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**An Investigation of EFL Students' Difficulties in the Listening
Comprehension of Homophonic Puns**

The Case of Third Year LMD Students of English at Jijel University

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillments of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in
Didactics of Foreign Languages

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Declaration

We hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “An Investigation of EFL Students’ Difficulties in the Listening Comprehension of Homophonic Puns” is our own work and all the sources we have used have been acknowledged by means of references. We also certify that we have not copied or plagiarized the work of other students or researchers partially or fully. In case any material is not documented, we shall be responsible for the consequences.

Signature

Date

Dedication

*To my beloved parents, my source of support and inspiration, for being beside me
in every time I needed you.*

*To my wonderful sisters 'Ahlam' 'Selma' 'Hana' and 'Abir', for the things you have
done for me, you are really the best sisters I could ever have.*

*To my dear brother 'Nassim', and my brother-in-law, to whom I owe my success,
I wish you all the best.*

To my source of joy, my nephews 'Yazen' and 'Ghaith'

To my best friends 'Karima' 'Assia' and 'Youssra'

To my friend 'Kanza'

*To my soulmate, the cutest partner 'Roumaïssa', who has always been there for me,
who was very supportive and complementary in this work, who never fails to make
me laugh, thank you for your presence, Sabiha!*

To all of those who have always been there for me, and believed in me

I dedicate this work.

Asma

In the name of Allah, The most Gracious, the most Merciful

I dedicate this humble work to:

My dearest mother "Leila" and my dear father "Abdelmalek" who always encourage me. You have been my source of success, Support, and happiness,

To my dear brothers "Khaled" "Amin" and "Soufiane" for their support,

To my sister -in- law "Zaineb" for her support,

To my lovely and sweet nephews, "Yazene" & "Yakine".

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Abstract

This study attempts to investigate the comprehension difficulties EFL learners encounter when listening to homophonic puns, as well as the relationship between their vocabulary knowledge and homophonic puns' comprehension. The research study sample was randomly selected from third year LMD students of English at Jijel University. To fulfill the purpose of this study, a survey was directed to 36 participants. In which test was used to conduct students' comprehension of homophonic puns and an open-ended test was used to test their vocabulary comprehension after listening to ten homophonic puns recorded by a native speaker. Findings of both tests revealed that third year EFL students face difficulties in understanding homophonic puns due to many factors such as cultural barriers, limited exposure to puns, linguistic knowledge, context, lack of vocabulary input, ...etc. The results also showed that there is a positive relationship between vocabulary knowledge of learners and their comprehension of homophonic puns, however; the relationship is relatively weak, which could be attributed to other factors that may influence students' listening comprehension of homophonic puns.

Key words: EFL students, Listening Comprehension, Humor, Pun, Homophonic Pun.

List of Abbreviations

- 1- **CA:** The Comprehension Approach
- 2- **CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching
- 3- **EFL:** English as a Foreign Language
- 4- **EL:** English Language
- 5- **ELL:** English Language Learning
- 6- **ESL:** English as Second Language
- 7- **FL:** Foreign Language
- 8- **FLT:** Foreign Language Teaching
- 9- **GTVH:** General Theory of Verbal Humor
- 10- **KR:** Knowledge Resources
- 11- **L2:** Second Language
- 12- **MCQs:** Multiple Choice Questions
- 13- **Q:** Question
- 14- **S.m:** secondary meaning
- 15- **SLA:** Second Language Acquisition
- 16- **SOp:** Script Opposition
- 17- **SOv:** Script Overlap
- 18- **Syn:** Synonym
- 19- **TPR:** Total Physical Response

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General Introduction

Listening among all four skills of language is widely regarded as the most challenging and complex skill to master. Most of the foreign language (FL) learners encounter difficulties in understanding various forms of spoken language from native speakers. Furthermore, English puns, particularly homophonic puns, are often considered challenging for non-native users, including English Language (EL) learners. Nevertheless, incorporating homophonic puns into Foreign Language teaching /Learning (FLT/FLL) can be an entertaining and enjoyable way to improve different aspects of language, primarily vocabulary and listening skills.

Background of the Study

Humor can take many forms including jokes, irony, puns, teases, etc., however; the humor of puns is based on play on words. Puns have been a subject of interest for many researchers, educators, applied linguists, psychologists, etc., because it can be found in daily life- in newspapers, headlines, billboards, websites (Lems,2013). “A pun can be defined as a humorous verbalization that has (prototypical) two interpretations couched in purposeful ambiguity of a word or a string of words” (Dynel, 2009, p.1289). In a similar vein, “Punning is an art of harmonious jingling upon words, which, passing in at the ears, and falling upon the diaphragm” (Sheridan, 1719, p. 2). According to Bell (2002), puns element’s ambiguity can come from homography, homophony, homonymy. Accordingly, puns can be divided into three main types; homographic, homonymic, and homophonic puns. This research sheds light on the latter (homophonic puns) which is also called “wordplay” which plays on the similarity in sound between words. Leech (1969) stated that “homophonic puns occur when words differ in the way they are written; orthographic difference but pronounced alike” (p.209-210).

Homophonic puns have been studied in relation to different theories such as relevance theory, General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH)...etc.

A study has been done by Attardo (1994) in his book “Linguistic Theories of Humor”. He defined the properties of punning utterances namely the “Disjunction” of meaning i.e., the element causing a passage from one interpretation to another, and the “Conjunction” of form i.e., the ambiguous element, in order to prove the fundamental role context played in puns comprehension.

Another study was carried out by Abduraziq and Abduraziq (2018) aimed to investigate the comprehension difficulties that face learners in semantics particularly when they are using homophones in EL. The researchers set up the following hypotheses: Second year students cannot use and understand homophones in writing; teaching homophones are not sufficiently covered by teachers of English. To conduct data, the researchers used a questionnaire for the teachers while a test was used for students. The results showed that the students were not able to use homophones in the written text, and that teaching homophones was not sufficiently covered by teachers.

Statement of the Problem

Play on words has been considered as an essential and useful part in learning and acquiring EL. However, the aforementioned studies and theories are mostly focused on the perceptive mechanism and the semantic of homophonic puns, another interesting issue that is worth considering is listening comprehension of homophonic puns. To put the issue into the right perspective, EFL students find difficulties when listening to this type of humor.

Based on the previous features, this research is designed to investigate and describe EFL learners’ difficulties in the listening comprehension of homophonic puns. Moreover, the

focus of this study is comprised of the relationship between learners' vocabulary knowledge and their understanding of homophonic puns.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the difficulties third year students face in the listening comprehension of homophonic puns?
- 2) What are the factors that cause difficulty in understanding homophonic puns?
- 3) How can lack of vocabulary hinder the listening comprehension in understanding homophonic puns?

Research Assumptions

This research is built around the following assumptions:

- It is assumed that EFL learners face difficulties in the listening comprehension of homophonic puns.
- It is assumed that there is a relationship between listeners' vocabulary input and their comprehension of homophonic puns.

Aims of Research

The current study aims at investigating the EFL students' comprehension difficulties and challenges that arise while listening to homophonic puns, as well as the reasons that lead to these difficulties. Moreover, it aims to explore the impact of limited vocabulary on EFL learners' comprehension of this type of wordplay.

Methodology

The proposed research is based on the mixed methods approach. To conduct data, the researchers used a Multiple-Choice Questions (MCQs) and an open-ended test as instruments for collecting students' answers, therefore their understanding of homophonic puns, and their vocabulary comprehension.

The test consists of ten homophonic puns selected from different websites presented to the participants by using a loudspeaker. Moreover, the researchers can identify the points of difficulty and its reasons, and the relationship of their comprehension of the puns with their vocabulary input.

Significance of the Study

The importance of this study lies at investigating the practical issues that both teachers and learners face when implementing wordplay in the learning and teaching process. The major focus is on SLA in relation to punning theories such as ambiguity, Relevance Theory, GTVH to provide some opportunities that may develop a framework that can be used in EFL teaching.

One main interesting point is the fact that this type of puns can be applied in the EFL classrooms as a strategy to improve students' listening skill and to enhance their vocabulary store. Moreover, teachers' sense of humor plays a major role in reducing boredom and creating a relaxed atmosphere for students' entertainment during the sessions.

Structure of the Study

The present dissertation is made up of two main chapters. The first chapter represents the literature review, which is entitled "Listening Comprehension and Homophonic Puns". It

is made up of two sections. The first section addresses the listening skill and the listening comprehension where the different processes, models, types, also current approaches to listening comprehension and the difficulties are described. The second one is devoted to “Puns and Homophonic Puns”. It tackles the definition of humor and its types, definition of puns, puns processing, classification, and the importance of puns in FL context.

The second chapter entitled “the Field of Study” consists of the method and methodology through which the study was carried out, population and sampling data collection procedures, data analysis of students’ test, then the discussion of the results.

Chapter One: Literature Review

This chapter covers the theoretical background related to listening skill and homophonic puns. It is divided into two sections. The first section deals with listening skill and listening comprehension, it tackles the difference between listening and hearing, definition of listening, its processes, types, models, and types of listeners. Moreover, this section is also devoted to listening comprehension, its definition, current approaches to listening comprehension and the factors that affect it. It ends up with major problems in listening comprehension. On the other hand, the second section casts light on humor and homophonic puns by providing their definitions, types, and their implementations in EFL contexts.

SECTION ONE: Listening and Listening Comprehension

1. Listening Skill

Researchers considered listening as the most critical skill, it has great importance in EL learning/teaching context. Students spend most of their time functioning listening in classes. “Listening is the basic skill in language learning. Without effective listening skill, learners will never learn to communicate effectively. In fact over 50% of the time that student spend functioning in a foreign language will be devoted to listening” (Nunan, 1998, p.1). However, it is often neglected in social interaction where “the speaker rather than listener is the center of attention” (Siegel, 2015), and in FL classes by teachers and researchers “Listening is a fundamental language skill, but it is often ignored by foreign and second language teachers” (Rebecca, 1993). The reason why the other skills got the priority over listening was due to the “assessing listening ability” problems and lack in teaching methodology (Siegel, 2015). In addition to the belief that listeners learn listening automatically and “picking up” language is sufficient to teach listening; passive process (Miller, 2003).

1.1. Difference between Hearing and Listening

In order to deal with the term listening in a FLT and FLL context, it is necessary to ask the following question: What is the difference between ‘Listening’ and ‘Hearing’?

The two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, however; there is a clear distinction between them. According to Hamilton (1999) “hearing is with the ear whereas listening is with the mind” (as cited in Shiferaw, Tiruneh & Mengistu, 2017). That is to say, hearing refers only to receive the sound, while listening is a mental process that takes effort, active involvement, and concentration in order to make sense of what we hear. For instance,

you can hear the voices outside your room but you do not listen, or maybe you listen for seconds then you go back to your business. Thus, hearing is only “a precursor” for listening. Similarly, Rost (2002) argues that “although both hearing and listening involve sound perception, the difference in terms reflects a degree of intention” (p.27). This means that listening is guided by our degree of intention where intention in this context refers to go deeper and pay a close focus on what you hear. Fiske and Taylor (as cited in Rost, 2016) reported that attention is the beginning of involvement which represents the main distinction between them “Listening requires intentional involvement, while hearing does not” (Rost,2016, p.10).

