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riting Punchlines for Jokes

การเขียนจุดหักมุมของเรื่องขำขัน

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Abstract

This study intends to investigate how students manage difficulties in order to write punchlines for jokes. It is beneficial for ESL teachers who like to use jokes in language classroom. The jokes in this study were selected from the Internet according to certain criteria concerning the length of jokes, joke contexts, language complexity, variety of topics and situations. The subjects of this study were eight students from the Department of Material and Tool Engineering and the Department of Electrical Engineering at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT). In writing punchlines, the subjects had difficulties cause by inappropriate

length of jokes, unfamiliarity with jokes, insufficient language ability and lack of creative ideas. Then, they used their techniques to cope with the difficulties. To the techniques, subjects' punchlines were evaluated by three raters ranging from the best to the worst punchlines.

The subjects were required to write punchlines for provided fifteen jokes. They were asked to spend three days a week and write three punchlines a day. When they finished each three jokes, the subjects were interviewed how they wrote their own punchlines. To write punchlines, it is found that the subjects had difficulties caused by inappropriate length of jokes, unfamiliarity with jokes, insufficient language ability and lack of creative idea in writing. However, they had their techniques to manage difficulties by using re-reading, connecting jokes with their own experiences, imagining the scenes of jokes, translating, putting themselves in the situation in the jokes and using keywords. Due to these techniques, the subjects' works were evaluated by three raters who were studying in the programme of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics for English Language Teaching (ELT) at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) ranging from the best to the worst punchlines with reference to relevance, communication, creativity and fun. Then, the benefits of using jokes for language teaching and writing practice were discussed with points to consider and recommendations for further study were finally given.

Keywords: Jokes, Humour, Punchlines, Writing Process, Difficulties and Management of Writing Punchlines, Creative Ideas

ບທຄັດຍອ

งานวิจัยนี้ມີວັດທຸນປະສົງເພື່ອການຄົງວິທີການຂອງນັກຕີກົມກົວດັນຂອງມາດລັບເຕົກໂນໂລຢີ ພຣະຈົມເກົລຳຮັນບຸຮູ້ເຂົ້ານຈຸດທັກມຸນຂອງເຮືອງໝາໝັ້ນ ເພື່ອເປັນປະໂໂນໜ້າຕ່ອງຮູ້ອາຈານຍໍ່ທີ່ຈະ ນຳເຮືອງໝາໝັ້ນໄປໃຫຍ່ສອນໃນທອງເຮັດວຽກ ເຮືອງໝາໝັ້ນທີ່ໃຫ້ໃນງານວິຈີຍນີ້ໄດ້ຖືກຄັດເລືອກຈາກ ອິນເຕອຣີນຕໂດຍເປັນໄປຕາມມາດຮູ້ນໃນການຄັດສຽງ ສຶກສາ ຄວາມຍາວຂອງເຮືອງໝາໝັ້ນ ບຣິບທ ຂອງເຮືອງໝາໝັ້ນ ຄວາມຍາກຂອງກາໝາ ແລະ ຕ້ອງມີສານກາຮັນທີ່ຫລາກຫລາຍ ສໍາຫັບກຸລຸ່ມ ດ້ວຍຢ່າງທີ່ໃຫ້ໃນງານວິຈີຍນີ້ຄືອນນັກຕີກົມກົວດັນ ວິທີກົມກົວດັນ ສາຂາ ເຄື່ອງມືອແລະວັສດ ແລະ ວິທີກົມກົວດັນ ໄຟຟ້າຂອງມາດລັບເຕົກໂນໂລຢີ ພຣະຈົມເກົລຳຮັນບຸຮູ້ຈໍານວນ 8 ຄນ ໃນການເຂົ້ານ

จุดหักมุมของเรื่องข้าขันนี้กลุ่มตัวอย่างจะพบกับปัญหา คือ ความยาวของเรื่องข้าขัน ความไม่คุ้นเคยกับเรื่องข้าขัน ความยากของภาษา และ การขาดความคิดในเชิงสร้างสรรค์ กลุ่มตัวอย่างในงานวิจัยนี้จะต้องเขียนจุดหักมุมของเรื่องข้าขันทั้งหมดสิบห้าเรื่องด้วยกันโดยเรื่องข้าขันนั้นจะแบ่งออกเป็นครั้งละสามชุด ดังนั้นกลุ่มตัวอย่างจะต้องใช้เวลาทั้งหมดห้าวัน เพื่อเขียนจุดหักมุมของเรื่องข้าขันนั้นให้ครบห้าชุด หลังจากนั้นผู้วิจัยจะนำจุดหักมุมของเรื่องข้าขันดังกล่าวส่งมอบให้ผู้ประเมินเพื่อดูคุณภาพการเขียนโดยเป็นไปตามมาตรฐาน คือ ความต่อเนื่องของเรื่องราว การสื่อสารความเข้าใจ ความคิดสร้างสรรค์ และสนุกในงานวิจัยนี้ผู้ทำการวิจัยจะพบว่ากลุ่มตัวอย่างมีปัญหาในการเขียนจุดหักมุมของเรื่องข้าขันและวิธีการแก้ไขปัญหาซึ่งจะเป็นประโยชน์ในการใช้สอนภาษาและการฝึกการเขียนให้กับนักเรียนนักศึกษาต่อไป

คำสำคัญ: เรื่องข้าขัน อารมณ์ขัน จุดหักมุมของเรื่องข้าขัน กระบวนการการเขียน ความยากและการจัดการในการเขียนจุดหักมุม ความคิดสร้างสรรค์

Background of the Study

With reference to undergraduate curriculum of Liberal Arts of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT), the university provides four fundamental English courses (LNG 101 to LNG 104) to all students to study in the language classroom. Most faculties require them to study at least three English courses. All courses aim to equip them with language and learning skills through different tasks. The learning tasks aim to provide chances for students to practice four language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Particularly, LNG 103 course mainly provides students to practice thinking skill and creative writing. To the course it trains students know what creative thinking is and practices students creative writing such as opinion task, writing

creative technological design etc. Thus, the researcher preferred those who learned LNG 103, because it can save time to guide them. Moreover, students have experiences in classroom and they have known the strategies for writing creatively.

