

# **Hong Kong Advanced and Intermediate English Learners' Comprehension and Appreciation of English Language-based Jokes**

**Minda Fan Wing Yan**

**(Supervisor: Professor Jookyong Jung)**

## **Abstract**

The use of humour or wordplay in English classroom has been advocated by second language (L2) scholars for years. Yet, students' appreciation of English humour has seldom been researched. This study investigates Hong Kong advanced and intermediate English learners' comprehension and appreciation of English language-based jokes. Participants were 51 Hong Kong local university students with 30 of them as advanced English learners and 21 of them as intermediate English learners. Participants had to read 20 English language-based jokes, which were classified into four types, namely lexical, syntactic, morphological, and phonological jokes. Participants had to state whether they understood each of these jokes or not and provide a humour rating on a 6-point Likert scale. The results showed that Hong Kong advanced English learners performed significantly better than intermediate English learners in comprehending lexical, syntactic, and phonological jokes. However, there were no significant differences between advanced and the intermediate English learners on their humour ratings. There was also no correlation between ease of comprehension on language-based jokes and humour ratings. The findings of this study reveal that there is a pedagogical need to incorporate English humour in English language classrooms to enhance L2 learners' English communicative competence.

## **Reflection**

As an English major and psychology minor student, this capstone project allows me to revisit some of the theories and concepts I have learnt from the previous courses, such as the morphological structure, polysemy in *Lexical Studies*; lexical access, lexical and syntactic ambiguity in *Psycholinguistics* course. Apart from helping me to consolidate the knowledge I have learnt over the past four years; this capstone project is also beneficial to my future career. I am interested in the field of event management, which requires frequent communication with people from all walks of life. Understanding the theories of humour and how people perceive jokes made me know what kind of jokes I should or should not tell when I interact with people in my workplace. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Professor Jookyong Jung for her guidance and support for my capstone project over the past few months.