

Engaging EFL Students in Understanding Pragmatics through the Analysis of Verbal Humor in Cartoon Film “Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs”

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Abstract. The exploitation of authentic materials in the EFL classroom is getting highly recommended nowadays. While kinesthetic activities would eliminate boredom in the classroom, visual aids offer practicality and efficiency for teachers in this digital era. Teachers can take the advantage of film to trigger students' interest in language studies. Film is a good exposure for EFL students in which utterances and expressions can be seen in believable contexts and real situations. However, cartoon film offers more intriguing perspective to accommodate the pragmatics learning, as in cartoon films we did not anticipate a certain scenario that might occur. Cartoon films do not only entertain us with humor per se but they also come with a package of verbal expressions that is worth being brought to pragmatics analysis in the classroom. This study is to be concerned with the *jokehood* rather than *funniness* and to analyze them from pragmatics point of view. Investigating conversational humor in cartoon films opens a wide opportunity to deeper understanding on pragmatic phenomena. Pragmatics will provide a framework on how the meaning communicated by the jokester will result funniness depending on given context and interpretation. Meanwhile, cartoon film as a source of conversational humor can be used not only for the sake of humor analysis, but also at the same time can be a positive exposure for students.

Keywords: Understanding Pragmatics, Verbal Humor, Authentic Material, Cartoon Film.

1. Introduction

Understanding elements of linguistics especially Pragmatics has been a challenge for EFL teachers through the ages. A simplified means of thinking of pragmatics is to identify, for instance, that language should be kept fascinating - a presenter or author does not would like to bore an audience or viewers, for example, by being over-long or tedious. So, humans try to discover linguistic ways to make a content possibly much shorter, much more intriguing, a lot more pertinent, more purposeful or much more personal.

Since the concept of pragmatics was introduced into language education and learning, it has obtained an increasing number of focus in language understanding. Standpoint of EFL communication experiences that there is not a cultural or a language which are far better than the others. Lin (2007) mentioned that the non-native English presenters or even indigenous speakers need to discover pragmatics by explaining and explaining interlanguage interaction from a universal and intercultural point of view, rather than fashion the native-like English as a basic type of communication.

It can be inferred that when finding out pragmatics, there is no constraint of just how several overseas societies a learner ought to discover though the more cultural found out the better, if a student can absorb adequate intercultural know-how. One significant issue of pragmatics is that there are no classical and conventional designs in each speech act of English. The EFL/EIL presenters have to elevate their consciousness concerning numerous kinds of speech acts which are based on a framework and convention paragon of an additional different culture.

Rose (2001:12) states that pragmatics consciousness rising is essentially an inductive technique to develop a basic awareness of how language types are used suitably in context. In other words, Rose exposes that pragmatics is a research, which makes the students understand that language choices do currently existing in different speech acts of EIL/EFL communications and which makes the students fit to varied type of flexible colloquies in EFL/EIL communication.

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The need and importance of training pragmatics have actually in addition been acknowledged yet still language teachers keep back to inform pragmatics in their class. Informing pragmatics is a hard and delicate issue due to the greater degree of 'face threat' it frequently involves and second, the variety of easily offered educational assessment sources is limited.

On the other hand, film, television and other digital multimedia contents have been grown enormously for the last decade. The engagement of authentic materials in the EFL classroom is getting highly recommended nowadays. Teachers can take the advantage of film to trigger students' interest in language studies. Film is a good exposure for EFL students in which utterances and expressions can be seen in believable contexts and real situations. However, cartoon film offers more intriguing perspective to accommodate pragmatics learning, as in cartoon films we did not anticipate a certain scenario that might occur. Cartoon films do not only entertain us per se but they also come with a package of verbal expressions that is worth to be brought to pragmatics analysis in the classroom. The exploitation of cartoon in EFL classroom has been introduced since mid 90s, along with the success of television cartoons such as *The Simpsons*, *Peanuts*, *Little Monsters* etc. Educators tried to exploit these successes to get students' attention.

Cartoon films could be controlled by teachers to link in humor with the language concentration, particular concentration or to foster macro and micro ability development in the class. The tasks developed to exploit the product will obviously differ in their level of difficulty, but they need to have something alike, it allows the students to succeed and leave the session with a sense of satisfaction at managing to understand genuine video product.

