

## Chapter 14

# Use of Humor in Instructional Multimedia for Asynchronous Online Learning: Design Process of Humorous Elements

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### ABSTRACT

*Since the students themselves are responsible for their learning in the asynchronous online learning process, there needs to be a power attracting them to the online learning environment. Humor, which has an educational power, can be evaluated in this perspective. Instructional multimedia is one of the most essential components in the asynchronous online learning process because it enables students to continue their studies individually. The chapter aims at suggesting a way for designing instructional multimedia using humorous elements for asynchronous online learning. Attention, recall, feedback, and humor breaks can be listed as advantages of integrating humorous elements in instructional multimedia. For this purpose, humorous elements can be easily added to instructional multimedia for asynchronous online learning. This chapter also focuses on the question of how to integrate humorous elements into instructional multimedia and offers various recommendations for future studies within this context.*

### INTRODUCTION

High dropout rates, low retention, lack of motivation and participation are still problematic and negatively affect learning outcomes in the online learning process, although online learning has a significant role in higher education for the benefits it provides (Packham et al., 2004). As some scholars assert, learn-

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ing starts with interest and enthusiasm and the lack of these leads learners to have low participation and engagement (Şahin, 2018). In asynchronous online learning environments, it is critical to engage learners in the tasks to achieve learning objectives. At this point, researchers state that well-designed instructional multimedia (IM) can support student-content interactions in online learning being maintained (Swan, 2001; Khan, 2001). However, the lack of emotional components in IM may negatively influence students' engagement by leading them to give up studying with IM (Um, et. al., 2012). Therefore, researchers put an emphasis on decreasing the negative feelings toward IM that are considered as essential indicators of the lack of student engagement in online learning environments (Henrie et al., 2015). In this circumstance, previous studies have demonstrated that including the potential of humor in IM may provide positive emotions and feelings while studying with IM (James, 2004; Wanzer, et al., 2010). Positive emotions create an attractive learning atmosphere that learners enjoy and are at least not frightened of the course. When humorous elements are integrated to the learning process appropriately, the “haha!” of humor can lead learners to the “aha!” of exploration to encourage participation in online learning (Swan, 2002). At this point, instructors who act also as designers can take advantage of humor to design IM for online learning. The idea of how to employ these features of humor in the instructional multimedia design process seems to be vital for online learning. Based on this claim, this chapter aims to guide the process in making instructional multimedia humorous for online.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Humor and Online Learning**

Humor is defined as (1) verbal or non-verbal activities that provide positive cognitive and emotional responses to listeners (Jonas, 2012), (2) a word, concept or situation that makes people entertained, relaxed and/or makes them laugh thanks to the ability of enjoyment (Balta, 2016). Von Oech (1990) highlighted that “There is a close relationship between the ‘haha’ of humor and the ‘aha’ of discovery”. As “haha” refers to the emotional dimension, “aha” refers to the functional dimensions. Regarding the emotional dimensions of humor, some studies documented that humor can keep students' interest, reduce negative feelings during learning, increase student motivation and attention, encourage students to take responsibilities and actively engage in tasks (Levine, 2017). Considering the social perspective of online learning, James (2004) pointed out that humor can strengthen interpersonal relationships, minimize social distance, and improve a sense of community by creating an enjoyable environment.

In addition to the attention-grabbing feature of humor, it can support and enhance emotional learning (Dormann & Biddle, 2006) as humor on cognitive and affective processes can facilitate learning (Lepper & Henderlong, 2000; Renninger, 2000). In this sense, studies about humor are address how humor can function as attention, retention, feedback and humor break in online learning. Thus, embedding humorous elements to provide these functions in online learning process become crucial. Humorous information is easily recalled because of enhancing attention at encoding (Strick et al., 2009). Humor break and humorous feedback can motivate learners during the learning process (Tamblyn, 2003). Humor in the learning process has a strong point of allowing student attention and can be considered to be the first step of learning. Retention also takes place regarding the order of humorous intervention, which puts an emphasis on the effect of humor in the permanence of the constructed knowledge. The feedback function

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