

The Use of Humor in Teaching Listening

Fithriyah Inda Nur Abida^{1,*} Rahayu Kuswardani¹ Oikurema Purwati¹

Diana Budi Darma¹ Widyastuti¹

¹*Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia*

^{*}*Corresponding author: fithriyahabida@unesa.ac.id*

ABSTRACT

Humour is an effective teaching tool as it can encourage an atmosphere of openness, enlarge students' diverse thinking, and develop their retention of the presented materials. Most importantly humor has been a part of our pedagogical system. Humor is applied to teach languages concerning the major skills reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This paper takes up the concept of the application of humour in teaching English Listening. The purpose of this study was to show that humorous materials bring a lot of positive impacts to the students. They learn more effectively, improve the learning process, and help retention and recalling voices in the listening process. The experimental group and control group used to investigate the potential benefits of using humour in listening class. The results showed that the exposure to humorous activities in the classroom tends to improve the student's comprehension of the most difficult assignments in their listening book.

Keywords: *Humour, teaching listening, pedagogical system*

1. INTRODUCTION

In English language skills, listening skill is considered as the basic yet the hardest to teach. The capability to understand and listen in English can be a stressful activity. Goh and Taib [1] stated that listening for beginners can be a stressful activity as they are often unable to process information quickly. This problem occurs quite often in the listening activity and made listening is serious work. Students get difficulty in obtaining and interpreting messages in the communication process. As Morley [2] says that listening is not only hearing something, it is the ability to understand what the speaker says. Listening is the most widely used skill, without listening, speaking, reading, and writing could not be improved well. In addition, Schwartz [3] argues that the listening process takes half or more in adult communication activity. And for students, it takes as much as 90% which makes mastering a listening skill is compulsory. Listening is the process of receiving and decoding sounds, phones, or any linguistic signals by using the auditory organ. It means that learners have mastered the knowledge of the English language, including the knowledge of phonetics, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. Because they don't have the habit of thinking in English, it becomes a problem in the listening class. It also brings anxiety and stress in the process of listening. Therefore, a good approach to facilitate learning listening is the use of humor in listening class.

Humor plays a good role to promote listening skills. Sometimes, when students face many obstacles in listening comprehension, humor can help overcome those. Humor providing a relaxed and enjoyable classroom atmosphere. Humor helps improve concentration levels so that students pay more attention to the lesson during class time. Humor establishes a good rapport between students and teachers, eases tension and anxiety, improves interest in classroom lectures; all these combinations are responsible for successful learning. Learners learn best when there is a presence of humor, because it brings positive emotion among them. Chiasson stated by using humor learners feel at ease, less stressed, and they can enjoy the learning process [4]. Using humor today not only consisted within the walls of amusement but eventually, it already launches a new era in teaching language skills. Humor is a good tactic to teach and learn, it makes learning fun and fruitful. Teachers use humor as a means of ice-breaking tool to make learning fun, reduces tension, and work as a treatment for boredom. Having humor in a positive attitude help learners feel accepted and feel less serious about their mistake which makes them able to learn more. These ideas encourage the writer to introduce content-based humor in the listening activity. Using humorous materials in listening comprehension class is beneficial to facilitate a relaxed atmosphere and enjoyment for the students so they will have a strong motivation in studying. Thus, they will try to understand the message of the listening passage. Furthermore, the routine of the listening class will be broken and the students' knowledge will increase. This paper talks about the existence of fun and pleasure in the

listening class after using content-based humor and the improvement of students listening score by having humor-based contents. Therefore, the research questions can be formulated as follow:

1. Does the humorous material in teaching listening have a significant impact on the level of student learning pleasure?
2. Is there an effect of the application of humor material and the level of learning pleasure on the results of students' listening scores?

1.1. Related Work

1.1.1. Humor and Education

The priority of humor is increasing in education system day by day. Gradually, we have moved away from the settings of traditional teaching process. Previously, humor was considered unscholarly as a teaching strategy [5] Humor in teaching experience was a kind of amusement, unimportant jokes that made learning less serious, whereas currently, humor is a good tactic to teach and learn. Dziegielewski et. al. said that in educational setting humor is a good approach to facilitate learning. At present, teachers use humor in classroom teaching which includes jokes and funny short stories sometimes via technology. In addition, Minchew said teachers should apply some tactics to make learning fun and it is their duty to involve learners in that learning process [6]. He argues that humor can create a fun learning atmosphere which will increase the ability and creativity of the learners.

At present, teachers use humor in classroom teaching which includes jokes and funny short stories sometimes via technology. Humor is now a new formula in education. A good sense of humor of teachers proves that they have the willingness, also the spirit for accepting the creativity of the pupils. On a relevant note, Crossman marked humor as the most valuable classroom tool which tends to include refreshing zest and sparkle to the class [7]. Nowadays, very often humor contributes to good classroom modes. Humor establishes a good rapport between students and teachers, eases tension and anxiety, improves interest in classroom lectures; all these combinations are responsible for successful learning. Humor is an important tool to teach in classrooms because it endorses a new outlook and can grab the attention of an inattentive learner in the classroom. Moreover, humor is not a consistent perception of education. Banas et al refereed to humor as a non-homogenous concept [8]. It not only focuses on learning but also adds values to group cohesion in classroom learning.