Statement of Problems

To compare writing with other skills such as speaking which is an output process, writing can be more difficult for most Thai students as it requires good command of grammar, sentence structure and word choice (Chenoweth, 1987: 25). Moreover, the written language is shown to be evidence to the readers, so accuracy is crucial and students need to practice. To practice writing, motivation, interesting input for practicing and thinking processing are needed

for students. To the researcher' situation, Thai students lack inspiration to practice writing because of three main issues.

Motivation: To motivate students to write on their own is not easy because they have to spend time to compose written tasks. Besides, they do not have much chance to write in English in the real situation. To strengthen this point, Chimombo, (1987: 204) said, "Reality in writing is difficult for students to practice because writing is not part of most students' daily lives, so they only have a chance to practice in classroom mostly." For those who want to be professional writers, they should spend a sufficient period of time to learn. Thus, it is necessary to provide a supportive environment and time for the students to acquire the skill (Byrd, 2001: 6). To the researcher, what motivates students to write may not only come from the students themselves but also from courses, classroom materials or the tasks assigned.

Input for Writing: There are many materials that can be used as the task for students to practice writing. According to Hedge, (1989: 33-39) "some pictures in a newspaper can be good input for writing activity." She gives each student the pictures and asks them to write about the scene in a newspaper. She asks students to imagine themselves as reporters and then write up the news. KMUTT students also have a chance to do similar activities in one of the

fundamental courses. They form pairs to write about the news of their interest and then work in groups to design their own newspapers. Although writing newspapers is a good task for students to practice writing skill, it is a time-consuming task; they are required to write accurately and it is mostly suitable for group work. By the nature of group work, some students may not contribute or take as much responsibility as they should. This means that what should be input for writing must encourage every student to practice the skill to the fullest extent. Woolfolk, (1993: 336-337) supports that the task that can encourage students to write should not only be enjoyable, interesting and stimulating but also fun for them and it should persuade students to share ideas freely. Therefore, if a teacher can find the task which can provide this phenomenon, it may motivate students to practice writing skill either in class or on their own. In other words, writing tasks which can inspire them to write depends on the types of writing that interest or challenge the students (Indrisamo & Squire, 2000: 11).

Thinking Process: Thinking process is another problem which students face when they write because writing is a complex process in which students have to spend time to improve but they have less chance to practice. To compose written texts, students need to organize their thoughts into a sequence which makes sense and they should express their ideas

coherently. Leki, (1998: 78) said that, when students compose the texts, they should consider the main point or central idea of a piece of writing. Kroll, (1991) supports that students should link from the first to the second sentence and so on to connect ideas. As English is not their mother tongue, it can be difficult for KMUTT students to write with coherence and cohesion. Consequently, the writing task should encourage them to think critically or use their imagination creatively.

Rationale of the Study

To enhance motivation and thinking process in writing through enjoyable tasks, the researcher decides to use jokes because they are fun and not too long text to read. In addition, there are many types of jokes in various contexts. However, the researcher chooses to focus only on the punchlines of the jokes because the punchline is the twisting part of the jokes that needs creative thinking which enhances many possible ideas as long as they fit well with the context provided. Fischel, (1980: 30), 40 supports that it is challenging to use jokes to enhance writing skill since it requires the writers' imagination and enables students to practice thinking skill.

Therefore, jokes were used in this study because they encourage students to write creative sentences and enables them to make use of vocabulary and grammar in the ways that

suit their own purpose. Additionally, jokes are proved to be useful in English language class for the following reasons. (1) Jokes are short and can be told or taught within the space of a few minutes. (2) Jokes can be a mini-lesson in grammar, vocabulary and speech pattern. (3) There is a wide range of possible speech patterns within the single genre of jokes. (4) Jokes are funny and they keep students alert. Additionally, jokes cause positive atmosphere in classroom and lead students to have motivation to learn the language and introduce a refreshing change from routine language learning procedures. (Trachtenberg, 1980: 8-13).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the extent that jokes can be used for students to practice writing and what difficulties students have when they write their own punchlines for provided 15 jokes and how they solve the problems. Thus, the main research question of the study is to answer. "How do students write punchlines for jokes?"

Definitions and Components of Jokes

According to Collins Cobuild English Dictionary, (1995: 904) gives the definition of a joke as "something that is said or done to make people laugh for example, a funny story." Beeman, (2000: 1) and Medgyes, (2002: 1) supported "jokes aim to create a feeling of

enjoyment for the audiences, most commonly manifested in a physical display of pleasure including smiles and laughter. Additionally, jokes are triggers of laughter including comedies, funny stories and riddles." Trachtenberg, (1980: 9) and Maurice, (1988: 20) add that the riddles can be joking questions which include metaphors in the language and have lexical ambiguity in the words and the questions request unexpected answers from the readers or listeners. Among all the triggers of laughter, jokes are the most common stimulation that people use to entertain others and themselves (Webster, 1913: 7). Greg, (2004: 1) mentions that when joke writers write funny stories, they normally prepare the readers for laughing by giving the description of a situation i.e. it tells the readers who did what or talked with whom. Cooley, (2004: 1) agrees that the first part of jokes usually gives the background of the situation to the readers or listeners. The second part of jokes is the key part which is the punchline as it provokes laughter with unexpected endings and demands creative thinking to surprise the readers.