Cartoon film is a source of humor. Appreciating humor means comprehending not only the language and words however their usage, definition, the hidden society, implications and unwritten message (Tuncay, 2007:2). Humor does rarely travel well from one society to another, as each society has a rather various idea of exactly what is hilarious, that's why recognizing American humor is rather tough for EFL students or college student in Palembang, on the other hand the ability to know humor has been among the specifications that aid teachers learn about students' understanding in both dental and written language (Tuncay, 2007:2). This has been confirmed through informal monitoring performed that during the proving of American cartoon films in the class, students often laugh at comedies where its funniness counts on slapstick comedy (a funny that relies upon accidental bodily humor) as opposed to ones with verbal humor, and when it comes to the cartoon films with verbal humor, only few students can cherish the humors and laugh while most of students found the humor to be tough to recognize.

It is understandable that humor usage and understanding additionally vary substantially depending on the age of the audience, and as they expand, they start to understand more complicated humor, however still the tastes of humor differ wildly (Ritchie, 2004:18). Investigating casual humor in cartoon film opens a large opportunity to much deeper understanding on pragmatic phenomena. Comedy as a source of conversational humor can be used not simply for the purpose of humor evaluation, however additionally at the exact same time could be a positive direct exposure for students.

2. Verbal Humor in Pragmatics Study

The word humor is derived from a Latin word *humorem* which means fluid or liquid. The Greek physician Hippocrates, who is considered to be the father of medicine, believed that good health depends on the proper balance of four fluids, or humors of the body, namely blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile (Martin, 2007: 21). In the English language, the word humor that had been borrowed from French *humeur* continued to evolve. In the sixteenth century, the idea of humor as a balanced temperament or personality trait led to its use to refer to any behavior that deviates from social form, thus humor came to mean an odd. Because such people were often viewed as ridiculous or objects of laughter and ridicule, it was a small step from there to association of humor with funniness and laughter, and its entry into the field of comedy.

Most of the humor concepts ever suggested are actually blended concepts, and several modern specialists think that humor in its completeness is too massive and multiform a phenomenon to be incorporated into a single integrated theory. Linguists likewise suggested some theories on their own called Linguistic Theories. 4 popular figures in the area are Arthur Koestler, Victor Raskin, Salvatore Attardo, and Greame Ritchie.

1) Arthur Koestler and The Act of Creation

Koestler's perspectives on humor are shared most extensively in his large tractate *The Act of Creation* (1964). To Koestler's mind, humor entails an enigma, since giggling is an universal physiological response to a quite excellent multitude of various advanced intellectual and emotional stimuli. Koestler argues that humor is inspired by hostile and/or concerned, self-defensive or assaulting impulses, and giggling is claimed to be an act of overt or hidden unloading of these impulses (Krikmann, 2004: 29).

2) Victor Raskin's Script-Based Semantic Theory Of Humour (SSTH)

Another essential figure is Victor Raskin, specifically so with his seminal publication *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (1985). Raskin's script-based semantic concept of humor (SSTH) does not aim to cover humor typically, but simply spoken humor or in method and simply pierce line jokes.

3) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH).

This theory is fine-tuned from SSTH given that Victor Raskin worked together with Salvatore Attardo. The main idea of GTVH is that a joke depends on contribution from 6 various know-how sources (KRs). They are Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS), Language (Los Angeles).

4) Graeme Ritchie's Propositional and Linguistic Humor.

In his publication *The Linguistic Analysis of Jokes* (2004), Ritchie mentions some disadvantages of GTVH and recommended category of humor into vast trainings: propositional and linguistic humor. Symmetrical humors have shipment mechanism, at the same time linguistic one is specified by a setup of linguistic aspects involving concept such as phonetic similarity, segmentation into words, and so on. Both linguistic and propositional humor relies upon background information, might include peripheral info and could consist of additional material or structure (Ritchie, 2004:80).

Investigating conversational humor in cartoon films opens a wide opportunity to deeper understanding on pragmatic phenomena. Pragmatics will provide a framework on how the meaning communicated by the jokester will result funniness depending on given context and interpretation. Meanwhile, cartoon film as a source of conversational humor can be used not only for the sake of humor analysis, but also at the same time can be a positive exposure for students.

3. Cartoon Film in Language Teaching

Cartoon film "*Cloudy with a chance of meatballs*" was originally a bed time story written by Juddy Barret and Ron Barret that was published in 1978. In 2009, Sony Pictures Animation then released the cartoon film adapted from the book and somehow did not really potray the plot from the book. The book itself has been teachers' favorite and one of top 100 authentic material used in the classrooms.

Teachers and students will find this motion picture and the book particularly useful in the class. Utilizing a cross-curricular approach to reading and science, instructors can concentrate on the weather condition events portrayed and develop accompanying lessons to teach the science of weather condition.