In short, hearing is simply a physiological process of perceiving sounds through the ear, listening, in contrast, is the conscious process of understanding, analyzing, and responding to the perceived sounds.

1.2. Definition of Listening

Although the vital role listening plays in foreign language learning and oral communication, many researchers have described listening as the “Cinderella skill” (Mendelsohn, 1994), “the forgotten skill” (Burlley-Allen, 1995). Unlike the other skills, listening was regarded as a passive skill (Brown, 2011; Field, 2008; Rost, 2016). However, Wilson (2008) argued that “Listening is not passive. Indeed, it is extremely active, but all the activities happen in the mind. Listeners guess, predict, infer, criticize, and above all, interpret.” (p. 21). In other words, listening is not only receiving information or sounds, it includes performing some mental activities. From learners’ perception, Field (2008) reports that if you ask students to rate the four skills_ speaking, writing, reading, and listening_ in terms of

difficulty, listening will be the most insecure and difficult skill. They are unable to develop their listening ability.

It is assumed that there is no agreement on an exact, clear, acceptable definition of listening “No one theory about what listening is” (Witkin, 1990, p.7). However, a large number of researchers have attempted to define the term. According to Brown (2011) “listening is making sense of aural input” (para.1). Making sense, according to Brown, is to make a connection between our linguistic knowledge (grammar, syntax, semantic, vocabulary, sounds, ...) and nonlinguistic knowledge (topical knowledge, contextual knowledge) to understand the speech transmitted to us. So, listening is an active process. In addition, the International Listening Association (2007) defined the term as “the process of receiving, construct meaning from, and responding to spoken and/or nonverbal message” (p.175). Listening then refers to the process of actively processing and making meaning of what we hear.

To sum up, listening is a hard skill to master, but it is still a very important skill for FL learners due to the key role it plays to achieve an effective communication and how it can enable learners to gain information and input (both inside and outside classroom) to acquire the language knowledge needed and develop their proficiency.

1.3. Listening Process

Listening process consists of five stages: receiving, attending, perceiving, interpreting, and responding.

1.3.1. Receiving

According to Wolvin (2009), this stage is represented by the ear, it is based on the perception of sound waves by creating a vibration in the middle ear, then pressure waves will be transmitted as sound signals to the brain. That is to say, in this process initially listeners gather information needed for listening, it also depends on physical hearing of a message caused by the sound waves stimulating the ear's sensory receptors.

1.3.2. Attending

Brownell (1996) noted that "Attention determines which auditory or visual stimuli are processed, if you do not pay attention to something it is as if it never existed. Attending to a stimulus, whether auditory or visual involves following its patterns overtime against a background of ongoing activity in the same medium." (p.77).

Additionally, Rost (2002) claims that "attention has identifiable physical correlates; specific areas of the brain that are activated in response to a decision to attend to a particular source or aspect of input." (p.18). To put it another way, listeners should listen attentively to the speaker when they are engaged in a conversation.

1.3.3. Perceiving

According to Wolvin (2009), this process relies on two factors which are frame of reference and empathy, the listeners' background, experience, roles, and mental and physical states constitute the perceptual filter, when s/he is aware of how the frame of reference shapes his listening behavior can function appropriately, which aids in extending his knowledge of other communicators. That is to say, this process is based on the selection, the organization, and the interpretation of information.

1.3.4. Interpreting

Steinberg (1994) noted that “Interpreting in the listening process implies that listeners are able to ascertain the emotional meaning the speaker attaches to the messages by his use of nonverbal signs such as tone of voice and body movement” (p.71). Essentially, the listener attempts to identify and decode the sound, as well as extract the meaning from the message, then interpret what they hear.

1.3.5. Responding

At this phase of responding, Steinberg (1994) stated that listeners complete the process of listening through providing feedback to the speaker. Here, feedback represents a prerequisite for effective listening. Furthermore, it encompasses all the verbal and nonverbal messages that a listener consciously or unconsciously sends to the speaker in order to respond to his message. In other words, at this process listeners plan their reply as it is usual to react to the speakers’ message in some way through providing verbal and nonverbal reactions to what he/she hears, as well nonverbal signals can include gestures, facial expressions, eye movements in order to interpret a message correctly.

1.4. Top-down vs Bottom-up Models

“Top-down model emphasizes the use of previous knowledge in processing a text rather than relying upon the individual sounds and words” (Flowerdew&Miller, 2005,p.25). Top-down model centers on deepening the understanding of ideas and making stronger interpretations, whereas bottom-up model focuses on sounds perception, words recognition, and syntactic structures more accurately. (Rost and Wilson, 2013).

In Lynch's perspective (2009), top-down model is necessary for language learners to completely apply and make use of their prior knowledge (stored information) to ameliorate their listening skills, also bottom-up model is essential which help learners to extract the meaning from the input they hear. Buck (2001) noted that "Bottom up view sees language comprehension as a process of passing through a number of consecutive stages, or levels, and the output of each stage becomes the input for the next higher stage. It is, as it were, a one-way street" (p.2).

In brief, Top-down model refers to having a general idea about the listening text, in other words, it focuses on the overall picture of it, it involves the use of prior knowledge to make sense of what listeners are listening to. On the other hand, the bottom-up model is based on linguistic knowledge, identifying grammatical forms, and looking at the individual units or elements. Besides that, listeners must pay close attention to every detail.

1.5. Types of Listening

Learning is determined by the situations learners find themselves in, thus, different situations require different types of listening; in classroom and real-world situations. Most researchers like to classify listening into two main types: "Extensive" and "Intensive".

Because they have special importance on the language learning process, learners can get the advantage by making a combination between the two types to gain valuable input (Harmer, 1998).

1.5.1. Intensive Listening

It takes place inside the classroom under the teacher's supervision where students use audio/audio-visual materials. Intensive Listening is more concentrated, and less relaxed, its

goal is to get more detailed understanding and focus on a certain detail in the text (bottom-up activity). “Intensive listening refers to listening closely, intending to hear precise sounds, words, phrases, grammatical units, and pragmatic units.” (Rost,2016, p.170). In other words, learners should pay close attention to focus on specific language segments (phonology, syntax, lexis, grammatical rules, etc.), it requires students to understand every sentence and word.

Intensive listening is dedicated to formal and instructional purposes, where teachers are responsible to choose the materials, topics, and genres to be used to teach listening such as short audio clips, short videos, interviews, story-telling, teacher reading aloud, and other activities. Rost (2016) added that even intensive is not required in everyday situations, accurate perception is useful to understand people’s feelings, thoughts, and perceptions.

Consequently, intensive listening plays an essential role in increasing listening proficiency, it has to deal with making a detailed analysis of what is said.

1.5.2. Extensive Listening

Unlike intensive listening, extensive listening usually takes place outside the classroom when listeners work on their own and for pleasure (‘self-learning’ or ‘autonomous learning’) by encouraging listeners to benefit from what the real world provides, mainly linguistic information (Field, 2008). This does not mean that teachers are not interested in this type, they are restricted by the instruction. However, in the classroom, teachers can apply this type of listening through asking students what they prefer to listen to or by providing appropriate tapes in different levels and topics and asking them to talk about the ones they like and enjoy. (Harmer, 1998).

Rost (2016) noted that “extensive listening refers to listening for an expanded period of time, while focusing on global meaning, comprehension building, and critical thinking.” (p.81). Extensive listening then takes a long period of time, its goal is to gain the general idea and understanding of the text (top-down processing).

Extensive listening activities can include listening to international radio, podcasts, films, novels, TV programs, and other sources of target language in everyday environment.

Ultimately, in extensive listening listeners are not obliged to understand every sentence or worry about some points being unclear, they just need to understand the content.

1.6. Types of Listeners

Learners vary in terms of their proficiency level, competence, and comprehension ability. Accordingly, Rost (1994) classified listeners into three main types which are described as follows:

1.6.1. Competent Listeners

The first type, also called Expert Listeners, refers to those who have a high L2 listening ability level. The listeners of this type are described to have the following characteristics:

- Understanding all speech styles.
- They can react appropriately in the target community and with other native speakers.
- They can use both top-down and bottom-up listening strategies effectively and where they are needed.
- They listen with critical comprehension.
- They can comprehend most of the ambiguous concepts and expressions presented in the target language.

1.6.2. Listener of Modest Ability

The second type is described as follows “The listener can react to the different contexts and social situations in the target culture but often not appropriately.” (Rost, 1994, p.138). Accordingly, listeners of modest ability are able to understand only certain speech styles. They may not understand some complex and ambiguous expressions used by native speakers. For this reason, they are unable to interact effectively with the target community.

1.6.3. Listener of Limited Ability

The last type refers to the listeners with low levels of proficiency. Listeners in this type could not understand most of the speech styles, only the simple and clear ones. They are unable to comprehend ambiguous concepts as well. Moreover, listeners of limited ability cannot interact appropriately in the target communities and social contexts because they are unable to use listening strategies, bottom-up and top-down, effectively. Rost (1994) in this sense stated “The listener is unable to sustain understanding in an interaction, display limited range of listener responses” (p.138).

2. Listening Comprehension

2.1. Definition

The term listening comprehension is one of the receptive skills. It gained much importance in EFL learning and teaching and was a major concern for many SLA researchers, however; recent studies indicate that listening is an active and more complex process rather than a simple one. In this regard, Richards and Schmidt (2010) expressed the following:

Listening comprehension is the process of understanding speech in a first or second language. The study of listening comprehension process in second language learning

focuses on the role of individual linguistic units (e.g., phonemes, words, grammatical structures) as well as the role of the listener's expectations, the situation and context, background knowledge and the topic. (p.344)

According to Nadig (2013), listening comprehension processes require understanding different listening passages, it includes comprehending the meaning of individual words, distinguishing speech sounds, and understanding the syntax of sentences (as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

Similarly, O'Malley, Chamot, and Kupper "listening comprehension is an active and conscious process in which the listener constructs meaning by using cues from contextual information and from existing knowledge." (As cited in Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011.p. 19).

Ultimately, listening comprehension plays a vital role in the field of language teaching and learning, as it is essential for learners to foster effective communication and make them better communicators.

2.2. Current Approaches to Listening Comprehension

2.2.1. Diagnostic Approach

Hunter (1979) stated that effective teaching requires a diagnostic approach, which looks for certain traits, actions, skills, or aspects.

According to Valenica (1991), diagnostic teaching is an approach that combines assessment and instructions which first assesses the instructs. Similarly, field (2008) pointed out that diagnostic teaching is an effective approach that provides help for learners to learn, to detect, comprehend, and correct misconceptions on their own. In other words, it aims to support and help students when they encounter difficulties while listening, as well as, it tests

the students' listening comprehension, that is to help them comprehend what went wrong with their listening and how it can be fixed. By the same token, Nemtchinova (2013) asserted that this approach aims to raise students' awareness of the listening processes and foster their listening attitudes they can use when facing difficulties. Along similar lines, it stimulates discussion and interaction with native speakers through listening in order to expand communicative contexts.

