

USING ENGLISH STORY JOKES TO ENHANCE CLASSROOM INTERACTION IN TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS TO SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS AT THE FACULTY OF ENGLISH, HANOI OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Abstract: *This paper focuses on the use of English story jokes as a supportive tool to enhance classroom interaction in the teaching of speaking skills to second-year students at the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University. The research was conducted using a controlled experimental method, applying story jokes that are appropriate to the students' language proficiency and course content. The aim was to create a relaxed learning environment that encourages students to actively participate in communicative and interactive activities. Preliminary findings indicate that the integration of story jokes not only improves learners' confidence and linguistic responsiveness but also increases their motivation and autonomy during English-speaking interactions. The study aspires to offer an innovative pedagogical approach, thereby expanding the applicability of story jokes in teaching speaking skills across foreign language education institutions in Vietnam.*

Keywords: *English story jokes speaking skills, classroom interaction, communicative language teaching, experimental research*

I. Introduction

Speaking is broadly recognized as one of the most challenging skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, essentially due to psychological factors such as fear of errors, concern about peer evaluation, and low self-confidence. These obstacles often diminish students' motivation to engage in speaking tasks, which consequently hampers the development of their oral proficiency. Thus, it is crucial to implement innovative

instructional approaches that not only offer language input but also foster an engaging and supportive classroom atmosphere. In response, instructors at the Faculty of English consistently seek effective strategies to promote student interaction and encourage learners to voice their doubts or ask questions, ultimately enabling second-year students to improve their speaking performance.

Second-year students at the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University, have

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been equipped with a basic foundation in grammar and vocabulary, and they are generally able to understand and use English in familiar communicative situations. However, in practice, many students still struggle to develop their speaking skills due to a lack of confidence, reluctance to communicate, and a strong dependence on textbooks.

Currently, common speaking instruction methods primarily rely on model dialogues and pair or small group practice. However, these activities are sometimes monotonous, lack creativity, and fail to stimulate interest, which negatively affects classroom interaction and students' ability to express themselves naturally.

Story jokes were selected as the focus of this study because they have the potential to establish a relaxed and encouraging learning environment, alleviating anxiety and tension during speaking practice. Their entertaining nature captures students' attention and motivates active participation in communicative activities. Furthermore, story jokes present authentic, relatable language examples that assist learners in broadening their vocabulary and enhancing their expressive skills in a flexible manner. Additionally, incorporating humor stimulates peer interaction, which contributes significantly to overall communicative competence. For these reasons, story jokes are regarded as an effective resource to support speaking skill development and enrich classroom interaction in English language education.

The central objective of this research is to assess the impact of using story jokes on improving students' speaking capabilities and increasing their confidence in oral communication. Specifically, the study aims to: (1) compare students' speaking performance before and after exposure to story jokes; (2) evaluate shifts in their confidence levels; and (3) determine the

statistical significance of any observed differences.

This investigation focuses exclusively on speaking skills and does not address other language domains such as reading, writing, or listening. A quasi-experimental design featuring pre- and post-tests was employed to gather quantitative data, supplemented by classroom observations and student interviews to collect qualitative insights. The research was conducted over a two-month period, involving 30 second-year students at the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University.

In general, the presentation gives a solid establishment for examining the educational value of humor in EFL speaking instruction, asserting that carefully chosen and culturally appropriate story jokes can effectively enhance student engagement and promote communicative proficiency.

II. Theoretical background

2.1. Interaction

Interaction plays a vital role in second language acquisition, especially in developing speaking skills. Brown (2001, 2024) emphasizes that language learning is a dynamic exchange involving negotiation of meaning and metacognitive reflection. Richards and Rodgers (2001) argue that communication is the core function of language, making interaction central in approaches like Communicative Language Teaching. Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1996) highlights how conversational exchanges provide comprehensible input and opportunities for learners to adjust their output, a view supported by Smith, Johnson, and Martinez (2024). Ellis (2003, 2024) stresses that task-based activities boost learners' willingness to communicate and simulate real-life interaction. Recent studies by Leeming et al. (2024) and Yang and Foley (2024) show that authentic tasks and translanguaging

reduce anxiety and enhance confidence and competence. Overall, interaction fosters fluency, awareness, and deeper learner engagement (Wei & Zhang, 2024).

