

MAKING ACADEMIC BOOKS APPEALING TO STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The use of humour in teaching and learning has perhaps mostly been limited to the teacher's verbal communication during class times. Besides verbal communication, however, students also need to interact with instructional texts, for instance, course textbooks and academic books. Unfortunately, textbooks are usually not enjoyable to read because they are often written in a boring and serious manner. The questions that are seldom asked are, firstly, can writers inject a substantial number of jokes in students' academic books so that they can be made engaging while delivering knowledge? Secondly, can writers distribute the jokes evenly throughout an academic book, and finally, can many types of jokes be incorporated in textbooks and academic books? Content analysis of Paraskos (1990) Economics book suggests that these questions do have positive answers. From a total of 178 pages, 80 cases of humorous expressions or jokes are found, and they are rather evenly spread throughout the book. The jokes can be (loosely) classified under fifteen categories based on their types. The brilliant strategy used by Paraskos to enliven students' academic reading may transform both academicians' approach in textbook writing and students' attitude to academic reading.

KEYWORDS: *humour, academic books, economics, reading.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

When in school and university, we may remember the times when we had to read textbooks related to our courses. More often than not, we read them because we had to, like passing tests and examinations, writing papers for our assignments, participating in tutorials, etc. The books were mostly boring, but we had to soldier on. This has possibly been accepted as the norm everywhere. It is therefore not surprising to hear a comment from scholars like the ones below who said:

“Getting students to read can often be a very exasperating, frustrating experience for classroom teachers, parents and reading specialists alike” (Shaughnessy and Stanley, 1991: 1). Tomlinson gives his reasons why students do not like to read textbooks:

More often than not textbooks tend to be serious in tone, bland and boring. This is possibly due to the fear of offending readers who may come from different cultures. Therefore, jokes, which sometimes are culturally bound, silliness and making fun of people are normally not tolerated in textbooks. (2009: 84)

Tomlinson maintains that to interest students in what they read, texts should be engaging enough, and authors can engage students by incorporating silliness, humour, bizarreness, etc. (2009). Of those mentioned, we feel that that humour can make textbooks engaging to students. In her paper (2000: 163), Holmes defines humour as “utterances, on the basis of paralinguistic, prosodie and discoursal clues, as intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and perceived to be amusing by at least some participants”. Because humour can amuse students, educationists can perhaps aim for both, i.e. students’ intellectual and also their affective domains when writing instructional texts. In other words, educationists can use humour so that students can enjoy reading their textbooks and academic books while obtaining information and knowledge. Shaughnessy and Stanley (1991) state that the use of jokes, cartoons and funny stories can be useful to instill a love of reading. Peat (2001) maintains:

- Humour contributes to making learning fun and having fun is an undoubted motivator.
- Humour facilitates a relaxed (stress-free) classroom environment and the brain works better in a state of relaxed alertness. Humour is a stress moderator.
- Fear blocks ‘working memory’ and, as fear dissipates when we are amused, our memory functions more effectively in an environment in which humour features.

Besides, humour can make classes more effective to students in other ways too. It can promote regular attendance since students do not like attending boring classes (Whisonant, 1998; Trefts and Blakeslee, 2000). It is a way of getting students to pay attention, and humour enhances the recall of lecture information (Powell and Andersen, 1985). Humour

can also help people to remember better. Korobkin (1998) found that classroom information is retained longer when presented in a humorous manner. Streaun (2008:76) suggests that laughter can help students learn... “and inducing laughter prior to and during a topic primes students’ brains to increase alertness and memory”. Studies in the field of advertising suggest that humour is an effective tool for enhancing recall of commercials. In a study that analysed 1059 commercials on 150 subjects, Stewart and Furse (1986) found the highest correlation between humour and recall of a commercial.

There have also been ideas which suggest that there is a connection between humour and health benefits. Zelizer (2010: 4) points to the fact that in recent years, “there has been a strong push to integrate humour into diverse health care settings”. According to Zelizer (2010), these include training health care professionals to use humour when they are working in hospitals and the deployment of clowns to cheer up patients in hospitals. The use of humour in hospitals, therefore, suggests that there could be health benefits from the use of humour too.