2.2.2. The Comprehension Approach

The comprehension approach (CA) is used in listening comprehension to test students' comprehension, First, the teacher starts by motivating and preparing the students for listening, Second, students are asked to listen to a recorded passage about three minutes, then checking their understanding through a comprehension task. If the answer is correct the teacher assume that understanding has been achieved. However, if a wrong answer is given, the difficult part will be replayed." The presentation can be made more learner-friendly by playing the recording in short sections; similarly, the comprehension exercise might take the form of a task rather than a set of questions." (Field,2009, p.26).

Field (2009) pointed out some strengths and weaknesses of the CA as follow:

2.2.2.1. Strengths of CA

Exposure and experience: Learners need much more exposure to the target language to improve their listening, basically they will develop the ability to figure out ways which help them to deal with listening tasks and forming some hypotheses to what was heard, especially that one of the characteristics of a competent listener is the ability to process spoken input in a highly automatic way which can be achieved only by extensive experience. Moreover,

instructors should expose learners over time to a wide range of accents, voices, text-types and degrees of ‘authenticity’.

The ability to pass exams: International tests of listening frequently adopt the CA principles as well as its methodology due to the fact that the questions are easy to score.

2.2.2.2. Weaknesses of the CA

More practice versus better listening: It is quite obvious that the CA gives more importance to listening experiences, it focuses also on students’ listening practice. However, it was criticized due to the fact that it does not provide listeners with survival techniques in order to solve problems of understanding, also it fails to determine whether the methodology used is effective to achieve some goals.

CA versus Communicative language teaching (CLT): CA has a teacher-centered methodology which make students feel isolated and may get bored “The atmosphere in a listening class often approximates more closely to that of an exam center than to that of a forum for communicative practice of the second language.” (p.31).

Overall, it might be said that the main focus of the diagnostic approach is on the process, since it helps to detect learners’ difficulties and problems in listening. Moreover, learners based on learning from their own mistakes, not only receive what the teacher had explained, as well as it seeks to raise students’ awareness of their listening process. On the contrary, the CA focuses on the product, it aims to test students’ comprehension and also it helps them to develop the ability to deal with listening tasks.

2.3. Factors Influencing Listening Comprehension

Listening comprehension can be influenced by many factors that can be related to the listener, the speaker, or to the nature of incoming input. Here are some of these factors.

2.3.1. Input

Input is a very important component in FLL. It is the primary source available to construct language comprehension (Long, 1996; Gass, 1997). Input received by second language (L2) learners can be oral or written. In listening input refers to the incoming speech. Input includes phonology, vocabulary, grammar rules, semantics, etc.

Krashen (1985) claimed that in order to acquire a target language, the incoming input should be comprehensible by the reader and listener. His 'Input Hypothesis' claims that language can be learnt only when learners are exposed to comprehensible input. If they can understand the message they receive, they will be able to develop their language abilities in the four skills.

Accordingly, in EFL classes teachers should provide lectures that consist of input that is slightly above the learner's current level 'i+1' where 'i' refers to the learner's current level (neither too easy nor too difficult). Appropriate input leads to appropriate listening understanding.

2.3.2. Schema

Brown and Yule (1983) defined schema as "the organized background knowledge which leads us to expect or predict aspects in our interpretation of discourse" (p.248). In other words, listener based on his/her prior knowledge to make predictions and expectations about what is said. In addition, cognitive schema "constrain the production and comprehension of extended discourse" (Rost, 1990, p. 17).

Prior knowledge assists listener to process the speech more meaningfully, stated by Anderson and Lynch (2000). In brief, lack in background (schemata) can affect negatively on the listening comprehension process.

2.3.3. Working Memory

Working memory is another main factor that can affect the listening comprehension process. According to Clark and Clark (1977), “Hearers take in the raw speech and retain a phonological representation of it in ‘Working Memory’” (as cited in Rost, 1990).

To illustrate, the effect working memory has on L2 listening comprehension. Friedman, Miyake, and Osaka (1998) explored how working memory influences syntactic comprehension. The results showed that subjects with higher working memory capacity were able to use syntactic cues in the comprehension process. They concluded, working memory capacity contributed to listening comprehension through the appropriate use of syntactic cues (as cited in Friedman and Miyake, 1998).

2.4. Listening comprehension difficulties

2.4.1. The Listeners’ Limited Vocabulary

Ritchards and Renandya (2002) expressed the following:

Vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis of how well learners speak, listen, read and write without an extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary, learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them. (p.255)

In other words, having a rich vocabulary knowledge is a key element to better listening comprehension, but learners who have insufficient vocabulary due to lack of exposure to listening conversation, this will give a negative effect in listening ability as well as, it affects their performance.

2.4.2. Lack of Grammatical Knowledge

Although there are a range of research argue that there is a relation between language comprehension and grammar knowledge, the importance of grammar factor on listening comprehension has been less investigated (Kurita, 2012).

Moreover, there has been a conflict about the impact of grammar factor on listening comprehension. “Linguistic structure of the sentence affects the processing time” (Scovel, 1998, p.66). In addition to Anderson (2009) who suggested that knowledge of EL structure allows the listener to grasp the meaning of what is said. Dewi’s (2017) study on eighty English students supports this view. His study aimed to investigate the effect of grammar knowledge on listeners’ listening comprehension. A listening test of TOEFL by Philips and grammar test by Azar were used respectively to conduct data of listeners’ listening comprehension and students’ grammatical knowledge. Then, a Tukey test was used to analyze the data. The finding showed that grammar knowledge had an effect on the listening comprehension process. In contrast to this view, Mecartty (2000) argued that knowledge does not contribute significantly to either listening or reading comprehension.

To conclude, both spoken and written language are made up through the construction of words by speaker and hearer. Thus, the lack of grammar knowledge may disrupt the comprehension process.

2.4.3. Lack of Prior Knowledge and Proficiency

Even though the construct ‘language proficiency’ has been used by many researchers to investigate foreign language listening comprehension, different ways are used to measure it (e.g., TOEFL test). It is known that listeners with low listening proficiency face problems in interpreting, understanding, and responding to what is said. This leads to communicative breakdowns.

Listener’ prior knowledge plays a vital role in the comprehension process. Top-down process, which refers to the use of prior knowledge, activates the comprehension process (Scovel, 1998, p.67-68). Without prior knowledge understanding the speech can be extremely difficult. To illustrate, a famous experiment reported by Scovel (1998). The participants asked to read/listen to incoherent passages. Most of the participants found it difficult to recall exactly the passage because the information failed to fit readers’/listeners’ schema. This experience confirmed that listener’s prior knowledge (schemata) helps to comprehend the speech. Thus, listeners with rich prior knowledge are more able to understand incoming speech than those with a lack of it.

2.4.4. Cultural Barriers

Cultural knowledge has a crucial role in facilitating EFL listening comprehension. (Azmi ,Celik , Yildiz &Mart, 2014) stated that learners sometimes may face difficulty to catch the whole meaning if their cultural knowledge is totally different from the speaker. That is to say, listeners from different cultural backgrounds may also misinterpret nonverbal signals for instance gestures, facial expressions, and tone of voice.

2.4.5. Phonological Problems

Many scholars advocated that fast speech rate is an effect of the difficulty of listening comprehension (e.g., Brown, 1989; Underwood, 1989). Griffiths (1990) investigated the effect of three speech rate on non-native speakers' comprehension. The results showed that both slow and average rates led to better understanding, while the fast rate resulted in a significant reduction in comprehension. Likewise, Zhao (1997) conducted a study where students were allowed to control rate of speech. This study concluded that slowing down the speech rate improved listening comprehension.

More attention will also be given to the pauses in spoken text. Research indicates that the appropriate use of pauses while speaking aids and facilitates listening comprehension process (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1993).

Moreover, variety accents can affect understanding the auditory input; native speakers use different accents (colloquial dialects) that the FL listener cannot understand.

2.4.6. Topic Unfamiliarity

Barbara and Schmidt-Rinehart (1992) investigated the relation between topical knowledge and listening comprehension. They expanded the research done by Long (1990). The study administered University student of Spanish at three levels of proficiency (proficiency variable) listened to two passages, one is about a familiar topic and the other is a novel topic. A native language recall protocol procedure was carried out to assess listening proficiency. The findings clearly showed that the topic familiarity affected the scores of the recall measure and that all the participants regardless of their level got higher levels of comprehension on the familiar passage ($x=52,27$) than of novel topic ($x=16,28$).

Another study was done by Gilakjani and Ahmadi (2011), in which they conducted an experiment for the seek to investigate the influence of text familiarity on listening comprehension of Iranian learners and on some other aspects of language. Sixty students participated. The results indicated that there is a significant improvement in the post test.

Based on the aforementioned studies, unfamiliar topics make the listening comprehension process more difficult. Listeners' background knowledge about the topic helps them matches the received input with what they already know, so they can interpret the incoming speech more successfully.

Section Two: Humor and Homophonic Puns

1. Definition of Humor and its Types

Crawford (1994) defined humor as “any communication that generates a positive cognitive or affective response from listeners” (p.57). In the same sense, Deiter (2000) defined the concept as “anything that is perceived to be funny, comical, or amusing” (p.22). It is then, refers to anything that makes people laugh and humor can be created in different ways, in form of jokes, language play, and puns.

Shade (1996) defined jokes as "Something said or done that provokes laughter "(p. 3). It is generally done for fun and amusement. Attardo (2020) made a distinction between canned and conversational jokes, Canned jokes are approximately decontextualized; they are constructed as small narratives that can be reused. In the contrary Conversational jokes can be produced and exist in context only, in other words it is actively involved in a conversation.

Language plays a critical role in creating humor. In this respect, Crystal (1996) noted that " language play occurs when people manipulate the forms and functions of language as a source of fun for themselves or for the people they are with." (p.328).

Among other kinds of humor, puns have garnered most of humor researchers' attention for many decades. In this sense, Blake (2007) stated that “puns are the most common basis of humor” (p. 68). English puns were extremely used in literature in famous writings such as William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*, and James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. Nowadays, puns are considered as a very important figure of speech which play a vital role in people’s life, Thus, an increased interest in studying the phenomenon and its humorous effects by many scholars in various fields.

2. The Notion of Pun

The word pun also known as paronomasia, Nida (1993) defined a pun as "playing on the meaning and formal resemblance of words (punning) is a universal phenomenon, and in some languages this rhetorical device is extensively encouraged and practice." (p.87)

The pun can be described as "a type of joke in which one sound sequence (e.g., a word) has two meanings and this similarity in sound creates a relationship for the two meanings from which humor is derived" (Hempelmann, 2004, p. 612). A pun is defined as "the usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meaning or the meaning of another word similar in sound." (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

Attardo (1994) asserted that "beyond the attempts at providing taxonomies of puns, the most significant contribution of structuralist linguistics on the study of puns is to describe the relationship between the two senses involved in a pun." (p.127-128).