Use of Jokes in English Language Teaching (ELT)

Humour and jokes can be used for educational purposes and language learning in the classroom for many reasons. For Maurice, (1988: 24), for example, explains that the use of jokes in language class makes students feel close

to each other because jokes create a positive learning environment and relaxing atmosphere. Tosta, (2001: 27) adds that the use of jokes increases interaction among teachers and students and the jokes are a useful tool to get students' attention as they create enjoyment and thus motivate students to learn. Moreover, Trachtenberg, (1980: 9, 11) gives reasons why teachers use jokes in an English language class: (1) Jokes are funny and keep students alert. (2) Hence, jokes make a refreshing change from routine language learning procedures. (3) It is possible to use jokes in teaching because they are short and can be told or taught within a few minutes and jokes can be used as an introduction activity. (4) Jokes can be a mini-lesson in grammar, vocabulary and speech patterns. (5) There is a wide range of possible speech patterns within a single genre of jokes. Pecnik, (2001: 2) adds more ideas about the use of jokes in ELT, "jokes can be used as a starting point of a discussion, creative activity or project work and help to relax the students."

Qualities of Good Jokes

Although jokes can be exploited in the language classroom, it does not mean that any joke can be used for teaching. To help teachers select proper jokes, Pupipat, (2004: 87) says, "The simple criterion for selecting jokes is that the jokes should be appropriate for students in terms of language (e.g. words and discourse)."

He continues that students' problems with jokes are usually idioms because students have limitation in language, so they may not understand jokes clearly. Therefore, these problems can be solved by informative support in which teachers analyze the selected jokes after they have got them from the sources to anticipate what can be difficult and what help students need to comprehend the jokes. For instance, teachers should consider the level of language in the jokes and the students' level of proficiency. In cases where some words in jokes are too difficult for the students, Pecnik, (2001: 1-3) suggests that teachers can simplify the words, use synonyms or provide the definitions of those words. Additionally, they can give emphasis on the keywords that the students are not familiar with because it helps them to know the whole story. She adds that it is important for teachers to extensively prepare themselves for a joke-telling activity and they should be sensitive and prepare students as early as possible by training them to be familiar with jokes such as to know parts of jokes and how jokes are written. This activity helps students to have the idea to create their own jokes or punchlines. Pupipat, (2004: 88) also suggests that in selecting jokes teachers should be aware of culture bias. This means, the selected jokes should not be oriented to only one particular culture or fit well with a particular social context because students in other cultures or fields of

study may misinterpret the jokes. Pecnik, (2001: 3) adds that teachers should introduce jokes which closely relate to students' culture because, if the jokes are far from their social context, they may not be able to comprehend. Thus, selected jokes should generally provide comprehensible situations for students such as jokes about teachers & students, doctors & patients, family or animal jokes.

Criteria for Joke Selection

1. There should be no culture bias in the jokes. This means that the selected jokes are not restricted to a particular culture because such jokes may be too difficult for the subjects. Furthermore, the jokes should be based on general situations where subjects in every field of study are familiar with, for example, school jokes, family jokes, animal jokes, patient and doctor jokes.
2. Each joke should not contain more than two idioms because it would be too difficult for the subjects to understand.
3. The length of each joke should not be more than half a page.
4. If there are too many difficult words, the jokes should be simplified or definitions of the words may be given.
5. All the jokes should cover a variety of topics and situations.

Materials

Twenty jokes were used in this study. They were divided into three groups. The first group, which included three jokes, was the jokes to introduce subjects know parts of joke which are story and punchline (see Appendix A). The second group, which included two jokes, was the jokes for training the subjects to write punchlines (see Appendix B). For these two jokes, their punchlines were deleted so that they have the same pattern as the third group. The third group, which included fifteen jokes, was the jokes for data collection (see Appendix C). For these fifteen jokes, they were simplified and the meanings of some difficult words were provided. These jokes were further divided into five groups and each group contains three jokes for subjects work for a time.

Research Instruments

Subjects' Punchlines

The punchlines were the parts that the subjects wrote by themselves after reading the first part (the situation) of the provided jokes. All together, there were fifteen punchlines written by each subject for the data analysis. The subjects could put ideas freely and wrote as many sentences as they wanted for each punchline.

Semi-Structured Interview

This research instrument was a set of twelve questions to ask the subjects how they wrote

the punchlines and factors affected their writing. The interviews, which were recorded by tape recording, were conducted five times for each subject after they wrote their own punchlines for each of the three jokes (see Appendix E).

Methodology

Pre-Experimental Procedure

In this stage, three introducing jokes were shown to subjects (see Appendix A) and the subjects learned about the characteristics and components of jokes. Then, training jokes were given to subjects to write punchlines. They were required to read the stories and completed the punchlines by themselves. After they finished writing punchlines for the training jokes, the subjects' punchlines were compared what they wrote with one another to enable them to see how each subject got the idea to write the punchlines and discussed which punchlines were relevant to the given jokes. This was to help subjects to learn and see various ways of writing punchlines for the same jokes. This activity aimed to elicit the subjects' ideas to create their own punchlines and prepare them for the data collection procedure.

While-Experimental Procedure

In the while experimental or data collection stage, three jokes were provided to the subjects at a time. Each subject wrote punchlines individually and then the punchlines were

collected. When they finished each set of three jokes, each subject was separately interviewed. This process was repeated every other day. Altogether, they met for five times until all subjects finished all fifteen jokes. To ensure that the subjects could create proper punchlines, the researcher requested three raters who were studying for their MA in English Language Teaching programme to read all the jokes and evaluate the subjects' punchlines by using the evaluating checklist. According to this stage, the researcher explained to the raters how to score the punchlines based on four criteria; relevance, communication, creativity and fun (See Appendix D). The aim of the evaluation was to find out the qualities of punchlines.