There are three research questions for this study. Firstly, while imparting knowledge and teaching students a serious subject (i.e. Economics) via the textbook, can many jokes be brought in? Secondly, can the jokes be evenly spread throughout the book? Finally, what are the types of jokes Paraskos uses in his book?

2.0 METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions above, a qualitative investigation was carried out on an Economics book titled, *Introducing Economics, A Young Person’s Guide to Economic Ideas*, which is meant for college level students and was written by Paraskos (1990). It was chosen because one of the researchers who had read it thought the book was a good read. To trawl cases of humour from the book, both researchers followed a simple content analysis procedure. They read the book from start to finish. It is a rather thin book numbering 178 pages altogether. While reading, they highlighted all cases of humour found in the book. After reading, a comparison was made to see whether the jokes highlighted by both researchers match. In other words, the comparison was made to check whether both researchers found the jokes humorous or otherwise, as a joke can be perceived as humorous to one person but not another. The method of counting is similar to that occurring in a conversation, i.e. each time a speaker cracks a joke, it is counted as a single case of humour. Finally, both researchers discussed the provisional classes the jokes could be categorised.

3.0 RESULTS

Content analysis of the book appears to have found the following. First, both researchers agree that Paraskos seems rather different from some other economic book writers due to his light, easy and humorous approach in explaining Economics terminologies and concepts. The examples below illustrate how Paraskos differs from some economic book writers in explaining common terminologies to their readers. The ones underlined seem funny.

sole proprietor/sole trader

- A sole proprietor is usually, but not necessarily, a single person carrying out a business in a one-person (or very small) operation. Most self employed people will fit into this category, although there is no legal limit to the number of people that sole proprietors can employ (some are known to employ up to 100 staff).
(Campbell, 1994: 33)
- The simplest type of firm is the sole trader. This is a firm set up and owned by one individual, though she or he may employ workers to assist. Among other things this enables egotistical individuals who can't stand taking orders to become their own boss.
(Paraskos, 1990: 35)

partnership

- The Uniform Partnership Act defines a partnership as “an association of two or more persons to carry on as co-owners of a business for profit”. Such a relationship is based on an agreement, written or oral, that is both voluntary and legal. A partnership is also referred to as a “copartnership”.
(Glos, Steade and Lowry, 1976: 65)
- An alternative form of company which is more often found than a sole trader is the partnership. Here, two or more people join forces to set up and jointly own a firm. This enables the entrepreneurs to contribute their various specialised skills to the business as well as to share the workload. ...The problem with partnership is that control, as well as profits, have

to be shared. At the same time, the principle of unlimited liability still applies, so you can lose all your possessions. Even if your partner is the shady incompetent one, you can still lose your shirt.
(Paraskos, 1990: 38)

economies of scale

- It can be seen from the above information that a business which is organised as a limited company has a number of advantages over a partnership or sole trader business. The main ones are: ...The ability to attract capital means the business can expand and possibly reap the benefits of economies of scale (greater efficiency brought about by increasing the size of the business).
(Ryan and Richards, 1991: 25)
- Once a country has specialised in certain products, it tends to produce a lot of those products. Large scale production leads to economies of scale or cost savings due to size. There are cost savings through bulk buying, improved use of machinery and so on. People also tend to get better at a certain activity if they do a lot of it for a long time (with the possible exception of English cricket).
(Paraskos, 1990: 108)

trade unions

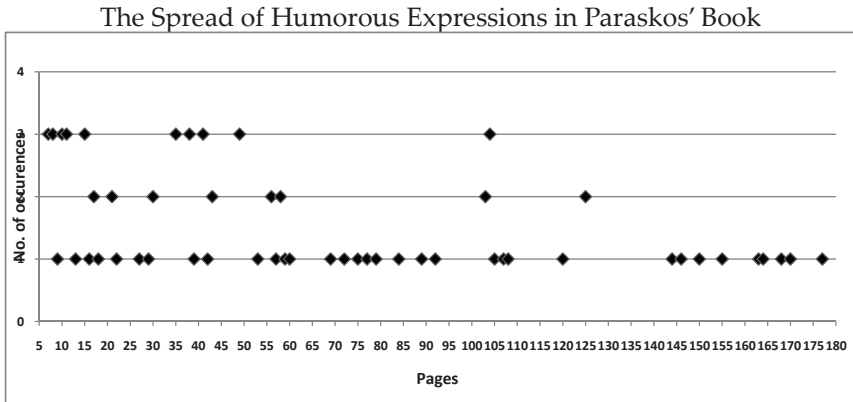
- Trade unions are an economic interest group. They are given a special status in law. They represent groups of employees in bargaining situations, both nationally and individual plants.
(Needham and Dransfield, 1994: 3)
- What do trade unions do? You might be forgiven for thinking that the short answer is: 'They go on strike.' In reality there is more to it than that. Essentially unions undertake collective bargaining. That is to say, they bargain or negotiate on behalf of all their members.
(Paraskos, 1990: 69)