According to Morgan (2011), puns make use of words in ambiguous or idiomatic ways, with the most common meanings differing from the meanings within a particular context. Koestler (1964) maintained that "the pun is the bisociation of a single phonetic form with two meanings, two strings of thought tied together by an acoustic knot." (p.65).

Lund (1947) defined puns as "a rhetorical device that often relies on the different meanings of a polysemic word, the literal and non-literal meaning of an idiom or on bringing two homonyms together in the same utterance to produce witticism"(p.83).

In a similar vein, Delabastita (1996) pointed out that the pun contrasts linguistic structures with distinct meanings based on their formal similarities. This relation of entire or

partial formal identity can be further described in terms of homophony, homography, homonymy, and paronymy.

It can be noticed from the definitions above that, puns are humorous use of words that convey another meaning, but they often have a serious purpose as well, also it can be interpreted in more than one way. That is to say, puns are sharply diverse in meaning and significance.

2.1. Pun Processing and the Role of Context

According to Attardo (1994), pun involves two distinct senses from which humor is derived, they are created on the basis of linguistic ambiguity (semantic, syntactic, structural, lexical). In order to define and explain the mechanisms of understanding puns, it is necessary to understand how the two senses are connected (i.e., resolve linguistic ambiguity); “The understanding of puns is probably the description of the relationship between the two senses involved in pun” (Attardo, 1994, p.127). Many scholars have proposed numerous theoretical frameworks in an attempt to explain puns mechanisms.

Aubouin’s (1948) “Justification” model, in which he assumed that two incongruous senses have to be accepted simultaneously by the hearer in order to be perceived as humorous/funny, “the power of the pun phrase lies in the simultaneous assertion of all its meanings” (Brown, 1956, p. 25). Ziv (1984) proposed a similar concept called “Logical Local” which makes connections possible based on the fictional world that is constructed for/and operates within a joke (Ziv, 1984). Brown (1956) emphasized on two main conditions for puns comprehension /understanding, namely the knowledge of multiple meanings of the pun word and context in which it occurs. Brown placed great emphasis on the role of context in

perceiving puns arguing that word meaning is its context, so that, the perception of pun relies on the acceptance of context-linking of the two distinct senses involved in pun.

Attardo's (1994) "Connector-Disjunctor" model of pun comprehension. He argued "the presence of humorous ambiguity is brought about and resolved (i.e., revealed, or made explicit) by two functional elements in the text" (p.134). To 'the connector' is responsible for the ambiguity in an utterance through making the presence of two meanings possible, while 'disjunctor' is the element that forces transition from one sense/interpretation to another.

GTVH (Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 1994) which is an extension of the Semantic Script Theory of Humor. It is another important model that has contributed to understanding the nature of puns. GTVH, according to Attardo (1994, 2001) is a 'linguistic theory' that provided six knowledge resources (KR) to generate humor. GTVH's application to puns processing included mainly the two highest KRs in hierarchy; where Logical Mechanism justifies script overlap (SOv) and script opposition (SOp). Note that, SOv and SOp are different conceptualizations of both ambiguity and incongruity, respectively (Attardo, 1997) which means that both ambiguity and incongruity are necessary for a successful pun, "Ambiguity is [...] a necessary but not sufficient condition for pun" (Aarons, 2017, p. 81). Attardo (1994) adds "Every linguistic element out of context is ambiguous [...], only contextual disambiguation enables the hearer to select one sense" (p. 112). He emphasized on the crucial role context plays in puns comprehension and enhancing humor.

Relevance Theory, produced first by Sperber and Wilson in 1986. It is a cognitive theory, also called "the cognitive view of context" (Solska, 2012, p. 392), which describes and explains the way hearer processes an utterance. According to this theory, processing puns requires knowledge of the relevance principle that presupposes "intensive-inferential

communication” (Sperber &Wilson, 2004) i.e., one has to look for inferential clues and premises (context) to be able to comprehend a pun. In addition to communicator attention, the hearer needs to extra effort to grasp the two meaning of pun (Tanaka, 1994). Based on which, Solska (2012) criticized Attardo’s models and the limited role of context. He examined how the cognitive context provided in Relevant Theory is better fit to explain puns comprehension. In a similar study, Gan (2015) applied Relevance Theory as a frame to analyze how the humor effect of English pun is constructed.

2.2. Types of Puns

2.2.1. Homonymic Puns

Homonymes are combinations of homophones and homographs, they are words that have similar spelling and pronunciation but have different meanings. Klein and Murphy (2001) noted that "homonyms are two different word meanings coverage on the same phonological representation, or in which a single word diverges into very different meanings.” (p.259).

According to Yule (1985), homonymes refer to words which have the same form but are unrelated in meaning as well as, they have different origins in language. Yule used the word "race" to explain the situation. It refers to contests of speed and ethnic groups as well.

According to Gramely and patzold (1992), homonyms refer to the existence of distinct lexemes that sound similar (homophones) or have the same spelling (homographs) but they differ in meaning. Leech (1969) defined homonymic puns as " distinct words which are spelled and pronounced alike.” (p.209-210).

To give an illustration, this homonymic pun contains a word that is spelled and sounds the same but has different meanings. ‘Two silk worms had a race and ended in a tie’. The word ‘tie’ can be party wins, but in this pun, it represents the piece of clothing usually made from silk. (Literary Devices, 2023)

2.2.2. Homographic Puns

Homographs are words with the same spelling but have different meanings and sounds. For instance, the word ‘bear’ serves as a verb which means to support, or as a noun which refers to an animal. A pun word helps better to understand homographic puns, since these puns are written they must be read to be understood by the learners. Furthermore, "Homographic puns exploit the fact that radically different meanings can be attributed to the same spelling" (Beadle, 2013, p. 33). In the same sense, Walaszewska and Patriwska (2012) defined homographic puns as words which have different lexical, logical and encyclopedic entries, but they share the same graphic form for instance. Having demonstrated his shooting prowess, the king gave the archer a little bow. (p.173).

Here two concepts are expressed via one graphic representation [bow] which has distinct phonetic forms such as / bæʊ / and / baʊ /.

2.2.3. Homophonic Puns

Homophones as kind of ambiguous words are also used to construct a sentence that embodies two meanings. Crystal (1998) defines homophony as the “term used in semantic analysis to refer to words (i.e., lexemes) which have the same pronunciation, but differ in meaning” (p. 185). Similarly, Yule (1999) asserted that homophones sound the same but they have different grammatical functions and meanings. English homophones are those language

forms that sound alike but with different meanings and spellings. The following are some examples of English homophones: weak/week; profit/prophet; meet/meat; sit/sight; throne/thrown; lye/lie ...etc.

Bly (2000) states “Homophonic puns are elements of language that catch fire only in the auditor’s ear” (p.4). In other words, homophone-based puns play on sounds. Bergson (2022) explained homophonic puns as follows:

The same sentence appears to differ two independent meanings, but it is only an appearance; in reality there are two different sentences made up of different words, but claiming to be one and the same because both have the same sound. (par.2)

This type of puns has been used in many famous writings. To exemplify, in Alice in Wonderland, Carroll played on the two homophones ‘tale’ and ‘tail’: “Mine is a long and sad tale! Said the Mouse, turning to Alice, and sighing. ‘It is a long tail, certainly,’ said Alice, looking down with wonder at the Mouse’s tail; ‘but why do call it sad’” (Chapter III, p.56).

Shakespeare, as well, used homophonic puns in his ‘Romeo and Juliet’:

Romeo: Not I, believe me. You have dancing shoes
with nimble *soles*: I have a *soul* of lead
so stakes me to the ground I cannot move. (Act 1: Scene IV)

2.2.4. Paronymic Puns

Besides puns that constructed upon one particular linguistic form (homonyms, homographs, homophones), there is another type of puns which relies on paronyms, also called “quasi-puns” or “half-puns”. Paronymic puns occur “[when] an expected word in a

common expression or quote is replaced by a similar word, usually a rhyming one” (Blake, 2007, p. 80). In other words, the pun in this category is created when a word is substituted with a similar one in terms of spelling or pronunciation (phonetic or orthographic similarities) but with different meanings. Then, it can be said that paronymic pun is a special case of both homophonic and homographic puns. For example, “The Pun Also Rises” (book title by John Pollack) is similar to “The Sun Also Rises” (novel by Ernest Hemingway). A paronymic pun appears where the word ‘sun’ is replaced with ‘pun’.

2.3. Puns in FL Contexts

Recently, humor research has expanded to EFL and ESL contexts. Many researchers and scholars highlighted the effectiveness of using different humorous texts (including puns) in language learning process (e.g., Neuliep, 1991; Deniere, 1995; Schmitz, 2002; Hodson, 2008). For instance, Cornett (1986) strongly emphasized that “humor is one of the educator’s most powerful resources’ in achieving a variety of beneficial educational outcomes, including such potential effects as controlling problematic behavior and facilitating foreign language acquisition” (p. 8).

Lems (2011) points out that "when English learners learn humorous English words and phrases as part of their language study, it can help their metalinguistic awareness, or conscious awareness of the forms of language; this in turn, is positively associated with literacy development"(p.197). In this respect, teachers may increase learners’ interest and their awareness of double meanings by using tricky word play to reinforce their understanding about puns, in order to make the learning process enjoyable. Moreover, teachers may increase learners’ interest and motivation, as well as, creating a relaxed atmosphere when getting students involved in activities.

According to Heaps (2018), learners are able to engage in humorous interaction and discussion, as well as, they may well benefit from working with puns in the language classroom in order to develop and enhance their linguistic abilities. That is to say, it helps learners to gain greater English proficiency overtime. Additionally, both Deniere (1995) and Schmitz (2002) agree that humor should be integrated into EFL teaching; the incorporation of humor with different language teaching approaches and methods such as communicative approach, suggestopedia, TPR.

However, for humor to be useful in EFL classes, it should be comprehensible. In puns, EFL students should be able to differentiate between/ and understand keywords used in puns (homophones, homographs, homonyms, ...) hence, the acceptance of the two senses and humor perceiving. In this regard, Schmitz (2002) stressed that the use of different forms of humor in the classroom should be planned by the instructor, and that teachers should pre-teach the lexical and vocabulary used to express humor. Garner (2006) asserted that humor presented to students should be 'specific', 'targeted' and 'appropriate' to the subject matter. Deniere (1995), in turn, emphasized the need for cultural and linguistic knowledge to understand humor.

To demonstrate, Alnamer, Altakhaineh and Alnamer (2019) carried out a study in which they investigated to what extent Arabic-Speaking EFL students appreciate English punny jokes. The study aimed at identifying the challenges students face with four types of puns (sound-alike, look-alike, close-sounding, instant-texting). 16 different punning jokes (4 homophonic puns) were directed to 60 advanced Arabic-Speaking EFL learners. The results showed that sound-alike puns elicited a low number of answers (35%) because students found

it difficult to understand due to some reasons mainly cultural background, contextual factors, and English homophones per se.