Data Analysis

The punchlines produced by the subjects (see Appendix C) and the data from semi-structured interview were analyzed in order to answer the research question. The scores given to each punchline were calculated by rating rule:

$$\frac{\sum x}{N} (1-8).$$

Finding

Subjects' Difficulties

Though the subjects could compose quality punchlines for all the 15 jokes, the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews suggested that the subjects had difficulties concerning lack

of creative ideas, inappropriate length of jokes, unfamiliarity with jokes and insufficient language ability. The examples of subjects' answer show belows.

Lack of Creative Ideas: Creative ideas in this study are needed for subjects in writing punchlines. It is concerned with understanding the context in the first part and the situation of the provided jokes. Then, the subjects had to react to the situation and to create ideas for the punchlines. It was found that their creative ideas were probably affected by other difficulties. According to the data from the semi-structured interviews, inappropriate length of jokes and unfamiliarity with jokes are causes that affected the subjects' creativity. Firstly, if the first part of jokes was too long and had a lot of detail, the situation of the provided jokes would confuse the subjects.

"...joke number 12 provided a lot of detail, I was confused, so I did not have creative idea to write a punchline."

(Subject 1, Interview 4)

On the other hand, if the jokes were too short, they did not provide enough information for the subjects to read and to imagine the situation. Moreover, too short jokes did not give clear illustration to subjects and they affected them in creating punchlines. These excerpts support.

"Joke number 1, 2 and 3 were too short and did not provide enough information to imagine

along the situation. Consequently, I did not have clear illustration and creative idea to compose punchlines."

Inappropriate Length of Jokes: There are two aspects of the length of jokes i.e. it is either too long or too short. To define the subjects' problem with the length of joke, data from the semi-structured interviews and the number of words of each joke were analyzed. Actually, the length of jokes is counted from the first word of the joke to the last word before the punchline. The jokes that the subjects indicated as the long ones were joke 10 (54 words), joke 11 (68 words), joke 12 (95 words), joke 13 (77 words), joke 14 (92 words) and joke 15 (137 words). Moreover, the subjects said that these jokes had more detail and required them to imagine the scene while they were reading the jokes. The scene confused the subjects and it was hard for them to compose punchlines for these jokes. The following excerpts from the interview support this point.

"....joke number 12 was difficult because the information was long and I had to think a lot along about the situation in the joke..."

(Subject 3, Interview 4)

It can be concluded that long jokes can confuse the subjects when they try to understand the context or the situation provided. On the other hand, the subjects reported that

some jokes, such as joke 1 (25 words), joke 2 (28 words) and joke 3 (30 words), which were much shorter, were also difficult for the subjects to imagine the scene of the jokes. The subjects informed that some jokes were so short that there was not enough information for them to think of the situation. The data from the semi-structured interviews below illustrate the ideas that this difficulty obstructed them from composing their own punchlines.

"....joke number 1, 2 and 3 were difficult because they didn't give enough information to read and to imagine."

(Subject 1, Interview 1)

According to the data, the jokes that are too long or too short directly cause the subjects difficulty to understand the joke stories. The reason is that the long jokes could have several details and they require the subjects to think more about the situations while reading. On the opposite, too short jokes do not provide enough information for them; thus, they had not enough clues to guide them. The data also show that the subjects did not have problems with the length of joke 6 (35 words), joke 7 (33 words), joke 8 (51 words) and joke 9 (31 words). Therefore, these jokes may be considered as the moderate length. This may imply that length of jokes could affect the subjects in composing punchlines (see 4.3.1). However, joke 4 (26 words), which can be considered as a short joke, did not cause

any difficulty to the subjects. This makes the researcher realize that the number of words might not be the only factor that causes difficulty to students, as will be described further.

Unfamiliarity with Jokes

Unfamiliarity with jokes in this study means that the subjects had never read, heard or been in the same or similar situation to the provided jokes. When they participated in this study, it was the subjects' first time to learn about some of the joke stories. Familiarity seems to be beneficial to the subjects to comprehend the jokes. However, unfamiliarity can cause difficulties either in understanding or writing punchlines.

Unfamiliarity with jokes that causes difficulty while reading: While reading the jokes, if the subjects were not familiar with the context in the jokes, they could not comprehend the situation clearly. The data from the semi-structured interview support this idea.

"Joke number 6 was difficult because I have never read or told the story or never met the situation like joke 6, so I didn't understand the situation easily."

(Subject 5, Interview 2)

The data suggested that unfamiliarity with jokes had certain effects on the subjects' comprehension in reading the jokes. Consequently, they could not figure out the

situation of these jokes and this could affect their writing of punchlines.

Unfamiliarity with jokes that causes difficulty while writing: Actually, the subjects used their familiarity with the jokes to help them think about ideas for writing punchlines. On the contrary, if the subjects were not familiar with the situation in any joke such as they have never read or met the situation in the provided jokes, they would find that it was difficult to compose punchlines. The data from the semi-structured interview verify this idea.

"....I have never met the situation or read the same joke like joke number 1, as a result, I didn't know what to put in the punchline."

(Subject 3, Interview 1)

These excerpts indicate that unfamiliarity with jokes is likely to affect the subjects' creativity. Surprisingly, this finding is not always true as one subject (subject 1) mentioned that the content of jokes, which is very close or very familiar to him, did not challenge him to compose punchlines. In this case, the subject's difficulty was influenced by his familiarity, i.e. he just copied down the punchlines which he had previously heard or read. From the semi-structured interviews, this subject informed that he always told or shared jokes with his friends and he had heard the provided jokes before. Therefore, the situation of the jokes was not challenging for him as he reflected in the following

excerpts.

"...since I was very familiar with the context of joke number 5, I kept thinking about the same old punchline."

