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Research Article

Teaching English Grammar and Maintaining Students' Learning Motivation through Humour Stories

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KEYWORDS

English grammar;
Students' motivation;
Humour stories.

ABSTRACT

English structure is one of the principal elements considered problematic by many students. Therefore, every teacher is always encouraged to use the effective teaching ways. One of the proposed ways in teaching English grammar is using media like humour stories. As suggested teaching media, humour stories require an examination. Therefore, this research attempts at finding out the effectiveness of humour stories to teach grammar and maintaining students' learning motivation. The method employed was quasi-experimental research. The instruments used were a test, questionnaire, and field note. The participants of this study were two classes of English Language Teaching Department. The students learnt some grammar topics such as past simple, present perfect, passive voice of past tense, passive voice of present perfect, passive voice of present simple, passive voice of present continuous, passive voice of present future, relative clause, and noun clause. The results reveal that humour is an effective teaching media for grammar. The significance of 2-tailed (0.035) was lower than 0.05. There is a significant difference between control and experimental group. Furthermore, the result of the questionnaire shows that the usage of humour positively influenced the learners' motivation. The observation results also reveal that the teaching atmosphere in the experimental class is getting better in each meeting.

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INTRODUCTION

The prominence of English as one of the international languages is undeniable. Andika and Mitsalina (2020) mentioned that English is one of the crucial international languages employed to connect people in various fields includes education. English is taught as a compulsory subject for students at junior and senior high school levels in Indonesia. English also becomes an extracurricular activity in primary school. This policy manifests the importance of English.

Even though English is a compulsory subject, English is a foreign language. It means that English is only taught at a

formal educational institution. The condition, probably, leads to many obstacles in the teaching and learning process. According to Aniuranti (2021a), since English was formally only studied at schools, English students in Indonesian mostly do not have enough exposure to English. One of the English elements regarded as a problematic component is grammar. Most students feel that structure is the most demanding subject to handle (Aniuranti, 2021b; Bahruddin, 2015). Iskandar and Heriyawati (2015) even mentioned that apprehending and mastering English structure is troublesome for learners since they have to understand three different language elements called form, meaning, and usage. Effendi et al.

(2017) added that plenty of pupils who have learned for a long period of time in higher education level still encounter obstacles in constructing acceptable and good sentences. Al-mekhlafi and Nagaratnam (2011) even argued that structure often leads to uncomfortable moments and even create terror for the students. Yusnitasari and Suwartono (2020) mentioned that in terms of structure errors frequently occur. Grammar, in short, is still regarded as a demanding English component due to several factors such as forms, usage, and meaning, and mastering it requires plenty of effort.

Even though English structure is often considered difficult, the essentialness of grammar is unquestionable. Structure generally plays an essential role in English (Ameliani, 2019; Aniuranti & Rizkina, 2019; Effendi et al., 2017; Handayani & Johan, 2018; Lien & Thi Minh Thu Tran, 2017; Nawira et al., 2019; Yuliyanto & Fitriyati, 2019). Understanding English grammar plays a prominent role in the spoken and written communication process (A'yun, 2019; Amin, 2015; Harmer, 2003; Utomo & Ahsanah, 2020). Suwartono and Priyanti (2006) argued that improper use of structure influences the flows of ideas. Wang (2010) noted that in teaching and learning process, structure is always crucial. Simply put, every language learner must have a sufficient notion of grammar as it is a crucial element in the communication and teaching-learning process itself.

Based on the situation above, every English teacher is always encouraged to create effective teaching and learning process. One of the proposed media to create effective process in English grammar class is humour stories. Humour or joke is inseparable in human life, and they can be employed as teaching media. Akbari (2020) argued that humour stories facilitate the students to learn vocabulary, syntax, and semantics of the target language. Fadel and Al-Bargi (2018) argued that humour stories can enhance the students' awareness in linguistics. Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2017) even mentioned four different merits of humour called physiological, psychological, social, and educational benefits.