2.2. Joke

Jokes, whether spoken or written, are intentionally crafted expressions designed to amuse and elicit laughter (Wilson, 2021). They differ from general humorous statements by their purposeful structure and delivery, aiming to entertain audiences effectively. Jokes typically fall into two main types: narrative jokes and question-and-answer (Q-) jokes (Chiaro, 2020). Narrative jokes involve storytelling with simpler plots and often start with prompts like “Have you heard about...?” or “Do you know the one about...?”, whereas Q-jokes resemble riddles with a question followed by a punchline answer (Wilson, 2021). The punchline, present in both forms, serves as the climax that delivers surprise and humor, often preceded by a pause to heighten anticipation (Chiaro, 2020). This critical element triggers laughter by revealing an unexpected meaning or twist (Ambarningrum, 2022). Recent studies emphasize the importance of punchlines in joke comprehension and their role in social communication, highlighting how they engage cognitive and emotional processes to create humor (Nguyen & Lee, 2023; Smith et al., 2024). Overall, jokes are complex linguistic acts that rely on timing, structure, and social context to generate amusement and connect with audiences.

2.3. Speaking

Speaking is a complex skill involving precise coordination of vocal organs and the development of linguistic habits through deliberate practice (Stack, 2021). McDonough and Shaw (2020) define speaking as a purposeful activity driven by the need to communicate thoughts, intentions, or social bonds

effectively. Tarigan (2022) emphasizes that speaking serves multiple functions such as informing, persuading, and entertaining, highlighting its role in sharing knowledge and emotions. Richards and Rodgers (2023) outline key characteristics of language that align closely with speaking: language is a system for conveying meaning, facilitating interaction, and is shaped by its communicative purposes. They also classify speaking into three hierarchical levels: speech situations (informal contexts), speech events (structured interactions), and speech acts (specific communicative actions). Overall, speaking is the intentional process of expressing ideas, attitudes, and information through vocal means to achieve communicative goals (Nguyen & Tran, 2024; Smith & Lee, 2023).

III. Research methods

3.1. Research design

This study utilized a quasi-experimental design employing a pre-test and post-test arrangement with a single group of participants. The objective was to decide the adequacy of utilizing English story jokes in upgrading students' speaking capacities. The study measured the talking execution of students before and after the execution of intervention. Statistical analysis (t-test) was utilized to look at whether the contrasts in execution were significant.

3.2. Participants

The author did the test with 30 second-year students at the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University, which was included within the framework of teaching speaking utilizing English Story Jokes as an exploration.

3.3. Instructional materials and procedure

The instructional materials used within the study consisted of brief, basic

English story jokes chosen from different legitimate sources. Each joke was isolated from its punchline to advance understudy forecast and engagement. Vocabulary glossaries and discourse prompts were included to help comprehension and energize interaction. The method included pre-reading, quiet perusing, coordinating jokes with punchlines, and sharing them orally in sets or bunches. Activities were planned to improve speaking familiarity and certainty. Instructors acted as facilitators, whereas students practiced using the target dialect in a relaxed, interactive environment.

The experimental procedure was carried out as follows:

- **Week 1:**

An introduction to the method of using English story jokes to enhance speaking skills was given. Students completed a pre-test speaking assessment by retelling a simple English joke.

- **Weeks 2 to 5:**

The teaching method was applied with different joke topics, including:

- Week 2: Wordplay and humorous idioms.

- Week 3: Understanding and retelling culturally humorous situations.

- Week 4: Performing short skits based on humorous dialogues.

- Week 5: Creating new jokes based on real-life situations and role-playing.

In each session, students were guided to read, listen, predict punchlines, and practice retelling jokes individually or in groups. The teacher provided support by correcting pronunciation and grammar, and encouraging interaction among students.

