices, in this way, are viewed as a demonstration of leadership performance, as well as the most significant means through which notions of leadership are continuously enacted and created. In other words, through the discursive ways and practices which leaders recurrently exercise in their everyday verbal or electronic communications, they carry out leadership and at the same time create themselves as specific kinds of leaders.

In this paper, then, leaders’ discourse is termed as the major gauge of their leadership performance, though humor is also tinged with this discourse as a new dimensional perspective. Thus, leadership efficacy and performance refer to the methods in which these aspects are shadowed in leaders’ discourse with a humorous shade. Based on the emblematic transactional and relational leadership actions described above, and taking into considerations the vital function of language, ‘effective’ leadership is thus creatively understood as a discursive performance, which by affecting others advances, the goals of the organization (transactional behavior) while also establishing accord within the group (relational behavior). This moderately expansive and discourse-based definition of leadership has established useful ground for a discourse analytical perspective to different types of leadership in varied contexts (Marra, Schnurr & Holmes, 2006). Evidently, there is no solitary way of ‘doing

leadership' that can be narrated as 'effective' regardless of the context. Instead, multiplicity of contextual and social factors has an impact on what comprises suitable and 'effective' leadership discourse. Among the features recognized in previous leadership literature as decisive for the performance of leadership are the dynamics of leaders' working groups, the culture of leaders' workplace and the ways gender is endorsed in leaders' workplace (Ford, 2006).

Groups, in corporate business and multinational set ups that work collectively for a long time often grow a shared repertoire of behavioral and linguistic conventions on which members recurrently draw when communicating with each other. These conventions are also mirrored in the discourse of the leaders of such groups. Identical observations implement to the function of the culture of leaders' workplaces. Since corporate and business organizations characterize concepts of what they think to comprise 'effective' leadership, leaders' discourse requires to be taken against this background. If viewed from humoristic angle, leadership is not a gender-neutral concept, rather, it is already discernible by a gender bias, masculine means of 'doing leadership' are characteristically viewed as normative (Martin, Rojo & Esteban, 2003). This gender oriented male bias in humoristic remarks passing is not only echoed in hegemonic discourses of leadership (Ford, 2006) but may also be observed in leaders' everyday discourse.

In their daily usage of business correspondence and negotiations, leaders, not surprisingly, draw on a broad range of discursive strategies to support them in achieving their transactional and relational goals while at the same time bearing in mind the social factors mentioned above. They often demonstrate their power in rather delicate ways, for example, by showing counseling rather than commanding behaviors, thus considering their addressees' face needs (Kendall, 2003). However, in their daily usage, they may also utilize more direct strategies to attain their various goals through humor miraculously, such as leading the amount of talk in

meetings (Holmes, 2000), opening and closing meetings in a new and novel way that may be funny or humorous giving a refreshing sense even in summarizing progress (Holmes, 2002) and controlling the topics to be discussed (Holmes et al., 2007).

Leaders also perform a key role in decision making (Marra et al., 2006) by evolving consensus among meeting participants, as well as attempting to avert conflict (Wodak, 1997). Humor can make this tough task easier if wisely used in discourse. In such corporate environment, one of the most appealing discursive strategies used to boost leadership performance is thus humor. This rather unobtrusive and under-researched discursive strategy is a predominantly flexible tool for performing leadership. And since it may productively be used to perform all of the activities in business events and functions, it clearly constitutes an imperative constituent of leadership discourse.

The Orientation of Humor

Humor has extensively been discussed and researched in literature, psychology and philosophy, yet it could have not so far found its proper and befitting place in corporate sector in the areas of employees' management, advertising, marketing and conflict resolution to the tune it really deserves. Although humor has long been a subject of interest in leadership and managerial research (Priest & Swain, 2002), only a reasonably small number of studies have empirically explored this area (Avolio, Howell & Sosik, 1999). But humor, might be more so than many other discursive strategies, emerges to be a central aspect of leadership discourse. Owing to its innate haziness and its capacity to perform a number of functions at the same time, humor facilitates leaders to attain their transactional and relational goals, sometimes even simultaneously. It is thus not astonishing that humor has been projected as 'one of the key characteristics of leadership' (Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995).

Humor is not only one of the most attractive discursive strategies on which leaders sketch in their everyday interactional performance, it is also among the most ambiguous ones. As

regards to this, defining humor – like defining leadership – is filled with complexity. Thus, although wide-ranging research across different disciplines has been carried out on humor, it still remains ‘a complex and paradoxical phenomenon’, as Linstead (1988: 123) notes especially from the perspective of business and leadership discourse. Some of the difficulties in viewing humor placed in leadership discourse are due to substantial problems in offering an apt definition of humor, which may cover all the phenomena clustered under this umbrella.