statistics

- Before we go any further we will take a closer look at the differing ways in which we use the word statistic(s). Each item of raw data is referred to as a statistic (singular). Each measure we develop to describe a distribution is also referred to as a statistic. (Hammond, 1991: 93)
- Why do we need all these statistics? Is it just an excuse for economists to pretend they are useful? In fact all kinds of people might need to use economics statistics, and since they are interested in different things the statistics need to be available in different forms. (Paraskos, 1990: 77)

A comparison was also made between the two researchers to see whether both agree that there are many cases of humour in the book. The comparison indicated a fine match because among those found, a majority of the jokes were found to be humorous by both researchers. There are 80 cases of jokes in which both researchers perceive as cases of humour. They disagreed on nine cases, because they were not unanimous in perceiving the jokes as funny. These were therefore excluded from this paper. This finding seems to suggest an answer to the first research question, i.e. that academic book and textbook writers can incorporate many jokes in their books to attract students and to provide some enjoyment when reading them. Although this is rather unconventional, Paraskos seems to have illustrated an innovative approach into getting students to like academic books.

Secondly, content analysis of the book seems to answer the second research question, i.e. whether Paraskos was able to spread the jokes evenly throughout the whole book. Our analysis suggests that Paraskos managed to spread them rather evenly throughout the book. We may have read numerous types of instructional texts but finding one that has a lot of humour and which are rather well distributed throughout the whole book may not be that common. The figure below illustrates how they are spread throughout the whole book:



Out of the total 178 pages of the book, most pages have a joke embedded in them. Some have two cases per page and some others have up to three cases to a page. The diamond shaped markers on each line in the figure represent cases of humour. Thus, a marker found on line number 3 means that there are 3 cases of humour on a page. On page 177, for example, there is only one case of humour in it. There are, however, some occasional gaps of humour cases, for instance pages 126 to 142. That was when the text becomes rather heavy and less engaging. The more frequent cases of humour are found at the earlier part of the book as shown in the figure. The author perhaps has more humorous ideas when he started writing and fewer as he progressed.

In Paraskos' book, from a total of 178 pages, 80 cases of humorous expressions are found. Some are mildly funny, and some extremely hilarious and enjoyable, but the economics contents appears to have been kept intact. Besides verbal humour, Paraskos also makes use of cartoons to amuse his readers. There are altogether 6 cartoons with their funny captions in the book. Nevertheless, it was agreed by both researchers that due to their higher frequency, it was the dominance of the verbal expressions that made the book amusing. An attempt was made to categorise the types of jokes used, and roughly they appear to fall under the loose categories identified below. Altogether, there are 15 types or categories of jokes found, and they will be described below, but they are at best provisional. These 15 types of jokes found, therefore, seem to have answered the third research question, i.e. on what types of jokes Paraskos used to entertain his readers. To better illustrate the 15 categories identified, examples of the jokes and their contexts are also included. The ones underlined are perceived to be humorous.

The types of humour used by Paraskos

Both excerpts A and B below are mainly to illustrate the idea that Economics, according to Paraskos (1990: 8-9), is different from the hard science subjects like Biology or Physics, because firstly, there is not always a right answer in Economics, and secondly, economists cannot conduct controlled laboratory experiments as in the hard sciences. In explaining this idea, Paraskos in jest mocks economists who constantly are trying hard to sound as if they are scientists from the hard sciences. In excerpt A, the economics teacher is illustrated as preferring technical jargon to plain words so that s/he would sound like a true scientist. The joke in excerpt B is made to illustrate a phenomenon that is often the norm in Economics. Research evidence gathered in Economics cannot give the Economics researcher the same confidence as evidence found in the hard science subjects (because they do not come from carefully controlled laboratory experiments). The evidence can often be misleading, thus the reason why the researcher was willing to change the evidence, as economists, according to Paraskos, are often confused in terms of causes and effects in Economics.