1.1.2. Teaching of Listening Skills

Teaching listening skill is an important part of mastering foreign languages. Teaching listening is an activity of giving the students an exposure to sounds, phones, and signals and let them understand what the words or messages mean. Learning listening skills is a very active learning process where we not only experience the listening process but are also able to mix the information we hear with the initial knowledge we already have. In this process, learners are also required to be able to combine and link one piece of information with other information to form a unified whole. According to Nunan listening is a process of decoding the sounds that are heard from the phonemes to the text completely [9]. Brown adds that learning to listen is a series of responding to listening as a chain [10]. Learning to listen is a very active process of listening, understanding, remembering, evaluating, and responding. In this process, learners are also required to be able to combine and link one piece of information with other information to form a unified whole. There are several sources of listening materials such as textbooks, DVDs, tape recordings, television, video, radio, and the internet. The effective materials, however, will be any kinds of materials taken from authentic sources. Songs can be a reliable source for improving second language listening skills. Boothe and West said that humorous song not only develops listening skill but also helps to recognize phonological difference as well [11]. Besides, some humorous television shows like "Friends", "Modern Family" can also contribute to developing listening skills. The news in English can also be used as a useful material in this regard. These kinds of shows bring amusement in classroom and lower learners' anxiety. In classroom content-based humor can reduce students' anxiety and be a good way to practice listening.

2. METHODS

The method used in this research is an experimental method that is part of a quantitative method. In this study, it involved two groups, namely the first group whose teaching was given humor-based content treatment, and the second group was not treated with the application of content-based humor. The two groups are assumed to be the same in all relevant aspects and differ only in the provision of teaching treatment. The quasi-experimental design was chosen in this study because this design was considered appropriate to find the effect of the application of content-based humor on student learning outcomes. It can also explain how and why a condition occurs and the causal relationship between several variables. As stated by Sugiyono says that to find out how much influence the application of humor based content has on student learning outcomes, one must compare the learning outcome test before receiving

treatment and after receiving humor-based content treatment or comparing people who have the ability the same who did not get the humor based content application treatment [12]. The participants of this study were English Literature students who registered and participated in the Active Listening class. This experimental research involved two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group. Both groups were given a pre-test and post-test but were given different treatments. In the experiment, the two groups attended four meeting sessions conducted by the researcher. In each session, one humorous listening material was studied. At the first stage of the session, the participants were given a pre-test to observe their ability in listening. Students in the experimental group were treated with the humor-based content method and students in the control group were given conventional material with conventional teaching methods. The research data comes from the results of the student scores. The questionnaire rubric is related to students' perceptions of humor, whether humorous material provides them with comfort and enjoyment while studying, whether humor-based content is useful for improving their understanding and listening skills and whether humor-based content has a significant impact on students' scores in listening class. While student scores are the results of the scores during the listening learning process. They were asked to answer the listening comprehension test to measure their listening ability. The results of data analysis in this study are presented using a table that describes the results of data analysis from student learning outcomes during the listening learning process.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below is the table of students' pretest scores both for experimental and control classes.

Table 1 The Percentage of Students' Pretest Score of Listening

Classification	Score	Experimental Class		Control Class	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good	4	-	-	-	-
Good	3	6	25 %	5	21 %
Fair	2	18	75 %	19	79 %
Poor	1	-	-	-	-
Very Poor	0	-	-	-	-
Total		24	100%	24	100%

If we look at table 1 above, the majority score of the students for the experimental class was in a fair category, 18 students (75%) got a moderate score and 6 students (25%) got a good score. While in control class, the score was also categorized in the average category, based on the data from 24 respondents, 19 students (79%) got a mean or average score and 5 students (21%) got a good score. Therefore, it can be concluded that both experimental and control classes were almost the same in the score acquisition. There is not significantly different between the students' listening skills in experimental and control classes before treatment. In this research, the experimental class was taught using humor-based contents and control class was taught in a conventional attitude. After that, the students from both classes are having the second test and from the following table, we can see that the percentage of students' post-test scores of listening who were taught by applying content-based humor, was different from those who were taught without applying content-based humor.

Table 2 The Percentage of Students' Post test Score of Listening

Classification	Score	Experimental Class		Control Class	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very Good	4	3	12.5%	-	-
Good	3	12	50 %	8	34 %
Fair	2	9	37.5%	16	66 %
Poor	1	-	-	-	-
Very Poor	0	-	-	-	-
Total		24	100%	24	100%

From the table above we can see that the students' listening skills from the experimental class in the post-test increased, 3 students (12.5%) got good, 12 students (50%) got a very good score and 9 students (37.5%) got a medium score. Let us compare with the students in control class. From the data, 8 students (34%) got a good score and 16 (66%) got an average score. Although both of the students from both classes increase, the scores of both groups are different after being given treatment. Students in control class have a significant improvement in the score of listening test.

From the data analysis, it is found out that the score in the pretest is similarly the same, however, the score in the posttest was significantly different. It showed that the use of content-based humor in the listening process significantly increases students' listening skills. It means that using humor in a class becomes an effective tool to improve students' listening skills to the participants of

English literature program of English Department. Through the comparison score between pretest and posttest data, the application of humor gives significant progress toward students' listening skills. The improvement of students' listening skills was marked by the result of the posttest occurring in the both experimental and control class. However, the improvement rate of the experimental group was higher than control group.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on data analysis and score results, we can see that content-based humor does have some positive effects on improving students' listening skills. The students' score improves after the application of humor in the listening class. Therefore, there is a correlation between the use of humor with the improvement of students' abilities in the listening class. The students who relax and enjoy the lesson might obtain a higher score in listening class. Therefore, the use of humor in listening class is significant as students can not only improve their listening ability but also improve their communication skill.

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