Humor Definition

Humor is an omnipresent phenomenon within our everyday interactions and a main element of our conversation. One of the reasons for this phenomenon is that in personal interaction, the people involved know each other particularly well. Thus, they do not hesitate to tell jokes and mock themselves or one another. Business leaders, geeks and gurus, despite the fact that they prefer to remain reserved, are still no exemption from using humor in interaction in leadership discourse. This new orientation of business discourse emerged from leadership humor favors the establishment and maintenance of a mood for conviviality, lightness, friendliness and joviality.

Joking and laughing is the most prominent exponential and demonstrative feature of humor which is desperately required in tourism set up. Another significant theory of humor is Incongruity theory which is the most common than all other prevailing theories currently in vogue. This can be mostly applicable in leadership discourse scenario as it transpires that there is sharp contrast between what we expect and what we get out of conversational interaction. If this theory of humor is evaluated on literary grounds instead of linguistic ones, it is equivalent to and closely related to temporal and spatial irony. These two are wherein a leader resides much of his business life. Hobbes advanced ‘superiority theory of humor’, according to which we laugh at the sudden conception that we are superior to other. (Berger, 1987)

Research on humor extensively has been conducted in the field of psychology, where it is normally understood in terms of psychological notion (Apte, 1985), and where it is usually defined as entertaining or hilarious utterances which make an audience irresistibly laugh (Duncan & Feisal, 1989). This is rather a broad definition and has been adopted by researchers from many other disciplines altogether (Smith, Harrington & Neck, 2000). It spotlights on the postulations that humor is in general 'pleasant' and aims at generating 'good-tempered amusement' which definitely results in the production of outburst laughter (Clouse & Spurgeon, 1995).

Taxonomy of Humor In Leadership Discourse

In order to comprehend the role of humor in leaders' discourse, and especially analyzing the manifold means and methods by which they bring forth this discursive strategy when acquiring their numerous transactional and relational targets, it is fundamental to distinguish between different types of humor. A brief taxonomy of typical segments of humor is subjective humor, imaginary or fanciful humor, pun-play or wordplay, self-denigrating humor, mockery, role play, cynicism, teasing, sarcasm and irony. It is, however, significant to note that boundaries between these types of humor are not always clear-cut as they are interceptive and intersectional and some instances as spoken by leaders in their discourse may be classified as pertaining to more than one type.

Subjective humor is defined as 'a story which the speaker considers to be entertaining and amusing' (Hay, 2001). It can consist of terse and pithy comments or episodes which may be richly developed by numerous leaders in daily communication and interaction in business deals, negotiation and administrative meetings. Subjective humor generally refers to an incident narrated humorously that actually took place; fantasy or fanciful humor describes the structuring of humorous and imaginary scenarios (Hay, 2001). Like anecdotes, successions of fantasy humor frequently integrate other types of humor. A third type of humor is wordplay

which emerges due to a speaker's manipulated and maneuvered types of words which create humor. In leadership discourse, leaders can use this strategy by manipulating and distorting words sounds and by creating ambiguous meanings from these manipulations (Chiaro, 1992). A standard example of wordplay humor is the use of puns in communication especially in conversation and verbal interaction by the leaders. Puns are either indistinguishable in sound (homonyms) or very identical in sound, but are sharply diverse in meaning' (Abrams, 1993). This type of humor can extensively and broadly be used in leadership discourse in order to diffuse work stress and conflict resolution by the leaders in their course of discourse. Leaders can also incorporate such humorous utterances unintentionally that engage a slip of tongue. Role play, less practicable in leadership discourse, characterizes humorous illustrations in which the speaker impersonates the speaking style, tone or personality of another individual in order to generate comic effect (Hay, 2001).

There are so many ironical situations in business courses. Irony, as a tool of humorous leadership discourse defined as 'a rhetorical figure which results in implying the contradictory to what is said literally'. Sometimes, in business communication, irony refers to something else than what has been expressed. Irony is often traced by a range of cues, which help finding its identification. In business meetings and interactions, the most common indices for ironic purpose are a slow speaking tempo, heavy stress and nasalization (Kreuz & Roberts, 1995), as well as gaps of silences, syllable expansion and laughter (Attardo, 2000).