Moreover, Hodson (2008) examined what challenges EFL learners face in understanding humorous texts. Based on their responses to five English jokes of different types and levels of humor, he found that besides cultural knowledge, affective factors and humor levels presented in the jokes, the shorter, lexical-dense jokes are more challenging than longer less dense ones.

Furthermore, Lems (2013) describes how puns can be processed by English language learners, in an attempt to understand some puns learners must go through several steps. First, they must recognize the meaning of the original word, also providing an explanation of a common idiom or phrase, then they should figure out a second meaning that a word has. In other words, they must recognize the double meaning of words. For instance, if it is a close-sounding pun, learners must be able to decipher what the other word sounds like. Furthermore, they need to compare the two possible meanings of the word in the context of the phrase, then by completing all of those steps the meanings come together, and laughing takes place.

To conclude, the fact that the use of humorous puns in FL classes can provide a comfortable and relaxed class atmosphere, reduce anxiety, increase and maintain students' interests, enjoyment, and motivation makes it a very useful pedagogical tool used in teaching EL skills. However, puns implementation in EFL classes demands that to be selective and purposeful in a way that match students' linguistic competence, cultural and contextual knowledge, L2 learners' proficiency level, etc.

Chapter Two: Field of Study

Introduction

The present study investigates the difficulties third year LMD students of the English department at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University encounter in the listening comprehension of homophonic pun. It is structured to answer questions related to the reasons behind these difficulties and the role of listeners vocabulary knowledge on understanding homophonic pun as well. Therefore, this chapter includes the choice of methodological approach, population and sampling, data collection procedures, tests description and administration. Subsequently, the findings obtained from the tests are analysed and summarized at the end of this chapter. Finally, the chapter provides the general conclusion including the limitations of this study along with some pedagogical recommendations.

1. Methodology

This study aims to investigate the listening comprehension difficulties of homophonic puns, and the students' vocabulary knowledge linked to their comprehension of puns. To meet these objectives, the mixed methods approach has been chosen in which quantitative and qualitative data analyses would supplement each other. According to Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) defined mixed methods research as "the class of research mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into single study" (p.17). Besides that, MCQs test and vocabulary test are used to collect quantitative data on participants' performance. The data collected from these tests are then analysed using statistical methods (descriptive statistics and correlational analysis) to

provide the researchers with qualitative insights about students' comprehension difficulty areas of homophonic puns, their vocabulary level, and the relation between the two variables.

2. Population and Sampling

Firstly, Kumar defined the sampling as “the process of selecting a sample from the sampling population”. (2011, p.164). In this regard, 36 students were selected to participate in this study based on a random selection, it centres mainly on third year EFL learners at the department of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia Jijel. The target participants have been chosen due to the fact that they are expected to be well experienced and advanced learners in the listening skill unlike first and second year LMD students.

3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection procedures vary depending on the research nature, feasibility, validity and reliability, and the available resources. To gather useful data that align with these research questions and objectives, two tests were designed as the primary tool to measure students' listening comprehension of homophonic puns and the role of vocabulary knowledge. “A test is a method of measuring person's ability, knowledge or performance in a given domain.” (Brown,2004, p.3). MCQs are used to assess students' comprehension of homophonic puns and an open-ended test to evaluate their vocabulary comprehension.

4. Test Description and Administration

To investigate students' listening comprehension of 10 homophonic puns recorded by a native speaker, an MCQs test was carried out on 36 third year students at the department of English, Jijel University. The choice of this tool was mainly justified due to the fact that MCQs are considered to be time saving, quick and simple to answer for students', easy to

analyse, interpret and draw conclusions from. A small test was conducted to check their vocabulary knowledge in which students were required to provide synonym and secondary meanings of each pun word.

The aim of each question (MCQs test)

Question 01: which word in the pun creates the double meaning?

To evaluate students' ability to recognize the word that creates the double meaning and humor from the provided options.

Question 02: What is the primary meaning of the pun?

This question is to see whether students are able to identify the literal meaning of the pun.

Question 03: What is the secondary meaning of the pun?

To assess students' comprehension, interpretation, and appreciation of the pun. It helps in evaluating their understanding of multiple meanings of words and homophones.

The test was carried out during the last week before exams, the participants were divided into two groups due to time constraints, the first one at 9:30 am and the second at 12:30 pm. Both groups were treated under the same conditions. Before the test begins, the participants of both groups were provided with a set of instructions. Firstly, we briefly explained the aim of the study, followed by the definition of pun and homophonic pun. We provided the following examples along with an explanation of primary and secondary meanings of each example, as the majority of participants were not familiar with the topic.

- The thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

- Can you eat the sand which is in desert?
- Teacher: name a unit of electrical power?

Student: A what ...?

Teacher: yes, a Watt, very good

Afterwards, the researchers played the puns separately using a loudspeaker. The participants first listened to each homophonic pun three times and then answered questions related to each one. Once they finished, they completed a vocabulary test, which required them to provide synonyms and the secondary meanings of the pun words. This test aimed to evaluate their vocabulary knowledge and its relation to their comprehension of puns.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Data Analysis Procedures

Basically, the choice of statistical methods is largely determined by the nature of data collection tools and methodology. In this regard, the analysis of the results requires the use of descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages, correlational analysis, it also involves the researchers' expectations and predictions about students' comprehension difficulties.

5.2. The Analysis of the Students' Tests Results

Pun N°= 01

This pun is about Alex and John having a conversation about weather in England.

Alex asked: why is it so wet in England?

John answered: Because many kings and queens have reigned there.

Table 1 : Listening Comprehension Test: Pun One

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	55,56%	19,44%	13,89%
Incorrect answers	41,67%	72,22%	77,78%
Not sure	2,78%	8,33%	8,33%
Total	100%	100%	100%

This pun plays on the similarity of ‘reigned’ and ‘rained’ that is rained is a weather condition common to the UK while reign refers to rule as monarch / king, this wordplay combines the literal meaning of rainfall with the figurative sense of royal reign, creating a humorous connection between the wet climate in England and the historical reigns.

Table one reveals that 55,56% of the participants identified the pun word correctly, whereas 41,67% of the participants provided incorrect answers, facing some difficulties in recognizing the pun word. Around 2,78% of the participants were not sure,

As for the second question, only 19,44% of the participants got the primary meaning of the pun. However, the majority of them (72,22%) provided incorrect answers, facing challenges in grasping the intended meaning. Moreover, it is quite obvious that 8,33% of the participants were not sure. In the third question, only 13,89% of the participants got the secondary meaning correctly, while 77,78% of them did not get the secondary meaning. Additionally, 8,33% were not sure.

Based on the results above, it could be said that the participants' limited exposure to cultural references of the United Kingdom, specifically related to weather, contributed to their struggle in comprehending the play on words in this pun. Students should also be aware of the

historical significance of kings and queens in England so that they can relate the word "reign" to the given context.

Table 2: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun One

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	25%	19,44%	19,44%	36,11%	100%

From the results obtained from table two, 25% of participants successfully recognized the synonym of the word “reigned”. Additionally, the same percentage (19.44%) was obtained by the participants who provided only secondary meaning and those who provided both of the synonym and secondary meaning of the word category. While, 36,11% represents the portion of participants who did not provide answers. Based on the information presented in this table, it can be deduced that a considerable number of participants face challenges in understanding the secondary meaning due to insufficient exposure to related vocabulary.

Pun N°= 02

This pun revolves around an overweight individual patiently awaiting their order at a McDonald's restaurant, jokingly said:

I didn't think I was fat till the woman in MacDonal'd's said: " Sorry about your wait."

Table 3: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Two

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	55,56%	47,22%	55,56%
Incorrect answers	38,89%	47,22%	19,45%
Not sure	5,56%	5,56%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%

This pun plays on the homophones ‘wait’ and ‘weight’. The primary meaning of this pun lies in the word ‘wait’ when the woman in McDonald’s was apologizing for the individual’s wait time. The secondary meaning comes from the play on word between ‘wait’ and ‘weight’ which sound identical. The fat man humorously misinterprets the phrase ‘sorry about your wait’ as a comment on his physical weight.

As it was indicated in the table and according to the results obtained, 55,56% of participants answered correctly by choosing the pun word that creates a double meaning. Therefore, 38,89% of participants did not identify the word correctly and only 5,56% were not sure of the answer. Moving to question two, the results show an equal percentage 47,22% for both correct and incorrect answers when they were asked to identify the primary meaning. This indicates that participants were a little bit confused to choose the right answer while 5,56% of them selected the fourth option. For question three, the majority of participants 55,56% indicate the secondary meaning correctly, however; 19,44% of them provided incorrect answers, the rest 25% were not sure.

The results obtained from this pun show an acceptable level of comprehension. For those who were not able to identify both primary and secondary meaning, they may face difficulties such as ambiguity of meaning and problems of interpretation.

Table 4: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Two

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	41,67%	19,44%	19,44%	19,44%	100%

Moving to the vocabulary test results, a considerable percentage of 41,67% identified the synonym of the word “wait”, 19,44% provided the right secondary meaning. Similarly, 19,44% of participants got the pun word by providing both synonym and secondary meaning and 19,44% of them chose not to answer. It might be concluded that ambiguity of meaning leads to misinterpretation of the word, especially that the participants have struggled to identify the specific secondary meaning, as well as participants who have limited vocabulary prevents them from selecting the right meaning.

Pun N°= 03

This pun is about Hilda and Rosa who are discussing their experience at a friend’s wedding party...

Hilda said: It was a joyous occasion, and I thoroughly liked every aspect.

Rosa: The wedding was so emotional that even the cake was in tiers.

Table 5: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Three

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	41,67%	27,78%	44,44%
Incorrect answers	55,56%	61,11%	47,22%
Not sure	2,78%	11,11%	8,33%
Total	100%	100%	100%

In this pun the word ‘tiers’ like in cake tiers which is a common term used in wedding to describe a multi-layered cake. It sounds like tears in crying. So, the students were required to make a connection between the two words to appreciate the humor in this homophonic pun.

Table 5 shows that the majority of participants did not get the pun word. 55,56% selected incorrect answers and 2,78% were not sure. For the primary meaning, only 27,78% answered correctly. While a significant majority of participants (61,11% answered incorrectly, 11,11% were not sure) were not able to grasp the primary meaning of the pun. Similarly, a lower percentage of students (44,44%) got the secondary meaning while the rest either answered incorrectly or opt for the fourth option. Based on that, it can be said that comprehending this pun was very challenging for students due to either their lack of vocabulary input or they did not get the context.

Table 6: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Three

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	8,33%	25%	11,11%	55,56%	100%

Depending on students' responses on the vocabulary test, the majority could not provide the synonym of the pun word 'tiers', only 8,33% did. Indicating that many students are not familiar with the alternative words of 'tiers'. Only 25% of participants provided the secondary meaning of the word and 11,11% provided both synonym and secondary meaning. However, a higher portion of students provided no answer (55.56%), which indicates a lack of understanding and uncertainty about the word's multiple meanings.