Category 1: A twist of the norm (two examples given, A and B)

- A **Economics teacher:** “Don’t argue with me boy! We never use a simple expression when a more complicated one will do” (p. 7).
- B **Economist:** Unfortunately, the evidence didn’t support my theory, so I had to change it.
Friend: You changed your theory?
Economist: No. Of course not, I changed the evidence (p. 7).

The norm in education today appears to be to use simple expressions and to be honest when carrying out research by reporting findings based on the evidence gathered. In the two examples above, however, the expressions become funny when Paraskos twist what appears to be the norm in education and research.

The statement in excerpt C below is made to illustrate the contrast to an earlier scenario described in the book of people who often think that Economics as a subject is not quite as useful as subjects in the hard sciences. In excerpt C, thus, Paraskos is trying to shift the view of his readers to convince them that Economics is, after all, an important subject. He went on to say that the Economics subject is needed because

everyone, for instance, is involved in buying and selling, and everyone, at some time in their lives, will have to deal with banks and companies and they need to deal with them confidently. The joke came when the author deliberately brags, and also when he portrays the picture of a person trying to secure a loan from the bank and who is economically illiterate but trying to look intelligent in a discussion with a building society manager. The statement in excerpt D is made to illustrate the role of price in influencing what people buy. Paraskos again jokes by bragging that even if his book is the best choice, (“the Paraskos masterpiece”), people may not buy it if the price is too expensive.

Category 2: The writer brags (two examples, C and D)

Category 3: Making other people appear dumb (one example, C)

C WHO FINDS ECONOMICS USEFUL? (TITLE)
 The short answer to this question is, of course, everyone. I can say that without fear of contradiction. I’m an economist! ...When you go to see your bank or building society manager, do you take an active part in the discussion or do you just nod your head in agreement from time to time and try hard to look intelligent? (p. 10)

D Suppose you have decided that you want an Economics book. You ask around and you are wisely advised that the best one is ‘Introducing Economics’ by Paraskos, though there are some other good books around. ...even if you are still convinced that the Paraskos masterpiece is a must for your bookshelf, you may find that you can no longer afford it (p. 15).

Bragging and making other people look unintelligent are another two techniques used by Paraskos in injecting humour in his book.

In excerpt E below, the statement illustrates an economic reason why people do not wish to sell something. Even though a sale may result in profit, people may, according to Paraskos, still refuse to sell because the item means more to them than the profit obtained, or the effort needed to produce the product or item is too great. Paraskos jokes why he refuses to sell his services by mocking himself.

Category 4: Making a mockery of the self (two examples, E and F)

E Apart from wanting to keep things there is another

reason why you might not wish to sell. To sell some things, you must first produce them and this requires effort. Suppose that someone was foolish enough to offer me 50 pounds per hour for expert tuition in Economics. Well, as it happens, I'm a lazy Greek who likes to take siestas in the afternoon and the extra work load would probably make me reject the offer (p. 16).

The statement in excerpt F illustrates the idea that large companies are able to charge higher prices for an item than smaller ones. Paraskos maintains that people are more prone to assume that large companies are more successful than smaller ones, and therefore, their size may show that they are more reliable. In explaining this idea, Paraskos makes a comparison between himself and a large British bank, Barclays PLC. He mocks himself again in the process.

F Let's consider a large company like Barclays Bank PLC and compare it to Paraskos Finance Co Ltd., a little bank which might be set up by the author. Since Barclays branches are large and are found on every high street, we normally assume that they are reliable. If they were incompetent or crooked, they wouldn't have millions of customers, would they? None of this is true for poor old Paraskos. Perhaps people who know him will be convinced of his reputation for friendly, efficient and reliable service, but he will not be widely known. The general public will be rather wary of giving their money to a shady looking Greek they have never heard of, who suffers from the added handicap of being an Economist (p. 42-43).

