

HUMOR ENGLISH TEACHING MATERIAL FOR IMPROVING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL WITH HIGH AND LOW LEARNING MOTIVATION

Ahmad Nur Syafiq
Mursid Saleh
Semarang State University

ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the effectiveness of humor as English foreign language teaching material to improve students' speaking skill with of high or low motivation for the students and the effect that the use of humor gives to their teaching. This study was quasi experimental research named two-way (two-by-two) factorial design. The subjects were 80 students of *STAIN* Kudus, 40 students in the experimental group and 40 students in the control group. Both groups were distributed the pre-test to measure students' speaking skill. For treatment, Shade's (1996) classification of verbal humor was used. The results revealed that humor as teaching material has significant effect on the students' speaking skill to those who have high and low learning motivation. The students expressed that humor in the classroom situation affected their learning positively to those who have high or low motivation rather than conventional material.

Key words: humor, speaking skill, learning motivation.

INTRODUCTION

It is of paramount importance for English teachers to find effective pedagogical techniques to help enhance students' speaking abilities, among other English skills they also need to develop. Furthermore, realizing that speaking is very important for English learners, it is essential for English teachers to encourage the students to speak. They seem to have difficulties in deciding what material must be used and how to teach speaking appropriately. Moreover, they must be able to find out the ways of how to make speaking easier and be the fun activities

for the students to learn. In this case, teachers have responsibilities to guide the students during the learning process and to give motivation to them to improve their English especially in speaking skill.

Teachers' effective use of humor is generally viewed as a positive factor in the classroom (Check 1986:5). It may even influence the effectiveness of college teacher power and compliance-gaining strategies. Wheelless, Stewart, Keamey, & Plax (1987) note that compliance is an enactment of power. Likewise, if college teachers exert humor in the classroom, they will be seen as more powerful by their

students. Possibly, college teachers could gain more compliance from students through the utilization of humor.

Another issue is that motivation is one of the most important factors that will influence students' English achievements or Performance. It has a close relationship with students' success or failure in English teaching in college. Therefore, Teachers must pay more attention to this aspect. As Gardner (1985: 2) emphasized that the motivation constructed the primary factor to influence students on English learning. He believed that motivation for language learning can not only include goal orientation but the combination of effort, desire to achieve the goal of learning the language and favorable attitudes toward learning the language.

The main focus of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of humor as EFL teaching material to improve students' speaking skill with high or low learning motivation at second semester students of *Tarbiya* Program of STAIN Kudus in the academic year 2011/2012 and the effect that the use of humor gives to their teaching. Further, the study attempts to find solutions and strategies to make teachers have a formed opinion of the use of humor in delivery of subject matter while teaching so as to be more effective.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Teaching Speaking Skills

According to Bygate (1987: 3), in order to achieve a communicative goal through

speaking, there are two aspects to be considered – knowledge of the language, and skill in using this knowledge. It is not enough to possess a certain amount of knowledge, but a speaker of the language should be able to use this knowledge in different situations. We do not merely *know* how to assemble sentences in the abstract: we have to produce them and adopt to the circumstances. This means making decisions rapidly, implementing them smoothly, and adjusting our conversation as unexpected problems appear in our path. (Bygate 1987:3).

Speaking skills comprise two components: production skills and interaction skills, both of which can be affected by two conditions: firstly, processing conditions, taking into consideration the fact that 'a speech takes place under the pressure of time'; secondly, reciprocity conditions connected with a mutual relationship between the interlocutors (Bygate 1987:7).

In production skills, the processing conditions (time pressure) in certain ways limit or modify the oral production; it means the use of production skills. For that reason, speakers are forced to use devices which help them make the oral production possible or easier through 'facilitation', or enable them to change words they use in order to avoid or replace the difficult ones by means of 'compensation' (Bygate, 1987:14). In interaction skills, both speakers and listeners, besides being good at processing spoken words should

be 'good communicators', which means 'good at saying what they want to say in a way which the listener finds understandable'. This means being able to possess interaction skills. Communication of meaning then depends on two kinds of skill: routines, and negotiation skills (Bygate, 1987:14).

For many years, English language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. However, today's world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students' communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance.

There are some explanations about what is teaching speaking, then, according to Nunan (2003: 94). Teaching speaking is to teach English language learners to: produce the English speech sounds and sounds patterns; (1) use words and sentence stress, intonation patterns and the rhythm of the second language; (2) select appropriate words and sentences according to the proper social setting, audience, situation and subject matter; (3) organize their thoughts in a meaningful and logical sequence; (4) use language as a means of expressing values and judgments; and (5) Use the language quickly and confidently with few unnatural pauses, which is called fluency.