Furthermore, parents do not have to be concerned with the inappropriateness since this adaptation of the timeless kids's book *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* is applicable to all ages. While there's nothing overtly age-inappropriate in the motion picture, anticipate a little salty language along the lines of "hell" and and the periodic moderate insult like "foolish" or "knuckle scrapers." The few tense/slightly terrifying scenes are weather condition- and huge food-related-- which can disturb little kids who are sensitive to worries about natural catastrophes-- and there's a developing romance in between the main character and a weather reporter. Although no marvelous life lessons are offered, the movie does center on a kid's requirement for fatherly encouragement and the concept that you should not compromise who you are simply to be popular.

Surprisingly, the functions of the movies in fact have great relevance in English language teaching. A lot more plainly, making use of movies could promote the English language training. The using of video products could enhance the students' inspiration and offer them various means of input. Certainly, the knowing products with visual component are a lot more purposeful and alive and help to bring the real life into the class, and unlike the book, the film could present the actual life in the class dynamic.

The use of movies in language study does not indicate merely play the film for the students in the classroom. Really, the teacher should develop some tasks based upon the films and the book, so about make the environment in which the students might connect properly with each other. The students' language effectiveness and their specific necessities should be taken into account. What we are trying to pursue here is not only verbal humor to be analyzed, but also exposing what cartoon films might offer, such as:

3.1. Exposing English native culture

It is easy to notice the exposure of certain culture in the cartoon film. Obviously, all of the characters in cartoon film were adaptive from real characterization of particular culture including fashion choice and life style. When a creator of cartoon films proposed a certain story line or character, he tried to portray what actually happened in the society. Take *The Simpsons* for example, for the last two decades this cartoon series has brought an American campaign into our home with its controversial yet informative current issues. In this cartoon series we can see Homer Simpsons characterization as a portrayal of common American family man who has regular job at nuclear plant but is rather reluctant to fulfill his duty and tries to get his way, on the other hand there is a character named Apu, a portrayal of industrious immigrant from India, spending all day and night working as an owner and shop keeper of chain grocery store. Moreover, cartoon films' characters are much more like normal Americans in that many of them are ordinary looking, as opposed to the exceptionally attractive actors in regular film. This has added to its realistic quality. In cartoon films, one can find U.S. cultural/societal realities, both broad and specific, e.g. cultural and racial diversity, Catholic traditions, rivalry among siblings, feast and festivals, etc.

3.2. Accommodating phraseology

Teaching a foreign language means delivering phraseology aspects of that language in appropriate context so it would be easily grasped by the learners. However, not all conversational idioms and phrases are presented in textbook. As a result we tend to create a lack of accuracy. It is important to alert students to expressions that may be peculiar to non-native speakers yet are used by native speakers to promote communication and solidarity (Hwang, 1999:85). Furthermore, Anton (2011: 19) argued that the decontextualized word-in sentence-pattern approach prevalent in our native language e.g. Bahasa Indonesia often results in awkward English, such as "Good trip" (Have a nice trip), since its equivalent in Bahasa Indonesia Selamat Jalan has the same pattern as "Good morning (selamat pagi)." This approach fails to recognize that a conventionalized expression needs to be learned as a chunk, because its meaning is unlikely the sum of its constituents. Again, the ubiquity of formulaic expressions in English is often neglected.

3.3. Conveying pragmatics appropriateness

When it comes to the peculiarity of a language, its phraseology is relatively explicit, relatively teachable. Nevertheless, learning a language entails how to use it appropriately in different situations, depending on such factors as the relationship between the speakers, the setting, and the context of the situation. Hence, sociolinguistically appropriate expressions are more easily observed than taught. For instance, the most frequent but unconscious "fillers" in American English, e.g. "look," "listen," "boy," "well," "so," "you know," and "I mean," are abundant in cartoon.

4. Engaging Students in Understanding Pragmatics through Analyzing Verbal Humor

Since jokes are context-free and self-contained, and can be told in many conversational contexts, they are relatively easy to analyze and they lend themselves well to experimental research (Martin, 2004: 98). Conversational humor however depends more on the constantly changing social context and therefore poses greater challenge for theorists and researchers. Psychologists have been paying more attention on the cognitive processes of humor that has stimulated a considerable amount of research. Moreover, they only focus on the study of jokes rather than conversational form of humor.

Psychologist Debra Long and Arthur Graeser (1988) developed an extensive classification system of conversational humor. They recorded a number of episodes of television talk show to obtain a broad sample of the types of humor occurring in natural conversations. Based on their analyses, they identified the

following 11 categories which were distinguished from one and another on the basis of their intentions or uses of humor. They are irony, satire, sarcasm, overstatement and understatement, self-depreciation, teasing, replies to rhetorical questions, clever replies to serious statements, double entendres, transformational of frozen expressions, and puns. The rubric they have provided can be a framework for students to categorize conversational humor found in *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs*.