Next, the statements in excerpt G distinguish a free market economy from a planned economy in which the latter believes in the equality of its citizens regardless of the type of jobs they do. Paraskos discusses the pros and cons of both economies and the lack of incentives which may afflict planned economies, as those practised in North Korea and other Communist countries. He uses the analogy of the hardworking and the lazy students. In his explanation, he deliberately inserts the word stupid, an unconventional practice in textbook writing.

Category 5: Using the crude word stupid to describe a group of students (one example, but the word stupid is repeated)

- G Suppose I tell my students that it is unfair for some of them to get a grade A in the examination just because they are clever. After all, some stupid pupils may work very hard and still only get a grade C. Instead I will only give them all a grade B, whether they are clever or stupid. What would happen? I expect that neither the clever ones nor the stupid ones would do much work from then on. If hard work does not lead to any gain and laziness does not lead to any loss, then why not be lazy? This is precisely the problem the Russians have had (p. 30).

Next, in explaining the distribution of income in excerpt H, the writer offers education and training as the reasons why some people tend to get paid more than others. In doing so, he mocks prominent personalities.

Category 6: Deliberately mocking prominent personalities (two examples, H and I)

- H Education and training itself is often long, hard and boring. To persuade young people to do it we have to hold out the prospect of higher pay later on, otherwise few people would bother. In the end we wouldn't have enough car mechanics, doctors and so on, and everyone would want jobs that need no formal qualifications at all, like being Princess of Wales or Chancellor of the Exchequer (p. 104).

In excerpt I, Paraskos discusses the merits and demerits of the sole trader type of business. One disadvantage of the sole trader business is the difficulty of getting loans from banks. In doing so, he mocks a prominent personality ("a South American Dictator") and derides the reader, the Joe Public.

- I Although it is easy to borrow huge sums from the bank if you are a South American dictator, it is much harder if you are Joe Public (p. 35).

Excerpt J discusses the meaning of the term, money. Money is described as something which can be used as payment to trade with another party. In the examples below, wives were indeed used as money in the past. It appears that Paraskos seized the opportunity to include it in his explanation of the word to amuse the reader.

Category 7: Deliberately portraying wives as an economic commodity (two examples, J and K)

- J The strangest things have been used as money in the past: salt, cigarettes, cows and wives, to name but a few (p. 56).

In excerpt K below, Paraskos compares the convenience of modern money against barter trading. The word wives was again used for humour in this comparison.

- K The beauty of our modern forms of finance is the convenience of using them. Imagine taking bags of grain or gold or even cows shopping with you. What if you were using wives as currency and you wanted to buy some camels? How many camels are worth one wife? Or how many wives is a camel worth? And what about savings? How would you save up if you are using wives as money? Wouldn't they depreciate? And what if you wanted to buy something very small, like a bar of chocolate? How could you pay for it in wives: would you chop off a finger and hand it over? (p. 58)

Excerpt L below is the point where Paraskos reaches the end of his book. Here he touches on Mathematics which seems to be common in Economics. In trying to make the book as enjoyable and as readable as possible, Paraskos postpones the Mathematics chapter to the last, because he thinks many people are afraid of it. He pokes fun of the phobia which some people have of Mathematics.

Category 8: Making fun of the common phobia that some people have for Mathematics (one example, L)

- L Some of you may be perfectly happy with maths, even at a high level, in which case you can skip this chapter altogether. Most readers, however, will probably not be in this category. The problem with maths is that most people have a kind of phobia about it. On a scale of fright, it probably ranks somewhere between werewolves and a visit to the dentist (p. 170).

In excerpt M below, Paraskos attempts to explain the factors that affect selling. One factor that affects both the ability and the willingness to sell something is a change in price. In the excerpt below, Paraskos illustrates how money can alter the affectionate feeling the seller has of her aunt.

Category 9: Making fun of people's greed for money which can change their love for something (one example, M)

M Suppose that price rises substantially. If you were offered a very high price for Aunt Matilda's necklace, your fond memories of aunt Matilda might suddenly fade (p. 18).

For excerpt N and O, Paraskos describes, in addition to money which is ready for immediate spending, other ways in which assets are held. In describing this, he makes fun of an old practice and fashion.