Based on the analysis of students' responses to both the homophonic pun test and vocabulary test, it can be inferred that a limited vocabulary knowledge may have contributed to difficulties in comprehending homophonic puns.

Pun N°= 04

Peter likes listening to local radio stations while driving through the cities, once he heard a news presenter asking a statistician professor about population growth:

News presenter: what country's capital is growing the fastest?

Statistician professor: Ireland. Everyday it's Dublin.

Table 7: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Four

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	38,89%	61,11%	55,56%
Incorrect answers	47,22%	22,22%	33,33%
Not sure	13,89%	16,67%	11,11%
Total	100%	100%	100%

In this homophonic pun, the word 'Dublin' is used as a play on word which sounds identical to 'Doubling' when spoken aloud. Where the primary meaning of the pun lies in the

literal meaning of Dublin as the capital city of Ireland, the secondary meaning emerges from the play on the similarity between the phrase ‘everyday it’s Dublin’ and ‘everyday it’s doubling’.

From table 07, it can be seen that students had difficulty with identifying the word that creates the double meaning that only 38,89% of the participants were able to choose the correct answer. However, a high percentage of students were able to grasp both primary meaning (61,11%) and secondary meanings (55,56%). This indicates a contradiction between students who did not get the pun word and get both meanings. Due to the fact that understanding a pun requires identifying the word that creates the double meaning, some participants were lucky to choose the correct answer regarding question two and three, or there might be other underlying reasons to take into account. Based on the results, identifying the pun word was the most difficult aspect in this pun.

Table 8: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Four

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	33,33%	11,11%	16,67%	38,89%	100%

From table 8, it appears that the pun word ‘Dublin’ posed serious challenges to the participants. 33,33% were able to identify the meaning of the word. Only 11,11% provided the secondary meaning whilst 16,67% identified both the synonym and the secondary meaning of the word. A significant portion (38,89%) did not answer. This indicates that the students struggled and were confused about the additional possible meanings of the word.

The students may have difficulty comprehending this pun due to their unawareness of some cultural aspects related to the Ireland. Firstly, they may lack knowledge with the geography of the British Isles in general and the capital city of Ireland, Dublin, in specific. Without this foundational familiarity, the wordplay based on "Dublin" sounding like "doubling" may not register with them.

Pun N°= 05

This pun is about a family gathering at a funeral home, mourning the loss of their father who had passed away due to a sudden illness. As they sit together, one of the family members asks in regret:

My dad, unfortunately, passed away when we couldn't remember his blood type

Mother responded: Remember his last words to us, "Be positive! "

Table 9: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Five

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	66,67%	44,44%	33,33%
Incorrect answers	33,33%	47,22%	55,56%
Not sure	0 %	8,33%	11,11%
Total	100%	100%	100%

The homophonic pun plays on the phrase 'be positive' which creates the double meaning of the blood type (B+). When the mother recalled the fathers' last words, which were meant to inspire positivity and to encourage his family member, she humorously suggests that the father's last words 'be positive' meant his blood type adding a touch of humor.

In table 9 where 66,67% of students were able to identify the pun word, 33,33% of them did not get it. Moving to question two, where 44,44 % of participants grasped the primary meaning of the pun, 47,22% of them provided incorrect answers and only 8,33% chose ‘not sure’ option. For question three, the data shows that only 33,33% of participants got the secondary meaning of the pun, while a larger percentage of 55,56% provided incorrect answers, and the rest were ‘not sure’.

Table 10: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Five

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	44,44%	19,44%	19,44%	16,67 %	100%

As it is plainly shown in table 10, a considerable portion of 44,44% provided only the synonym of the phrase ‘be positive’, whereas the portion of 19,44% represents the number of participants who correctly identified the secondary meaning. Simultaneously, 19,44 % of them successfully provided both synonym and secondary meaning. 16,67% represents the lower percentage compared to the other pun word for the students who did not provide any answer. Overall, participants may have difficulty in recognizing multiple meanings. For instance, the participants are not familiar with medical terms that might have struggled to make a connection between the two meanings to comprehend the pun.

Pun N°= 06

This pun is about Robert asking John why he still works in a bakery, even though he may have other job opportunities.

Robert: So why do you still work in a bakery?

John joked to his friend: Because I knead the dough!

Table 11: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Six

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	27,78%	25%	30,56%
Incorrect answers	72,22%	52,78%	38,89%
Not sure	0%	22,22%	30,56%
Total	100%	100%	100%

This pun plays on the homophones ‘knead’ and ‘need’, knead means like mixing and punching down the dough, since knead sounds like need, it implies that he need money. Taking into account that the word ‘dough’ has two meaning which are mixing ingredients and a slang term for money.

It is obvious from table 11 that the majority of students did not get this homophonic pun with only 27,78% correctly identified the pun word. 25% got the primary meaning, and 30,56% grasped the secondary meaning. Depending on these statistics, it can be noticed that students encountered difficulty with the three aspects of the test, which can be linked to the different cultural backgrounds.

Table 12: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Six

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	2,78%	33,33%	8,33%	55,56%	100%

Table 13: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Six

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	16,67%	5,56%	5,56%	72,22%	100%

Looking at students' answers to the vocabulary test as presented in the tables 12 and 13, the majority of participants did not provide neither synonym, nor secondary meaning. Approximately, 55,56% is devoted to the homophonic pun word 'knead' and 72,22% to 'dough', which explains why the majority of students could not comprehend the homophonic pun.

Pun N°= 07

The pun is about Alex talking to his brother about the stake he made with the butcher on 50\$. "I bet the butcher 50\$ that he couldn't reach the meat on the top shelf. He said: "No, the steak is too high"."

Table 14: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Seven

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	58,33%	38,89%	38,89%
Incorrect answers	36,11%	27,77%	36,11%
Not sure	5,56%	33,33%	25%
Total	100%	100%	100%

This pun plays on the word 'steak' and 'stake' since Alex used the word 'bet'. 'The steaks are too high' means literally the cut of meat are too high up for him to reach, However,

it sounds identical to the phrase ‘the stakes are too high’ which means that there is too much that I could potentially lose if I were to gamble.

The results of table 14 highlight that 58,33% of participants answered correctly indicating a higher level of understanding, while 36,11% answered incorrectly because they had difficulty to find the pun word. 5,56% were not sure. The second question seems to be more challenging for students compared to question one. 38,89% represents the students who were able to identify the primary meaning of the pun; however, a notable portion of participants 33,33% were not sure about the primary meaning and the rest 27,77% represent a relatively lower rate of incorrect answers, which may indicate a higher level of uncertainty and difficulty. Similarly, question three displays challenges for students that 38,89% of them answered correctly, while 38,11% did not get the secondary meaning due to confusion or lack of understanding. It can be concluded that the participants faced difficulties in the three questions above, as well as, they did not get the multiple meaning of the pun word.

Table 15: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Seven

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	30,56%	8,33%	8,33%	52,78 %	100%

In table 15, the percentage of 30,56% represents the participants who successfully provided the synonym of the pun word ‘steak’. An equal percentage of 8,33% was scored in both the secondary meaning category and the synonym and secondary meaning category. 52,78% indicates a higher rate of participants who did not provide an answer. That is, participants were unable to identify the secondary meaning because they might have limited

vocabulary and might not be familiar with similar synonyms to the word ‘steak’. Also, it makes a homophone confusion between the word ‘steak’ and ‘stake’.

Pun N°= 08

This pun is about a girl who is fascinated by reading books:

Lisa is a book lover, while she was reading on the balcony her sister Hilda came and said:

Reading while sunbathing makes you well-red.

Table 16: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Eight

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	61,11%	63,89%	41,67%
Incorrect answers	38,89%	33,33%	52,33%
Not sure	0%	2,78%	5,56%
Total	100%	100%	100%

In this pun ‘well-red’ could be confused with ‘well-read’ as they sound the same. So, the sentence has the primary meaning of sunburnt; where the color of your skin can turn red if you sunbathe for too long and the secondary meaning of well-read which means well educated and knowledgeable.

Depending on the statistics shown in the table above, the majority of participants got the pun word (61,11%), while some students faced difficulty in identifying it. A notable portion 38,89% provided incorrect answer. The participants showed better performance and understanding regarding the primary meaning of the pun (63,89%) compared to the secondary meaning (41,67%) which results in challenges to comprehend and appreciate pun’s humor.

Moreover, the students could not make a connection between the two possible meanings of the pun word.

Table 17: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Eight

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	19,44%	30,56%	11,11%	38,89%	100%

The table above shows that a small percentage (19,44%) of participants provided the correct meaning of the pun word ‘well-red’, which demonstrates that students’ limited vocabulary knowledge cause difficulty and confusion in recognizing a suitable synonym for ‘well-red’. Students’ performance in identifying the second meaning of the word better with 30,56 % but it is still relatively low. However, 11,11% of them gave both synonym and secondary meaning. The percentage of participants who did provide any answer is relatively high (38,89%) indicating that the students had insufficient vocabulary knowledge which affected negatively their comprehension process of HP.

Pun N°= 09

This pun is about a patient who ingested a whole bottle of food coloring, he told the doctor he was not feeling well:

The doctor assured his patient that he is going to be fine, the patient said, " but doc, I feel like I’m dyeing inside."

Table 18: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Nine

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	77,78%	50%	69,44%
Incorrect answers	22,23%	41,67%	27,78%
Not sure	0%	8,33%	2,78%
Total	100%	100%	100%

This pun plays on the phonetic similarity between the words ‘dyeing’ and ‘dying’ to create a humorous play on words. The expression ‘dyeing inside’ means that the patient feels like he is colored inside which sounds identical to the phrase ‘dying inside’ which means ceasing to live or on the point of death.

Table18 indicates a high level of comprehension of this pun. As most of the participants were able to identify the pun word with high correct responses (77,78%), half of participants grasped the primary meaning, while the second half differs between incorrect answers and not sure. For the secondary meaning, approximately 69,44% of students provided correct answers.

Table 19: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Nine

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	8,33%	47,22%	11,11%	33,33%	100%

From the results obtained in the table above, most of the students did not provide an appropriate alternative for the pun word ‘dyeing’, only 8,33% provided the synonym for the word. In contrast, a total of 47,22% of students were able to identify the second meaning

‘dying’ due to the fact that its meaning is commonly recognized. However, a lower rate of participants gave both the synonym and secondary meaning. A notable portion 33,33% of them chose not to answer.

Pun N°= 10

This pun is about two friends decided to go for a bicycle ride through forest, when they took a break:

Michael asked: why couldn’t the bicycle stands by itself?

Jack answered: it was two-tired.