(Subject 1, Interview 2)

Insufficient Language Ability: It is worth noting that the problem with language ability was the least difficulty the subjects had. However, their proficiency has some impacts on their comprehension and creativity while they worked on the jokes. In other words, the subjects may have had difficulty with language in reading and/or writing stage as presented below.

Insufficient language ability that causes difficulty while reading: The knowledge of vocabulary or keywords enables the subjects to understand the main idea of the stories that they read. On the other hand, if they did not know keywords, they could be confused with the stories and could not understand the jokes. The data from the semi-structured interview verify that the subjects' language competence could affect their reading comprehension.

"...I didn't know some words such as impressive in joke 1 and pills in joke 3."

(Subject 4, Interview 1)

From the excerpts above, the subjects' insufficient language proficiency could affect their comprehension of the jokes. This problem can also affect the writing stage, as further discussed.

Insufficient language ability that causes

difficulty while writing: The subjects' difficulty with language due to the lack of vocabulary and knowledge of grammar could happen even after they had some ideas to create punchlines. According to the semi-structured interviews, the subjects informed that they could not express their ideas into written language and use vocabulary appropriately. The following data illustrate what they reflected about this problem.

"I couldn't write the punchlines of joke number 6 because I didn't know how to make sentence correctly."

(Subject 8, Interview 2)

The information above reveals that, even though the subjects had ideas to create punchlines, they were limited by their language abilities. They could not make sentences or use vocabulary in the punchlines appropriately.

How Subjects Manage Difficulties

To write punchlines for jokes, the subjects had four main difficulties affected by lack of creative ideas, inappropriate length of jokes, unfamiliarity with jokes and insufficient language ability. To overcome these difficulties, they used a variety of techniques which can be classified into two main categories: techniques while trying to understand jokes and composing punchlines. The following table shows the subjects' report of how they coped with the difficulties.

Table 1 How Subjects manage Difficulties

Difficulties	Subjects' Management of Difficulties										Percentage
	While Trying to Understand Jokes					While Composing Punchlines					
	Re-reading	Connecting Jokes with own Experiences	Imagining the Scene of Jokes	Translating	Re-reading	Connecting Jokes with own Experiences	Putting Themselves in the Situation in the Jokes	Translating	Using Keywords		
Inappropriate Length of Jokes	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Unfamiliarity with Jokes	31	27	35	0	9	10	6	0	0	0	
Insufficient Language Ability	0	0	0	16	2	3	1	6	6	6	
Lack of Creative Ideas	0	0	0	0	14	34	10	0	34	34	
Total	38	27	35	10	25	49	19	6	40		
Percentage	15.26	10.84	14.06	4.02	10.12	19.68	7.63	2.47	16.06	100	

After eight subjects wrote their own punchlines (each subject wrote punchlines for each 15 jokes), the total numbers and the percentages of subjects' management of difficulties show the overview of reported frequency of the techniques that the subjects used to deal with difficulties while trying to understand jokes were re-reading (15.26%), connecting jokes with own experiences (10.84%), imagining the scene of the jokes (14.06%), and translating (4.02%). The ways the subjects managed their difficulties while composing

punchlines by re-reading (10.12%), connecting jokes with their own experiences (19.68%), putting themselves in the situations in the jokes (7.63%), translating (2.47%) and using keywords (16.06). Concerning problems while composing punchlines, the most frequently reported difficulty in this part was lack of creative ideas. To manage this problem, the subjects used keywords, connecting jokes with their own experiences, re-reading and putting themselves in the joke with frequencies of 34, 31, 14 and 10, respectively. However, insufficient language

ability and unfamiliarity with the jokes also affected the subjects when they composed their own punchlines. Hence, when the subjects had difficulty with language ability, they connected jokes with own experiences, translated, used keywords, put themselves in the jokes and re-read. These techniques were reported 8, 6, 6, 3 and 2 times, respectively. Moreover, when the subjects were unfamiliar with the jokes, they still used connecting jokes with own experiences, re-reading and putting themselves in the jokes. The reported frequencies of these techniques were 10, 9, and 6, respectively. Each technique is described in more detail as follows.

Re-reading

The subjects used re-reading to manage their difficulties both trying to understand jokes and composing punchlines. However, they had different purposes in the use of re-reading; they revealed the reasons why this technique was used to manage their difficulties, as follows. The subjects used re-reading while trying to understand jokes when they met the difficulties about length of jokes and unfamiliarity with the content. The subjects could re-read the jokes more than one time. The example from the semi-structured interview illustrates this point.

"I never read joke number 10-12 both in Thai and English....so I read them two to three times. By reading the first time, I read to know the whole stories. In the second and the third times, I read

to find the main idea of the jokes..."

(Subject 1, Interview 4)

The purpose of re-reading while composing punchlines is not the same as the purpose of re-reading to comprehend the first part of the jokes. In fact, the subjects re-read in order to remind themselves and review what they had understood about the jokes. Moreover, the subjects said that, if they were unfamiliar with the situation of the jokes and had not enough language ability to write the punchlines, re-reading could help them to cope with their problems. The example is presented below.

"...joke number 8 was difficult...I solved... by re-reading the story. It helped me to relate the joke with my experience to write the punchline."

(Subject 6, Interview 3)

Connecting Jokes with Own Experiences

Connecting the jokes with own experiences in this study means when the subjects did not have exactly similar knowledge as the provided jokes, but they had some personal experience which might not be directly relevant to the jokes. Then, they used their own experiences to help them to cope with the difficulties as presented below.

The subjects connected the jokes with their own experiences to understand jokes when they found that they were not familiar with the provided joke i.e. the subjects have never been

in the same situation, read or listened to the same or similar jokes. Therefore, they linked their experiences from different situations to the provided jokes to help them comprehend the stories.