Besides possessing several advantages as teaching media of grammar components, humour can be used to maintain another significant aspect during the teaching and learning process called students' motivation. Krashen in Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2017) mentioned that humour can help boost self-confidence and motivation and connect the gap between teachers and students in a fearsome subject like English. By employing humour, the students might comprehend and remember the materials in longer period of time.

Some studies about the use of humour stories in the EFL context have been conducted. The first was carried out by

Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2017). Their research is concerned with the perception of teachers and students about the usage of humour in teaching English. The next study was done by Fadel and Al-Bargi (2018). They carried out research aimed to explore student perceptions of the usage of verbal humour in teaching English. There is also a study conducted by Akbari (2020). His research aimed to explore the student voice on the usage of humour in EFL classrooms. This research is different from the earlier studies since previous studies commonly focus on the student perception of the usage of verbal or written humour for teaching English in general, meanwhile, the focus of this study is more specific on grammar. This research is also purposed to examine the effectiveness of humour stories through an experimental study.

Overall, the objectives of this research were to explore the effect of humour stories to teach grammar and to maintain the students' motivation. This research might be significant for the other researchers or teachers who are willing to do action research. In addition, this study is beneficial to enrich the literature studied about humour in the EFL context.

METHOD

This study was a quasi-experimental research. The participants were two classes of 2020 Batch of the English Language Teaching Department, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Purwokerto. Class A was the experimental, and Class B became the control group. The experimental class learned English through humour stories, and the control group learned through conventional ways of teaching. Conventional way means English grammar was taught by giving the formulas or patterns to the students, then the students did the exercises. In short, the students did not learn from a certain context.

In total, there were 14 meetings for each group. The first was used to conduct the pre-test, and the last meeting was used to carry out the post-test. The treatment was given in the second to the thirteenth meeting. The topics taught were past simple, present perfect, passive voice of past tense, passive voice of present perfect, passive voice of present simple, passive voice of present continuous, passive voice of present future, relative clause, and noun clause. During the meetings, observations were carried out to see the teaching and learning process.

The instruments employed in this study were a test, questionnaire, and field notes. The test was used to measure students' grammar mastery before and after the implementation of the treatment, humour stories. The test consisted of 45 questions in form of multiple-choice, and the instrument was adapted by the researchers from

several printed grammar books written by Azar (2000) and Murphy (2004). Furthermore, the team also employed a questionnaire to measure students' learning motivation. The questionnaire used was a closed questionnaire adapted from Hapsara (2016). The result from the questionnaire was supported by the result from the observation process. In conducting the observation process, the observers equipped themselves with field notes.

After collecting the data, the data from the test were analysed using the SPSS application to find the effectiveness of humour stories. Moreover, the results from the questionnaire were analysed by calculating the percentage of students' voices for each item, meanwhile, the results from the observation were analysed using the theory from Miles and Huberman (1994). They state that in qualitative research the data analysis is commonly conducted in some phases called gathering, reducing, and presenting the data, and verifying the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study was a quasi-experimental employed pre-test post-test group design. The main purposes were examining the effectiveness of humour to teach grammar and maintain students' learning motivation. The sources of the data were test, closed questionnaire, and field notes. In experimental group, the treatments were given for 12 meetings, meanwhile the control group did not receive any treatment. The teaching and learning processes were conducted in conventional way. In the last meeting the students took a post-test and filled in a closed-questionnaire.

The humour or jokes used in this study were mainly taken from Woolard (1999). Here are the examples:

Joke for Teaching Past Simple

John : Mum, Aunt Sarah kissed me.
John's Mother : Did you kiss her back?
John : Of course not, I kissed her face.

Joke for Teaching Present Perfect

A patient : Doctor, I'm very nervous. This is the first time I've ever needed an operation.
A doctor : Don't worry, I feel the same. This is the first operation I've ever performed.

Joke for Teaching Passive Voice of Present Continuous

A waiter : We are famous for snails in this restaurant, sir.
A customer : I know! I'm being served by one now.

Joke for Teaching Relative Clause

A man walked into a police station and said:
The man : I've come about the job that advertised outside.
The police : What job?
The man : The one on the poster outside that says: MAN WANTED FOR THE BURGLARY.