Measurement Of Humor

Leadership discourse can best be analyzed and evaluated through the lenses of pragmatics. Holmes (2006), suggest a pragmatic approach to measure humor quantitatively that calculated traces of humor in business meetings and counted an average index per 100 minutes (Holmes, 2006). This process is particularly helpful for an inquiry of the incidences of humor in similar types of business interactions and for a comparison across different

leadership discourses. However, it offers problems when applied to various types of conversations of leadership domain as it ignores the impact of significant contextual factors, such as the interlocutors' associations. Moreover, counting instances of leadership discourse from the perspective of humor is not clear-cut. This is particularly obvious in extensive series of conjoint humor in which plentiful interlocutors contribute. In order to evade this hitch it was determined to chiefly follow a qualitative approach, and mainly focus on analyzing the numerous functions of a variety of types of humor in leadership discourse. This quantitative information may facilitate to discover distinct models or standards which typify the discourse of leaders.

Research Tools for Humor in Leadership Discourse

The analysis of leadership discourse from humorous orientation is placed within a social constructionist paradigm and principally draws on analytical concepts developed by interactional sociolinguistics. Especially, it uses a variety of 'contextualization cues' (Gumperz, 1999) in order to know the skills in which leaders' discourse and particularly their use of humor is understood by colleagues and subordinates, and how it reveals interlocutors' suppositions that trigger the conciliation of their shared interpretations (Gumperz, 1999). Humor, in corporate culture as well as in leadership discourse, is a vague and multi-functional discourse strategy, it may allow individuals to form 'multi-faceted and sometimes incongruous identities' (Holmes 2003). It not only provides an occasion to build certain facets of professional identities, but also becomes a factorial consideration for the speaker to merge and build potential identities.

Data Collection

Collecting data in a workplace setting causes certain challenges. The core challenge this research project confronted, however, was to collect data to correspond to the research aim i.e. to discover various components of leadership discourse at work. In order to probe into

leadership discourse, and particularly its interface with humor, gender and workplace culture, it was found quite pertinent to carry out case studies involving various types of leaders from several organizations. The reason for the choice of case studies method is this that it allows the researcher to scrutinize and comprehend the structure of compound realities; they are also attuned with the social constructionist pattern (Marra, Schnurr & Holmes, 2006). Case study research is characteristically carried out in qualitative research that ‘expansively portrays and elucidates the variety of components in a specified social situation’ (Arneson, 1995), and has been confirmed to be chiefly helpful for an analysis of ‘organizational and managerial processes’ (Yin, 1994).

Data

In leadership discourse humor, the key linguistic data were supported by participant observation, consultation of organizational records and official documents. Participant observation was generally carried out during the preliminary phases of the data collection process, before any interactions were recorded. It has been noted that participant observation is a helpful methods for collecting qualitative data on managerial and organizational processes since it creates a remarkable provision of high-quality data and essential insight into leadership dynamics (Hollander, 1984). Observational notes collected during this data collection period, in addition to the insight and knowledge acquired from consulting official documents proved to be helpful for the ensuing analysis of leaders’ discourse, mostly in concurrence with a consequent discussion with organizational members (Gunnarsson, 2000)

In a study of humor analyzed in leadership discourse in a manufacturing company in the UK, Mullany (2004) found that meeting chairs utilized humor to support them in attaining their transactional objectives, specifically to get the acquiescence of their subordinates. Pizzini (1991) also discussed ways of humor on doctor-patient clinical discourse in an obstetrical or gynecological setting. In her data, the more powerful interlocutors i.e. the doctors repeatedly

used humor in knowing history and consultations process as a means to implement and emphasize their power by dominantly controlling their patients' discourse. The tactics used by doctors were, for instance, by shifting topics or avoiding patients from 'rambling on' (Pizzini, 1991).

Data Set 1

Context: Interaction between Sharjeel, CEO of Divine Solutions, and Samina, a junior HR Officer. After interviewing Aminah, a job applicant, Sharjeel and Samina decide to offer her a job.

1 Sharjeel: yep+okay alright

2 do you wanna write do up a letter of offer for Aminah

3 Samina: no // [laughs]

4 Sharjeel: / [laughs]

5 (are) you the junior HR Officer

6 // [laughs]

7 Samina: /how do I \ do that

8 Sharjeel: eh? [laughs]

9 there'r standard templates available in your system

10 Samina: in my system? What do you mean? in my system or in my computer? Do you mean for letters of offers?

11 Sharjeel: yep, I mean in your computer

12 Samina: oh hell, well

13 Sharjeel: so but what you're gonna have to do is work out

14 what you're asking her to do and what the

15 what the position is +

16 cos we don't have a position for (her) + [laughs]

17 Samina: okay so what's that then

This piece of discourse exemplifies how Sharjeel uses humor to patiently talk his junior HR Officer through the progression of writing an offer letter for the successful candidate and thereby help her conquer her initial hesitation. Fascinatingly, Sharjeel uses humor in his part of discourse being a leader at various intentional and spontaneous points throughout the conversation with the effect of negotiating and ultimately ensuring his subordinate's observance.