"When I read joke 4-6, I had to link the situation of jokes with my own experience which was not the same as the provided jokes but it enabled me to understand the jokes."

(Subject 3, Interview 2)

Then, more than half of the subjects used their own experiences to manage their difficulties while they were writing the punchlines. It is also clear that the use of own experiences helped the subjects to create their own punchlines. In this case, this technique was mostly used to solve the problem about lack of creative ideas.

"...I solved the problem by linking joke number 12 with my own experience. In order to compose creative punchline, I linked the joke to what I read about a party and applied to write punchline, so I used word swinging."

(Subject 4, Interview 4)

Imagining the Scene of Jokes

Imagining the scene of jokes in this study means the subjects made illustration and the scene of the joke stories in their heads to see the events in jokes. This solution was only used in the stage while trying to understand the

provided jokes. As shown in the excerpt below, subject used this technique to understand what happened in the stories appropriately when they were unfamiliar with the jokes.

"...I had to imagine the situation in jokes 1, 2 and 3 because it helped me to understand what happened in the stories appropriately...."

(Subject 1, Interview 1)

Translating

The researcher discovered that the subjects used their L1 to comprehend the first part of jokes and compose the punchlines when they had insufficient language ability. The data below present the students' solution. The use of translation in trying to understand the jokes in this study means that the subjects used L1 as an aid to process L2. Actually, this technique was used when subjects had insufficient language ability. Translating into Thai could help them understand the jokes more easily.

"...I had to think in Thai when reading joke 1, 2, 3...."

(Subject 1, Interview 1)

The use of translating while composing punchlines was employed when the subjects already had an idea of how to complete the punchlines, but could not express their idea in English. They, therefore, translated what they thought in L1 as illustrated in the following excerpt.

"...I didn't know how to express my idea to write the punchlines for joke number 1, 2 and 3. I solved the problem by thinking in Thai first and translated the words into English."

(Subject 2, Interview 1)

Putting Oneself in the Situation in the Jokes

For some subjects who did not have any experience that could be related to the situation in the jokes, they put themselves in the jokes to write the punchlines. This technique was only used in the stage of composing punchlines in order to manage the difficulty of unfamiliarity, insufficient language ability and lack of creativity. As a subject said in the example in the excerpts below, he put himself in the situation and considered what they would say in the punchlines.

"....I solved the problem by supposing that I was in that situation, like in joke number 1 and thought what I would say, if I were that person."

(Subject 3, Interview 1)

Using Keywords

The use of keywords from the first part of the jokes was only used in the stage of composing punchlines and it was another technique that the subjects used to manage the difficulty of insufficient language ability and lack of creative ideas. According to the data from semi-structured interviews, this is what a subject said.

"...I used keywords which are the main words such as...clever and sweet in joke 3 as a part in the punchlines...."

(Subject 1, Interview 1)

To conclude, all of the subjects could write punchlines for jokes by trying to comprehend the situation in the jokes before they went through the writing process. However, they perceived that writing punchlines is difficult because of four difficulties: lack of creative ideas, inappropriate length of jokes, unfamiliarity with jokes and insufficient language ability. They dealt with the difficulty by re-reading the jokes, connecting jokes with their own experiences, imagining the scene of the jokes, translating the jokes, putting themselves in the situation in the jokes and used keywords.

Subjects' Writing Process

The subjects used writing process, i.e. planning, drafting, revising and editing when they attempted to write the punchlines for 15 jokes as presented in table 3.

Table 2 Eight Students' Writing Process in Writing Punchlines

Jokes	Eight Subject's Writing Process			
	Planning	Drafting	Re-writing	
			Revising	Editing
Joke 1	8	8	2	2
Joke 2	8	8	2	2
Joke 3	8	8	1	2
Joke 4	8	8	2	3
Joke 5	8	8	3	3
Joke 6	8	8	3	2
Joke 7	8	8	3	0
Joke 8	8	8	1	3
Joke 9	8	8	1	2
Joke 10	8	8	1	0
Joke 11	8	8	1	0
Joke 12	8	8	2	1
Joke 13	8	8	1	2
Joke 14	8	8	0	2
Joke 15	8	8	0	1
Total of frequency of Writing Process used by Each Subject	120	120	23	25

It is clear that all the subjects always used planning and drafting and some of them used rewriting, i.e. editing and revising. The detail of each writing process is described as follows:

Planning

In this study, planning was the first stage and it refers to setting rough ideas for the punchlines before starting to write. All subjects knew that the joke readers expect enjoyment when they read jokes, so jokes should have a

twist to motivate them to laugh. Therefore, the subjects had a planning stage since they would like to write funny punchlines. As a punchline is usually short compared with other written texts, the subjects revealed that they did not write an outline of a punchline. In fact, they simply planned in their mind what they would put in their own punchlines. Here are some examples of what subjects mentioned.

"After I had read the first part of jokes, I tried to understand what they stories were about, I

organized the idea...and how I would write the punchlines...I didn't write any plan actually before writing punchlines because it was very short..."

(Subject 4, Interview 2)

It can be implied that the subjects did plan what to write but they did not actually write any word or notes when they organized their ideas for the punchlines.

Drafting

After the subjects planned to write punchlines in the previous stage, they wrote their own punchlines immediately. They said that the punchlines were short, so they could write what they had had in mind. The data from semi-structured interview support this idea.

"...I only thought of what I wanted to say or what would happen and I wrote immediately."

(Subject 2, Interview 4)

However, the full process of drafting was not clearly shown in the subjects' writing process because the punchlines were short sentences but the subjects actually had process of drafting for their punchlines after planning to write.

Revising

After the subjects wrote the punchlines, some of them checked whether they needed to clarify

the ideas or re-organize any words in the punchlines. To do so, the subjects imagined themselves as the joke readers so that they may know what and how to change what they had written, as the excerpts below show.