According to Hughes (2002: 6), "the goal of teaching speaking is communicative efficiency". So, in learning speaking, students should be able to make themselves understood and they should try to avoid confusion in the message due to its pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary and to observe the social rule that apply in communication situation.

A classroom language test is designed to measure the students' ability in learning a second or foreign language and also ultimate success in that undertaking. Since this study is concerned with speaking skill, a performance in assessing the students as showed by Lazaraton in Celce-Murcia (2001:111). The oral skills teacher may be required to make decisions about two kinds of oral assessment. The first, evaluation of classroom performance ... A second assessment situation with which the oral skills teacher may be confronted is preparing students to take –interpreting results from-large scale oral examinations, successful performance on which has become increasingly common as a requirement for admission to universities, as a minimum standard for various types of employment. Thus, performance assessment is used to measure the student's speaking ability one by one. It consists of five aspects, including that are pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, content, and fluency.

Humor as Teaching Materials

Humor has been defined differently by different educational scholars. "Humor has

been defined by Steven Leacock as the kindly contemplation of the incongruities of life and the artistic expression there of "(Berk, 1998: 11). Garner (2005: 6) stated the following: Humor has also been described as a sense, as in the term, sense of humor. As with any sense, however—such as taste or smell—individuals may have differing levels of receptivity; similarly, humor can be highly personal, contextual, and subjective (Stuart and Rosenfeld, 1994).

Regarding the humor in pedagogy, Kher, Molstad & Donahue (1999) stated that humor is often identified as a teaching technique for developing a positive learning environment. When an instructor establishes a supportive social climate, students are more likely to be receptive to learning. Humor is a catalyst for classroom magic, when all the educational elements converge and teacher and student are both positive and excited about learning. Instructors can foster classroom "magic" through improved communication with students by possessing a playful attitude and a willingness to use appropriate. McGhee (1979) refers to humor as a mood or state of mind. Humor is part of our life and should be part of our classrooms as well.

Beside its definition, humor in the classroom can take many forms. In a classic study of humor in the college classroom, Bryant, Comisky, & Zillmann (1979: 3) and Bryant, Crane, Comisky, & Zillmann (1980) classified humor in

lectures as jokes, riddles, puns, funny stories, humorous comments and other humorous items. Professors have discovered other creative ways to incorporate humor in class such as cartoons, top ten lists, comic verse, and phony or bogus experiments. In 1996, Shade provided a more clear classification for humor in classroom. Based on his classification, humor is classified into four major categories:

- Figural humor that includes comic strips, cartoons and caricatures. This form of humor appears in a variety of media and involves the use of drawing to deliver the humor.
- Verbal humor that consists of jokes, puns, riddles, satire, parody, irony, wit, limerick and anecdote. This form involves the use of language and often depends on the use of incongruity as demonstrated through contradiction, understatement and exaggeration.
- Visual humor that includes sight gags, practical jokes, clowning, impersonation impressions, etc. this category depends on visual cues for the humor to be effective.
- Auditory humor that includes impersonations, impressions, noises and sounds.

Humor has been seen as enhancement to classroom teaching and learning. Krashen's (1982) affective filter hypothesis addresses the importance of maintaining a low affective filter in language classroom so that learners will be

more receptive to the input to which they are being exposed. This, it would seem, is an especially relevant and supportive indicator for the potential affects that humor can create in the language classroom. Deneire (1995) also pointed out the well-documented tension-reducing capacity of humor as an especially beneficial effect for the language classroom. Clearly, the foreign/second language classroom presents uniquely high levels of tension/anxiety for the student. Not only must the learner attempt to communicate in a new and unfamiliar language, but also do so among and in front of his/her peer.

Chiasson (2002: 7) also stated that humor can contribute a great deal to the second language classroom. It enables the teacher not only to create an affective or positive environment, but is a source of enjoyment for students and teachers. Language is seen in authentic and real life situations. Humorous situations allow students to express themselves without fear of ridicule and criticism. Anxiety and stress is reduced and students are encouraged to take more risks in using their second language (Chee, 2006; Neulip, 1991).