Joke for Teaching Noun Clause

The man : You are the manager of this rock group, aren't you?
The manager : That's right. What can I do for you?
The man : Does the band take requests?
The manager : Yes, I'm sure that they'll be able to play anything you ask for.
The man : Wonderful! Could you please ask them to play cards, and stop making that horrible noise!

In the first example, the students asked to read and enjoy the joke. Then, they had to find out the past simple components used. From the joke, the students learnt about the regular past simple like *kissed* and the use of *did*. In the second example, the students studied about present perfect. They learned that they should use *has/have* followed by *past participle* like *have ever needed* or *have ever performed*. They also study about the usage of adverb of time like *ever*.

In the third joke, the students studied about passive voice of present continuous. They learnt that in passive form, they must use *being* and *past participle*, and they also learnt the adverb of time like *now*. Furthermore, in the fourth joke, the students studied about relative clause. They learnt about one of the relative pronoun *that* and the basic function of relative clause to *modify or describe a noun*. In the last example, the students studied about noun clause. In the example, they studied about subordinator like *that* and the basic function of noun clause as a group of words acting together as a noun.

After collecting the data, the data from the test were analysed using SPSS application. Here is the result from the test.

From the data displayed in the table 1, we can see that the homogeneity is proven since the significance (0.749) is higher than 0.05. In addition, the significance (2-tailed) is lower than 0.05. It means that there is significant difference between control and experimental group. The value of t is -2.205 since there is difference between the mean of control and experimental group. When the value of t is compared to the t critic, the result reveal that the

value of t is greater from t critic. Simply put, humour stories are effective to teach English grammar.

Table 1. Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	0.015	0.749	-2.205	31	.035
Equal variances not assumed			-2.201	29.724	.035

The next data were obtained from the questionnaire. This data were used to see the influence of humour to learning motivation. Generally, the closed-questionnaire can be divided into three categories. They are students' perception about grammar in general, students' voice about the influence of jokes for teaching and learning process, and students' opinion about the effect of jokes for their learning motivation. The scale consists of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), neutral (N), disagree (D), and strongly disagree (SD). The results are displayed in the following tables.

Table 2. Students' Perception of Grammar

No	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Grammar is crucial to learn	62.1%	34.5%	3.4%	0%	0%
2	Grammar is important in spoken and written communication	31%	62.1%	6.9%	0%	0%

From the table above, we can see that 62.1% of the students strongly agree that grammar is important to learn, and 34.5% of the student agreed about it. Then, most of the student (62.1%) agree, and 31% of the students even strongly agree about the essentialness of grammar in communication. In short, most of the students think that grammar is significant to study and it has essential roles in communication process both spoken and written communication.

From table 3, we can see that most of the students (72.4%) agreed that the teaching and learning process applying humour stories was fun. Some of the student (13.8%) even strongly agreed that the teaching and learning process of grammar was fun. Most of the students (75.8%) also agreed that the teaching and learning process was interesting, and 55.2% of the students also felt that the teaching and learning process become more effective. Overall, most of the students have

positive responses about the teaching and learning using humour stories.

Table 3. Students' Voice of Teaching and Learning Process

No	Item	SA	A	N	D	SD
3	The teaching and learning process of English grammar is fun	13.8%	72.4%	13.8%	0%	0%
4	The teaching and learning process of grammar is interesting	10.3%	75.9%	13.8%	0%	0%
5	I feel that the teaching and learning process become more effective	13.8%	55.2%	24.1%	6.9%	0%

Based on Table 4 above, we can generally conclude that humour stories influence students' motivation positively. Most of the students feel the power of humour stories. 55.2 % of the students agreed that humour stories affect their learning motivation, and 3.4 % of the students even strongly agreed. Besides, most of students also agree that learning English grammar through humour is more relevant and the stories used are also relevant to the materials taught. Besides, learning grammar through humour is comfortable and not boring. The usage of English grammar also effect positively in helping the students to be more focus, remember the material, do the exercise well, ask questions, and remember the material in longer period of time. Humour stories, in short, are possible to be applied in teaching and learning process since it may influence students' learning motivation in a positive way.