"After I wrote punchlines, I had to check whether the punchlines were relevant to the stories or not. Moreover, it was a chance to re-organize my idea and add some words in my punchlines...after I finished to write the punchlines, I supposed that I was a reader and read my punchlines. I thought that, if it made me laugh, other readers would laugh."

(Subject 1, Interview 1)

It can be concluded that revising helps the subjects to re-organize the ideas in their punchlines. It is noteworthy to say that all subjects were concerned about their readers and they not only knew the purpose of writing but also tried to reach the writing objectives.

Editing

It is found that the subjects edited their punchlines by focusing on grammar mistakes, spelling, and sentence structure because they cared about the accuracy of language. Some illustrations are quoted below.

"I changed grammar mistake and spelling in joke 4 and 5 when I finished writing the punchlines."

(Subject 4, Interview 2)

The findings indicate that the subjects attempted to look for their own grammatical mistakes which are one step of self-directed learning. This might be because they knew that their punchlines would be read and checked by other readers. Having a real reader can be an inspiration for re-writing. However, the subjects revealed that they did not use revising and editing with every joke, because they thought that their punchlines were already suitable.

It was evident that the subjects engaged in several stages in the writing process; planning, drafting, revising and editing to write their own punchlines. Therefore, it means that their writing process in writing punchlines for jokes was similar to the typical writing process for other types of written texts.

Implication and Recommendations

To enable the subjects to understand jokes and write punchlines on their own, the following points should be taken into account.

Length of Jokes: With reference to the result of this study, it is found that too long jokes may contain too many new or unfamiliar words and unfamiliar contexts. Consequently, it was not easy for the subjects to understand some of the joke stories and to write proper punchlines. This is supported by Walakanon, (2002: 76) as he says that too long jokes demotivate subjects to read through the passage. In addition, he continues that short jokes were more favourable

to most of his subjects and made them feel interested to read. However, the findings of this study indicate that too short jokes can also cause difficulty to the subjects due to insufficient information for the subjects to read and imagine the situation of jokes and thus they could neither understand nor create punchlines. To lessen their difficulty caused by inappropriate length of jokes, teachers who select jokes to use in a language class should be aware of the number of words in the jokes. However, considering only the proper number of words is not enough to select the jokes because there are other factors such as types of jokes and language complexity in jokes which the teachers should consider, as will be described further.

Type of Jokes: Although there are several types of jokes like family jokes, school jokes, doctor and patient jokes, the jokes selected for ELT should not include the situations which the students hardly come across such as business jokes and political jokes because unfamiliar contexts will obstruct their comprehensibility. Alderson, (2000: 46), Carrell, (1988: 245) and Pupipat, (2004: 88) support that, when teachers select jokes for their language class, they should consider that their context should not be too far from the students' background knowledge. Another possible way is to encourage students to choose the jokes that they find funny and not difficult to understand in terms of context;

teachers can ask students to create new punchlines (Pecnik, 2001: 3). With reference to this study, the proper types of jokes that are easy for students to understand are animal jokes, family jokes, school jokes, doctor and patient jokes and daily life jokes. However, these jokes should also be considered in terms of language complexity, as discussed in the following topic.

Language Complexity of Jokes: Another factor to consider whether the jokes are difficult to understand or not is the language complexity or the use of vocabulary and sentence structures in jokes. Words of high frequency and uncomplicated structure are appropriate to students who do not have experience in reading jokes in English. In case that there are too many difficult words, teachers should simplify those words by using synonyms or providing definitions (Pupipat, 2004: 88), otherwise students might ignore those words which may be the keywords of the jokes (Walakanon, 2002: 76). However, too much simplification may distort the use of language. Therefore, it is better for the teachers to anticipate their students' difficulty in comprehending jokes concerning the language.

Language Preparation: Another way to solve the problem of language proficiency is to have language preparation especially for weak students. Teachers should teach students reading strategies such as reading for main ideas, finding keywords and guessing meanings from

context clues. Alternatively, teachers can have students work together to share ideas about the jokes before they create the punchlines individually. To do this, students should have enough time for the reading stage before they write the punchlines. Moreover, language complexity should be simplified.

Recommendation for Further Studies

This study reveals that some students had language difficulties such as vocabulary and sentence structure, which are common problems among Thai students. Therefore, it is interesting for other researchers to investigate whether jokes can be used to train students to get the meaning of unknown words by using context clues. Moreover, it is interesting to find out what other possible problems the students might encounter and how they solve the problems. Another interesting research study is whether we can encourage students to learn culture through jokes. In this study, many types of jokes such as political jokes and ethnic jokes were not included since these jokes contain cultural bias. These jokes may be difficult for students to understand. However, it is interesting to find out whether these jokes can be used with advanced learners to see how they gain the knowledge of social and cultural aspects of other countries.

Conclusion

This study aims to investigate how students

write punchlines for jokes. The study was done with a group of undergraduate students at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi who had learned about writing and creative thinking in their compulsory English course while undertaking this study. Eight subjects were selected by voluntary basis and trained in the components of jokes and how to write punchlines.

Then, fifteen jokes were used in the real procedure. When the subjects finished writing the punchlines for each three jokes, they were interviewed about how they wrote their punchlines individually. According to the findings, the subjects went through the writing process: planning, drafting, revising and editing for writing punchlines. They, however, had some difficulties in trying to comprehend the jokes and in writing the punchlines. The data gained reveal that most of their difficulties were interrelated and they used various techniques. However, it can be suggested that jokes are interesting materials for language teaching such as they provide funny and relaxing contexts. Furthermore, jokes can be exploited to motivate students to promote their thinking skill. Finally, it is recommended that the use of jokes to teach context clues and cultural aspects can be further studied.