On judging Samina reluctant to write a letter of offer to Aminah (line 3), Sharjeel, instead of forcing her to do it, teases her '(are) you the junior HR Officer' (line 5) thereby reminding her of her duties. The laughter associated with his question noticeably lessens the illocutionary force of the negatively affective speech act, which ms to make it easier for Samina to tell Sharjeel what her problem is: in line 7 she acknowledges that she does not know how to compose a letter of job offer. Sharjeel then gives her some piece of advice and guidance saying that 'there's standard templates' (line 9). Further Sharjeel uses a pun 'system' having double meaning - human system and computer alike. And after Samina has explicitly showed her reluctance again, 'oh hell' (line 12), Sharjeel competently convinces her to take on the task by deliberately offering her more guidance and producing some more humor (lines 15–16).

Sharjeel's last funny line, 'cos we don't have a position for (her)' (line 16) could be construed as fulfilling various purposes: it signals in a gracious and face-saving way that he still supposes Samina to write the letter of offer, and simultaneously takes up another issue to her awareness, that is, the requirement to hit upon an proper title for the position Aminah is supposedly going to fill. His hilarious comment also lightens the state of affairs, reinforces camaraderie with Samina and thus enables her to accept his guidance and perform the duty.

Employing humor and using the all-encompassing pronoun ‘we’, Sharjeel adeptly manages to save the faces of both interlocutors. And Samina’s final comment, ‘okay so what’s that then’ (line 17) indicates that she is going to compose the letter of offer as Sharjeel has proposed.

Data Set 2, coming up now, thus illustrates how both the aspects of leadership – the attainment of transactional objectives and the reflection of relational aspects – are frequently tangled. By motivating Samina to write the letter of offer, Sharjeel remains successful in his transactional objectives; and by bringing in forth the negatively affective speech acts of imparting a piece of advice and conveying a request as non-threatening as possible, he also takes into the consideration the relational aspects.

Here Samina expresses yet another problem after she has agreed to write the letter of offer to Aminah. She points out that she even not in the knowledge of the title for the job they are going to offer to the new employee i.e. Aminah.

Data Set 2

- 1 Sharjeel: so I would think that you’d write as you already know [voc]
- 2 project associate or something or +++
- 3 technical associate +++
- 4 I think I’m sorry I’m not very good at euphemisms for kind’o roles
- 5 [laughs]
- 6 Samina: [laughs]
- 7 Sharjeel: chief coffee //maker\
- 8 Samina: /[laughs]\ \
- 9 Sharjeel: we didn’t ask her how well she can make coffee [laughs]
- 10 Samina: shouldn’t we consider another short interview for this
- 11 Sharjeel:[laughs] it would make no difference

Sharjeel's use of humor in this extract, like previous one, primarily helps him to accomplish his transactional objectives, but it also enables him to deem relational aspects: it rather lightens the edgy state of affairs and thus appears to considerably facilitate Samina's recognition of his further instruction and direction. After having made solemn hint for likely job titles (lines 2 and 3), Sharjeel uses the tools of humor and makes fun of the whole situation by realizing that he is not good at tracing 'euphemisms for roles' (line 4). He thereby takes over some of the liability for finding a suitable job title – a task which by right is Samina's responsibility since Aminah is going to join her team. Sharjeel's comment further appears to applaud Samina and thus also works as a means of strengthening harmony among interlocutors as the succeeding shared laughter signifies. In lines 7 and 9 Sharjeel goes on with his leadership discourse with a tinge of humorous explanation that develops into a diminutive succession of fantasy humor: 'chief coffee maker we didn't ask her how well she can make coffee'. The most significant point here is thus the use of the inclusive pronoun 'we', with the help of which, Sharjeel once more takes over part of the mutual obligation of finding a suitable job title for Aminah. Again, in line 10, Samina's suggestion for a short interview creates a humorous situation which is responded by Sharjeel by saying 'it would make no difference'-shows they don't mean it in serious terms. It is actually to lighten the burden of tense situation often created in working environment.