Table 20: Listening Comprehension Test: Pun Ten

	Q1	Q2	Q3
Correct answer	77,78%	38,89%	47,22%
Incorrect answers	22,22%	47,22%	33,33%
Not sure	0%	13,89%	19,44%
Total	100%	100%	100%

This homophonic pun plays on the similarity between the phrases ‘two-tired’, which refers to the fact that the bicycle cannot stand on its own because it has two tires and it needs a kickstand. And the phrase ‘too-tired’ that creates the humor in this pun, as it implies that the bicycle is so exhausted and lacks energy.

The statistics of this table reveal that 77,78% of the participants indicated a good understanding of identifying the word that creates the double meaning in this pun, whereas the rest of the participants by 22,22% answered incorrectly. In question two, the portion of 38,89% represents the participants who identified correctly the primary meaning of the pun,

while a higher percentage 47,22% of students failed to get the primary meaning. Accordingly, 13,89% were not sure. In question three, 47,22% of participants successfully got the secondary meaning of the pun, 33,33% answered incorrectly and 19,44% were not sure. According to the obtained results it can be said that identifying the secondary meaning of the pun may be less challenging compared to the primary meaning.

Table 21: Vocabulary Comprehension Test: Pun Ten

	Synonym	Second Meaning	Both (syn+s.m)	No answer	Total
Answers	19,44%	16,67%	8,33%	55,56%	100%

Based on the results presented in table 21, 19,44% of the participants provided only synonym for the word “tires” with an approximate portion to 16,67%, which represents the second meaning of the word. Where 8,33% of the students provided both synonym and secondary meaning, 55,56% of them did not provide any answer. This suggests that the participants faced some difficulties in identifying the synonym, the secondary meaning, or both such as interference from prior knowledge because their pre-existing knowledge of the word tires may have interfered with their ability to identify the secondary meaning.

Table 22: Percentage of Students Answering all Three Questions Correctly for each Pun

Pun 1	Pun 2	Pun 3	Pun 4	Pun 5	Pun 6	Pun 7	Pun 8	Pun 9	Pun 10
8,33%	27,78%	5,56%	16,67%	11,11%	5,56%	5,56%	25%	30,56%	33,33%

The table above shows the participants who correctly answered all the three questions related to each pun, in other words, students who demonstrated full comprehension of each homophonic pun. The results highlights that some puns were very challenging for learners such as pun 1, 3,6, and 7 (5,56%). However, some stand out with relatively highest success rates like pun 10 (33,33%) and 9 (30,56%).

Correlational Analysis

Correlational analysis is used in this research to examine the strength between students' comprehension of homophonic puns and vocabulary knowledge. In order to do so, the researchers used Pearson's Coefficient, first, to examine the relationship between the synonym and primary meaning where the correlational coefficient $r = 0,29$, which suggests that the relation between them is positive but not particularly strong. Then the relationship between secondary meaning of the pun word and the secondary meaning of the pun; $r = 0,2$ which indicates a weak positive relationship between the variables. However, the majority of participants who were able to provide both synonyms and secondary meanings of pun word demonstrated full understanding of the pun.

6. Overall Discussion and Results

The present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties third year students face in the listening comprehension of homophonic puns?
2. What are the factors that cause difficulty in understanding homophonic puns?
3. How can lack of vocabulary hinders the listening comprehension in understanding homophonic puns?

The first two questions were intended to investigate the challenges students face in comprehending homophonic puns, as well as the reasons and factors behind these challenges. The results of homophonic pun test proved that the sample under study has difficulties in appreciating the ten homophonic puns.

After reporting and describing the results of homophonic puns test, it seems timely to make some interpretations and comments. Students' performance on this test reveals varying levels of success and difficulty among participants. It is clear that limited exposure to homophonic puns in their EL journey may influence the perceptions of homophonic puns, that is teachers might not explicitly teach puns as part of their lesson plans or instructions. Furthermore, students encounter difficulties to grasp the intended meaning of the pun when they are not familiar with cultural references, linguistic knowledge, or have limited exposure to English idiomatic expressions. Participants' performance on pun one demonstrates that they interpret the pun literally which impedes them to get the right meaning, focusing on literal meaning may lead to confusion. To illustrate, students selected the word 'wet' as the word that creates the double meaning based on their understanding of England's climate.

Additionally, learners cultural background affected their comprehension of puns, as it was indicated in pun one; participants misinterpret the pun because of their lack of target culture and pun six where they are not familiar with target slang language which prevents them from grasping the intended meaning the pun for instance, learners are not familiar with the word 'dough' as a slang term for money. Arabic native speakers-learners have limited exposure to this type of humor. Cultures vary in their sense of humor, this was clearly apparent from students' facial expressions. They did not react to the puns and seemed more

focused on solving the test rather than having fun and enjoyment. Only few students had smiles on their faces.

Since these puns were recorded by a native speaker, Students may struggle to differentiate between similar sounds because the native speaker tend to have better pronunciation and fast speech rate when delivering puns. Moreover, it is obvious from test's results that provided context has a major role on students' comprehension of homophonic puns in which the pun is presented, however; a considerable number of students did not understand the context of pun 1,3,6,7. Because understanding homophonic puns and the context also require nonverbal cues such as gestures, facial expressions or intonation that help to convey the intended humor. Also, difficulty level of homophonic puns may influence puns' comprehension. The results also shows that there are some participants demonstrated good understanding to some extent and appreciation of ten homophonic puns, which implies that individual differences such as linguistic abilities, students' proficiency level ... among participants play a role on shaping their understanding to homophonic puns.

All in all, the statistics of homophonic pun test displayed that the three aspects of the test were challenging for the participants; they had difficulties because of many factors such as limited exposure to English puns, cultural background, listening skills, English proficiency, etc. Moreover, the first assumption EFL students have difficulties in the listening comprehension and appreciation homophonic puns

The third question was meant for answering whether listener's lack of vocabulary poses difficulty and affects students' listening comprehension of homophonic puns. As Brown (1956) emphasized, one condition to understand puns is to have the knowledge of multiple meanings of pun words. Vocabulary comprehension test provide insights into students'

vocabulary input and their ability to make connections between words of similar sounds and their meanings in different contexts in which they occur. After having presented and analysed the results yielded by students from the vocabulary test, lack of vocabulary has been proven to be one of the factors that cause difficulty to their understanding of homophonic puns. The identification of synonyms and secondary meaning of pun words, reflects the participants ability to recognize and interpret pun words in the given context, thus understanding the ten homophonic puns. The majority of them were unable to identify both synonyms and secondary meanings of these words 'knead', 'dough', 'steak', and 'tires' that create the double meaning, making them confused to select the primary and secondary meaning in the homophonic pun test, to specify; in pun 6 students demonstrate the lower understanding, and the majority of them did not know neither the synonyms of the two words that setup the pun, nor their secondary meaning. Additionally, regarding to all the puns the highest rate of those who provided both synonym and secondary meanings did not exceed 19,44%. This category of students demonstrated high level performance in homophonic pun comprehension test compared to the others. This suggests that students with rich vocabulary are more likely to comprehend homophonic puns.

However, based on the correlation coefficients ($r=0,29$) ($r=0,2$), it can be said that there is a positive relationship between students' vocabulary skills and pun comprehension. In other words, students with a larger vocabulary tend to have a better understanding of homophonic puns. However, the correlation in this case is not strong enough to draw conclusion because there are many other factors that may affect the results such as context, individual differences, language proficiency, or participants' choices may have been influenced by chance and luck rather than a deliberate comprehension of pun.

7. Pedagogical Recommendations and Suggestions

The findings of this study showed that learners struggle in understanding homophonic puns as well as they showed low level in vocabulary skill. In this regard, several procedures can be adopted.

- Teachers should alert EFL learners to the importance of having knowledge of puns and homophonic puns in order to communicate appropriately in advanced levels of English and with target communities.
- Teach puns explicitly and incorporating different types of puns in EL instruction.
- Engaging students in interactive activities such as pun-based activities, wordplay games.
- Teachers should raise students' awareness of English homophones, this would enable them to comprehend homophonic puns.
- The use of authentic and amusing materials can enhance learners' listening skills.
- Incorporating different types of puns in teaching vocabulary.
- Learners should take responsibility for their learning by exposing themselves to listening to and interacting with native speakers.
- Students must work on their vocabulary' skills, they should not always rely on teacher and classroom instructions.
- They may listen to native speakers' speech, engage with target communities and cultures through various social media platforms.

The research that has been taken for this dissertation has highlighted a number of topics on which further research would be beneficial.

- This topic can be investigated in a different way using other methods such as interviews, questionnaires.
- EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions and attitudes towards homophonic puns.
- Examine the effect of other factors on students' comprehension of homophonic puns such as the exposure of English media, language proficiency, etc.
- Investigating the strategies that can be used to address these difficulties.
- Investigating the role of homophonic puns on enhancing students' listening skill.
- Investigating the role of homophonic puns on enhancing students' vocabulary knowledge.

8. Limitations of the Study

It is important to point out that some limitations affected the study, to begin with, the size of representative sample was restricted to 36 students of third year, therefore a larger sample size could provide more generalizable results. Additionally, the lack of resources dealing with previous studies about homophonic puns. Concerning test design, it would be better to expand the number of homophonic puns included in the test to more than 15 puns. As well as increasing difficulty level of homophonic puns to better capture and offer a more comprehensive evaluation of students' listening comprehension of homophonic puns.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter presented the practical framework of the study, which investigates the difficulties EFL students encounter in the listening comprehension of homophonic puns, it was devoted to analyse, interpret, and discuss the data obtained from the two tests. First, the chapter targeted the research methodology, population and sampling, data

collection procedures, and description of research tools that were implemented to carry out this study. Second, this chapter dealt with data analysis procedures used by the researchers to analyse the findings of the two tests, it also constitutes the discussion of the results obtained from students' answers on the questions related to the ten homophonic puns test and vocabulary comprehension test. Lastly, this chapter ended with providing some pedagogical implications followed with some limitations that interrupt the researchers while conducting their study.

General Conclusion

Communication is the main purpose of learning any language, being a good communicator requires to be a good listener. In other words, the communicator should listen and comprehend what the other say in order to react appropriately in different situations and to different speech styles such as homophonic puns. This study attempted to get a closer look on the listening comprehension difficulties of homophonic puns among third-year students at the department of English of Jijel University. Accordingly, it has been assumed that EFL learners face difficulties in the listening comprehension of homophonic puns as well as there is a relationship between listeners' limited vocabulary and difficulties in understanding homophonic puns.

This research involves a general introduction, two chapters, and a general conclusion. The general introduction comprises background of the study, it pointed out the statement of the problem, research assumptions, research question, aim of the study, along with the methodology, significance and structure of the study. Concerning the first chapter it presented the theoretical background, it composed of two sections, the first section was devoted to listening skill and listening comprehension, and the second section which is entitled humor and homophonic puns. On the other hand, the second chapter concerns the field of study it tackles the methodology, data collection procedures, data analysis, and overall discussion of the results.