Motivation in Language Teaching

Motivation is the attribute that “moves” us to do or not do something (Gredler, 2001). According to Harter (1981: 10), a child has an intrinsic orientation when classroom learning is determined by internal interests

such as mastery, curiosity, and preference for challenge. A child has an extrinsic orientation when classroom learning is determined by external interests such as teacher approval and/or grades (Harter, 1981). For this study, children’s motivation was measured by their responses to the Children’s Self Report Scale of Intrinsic versus Extrinsic Motivation in the Classroom (Harter, 1980, 1981).

Interest can be conceptualized at two different levels of analysis. On a first level, interest refers to an individual’s habitual predisposition or relatively stable tendency, in which case it is usually termed *individual interest*. On a second level, *situational interest* refers to “current engagements,” and “describes a state or an ongoing process during an actual learning activity (Krapp & Lewalter, 2001: 212). Situational interest is a psychological (i.e., affective-cognitive) state “that has been triggered by exposure to specific objects or experiences and refers to the heightened attention or concentration that is directed to the object or the experience” (Ainley & Hidi, 2002: 44).

It is presumed that new individual interests develop in three stages (Krapp & Lewalter, 2001). First, a situational interest is aroused by external stimuli for the first time; then, if this situational interest lasts during a given learning phase, the initial attraction may develop into a more stable motivational state; finally, this more stable interest may develop into a relatively enduring individual interest. This suggests

that if educators knew how to generate (catch) but even more importantly, how to sustain (hold) situational interest, it might help their students to develop over time an individual interest in their courses. This would relieve them of the impossible task of trying to fit the course contents and activities to every student's personal interests (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). A number of factors have been identified as potentially effective in promoting situational interest. For instance, it was found that group work, puzzles, and the use of computers caught students' interest initially; however, it failed to maintain it (Mitchell, 1993). This suggests that using the "bells and whistles" approach to stimulate students does not serve the long-term development of interest (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

METHODS

This study employed an experimental with a factorial design. According to Shuttle Worth (2009), a factorial design is often used by the scientist wishing to understand the effect of two or more independent variables upon single dependent variable. The subject of the study was the second semester students of *Tarbiya* Program of *STAIN* Kudus. The population was 242 students and the sample of 80 students was selected randomly and distributed equally to one experimental group and one control group with 40 students respectively.

The data were collected by delivering questionnaires on learning motivation to all

participants, classifying the participants who have high and low motivation, choosing groups who have high and low motivation as control group, choosing groups who have high and low motivation as experimental group, doing pre-test of both control and experimental group, treatment by using both humor as teaching material and conventional material, doing post-test of both control and experimental group, and inputting the data into the one-way ANOVA with *F*-test at the 5% level of significant.

The data from pre-test and post-test were analyzed and tested using ANOVA Test to answer the question whether there was significant difference of students' score in speaking ability between the students who are taught using humor and those who are taught using a conventional technique. To test the hypotheses, Two-way analysis of variance with *F*-test at the 5% (0.05) level of significance will be used. Two-way ANOVA requires two basic things including normal distribution score for each cell and homogeneity of the score variation (Irianto, 1989). The purpose is to address the question whether there is any effect of the use of humor on the development of student speaking skill to those who have high and low learning motivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Data of pre-test showed the achievement of test of experiment and control group before the treatment. The lowest score

from the overall experimental group was 40 and the highest score was 80. In the way that the lowest score to those who have high learning motivation of Experimental group was 55 and the highest score was 80. To have more detail, it could be seen in the following diagram and the lowest score to those who have low learning motivation of Experimental group was 40 and the highest score was 80. Meanwhile, the lowest score from the overall control group was 30 and the highest score was 80 in the way that the lowest score to those who have high learning motivation of control group was 45 and the highest score was 80. To have more detail, it could be seen in the following diagram and the lowest score to those who have low learning motivation of control group was 40 and the highest score was 80.

The result of improving students' speaking competence by humor material with high motivation of students was very high. It was seen by score between 70 up to 95 with the average of speaking competence result was 81 and standard deviation was 7.36. The highest score was 95 and the lowest score was 70 with score range 15 from N = 20. Later on, the result of improving students' speaking competence by humor material with low motivation was quite high. It was seen by score between 45 up to 85 with the average of speaking competence result was 69 and standard deviation was 6.97. The highest score was 85 and the lowest

score was 45 with score range 40 from N = 20.