Category 10: Making fun of an old practice and fashion (two examples, N and O)

N There are many ways of storing financial resources apart from keeping money in your wallet or under the mattress (p. 59).

The statements in excerpt O below illustrate the benefit obtained by International Monetary Fund member countries when the exchange rates did not change by much. In describing their wealth, Paraskos makes fun of the people's fashion of the 60's and 70's.

O The stability arising from fixed exchange rates enabled the world to enjoy a period of unprecedented growth in trade and prosperity, which lasted until the early 1970s. Some readers may be old enough to remember the swinging sixties, for instance. We must have been well off, considering the amount of raw materials wasted on flared trousers and platform shoes (p. 120).

In excerpt P below, Paraskos explains why people want to become managers, and why managers want their firms to grow. In explaining these, he makes fun of human cravings for power, status and their rewards.

Category 11: Making fun of human cravings for power, status and rewards (one example, P)

P Let's start by looking more closely at the question of managerial megalomaniacs. Why do people become managers? Well, perhaps it has something to do with high salaries. This is certainly so, but what decides the manager's salary? The answer is usually the size of the firm. The number of people working under you is usually the most important determinant of how much you get paid. There may also be a profit bonus, but the main factor is the size of the empire you control. Having a large empire, of course, brings other rewards: plush offices, company cars, expense accounts and glamorous secretaries to name but a few. One of the strongest motives for empire-building is the feeling of status and power which it brings: the simple notion of being important (p. 41).

Excerpt Q illustrates the reasons why some workers have to be paid high salaries. One reason is that the jobs they do are unattractive. While describing this, Paraskos makes fun of men's typical needs and the risks of the supposedly harmless teaching job today.

Category 12: Making fun of men's typical needs (one example, Q)

Category 13: Making fun of the risks of becoming school teachers today (one example, Q)

Q Working on a building site or oil rig brings with it the risk of serious injury or death, and some teachers are only marginally safer. In these cases we have to pay more to attract the workers. The fatality rate for divers in the North Sea is incredibly high. In addition, most men don't like having to spend weeks at a time on a metal box in the middle of the ocean without any women. The wage rate of rig workers is therefore very high indeed (p. 103).

Excerpt R explains hyper-inflation, and excerpt S discusses the need for government intervention in a free market economy. Paraskos uses exaggeration to illustrate the effects of hyper-inflation and a laissez-faire economy.

Category 14: Making use of exaggeration to illustrate the effects of hyper-inflation and laissez-faire economy (two examples, R and S)

R Accelerating inflation could, theoretically, run right out of control as it did in Germany in the 1920s: prices went up by the minute and workers were literally paid in wheelbarrows - full of virtually worthless paper money. In this situation you'd better pay for your doner kebab before it is cooked, because by the time it's done, the price will have gone up. This is called hyper-inflation (p. 92).

Excerpt S discusses the need for government intervention in a free market economy, failing which anarchy may prevail.

S There are certain areas of activity where a free market would result in a situation which most of us would regard as wrong. Suppose one of the tramps in Victoria Station breaks his arm. If he walks into St. Thomas Hospital he gets his arm plastered free of charge. However, in a truly free-market system, health care like everything else would be traded for a price. They would first ask him for a fee, perhaps several hundred pounds, and then treat him only if he could pay. Since he couldn't pay, he would have to walk around in agony with a broken arm dangling from his shoulder (p. 27).

Excerpt T discusses a type of business firm called limited companies, one of the features of which is its limited liability principle which protects the shareholders from bankruptcy.

Category 15: Making use of the sound of alliteration as word-play for comic effect (two examples, T and U)

T Each shareholder has limited liability. This means that if the company goes bankrupt, you can normally only lose your shareholding. Your Porsches and Picassos are safe (p. 39).

Excerpt U discusses how money should be spent and the importance of budgeting. Paraskos uses alliteration again for humorous effect.

- U There should also be some savings in your budget, at least 10% of the total. This is because you will probably end up going over the budget sooner or later anyway. As soon as you meet scintillating Susie or dashing Derek, your budget for nightlife will go straight out of the window (p. 164).