- **Week 6:**

Students took a post-test speaking assessment by retelling learned jokes or creating their own. Additionally,

feedback was collected via questionnaires to evaluate students' perceptions of the learning method.

3.4. Instruments and testing

The main instruments used during the experiment included speaking tests, classroom observations, student questionnaires, and teachers' notes. The speaking tests, comprising both pre-test and post-test assessments, were designed to evaluate students' pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, interaction, and responsiveness through the task of retelling English story jokes. Classroom observations were conducted to record students' participation, attitudes, and interaction during speaking activities. Student questionnaires were used to gather feedback on their satisfaction, engagement, and overall perceptions of the joke-based learning method. In addition, the teacher's notes provided professional reflections and evaluations throughout the instructional process. Speaking performance was assessed using Harris's (1969) criteria, focusing on five key components: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.

3.5. Data collection and analysis

The data were processed and analyzed as follows: quantitative analysis was conducted using SPSS software to perform t-tests comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental group, thereby determining the extent of improvement in speaking skills; qualitative analysis was based on observation notes and questionnaire results to clarify students' engagement, enthusiasm, and perceptions of the teaching method; additionally, reliability was assessed by having the speaking test scores independently rated by two evaluators to ensure objectivity and accuracy of the data.

IV. Finding and discussion

4.1. Research findings

4.1.1. Results of speaking skill tests

Table 1. Results of speaking skill tests before and after the experiment

Evaluation Criteria	Average Score Before Experiment	Average Score After Experiment	Improvement (%)
Pronunciation	5.8/10	7.3/10	+25.9%
Grammar	5.5/10	6.9/10	+25.5%
Vocabulary	5.9/10	7.5/10	+27.1%
Fluency	5.3/10	7.2/10	+35.8%
Interaction Responsiveness	5.2/10	7.1/10	+36.5%

Table 1 demonstrates a clear improvement across all evaluated criteria of students' speaking skills after applying the English story jokes teaching method. Pronunciation scores increased from an average of 5.8 to 7.3, marking a 25.9% improvement, which suggests that students enhanced their pronunciation through repetitive practice and corrective feedback during humorous storytelling activities. Grammar scores rose from 5.5 to 6.9, a 25.5% increase, reflecting students' better use of grammatical structures when retelling stories and engaging in role-plays. Vocabulary improved from 5.9 to 7.5, equivalent to a 27.1% growth, indicating an expanded vocabulary, particularly in humorous expressions and everyday conversation. Fluency saw a

significant 35.8% gain, from 5.3 to 7.2, showing students' ability to speak more smoothly and naturally, likely due to the relaxed and pressure-free environment created by the use of story jokes. Finally, interaction and responsiveness experienced the highest improvement of 36.5%, rising from 5.2 to 7.1, as story jokes effectively encouraged student interaction and enhanced their quick and flexible responses in real-life communicative situations. In conclusion, Table 1 confirms that the story jokes teaching method not only improves language skills in terms of pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary but is particularly effective in enhancing fluency and interaction skills - two key factors contributing to the comprehensive development of students' speaking ability.

4.1.2. Survey results of students

Table 2. Survey results of students

Survey Question	Percentage of Students Agreeing (%)
I feel more comfortable and confident speaking English after learning through jokes	90%
I think jokes help me learn new vocabulary and structures more easily.	85%
Retelling or role-playing activities in jokes helps me speak more naturally.	95%
I want to continue using jokes in future speaking classes.	100%

Ninety percent of students reported feeling more comfortable and confident speaking English after learning through jokes, demonstrating that this method effectively reduces anxiety and fosters a supportive, engaging classroom

environment that encourages active participation. Additionally, 85% of students believed that jokes helped them acquire new vocabulary and grammatical structures more easily, as the humorous and contextual nature of

jokes made the language input more memorable and meaningful, enhancing retention and application. The highest level of agreement, 95%, was for the idea that retelling or role-playing activities based on jokes helped students speak more naturally; these interactive and creative exercises promoted fluency and spontaneous communication skills. Furthermore, all students surveyed (100%) expressed a strong desire to continue using jokes in future speaking classes, reflecting high satisfaction with

the method and motivation to engage in speaking activities. Overall, the survey results confirm that incorporating English story jokes into speaking instruction not only improves linguistic competence but also positively affects students' psychological readiness and enthusiasm for learning. The high level of student approval suggests that this method could be effectively implemented on a broader scale to foster a lively and confident learning atmosphere.