Table 4. The Effect of Jokes for Students' Motivation

No	Item	SA	S	N	D	SD
6	My learning motivation arises after I learn English	3.4%	55.2%	41.4%	0%	0%

	grammar through humour stories					
7	I become more focus after learning English grammar through humour stories	3.4%	37.9%	58.6%	0%	0%
8	I can understand the materials well through humour stories	3.4%	55.2%	41.4%	0%	0%
9	I think learning English grammar through humour is more relevant	6.9%	55.2%	34.5%	3.4%	0%
10	I feel more comfortable to learn English grammar through humour stories	13.8%	41.4%	34.5%	10.3%	0%
11	I do every exercise optimally	24.1%	51.7%	24.1%	0%	0%
12	I become braver to ask questions when I have difficulties	10.4%	44.8%	44.8%	0%	0%
13	Humour stories help me to remember the material in longer period of time	10.3%	58.6%	24.1%	6.9%	0%
14	I am not bored because the usage of	31%	48.3%	20.7%	0%	0%

	humour stories					
15	Humour stories used are relevant with the materials	24.1%	58.6%	17.2%	0%	0%

Besides the use of questionnaire, the researchers also employed observation process to see the effect of jokes for pupils' learning motivation. The observers used field notes to write the teaching and learning process in experimental group. The conclusion is the teaching and learning process is getting better in each meeting. In the first to the second meeting, the students were still confused in understanding the jokes used. They seemed to focus on the material rather than enjoy the jokes. But, in the next meetings, the students seemed more relax and enjoy the jokes since most of them laughed when the teacher discuss about the jokes. Interesting finding occurred when the students seemed so brave in asking and answering questions during the discussion session.

Humour has been proven statistically as effective media to help the learners comprehending grammar elements. This emerges due to the benefits of humour stories. Humour might be the authentic source containing the elements in structure. It can be employed to introduce syntax or grammar. Humour also causes the sensitivity of grammar differences. With the sensitivity of structure difference, humour stories assist the students to achieve language proficiency.

This finding is in line with several earlier theories. Al-Duleimi and Aziz (2017) stated that humour in EFL classroom that can be so varied leads to higher language proficiency and to a better control of the pedagogical settings. Fadel and Al-Bargi (2018) also argued that the use of humour triggers the students' sensitivity of grammatical and semantic differences between languages. Furthermore, Akbari (2020) explained that humour naturally paves the way for the pupil to learn vocabulary, syntax, and semantics in the target language.

Besides the power in helping the students in mastering English grammar, humour can also maintain students' learning motivation. The results from questionnaire and observation are supported by some earlier studies. AL-Duleimi and Aziz (2017) argued humour in educational process might help to lessen tension, stress, anxiety, and boredom. By creating such comfortable atmosphere, the students may encourage to learn the material more. Moreover, Akbari (2020) mentioned that the reason to use humorous texts is to enhance language learning and to increase student participation in classroom activities. One

of the indicators of students' motivation is participating actively in the teaching and learning process. Thus, humour stories are possible to be employed in maintaining students' motivation of learning.

Overall, humour stories as the authentic materials in EFL context is effective teaching media. They contain many structural elements. Additionally, humour stories cause laughter and comfortable situation motivating the students to learn and to engage to the teaching and learning process. The motivation may encourage the students to learn more and to achieve the learning objectives in grammar class.

CONCLUSION

Every teacher is always fostered to use effective teaching ways in their classes includes grammar class. They may use teaching approach, method, technique, or media. One of the suggested media in teaching English grammar is humour stories. After conducting a quasi-experimental study, the result reveals that humour is an effective teaching medium of grammar elements such as past simple, present perfect, passive voice of past tense, passive voice of present perfect, passive voice of present simple, passive voice of present continuous, passive voice of present future, relative clause, and noun clause. The significance of 2-tailed (0.035) was lower than 0.05. Furthermore, the result of the questionnaire shows that the usage of humour positively maintain the learners' motivation. The observation result also reveals that the teaching atmosphere in the experimental class was getting better in each meeting.

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