Results and Discussions

In the two examples above, Sharjeel portrays himself, through his discourse of course, as a leader who is considerate about his subordinates and who takes their sentiments into account through light veined humor. Instead of merely telling Samina to write a letter of offer and pointing her out to the guidelines she needs, Sharjeel cheers her and builds her confidence so that she finally agrees to execute this task. He gives full liberty to Samina to articulate her

apprehension and aggravation but nevertheless maintains her compliance. He leaves no uncertainty about the reality that he is 'the one in charge' but still successfully manages to represent himself as other-oriented and accommodating leader definitely through his discourse. Although leaders recurrently use humor to aid themselves in achieving their so many transactional aims, they vary in the particular ways in which they occupy this socio-pragmatic mechanism. Some of these differences can be pertaining to divergent expectations allied with leaders' roles and their position in the wider organizational perspective (Robbins et al., 1998).

The 'other' domain or 'other' orientation of leadership, namely more relationally oriented behaviors, has often been ignored in traditional theories and doctrines to leadership but is progressively more recognized in topical leadership research (Ferch & Mitchell, 2001). From discourse perspective, relational leadership behaviors are as multifaceted as transactional behaviors and may comprise enhancing cohesion, expressing group attachment and constructing a sense of possessiveness (Kotter, 1999). Finally, most of these characteristics have constructive effects for advancing transactional objectives in leadership discourse. And humor is one of the discursive tactics on which leaders commonly draw in order to realize both their relational as well as transactional goals. Humor may, for example, inspire and support subordinates as well as colleagues and thus boosts up their job satisfaction. It may also be exercised to enhance feelings of mutual and communicative intimacy with a tinge of sentimental belonging and thus may create team spirit among group members, colleague and subordinates which may have an encouraging effect on employees' job satisfaction, efficiency and overall performance (Barsoux, 1993).

These advantages of humor are predominantly obvious in workplaces charged with hectic level of activities and high levels of stress. The potential of humor to develop a tension free atmosphere and thus make easy dealing with difficult situations and strains, for example, was

claimed to be of exacting worth in medical settings, and especially in hospitals (White & Howse, 1993). In a study of paramedical staff working in an emergency room, Rosenberg (1998: 201) found that staff kept in view the significance of humor during performance of their tough duties and working hours with sensitivity of job nature and thus often employed humor as ‘a coping device and defense mechanism’ thereby gaining distance and detachment towards their instant situation (Rosenberg, 1998: 200). Even the doctor in charge at the situation also got involved in creating such humorous discursive situations. To these paramedics, humor represented a means of handling with the challenges of their ever disturbing and fuss creating emergent workplace reality (Coser, 1960).

Conclusion

It goes without saying that humor facilitates. It works and opens pleasant ways to settle so many issues. Leadership discourse loses its charm if humor is found missing or absent from it. In daily use of business language and teaching English to business career oriented students, it has become necessary that humor must be made a part of their syllabus. One or two modules must be taught to them regarding practical application and usage of humor in leadership discourse. “People with a sense of humor tend to be more creative, less rigid and more willing to consider and embrace new ideas and methods.” (Morreall, 2008) In 2008, a Hodge-Cronin survey polling 737 CEOs of mega corporations depicted the results that 98 % of respondents agreed upon this item of the questionnaire that humor proved a successful ingredient for win-win situation and it proved significant in the conduct of business, that most executives did not have enough level of creating humor, and that in hiring they prioritized people with a sense of humor. (Morreall, 2008)

In advertising and marketing, experts try to get attention of the consumer by certain humor based tactics like creative spellings and innovative phrases: E-Z, Kwik, ReaLemon, Reddi-Wip, Tastee-Freez, Toys Я Us, ‘While you wait’ (Bryson, 2009) Humor is physically and

psychologically healthy, especially in reducing stress. Humor fosters mental flexibility, blocking negative emotions (fear, anger and depression), and helping workers keep their cool and think more clearly. (Morreall, 2008) A debt collection letter reads as follows: “We appreciate your business, but, please, give us a break. Your account is overdue 10 months. That means that we’ve carried you longer than your mother did.” (Morreall 2008)

Many functions of humor correspond to decisive leadership objectives, such as providing an ambiance and atmosphere in which subordinates automatically and amicably get things done in a productive and efficient way. These primarily relational aspects of leadership discourse are performed, for instance, by reinforcing solidarity and developing a sense of belonging as well as reducing status differences. However, humor may not only be used in these tied functions but may also support leaders to purposely deconstruct solidarity and amplify status differences among interlocutors. Transactional behaviors involve a wide range of activities with the aim of progressing the organization’s goals, for example by making certain subordinates perform well. These transactional aims may be put in observance and compliance through leadership discourse strategy carrying humor, such as managing and guiding a group’s actions by getting things done, taking apt decisions, conflicts resolution, troubleshooting and providing feedback and supervision. And humor is the key to all the devices leaders may use to help them in achieving these aims and goals.

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