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Appendix A: Jokes for Introducing Punchlines

Joke 1

One Sunday, a preacher told his congregation, "I have good news and bad news." The good news is that we have enough money to pay for your new building program. *"The bad news is that it is still out there in your pockets."*

www.jokeandhumor.com/index.html

preacher is someone whose job is to give religious speeches or lead religious ceremonies in some Christian churches.

congregation is a group of people gathered together for a religious service.

Joke 2

Lunch

The teacher of the Earth Science class was lecturing on map reading.

After explaining about latitude, longitude, degrees and minutes the teacher asked,

"Suppose I asked you to meet me for lunch at 23 degrees, 4 minutes north latitude and 45 degrees, 15 minutes east longitude...?"

After a confused silence, a voice volunteered, "I guess you'd be eating alone."

www.jokeandhumor.com/index.html

Joke 3

Jane: Do you like this cake?

Sally: OK! Where did you buy it?

Jane: I made it by myself. Is it delicious?

Sally: I think, if it's possible, you should buy it.

Jane: Why?

Sally: "You taste your cake first."

www.jokeandhumor.com/index.html

Appendix B: Jokes for Training writing punchlines

Joke 1

Elephant keeper: "My elephant isn't well. Do you know a good animal doctor?"

Zookeeper"....."
....."

www.justjoking.com

Joke 2

Sam: "Can you see the movie screen clearly?"

Pam: "Yes, thank you."

Sam: "No one is blocking your view?"

Pam: "Oh no, I can see perfectly."

Sam: "And you're comfortable?"

Pam: "Very comfortable."

Sam "....."
....."

www.justjoking.com

Appendix C: Examples of Jokes for Data and Subjects' Punchlines

Joke 3

Brother: "Why are you so clever?"

Sister: "I take clever pills."

Brother: "Let me have some, then."

Sister: "Take two of these."

Brother: "These aren't pills-they're just sweets."

Sister: "....."
....."

www.justjoking.com

pill is a small piece of solid medicine that you swallow with water: sleeping/contraceptive/vitamin pills.

Students' punchlines

Subject 1 Oh! My brother! you are clever already. You know, it is only sweet.

Subject 2 "Oh! You are still stupid, it is not sweet, but it's sour."

Subject 3 "Now, you are clever, you know, it is candy."

Joke 4

Teacher: John, how do you spell "crocodile"?

John: "K - R - O - K - O - D - A - I - L"

Teacher: No, that's wrong.

John: Maybe it's wrong, but "....."
....."

Students' punchlines

Subject 1 Maybe it's wrong, but "If I didn't spell like this, how I know, it's wrong."

Subject 2 Maybe it's wrong, but "It's still CROCODILE."

Subject 3 Maybe it's wrong, but "KROKODAIL" is new species."

Joke 7

Little Johnny was playing in the garden and looking angrily into the sunlight with half-shut eyes.

His mother came out and said "Why don't you move out of the sun?"

Johnny answered.....
....."

www.jokepalace.com/main

Students' punchlines

Subject 1 "I think, I don't need to escape, because I came first."

Subject 2 "No", "Why didn't the sun escape me first?"

Subject 3 "I am not dead walker, I am not afraid the sun."

Joke 8

A man was walking down the street when he saw a little boy with a dog.

"Does your dog bite?" he asked.

"No", said the boy.

The man bent down to pat the dog and was immediately bitten.

"I thought you said your dog didn't bite", he complained.

The boy said, ".....
....."

www.jokepalace.com/main

Students' punchlines

Subject 1 "Sure", it is not my dog", "I don't know whose' s dog?"

Subject 2 "The dog didn't bite but I didn't say you can touch its head."

Subject 3 "My dog never bite but it isn't my dog."

Appendix D: Form of Evaluation of Punchlines

Criteria to evaluate punchline for the joke

Evaluator 1 2 3 Subject number

Score

5 = the most 4 = more 3 = average

2 = less 1 = the lest

Give the score for subjects' punchline by

following the criteria below.

Criteria

		Relevance	Communication	Creativity	Fun
Punchline of Joke					
Number	1	_____	_____	_____	_____
	2	_____	_____	_____	_____
	3	_____	_____	_____	_____
	4	_____	_____	_____	_____
	5	_____	_____	_____	_____
	6	_____	_____	_____	_____
	7	_____	_____	_____	_____
	8	_____	_____	_____	_____
	9	_____	_____	_____	_____
	10	_____	_____	_____	_____
	11	_____	_____	_____	_____
	12	_____	_____	_____	_____
	13	_____	_____	_____	_____
	14	_____	_____	_____	_____
	15	_____	_____	_____	_____

Appendix E: Questions of Semi-Structured Interview

1. Have you ever read the provided jokes in Thai or English before? If so, please tell the number of jokes. Did you think, if you have read the provided jokes, it has the effect with writing punchlines?
2. How many times did you read the first part of jokes before you completed them? Why?
3. Did you imagine the scene when you read the jokes? How does this behavior help you? Why? Please tell the number of jokes.
4. Did you organize the idea before you

write punchlines? How?

5. Did you note down or write what you want before you write the punchlines? Please explain.
6. Did you think in Thai before you complete the jokes? Please tell the number of jokes.
7. Did you use vocabulary, phrase or sentence to be a part of punchlines? Please explain.
8. From the provided jokes, did you think what numbers of jokes were difficult for you? Why? How could you manage the difficulties in

writing punchlines?

9. Did you relate the situation and your previous experience when you read the jokes? Please explain.

10. Did you re-read or check the stories when you finished punchlines? Why?

11. (From item 10) Did you change or

re-write your punchlines after you complete jokes? How?

12. Did you think, what make you laugh, when you read the jokes? How can you make the jokes in order to motivate the readers to laugh?



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