In terms of linguistic benefit, cartoon film provide learners with the vast opportunity to examine language from an intensely spoken form of media which initially could show up rough but when scattered down and introduced scene by scene, can offer beneficial and interactive language understanding. One more perk of using cartoon film is that such comedy show tends to introduce genuine language that is not simplified and is spoken at a normal rate with real accents.

A tryout had been conducted to some courses in University of Bina Darma Palembang when they were learning semantics. Appreciating humor in media such as movies or cartoon could be bothersome for many students in the beginning, but they were aspired to dig more. What should keep in mind, when bringing video into classroom teachers must not rely on just what students remember from seeing the video clip in the home, instead focus on detailed activities particular scenes and throughout video clip. Teachers ought to do something with scenes projected and especially with the ones where a dialect or strange expression is talked.

Two movies of *cloudy with a chance of meatballs* in the samples were used and one of them, the sequel of the movie was full of puns and words-play. One of tasks beyond the study book is to play the introductory scene of the show and let the students guess the rest of the story. A clip of the prequel's ending could also be shown to spice things up. While enjoying the scenes, students could (a) write down every word or expression they can determine; (b) next, they read to their partners or the class just what they comprehended and the major topics discussed later in the story; (c) then, teacher play the scenes one more time, then let them delight the rest of the film. Allowing students to read the subtitle could be optional. Teacher might use certain moments to press pause on the remote controller for question and answer session, but make sure it's just a couple of minutes because it can ruin the momentum. Once in a while invite students to give an alternate of the next scene.

Several activities developed after enjoying comedies can be individual or in groups. The activities could be: (a) asking students to work as movie critics. This can be preliminary activities before jumping on the intercultural discussion; (b) inviting students to recollect remarkable and intercultural moments in the program; (c) if the course has good facilities; using can brand-new Flash tools can be urged. Instructor may develop and display the cultural clips and prompt students with questions. Students see the video taken from the comedies and afterwards react to a set of concerns. Instructor should supply a more extensive natural language explanation of their choice. Students specify what they believe a response to the scenario may be in their own culture. This screen also provides details that let students assess the contextual details from the previous screen. If preparing Flash device seems so difficult and time consuming, a handout representing exactly what Flash device offer can be a great choice. Educators prepare certain sitcoms stills and offer concerns connected to intercultural moments.

Teacher and lecturer should not push students to do the analysis as the ones that have been suggested by researchers. For example when the study comes across with maxim, teachers might also emphasize the hyperbolic expression or personification used throughout the film. Giving a clue or let them aware with what they should pay attention to is very important because they might be carried away with the story.

It has been shown that students paid huge interest about the type of humors stated in Long and Grease's rubric. Students were likewise asked to see a funny show in regional television and do a simple analysis based on the offered rubric and many of them were good in identifying those humor types.

5. Conclusion

Among some means to improve students' level of sensitivity and understanding in foreign language is by discovering humor through using real visual media, in this case authentic video. There are 2 benefits of using real products in ELT in the classroom: (a) spontaneous authentic products show the attributes of natural daily

speech in a manner that read-aloud texts do not; and (b) authentic products are not streamlined to show language levels of 2nd language learners (eg. novice, intermediate, sophisticated).

Genuine material exposes students to language that is closer to what they will experience from the class, and it teaches students to understand and accept that they will not acknowledge and comprehend every word that they hear. Video offers students with the chance to communicate with both visual and audio stimuli that can be taught along with linguistic functions, therefore adding a further measurement. Generating communicative activities based upon the material of the video can urge a more interactive class, one where the students are pressed to connect what they have actually seen and heard in order to complete the tasks.

Video not only exposes students to the target language, but it also exposes them to non-verbal aspects of communication. Non-verbal communication is made up of such things as motions, expression, posture, and gown. The more crucial thing that video offers foreign language learners insight into the culture of the target language, and enables the opportunity to question any non-verbal facets of communication that they might not be familiar with.

The analysis result reveals that language design can also be associated with conversational humor. Dealing with language styles, this problem is carefully related to intercultural proficiency. Intercultural proficiency is in relation with the capability to comprehend more than exactly what the words record in spoken or composed language. Understanding humor is one of the crucial part of intercultural competence because comprehending humor could consist of understanding of history, language, non-verbal habits, world-views, 'do's and do n'ts', values, norms, habits, personalized, taboos, signs, behavioral patterns, practices, sex roles and so on. Teacher of foreign language need to know that intercultural skill is required as the standard capability for any communication. It is not just needed to have social abilities, but also to enhance the sensitivity and understanding for other values, views, lifestyles and thinking, along with being awkward in moving one's own values and views in a clear, however proper method.

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