4.1.3. Classroom observations

Table 3. Classroom observation report in six weeks

Week	Main Activities	Observations and Evaluation
Week 1	Introduction of the story jokes method; pre-test by retelling simple jokes	Students were still shy and interacted little; pronunciation, grammar, and fluency were limited
Week 2	Learning vocabulary and grammar through word games and humorous idioms, and practicing predicting punchlines.	Group participation increased, pronunciation improved, and students became more active in activities.
Week 3	Understanding and analyzing cultural humor, and role-playing based on humorous situations.	Students became more confident, used grammar more accurately, and improved cultural understanding.
Week 4	Performing short skits based on humorous dialogues, focusing on pronunciation and intonation	Speaking fluency and expressiveness improved; students were relaxed and collaborated well in groups.
Week 5	Creating jokes and role-playing real-life situations, giving feedback, and making language corrections.	High motivation, active interaction, and more natural and flexible speaking
Week 6	Post-test by storytelling and joke creation; collecting feedback on the teaching method	Speaking skills significantly improved; students expressed satisfaction and a

The summary above demonstrates that the application of using jokes in teaching speaking skills yields clearly positive results. Over the weeks, students not only improved their language skills, such as pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, but also increased their confidence and classroom interaction. Diverse activities like role-playing, word games, and short skits enabled students to learn in a lively and comfortable manner, reducing anxiety when speaking English. Integrating humor created a joyful atmosphere that stimulated creativity and active participation. Notably, fluency and communicative responsiveness

showed significant improvement, reflecting comprehensive progress. Student feedback also indicated high satisfaction and a strong desire to continue using this method. Therefore, jokes serve not only as a tool to enhance language skills but also help build a positive and engaging learning environment. This approach proves to be a suitable and effective direction for developing English speaking skills in the current educational context.

4.2. Discussion

This study set out to explore the effectiveness of using English story jokes

to enhance speaking skills and classroom interaction among second-year students at Hanoi Open University. Drawing from three primary sources of data—namely, the results of pre- and post-speaking tests, student survey responses, and classroom observation reports collected over six weeks—the findings reveal compelling evidence of the method’s positive impact on both linguistic competence and student engagement.

The analysis of pre- and post-test scores showed marked improvement across all five evaluated aspects of speaking: pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and interaction. The most significant gains were observed in fluency (35.8%) and interaction/response skills (36.5%), suggesting that the humorous and low-pressure environment created by story joke activities allowed students to speak more freely and confidently. This aligns with the affective filter hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), which posits that learners acquire language more effectively when anxiety is reduced and motivation is high. The repetitive exposure to language through jokes also appeared to strengthen grammatical accuracy and vocabulary use.

Student survey responses further reinforced these findings. A substantial majority of participants reported increased comfort in speaking (90%), better vocabulary retention (85%), and more natural speech production (95%) as a result of engaging with English story jokes. Most notably, all students (100%) indicated a desire to continue using this method in future lessons, reflecting both high satisfaction and motivational appeal. Additionally, classroom observation throughout the six-week period captured a visible transformation in learner behavior—from initial hesitation to active collaboration and confident performance. By the final weeks, students not only demonstrated more fluent and expressive speaking, but also showed

greater willingness to interact, take risks, and support one another in communication tasks. These insights collectively affirm that integrating humor into language instruction can be an effective, learner-centered approach to fostering both speaking proficiency and classroom dynamics.