The result of improving students' speaking competence by using life-experience story with high motivation of students was high. It was seen by score between 60 up to 90 with the average of speaking competence result was 72.75 and standard deviation was 7.75. The highest score was 90 and the lowest score was 60 with score range 30 from N = 20. The result of students' speaking competence test with high motivation using humor material could be described in the following histogram. Moreover, the result of improving students' speaking competence by using life-experience story with low motivation was low. It was seen by score between 50 up to 80 with the average of speaking competence result was 66.5 and standard deviation was 8.28. The highest score was 80 and the lowest score was 50 with score range 30 from N = 20. The result of students' speaking competence test with low motivation using humor material could be described in the following histogram.

Discussion

Generally speaking, the achievement results illustrated that more students were in favor of humor as teaching material in the EFL classroom in improving their speaking skill than conventional method. Most of students pointed out that humor helps them in progressing their speaking skill thus it indicated that jokes help them

pay more attention during class time and increases their level of concentration and anxiety. In comparison, only a few students believed jokes do not have an effect on increasing speaking skill in the classroom. He or she claimed that humor does not help in learning English as second language, and only sometimes boost their attention. Moreover, supporting previous research (Fisher 1997; Cornett 1986), the results of this study show that humor can be beneficial in the EFL second language classroom. Humor promotes the feeling of understanding and helps to hold the attention of EFL students, regardless of the cultural learning situation.

Humor as teaching material is effective to improve the student speaking skill than the conventional material because all students found humor to be contributing to positive atmosphere in the classroom in the way that student who got the highest score was (90) and lowest score (50) with mean (69.62) and standard deviation 8.87. This indicated number of students favored having humor as part of their English speaking classroom and quite a high proportion of all students felt that humor even encourages them to improve their performance of speaking using English.

Furthermore, high learning motivation has significant effect on the development of student's speaking skill. This was proven by the result of achievement of both experimental and control group who have high learning motivation got higher score than low learning motivation however, their

motivation does not play totally in their speaking class achievement. It means that the students who high motivation will not always get good score in their presentation. Thus, the grades obtained by the students are more likely related to their background knowledge and aptitude rather than only their motivation.

On the other hand, their high motivation generally helps them pass or even get good grades in their English speaking skill. These students do not experience regulative motivation. They are slightly more instrumentally motivated than interactively motivated. Since this study covers English major students only, it might be worthwhile to undertake similar study using other college students as well as students from other universities in Indonesia.

And last, humor as teaching material has significant improvement of the student's speaking skill to those who have high and low learning motivation. It was proven by different range of pre and post test of both experimental and control. Some students reported that humor in the classroom situation affected their learning positively to those who have high low motivation rather than conventional material. College students of STAIN Kudus expressed specific opinions about humor and the teaching atmosphere. Comparing to conventional material some students reported that humor reduces barriers between them and their teachers. Also, they felt that humor reduced their "fear" in

speaking performance, and other said that humor makes the learning environment more enjoyable. Clearly, students feel the need for the humor factor as part of their English learning process to improve their speaking skill.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the result of improving students' speaking competence by humor material with high learning motivation of student was very high. It means that humor together with learning motivation supported the students to get better achievement in speaking skill. Meanwhile, the result of improving students' speaking competence by humor material with low learning motivation was quite high. It meant that humor was quite good to be a material for students with low motivation rather than conventional one. Additionally, the result of improving students' speaking competence by using life-experience story with high learning motivation of the students was high. Humor as teaching material is more effective to improve the student speaking skill than the conventional material because all students found humor to be contributing to positive atmosphere in the classroom. It means that number of students favored having humor as part of their English speaking classroom and quite a high proportion of all students felt that humor even encourages them to improve their performance of speaking using English.

Humor as teaching material has significant improvement of the student's speaking skill to those who have high and low learning motivation in the way that some college students of STAIN Kudus expressed that humor in the classroom situation affected their learning positively to those who have high low motivation rather than conventional material. Comparing to conventional material some students reported that humor reduces barriers between them and their teachers. Also, they felt that humor reduced their "fear" in speaking performance, and other said that humor makes the learning environment more enjoyable.

Suggestion

The role of pedagogical humor in the classroom is truly multifaceted and thus requires examination and analysis from a variety of perspectives. A great deal of research has been conducted in the area of general pedagogical effects of humor on affective variables in the EFL classroom. Despite some uncertainty concerning the degree to which humor benefits the classroom, the vast majority of literature and experimental evidence in this area has generally acknowledged significant benefits to the pedagogical employment of humor. Further study may also be conducted to determine whether teachers' use of humor appears to reduce student anxiety and stress in the classroom to improve students' speaking skill, retention, and student-teacher relationships. Since a small number of subjects were involved in

this study, the results may not necessarily be extended to make a prediction about the entire population.

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