The results obtained from the students' tests revealed that almost all of them encountered difficulties while listening to homophonic puns such as lack of exposure to the target language, lack of background knowledge, cultural references, and lack of vocabulary input, which confirmed the first assumption as well as it supported our assumption that

learners have significant difficulties in understanding the homophonic puns. As a matter of fact, there is a positive correlation between listeners' vocabulary and their comprehension of homophonic puns variables is existed, however; the strength of correlation is not particularly strong.

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Appendices

Homophonic Puns

Pun 1: Climate

This pun is about Alex and John having a conversation about weather in England

Alex asked: why is it so wet in England?

John answered: Because many kings and queens have reigned there.

Pun 2: In MacDonald's

This pun revolves around an overweight individual patiently awaiting their order at a McDonald's restaurant, jokingly said:

I didn't think I was fat till the woman in MacDonald's said: " Sorry about your wait."

Pun 3: At a wedding party

This pun is about Hilda and Rosa who are discussing their experience at a friend's wedding party...

Hilda said: It was a joyous occasion, and I thoroughly liked every aspect.

Rosa: The wedding was so emotional that even the cake was in tiers.

Pun4: Listening to the news

Peter likes listening to local radio stations while driving through the cities, once he heard a news presenter asking a statistician professor about population growth:

News presenter: what country's capital is growing the fastest?

Statistician professor: Ireland. Everyday it's Dublin.

Pun 5: Blood type

This pun is about a family gathering at a funeral home, mourning the loss of their father who had passed away due to a sudden illness. As they sit together, one of the family members asks in regret:

My dad, unfortunately, passed away when we couldn't remember his blood type

Mother responded: Remember his last words to us, "Be positive! "

Pun 6: At the bakery

This pun is about Robert asking John why he still works in a bakery, even though he may have other job opportunities.

Robert: So why do you still work in a bakery?

John joked to his friend: Because I knead the dough!

Pun 7: Making a bet

The pun is about Alex talking to his brother about the stake he made with the butcher on 50\$.

"I bet the butcher 50\$ that he couldn't reach the meat on the top shelf. He said, "No, he steak is too high"."

Pun 8: Reading a book

This pun is about a girl who is fascinated by reading books:

Lisa is a book lover, while she was reading on the balcony her sister Hilda came and said:

Reading while sunbathing makes you well-red.

Pun 9: At the hospital

This pun is about a patient who ingested a whole bottle of food coloring, he told the doctor he was not feeling well:

The doctor assured his patient that he is going to be fine , the patient said, " but doc, I feel like I'm dyeing inside.

Pun 10: In the forest

This pun is about two friends decided to go for a bicycle ride through the forest, when they took a break:

Michael asked: why couldn't the bicycle stand up by itself?

Jack answered: It was two-tired.

Definition of key terms

Homophones: are words that have the same sounds but different meanings and different spellings. For example: peace/piece, wright/right, tale/tail.

Pun: is the humorous use of words with multiple meanings or words that sound similar but have different meanings.

Puns can be classified into homophonic, homographic, homonymic, patronymic puns.

Homophonic puns: rely on words that sound the same (or very similar) but have different meanings and spellings.

E.g., the Thief who stole a calendar got twelve months: the play on words is between “twelve months” on a calendar, and “twelve months in the prison”

Students Tests

Homophonic puns comprehension MCQs test

Dear Participants,

You are going to Listen to a list of 10 puns and answer the questions related to each one by circling the right answer.

Pun 1

- 1- Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?**
 - A. Reigned
 - B. England
 - C. Wet
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. England has a lot of rainfall.
 - B. England is prone to flooding.
 - C. England has a rich history of monarchs.
 - D. You are not sure
- 3- What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. England is a humid country.
 - B. England is ruled by many kings and queens.
 - C. England has a lot of rivers and lakes.
 - D. You are not sure.

Pun 2

- 1- Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?**
 - A. Fat
 - B. Woman
 - C. Wait
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The woman was apologizing for something.
 - B. The man is overweight and the woman commented on it.
 - C. The woman was commenting on the man's order at McDonald's.
 - D. You are not sure.
- 3- What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The woman was commenting on the man's weight.
 - B. The woman was commenting on the man's choice of food.

- C. The woman was complimenting the man.
- D. You are not sure.

Pun 3

- 1- **Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?**
 - A. Cake
 - B. Wedding
 - C. Tiers
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- **What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The cake was arranged in layers
 - B. Everybody was crying even the cake
 - C. The groom didn't like the cake's shape
 - D. You are not sure
- 3- **What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The bride was sensitive.
 - B. The cake was in tears.
 - C. The invitees were so impressed by every aspect of the party.
 - D. You are not sure.

Pun 4

- 1- **Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?**
 - A. Growing
 - B. Dublin
 - C. Ireland
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- **What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The news presenter is asking about population growth.
 - B. Peter enjoys listening to local radio stations while driving.
 - C. The statistician professor is an expert in statistics.
 - D. You are not sure.
- 3- **What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. Peter enjoys driving through the cities.
 - B. Ireland's population density doubles everyday.
 - C. The new presenter is asking about the fastest growing capital.
 - D. You are not sure.

Pun 5

1- Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?

- A. Family
- B. Blood
- C. positive
- D. You are not sure

2- What is the primary meaning of the pun?

- A. The family is mourning the loss of their father.
- B. The father passed away due to a sudden illness.
- C. The family remembers their father's last words.
- D. You are not sure.

3- What is the secondary meaning of the pun?

- A. The family couldn't remember their father's blood type.
- B. The father passed away because they couldn't remember his blood type.
- C. The family didn't pay attention to their father's last words.
- D. You are not sure.

Pun 6

1- Which word (s) in the pun creates the double meaning?

- A. Baker
- B. Dough
- C. Knead
- D. You are not sure

2- What is the primary meaning of the pun?

- A. John is still baking the bread.
- B. John still needs money.
- C. John still working because he is a good baker.
- D. You are not sure.

3- What is the secondary meaning of the pun?

- A. John likes his job.
- B. John still working because he is poor.
- C. John still working in the bakery because he needs money.
- D. You are not sure.

Pun 7

1- Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?

- A. Bet
- B. Steak
- C. Butcher

- D. You are not sure
- 2- **What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The butcher lost the stake/bet because he could not get the meat.
 - B. The butcher refused to bet because the steak was so high.
 - C. The butcher refused to make the stake because he wanted to bet 100\$.
 - D. You are not sure.
- 3- **What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The butcher refused to bet because the stake was so high.
 - B. The butcher lost the stake because it was so high.
 - C. The butcher refused the bet because he is short.
 - D. You are not sure.

Pun 8

- 1- **Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?**
 - A. Sunbathing
 - B. Reading
 - C. Well-red
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- **What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. Reading in sunlight makes you enjoy reading.
 - B. Reading in sunlight makes your skin red.
 - C. Lisa is obsessed with reading books.
 - D. you are not sure.
- 3- **what is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. Sunlight makes reading better.
 - B. Lisa likes reading while sunbathing.
 - C. Hilda motivates her sister to read while sunbathing.
 - D. you are not sure.

Pun 9

- 1- **Which word in the pun create the double meaning?**
 - A. Dyeing
 - B. Food-coloring
 - C. Patient
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- **What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
 - A. The patient is not feeling well.
 - B. The patient feels like he is dying inside.

- C. The patient feels like he is colored inside.
 - D. You are not sure.
- 3- **What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
- A. The patient has a stomach pain.
 - B. The doctor didn't describe medicines.
 - C. The patient feels like he is dying inside.
 - D. You are not sure.

Pun 10

- 1- **Which word in the pun creates the double meaning?**
- A. Bicycle
 - B. Two-Tired
 - C. Stand-up
 - D. You are not sure
- 2- **What is the primary meaning of the pun?**
- A. The bicycle cannot stand because it has two tires only.
 - B. The bicycle is too tired to stand up on its own.
 - C. The bicycle is standing up because it has two tires.
 - D. You are not sure.
- 3- **What is the secondary meaning of the pun?**
- A. The bicycle is broken.
 - B. The Bicycle is tired.
 - C. The Tires are worn out.
 - D. You are not sure.

Vocabulary comprehension test

Give the synonym/second meaning (you can give it in Arabic) of the following words :

Reigned:

Wait:

Tiers:

Dublin:

Be positive:

Knead:

Dough:

Steak:

Well-red

Dyeing:

Tires:

Résumé

Cette étude vise à enquêter sur les difficultés de compréhension auxquelles sont confrontés les apprenants de l'anglais en tant que langue étrangère lorsqu'ils écoutent des jeux de mots homophoniques, ainsi que sur la relation entre leur connaissance du vocabulaire et la compréhension de ces jeux de mots homophoniques. l'échantillon de l'étude a été sélectionné de manière aléatoire parmi des étudiants en troisième année de licence en Anglais à l'université de Jijel. Pour mener cette étude une enquête a été administrée à 36 participants. un test à choix multiples à été utilisé pour évaluer la compréhension des étudiants des jeux de mots homophoniques, ainsi qu'un test à réponses ouvertes pour évaluer leur compréhension du vocabulaire après avoir écouté dix jeux de mots homophoniques enregistrés par un locuteur natif .les résultats des deux tests ont révélé que les étudiants de troisième année en anglais rencontrent des difficultés à comprendre les jeux de mots homophonique en raison de nombreux facteurs tels que les barrières culturelles, l'exposition limitée aux jeux de mots, les connaissances linguistiques, le contexte, le manque d'apport lexical, etc. Les résultats montrent aussi que la relation entre la vocabulaire et les jeux de mots homophoniques est relativement faible, ce qui peut être attribué à d'autres facteurs qui influencent la compréhension auditive des étudiants des jeux de mots homophoniques.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى التحقيق في صعوبات الفهم التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الانجليزية عند الاستماع الى التورية المتجانسة وكذلك العلاقة بين اطارهم اللغوي وفهمهم لهاته التورية، تم اختيار عينة الدراسة عشوانيا من طلاب السنة الثالثة في تخصص اللغة الانجليزية لجامعة جيجل. لتحقيق الغرض من هذه الدراسة تم توجيه استبيان الى 36 مشاركا حيث استخدم اختبار اسئلة الاختيار المتعدد لقياس فهم الطلاب للتورية المتجانسة، كما استخدم ايضا اختبار مفتوح الإجابة لاختبار فهمهم للغة ومعنى الكلمات بعد الاستماع الى عشر توريات متجانسة سجلت من طرف متحدث للغة الام. كشفت نتائج الاختبارين ان طلاب السنة الثالثة تخصص لغة انجليزية يواجهون صعوبات في الفهم عند الاستماع للنكات المتجانسة صوتيا و ذلك يعود لعدة عوامل منها العوائق الثقافية، التعرض المحدود لهذا النوع من الفكاهة، المعرفة اللغوية، السياق و قلة ادخال المفردات ، كما اظهرت النتائج أن هناك علاقة ايجابية بين معرفة المفردات لدى الطلاب وفهمهم للتورية المتجانسة ومع ذلك، فان العلاقة ضعيفة نسبيا، مما يمكن أن يعزى الى وجود عوامل اخرى تؤثر على فهم الطلاب للتورية المتجانسة عند الاستماع إليها.