4.0 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Getting students to read academic books these days can be quite a challenge because they are usually written in a serious and in an overly-formal manner. Humour, however, according to Minchew and Hopper (2008: 236) “can be the avenue by which one grabs the attention of disinterested students”. This paper examines the possibility of injecting humour in a subject that is normally dealt with in a serious manner, i.e. Economics. Specifically, it focuses on the three research questions, i.e. whether it is possible to incorporate a lot of jokes in an academic book, can the jokes be evenly spread in the book, and finally what are the types of jokes used. The results suggest that Paraskos appears to be somewhat different from some other Economics book writers. Whereas some other writers explain Economics terminologies in a serious manner, Paraskos adopts the light, easy and humorous approach in explaining them. He has also succeeded in spreading the jokes rather evenly throughout his book, something which seems to be uncommon among some other writers. Paraskos uses a variety of ideas to joke with his readers. The jokes found in Paraskos’ book can roughly be classed under the 15 categories listed below:

- giving a clever twist of the norm, in which Paraskos twists human practices or behaviour which are normal to make them look unnatural and comical,
- bragging about himself for their comic effect,
- making other people appear dumb,
- making a mockery of the self,
- using the crude word stupid to describe a group of students,
- mocking prominent personalities,
- portraying wives as an economic commodity,
- making fun of the common phobia that some people have for Mathematics,
- making fun of people’s greed for money which can change their affection for something,
- making fun of an old practice and fashion,

- making fun of human cravings for power, status and rewards,
- making fun of men's typical needs,
- making fun of the risks of becoming school teachers today,
- making use of exaggeration to illustrate the effect of hyper-inflation and laissez-faire economy, and
- making use of the sound of alliteration as word-play for comic effect.

Injecting humour in academic texts may sound difficult, as writers may not have the same sense of good humour as Paraskos does. This paper may therefore provide ideas to textbook writers to consider the brilliant ideas used by Paraskos to make academic reading light and fun while keeping the subjects' substance intact.

This paper may also somewhat change our fears about offending others when making jokes about other people. As mentioned by Tomlinson in the introduction, these fears may result in the creation of boring and serious texts. The fact of the matter is that what really matters is the intention of the writer or the teacher when describing someone or something. Making a mockery of others in a sensible manner, for example, for the sake of humour and not out of spite may not constitute an insult. In some Western countries, for example, Britain, there were occasions where the British people made fun of their monarch publicly, but because they were done with humorous intents, the parties affected understood and did not make a fuss out of them. Textbook writers, and even teachers who write materials for their students, therefore, should not be too fearful of mocking others, the readers and even themselves as Paraskos did for the sake of humour. Using crude words sparingly in textbooks and teaching materials for the purpose of humour may not appear offensive to students if they know the real intention of the writer. Readers may instead admire the writing skill of writers and teachers who can make conventionally serious subjects fun to read.

It is possible that Paraskos' amusing jokes could also be well remembered by his readers, and along with them, they may also remember Economics ideas and concepts explained by the writer. Funny and absurd advertisements on the mass media, for instance, are deliberately created with a hidden aim; to remind people of the products they see. In reading instructional texts like Economics, there are important concepts, facts and principles which writers wish students to remember. By cracking good jokes attached to important economic concepts, facts and principles, they may be better remembered by students and this may help them in the learning process.

Finally, Paraskos' approach in teaching Economics is not only useful to textbook and academic book writers. His ideas may also be useful to teachers when they are teaching in class. To hold students' attention, to enliven the class, and to ease students' nervousness while in class, humour can be used. Humour can also be used by teachers to make students like the subjects they teach. Also, teachers may sometimes feel uncomfortable and nervous especially when the subjects they have to teach are difficult, when they meet new students, when they make mistakes or blunders while teaching, etc. By cracking good jokes, teachers can quickly break the ice and establish rapport with their students. By self-ridiculing themselves while delivering lessons, by mocking themselves for the blunders they make while teaching, they may diffuse face-threatening situations and make themselves more acceptable and endearing to students. In addition, many universities today also depend on the ratings students make of their lecturers. Students rate lecturers not only on the knowledge which lecturers impart to them, but they also rate lecturers based on how enjoyable the classes or the lessons are to them. Indeed, humour can have many positive effects in the teaching-learning process.

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