4.3. Pedagogical implications

The findings of this study suggest several important pedagogical implications for English language teaching, particularly within EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. First, the integration of humor—specifically through story jokes—into the curriculum proves effective in reducing learner anxiety and fostering a more relaxed, supportive classroom environment. This emotional comfort is crucial for encouraging spontaneous communication and building learner confidence. Therefore, curriculum designers and educators should consider incorporating humor-based content into speaking lessons to improve engagement, motivation, and fluency.

Second, the use of story jokes naturally supports student-centered learning. Activities such as joke retelling and role-playing promote active participation, peer collaboration, and contextualized language use, allowing learners to practice speaking in meaningful and interactive ways. These methods enhance critical thinking and creative expression, which are essential elements of communicative competence. As such, this approach encourages teachers to move away from traditional teacher-centered instruction toward more dynamic, learner-driven classroom practices.

Lastly, the method is particularly beneficial for intermediate-level learners, such as second-year English majors, who often face challenges with confidence and fluency. The familiar and humorous nature of story jokes creates low-

pressure opportunities for learners to apply vocabulary and grammar without fear of making mistakes. It offers a supportive framework for practicing real-life communication and can serve as a stepping stone to more complex speaking tasks in advanced language courses.

In sum, using English story jokes in speaking classes is a practical and culturally adaptable approach that enhances not only students' speaking proficiency but also their attitude toward learning. Educators and policymakers are encouraged to consider humor as a valuable instructional tool in EFL programs to create more engaging, effective, and student-centered learning environments.

V. Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of using English story jokes to enhance the speaking skills of second-year students at the Faculty of English, Hanoi Open University. The findings revealed a significant positive impact of this teaching approach, as demonstrated by the clear improvement in students' post-experiment speaking test scores. Integrating humor through story jokes not only increased students' motivation and classroom participation but also helped reduce their speaking anxiety, contributing to a more stable and positive learning environment.

These results underscore the value of innovative, learner-centered teaching strategies in language education, particularly within the context of social sciences. The study also provides empirical evidence for incorporating culturally relevant and entertaining materials to promote active engagement and communicative competence. Moreover, the findings highlight the importance of addressing emotional factors, such as anxiety, in foreign language learning.

This research contributes to a broader understanding of educational methods that enhance verbal communication skills and improve classroom dynamics. Future studies are recommended to explore the long-term effects of this approach as well as its applicability to diverse learner populations. Overall, the use of English story jokes represents a practical and effective method for developing speaking skills, offering valuable insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in social science education.

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SỬ DỤNG TRUYỆN CƯỜI TIẾNG ANH ĐỂ TĂNG CƯỜNG TƯƠNG TÁC LỚP HỌC TRONG GIẢNG DẠY KỸ NĂNG NÓI CHO SINH VIÊN NĂM HAI KHOA TIẾNG ANH, TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC MỞ HÀ NỘI

Trần Thị Lệ Dung²

Tóm tắt: Bài viết tập trung nghiên cứu việc sử dụng truyện cười tiếng Anh dạng kể chuyện như một công cụ hỗ trợ nhằm tăng cường tương tác lớp học trong quá trình giảng dạy kỹ năng nói cho sinh viên năm hai Khoa Tiếng Anh - Trường Đại học Mở Hà Nội. Nghiên cứu được triển khai với phương pháp thực nghiệm có đối chứng, sử dụng các truyện cười phù hợp với trình độ và nội dung học, nhằm tạo ra môi trường học tập thoải mái, thúc đẩy sinh viên tham gia vào các hoạt động giao tiếp mang tính tương tác. Kết quả ban đầu cho thấy việc ứng dụng truyện cười không chỉ giúp cải thiện sự tự tin, khả năng phản xạ ngôn ngữ mà còn tăng mức độ hứng thú và chủ động của người học trong quá trình tương tác bằng tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu hy vọng đóng góp một cách tiếp cận sư phạm sáng tạo, từ đó mở rộng khả năng ứng dụng trong giảng dạy kỹ năng nói tại các cơ sở đào tạo ngoại ngữ ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: truyện cười tiếng Anh, kỹ năng nói, tương tác lớp học, giảng dạy ngôn ngữ giao tiếp, nghiên cứu thực nghiệm

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