

# Humour in Indonesia EFL classroom: A qualitative study

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## ABSTRACT

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lessons can be challenging, particularly for students with limited English proficiency. In Indonesia, creating a relaxed classroom environment is essential for effective language acquisition. Consequently, teachers often incorporate humour as a pedagogical strategy. Despite its potential benefits, the use of humour in EFL classrooms remains underexplored. This study aims to identify the types of humour employed by teachers and examine students' responses to these humorous interventions. Utilizing a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design, this study was conducted in the English Language Education Department of a private university in Yogyakarta. Data were collected through three classroom observations and interviews with six third-year students. The findings reveal six types of humour used in the classroom: 1) teasing, 2) self-disparaging humour, 3) lesson-related humour, 4) sarcasm, 5) hilarious comments, and 6) gestures. Additionally, the study identifies seven student responses to teachers' humour: 1) fostering enjoyable learning activities, 2) stimulating student interest, 3) reducing classroom anxiety, 4) assisting comprehension of materials, 5) motivating class participation, 6) alleviating tension and boredom, and 7) enhancing student engagement. Based on these findings, it is recommended that humour be integrated into EFL classrooms due to its numerous benefits for both students and teachers, as well as its positive impact on the learning environment.



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## 1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language in an EFL class can be challenging, especially if their basic language skills are inadequate. Wagner and Urios-Aparisi (2011) emphasize that reducing student anxiety is particularly beneficial in foreign language classrooms, where students often experience heightened anxiety due to the disparity between their cognitive abilities and linguistic skills. In the context of learning English as a foreign language in Indonesia, Fadhillah et al. (2022) highlight the importance of maintaining a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Effective communication and interaction between teachers and students are crucial for creating a positive classroom environment (Banks, 2014; Luz, 2015). Finding strategies to enhance student learning remains a continuous challenge for educators. Unfortunately, Ocon (2015) notes that many university teachers have not received formal training in effective teaching methods.

All humans recognize laughter as part of a universal language of fundamental emotions. Furthermore, Dawood (2020) stated that humor is a human mind-aspect that causes amusement, makes people smile, laugh, or makes them comfortable. Therefore, the teachers can utilize the power

of laughter to enhance and improve teaching and learning. Lei, Cohen, and Russler (2010) reported that having a sense of humor is an important teacher characteristic that, when used appropriately, can be an effective pedagogical tool. This is beneficial to the continuity of learning activities humor can be used as effective way to help create fun learning activities, encourage attention, and can be used to pique students' interest in learning (Cann & Cann, 2013).

Humor, in particular, promotes student performance by attracting and maintaining attention, reducing anxiety, encouraging participation and raising motivation (Savage, 2017). However, only a few of classes incorporate humor as a pedagogical strategy, despite the potential benefits it can offer to learners as well as teachers in the context of foreign language acquisition in the classroom setting. Therefore, this study seeks to discover the types of humor employed by teachers, as well as students' responses to teacher humor in the classroom.

Humor, in particular, promotes student performance by attracting and maintaining attention, reducing anxiety, encouraging participation, and raising motivation (Savage et al., 2017). Despite these potential benefits, humor is rarely incorporated as a pedagogical strategy in EFL classrooms. This gap presents an opportunity to explore how humor can enhance the learning experience for both students and teachers in the context of foreign language acquisition. Therefore, this study seeks to discover the types of humor employed by teachers and examine students' responses to these humorous interventions. Specifically, the research addresses two research questions: 1) What types of humor are used by teachers in EFL classrooms? 2) What are the students' responses to the teacher's humor in EFL classroom?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Humor

Humor is a Latin term derived from the word *umor*, which means *body fluid* (that controls human health and emotions). Humor is often associated with anything that causes someone to laugh or smile. Making people laugh with humor can forge strong bonds and provide vital elements for connection. Dawood (2020) said, it is the same as if humor is also a human mind aspect that amuses, makes people smile, or makes them comfortable. Furthermore, humor is also a broad term that refers to anything that people enjoy or something that is considered funny and contributes to making others laugh, such as the mental processes that lead to creating and perceiving such funny stimuli, as well as affective responses involved in enjoying that (Octaberlina & Asrifan, 2021). Nashruddin and Alam (2021) defined that humor can also be identified as something that causes individuals to laugh or smile. This essentially an emotional response to language, whether spoken or written. Meanwhile, according to Tangler (2006), he states that humor and enjoyment are different things. He defined humor as more than having the sense of humor. Because when the audience laughs, they understand you and like you (Reddy, 2016). There are numerous theories about humor. Despite the different interpretations of humor, there is extensive agreement among experts, including the communication of many incomprehensible understandings that are amusing in some ways (Martin, 2007). Humor, as a multidisciplinary phenomenon, can be viewed from various perspectives. It is determined by the context of use, which ranges from social to psychological, philosophical to physiological, and linguistic to a layperson (Nashruddin & Alam, 2021).

Cann and Matson (2014) claimed that humor is closely related to social activities, which are closely associated with human nature. In accordance with Yip and Martin (2006), humor also a social instrument that effectively reduces psychological stress, communicates sentiments and ideas, and improves relationships; additionally, humor protects social relationships when negative information is communicated.

Based on the definition above, humor can be defined as an act or sentence that causes others to laugh. Everyone has a sense of comedy; the only variation is the level of humor. It all depends on the individual's background, such as environment, culture, or way of delivery. However, the purpose is always the same: to create a nice environment or to make other people happy.

### 2.2. Humor in a Foreign Language Classroom

Boredom is the most significant pedagogical obstacle to learning. According to Kardena (2020), if students are bored while learning, they will struggle to retain the information. As a result, student

learning needs to be optimally achieved. In so doing, humor becomes one of the most popular communication strategies teachers use in language classrooms (Tunnisa, 2018). Because using humor in the classroom has helped create a more comfortable environment by reducing the distance between teacher and student, also increasing learners' motivation (Farnia & Mohammadi, 2021).

It is also important to pay attention when using humor in class because the teachers must be mindful of several factors. The reason studied by Rashidi et al. (2014) is that if teachers are too humorous, they may appear to offend students. Therefore, in a similar study, Ali et al. (2015) also found that teachers should be aware that when humor is explicitly directed at certain students, it can be interpreted as harassment or favoritism. Students also should not be criticized or humiliated using humor because teachers' humor can trigger anxiety and even trauma in students (Petraki & Nguyen, 2016).

In other contexts, humor appears differently. It is reasonable to assume that humor in the classroom differs from that in different settings. Because the classroom as a community includes both solidarity and conflict, humor features may only be found in the classroom situation (Kim & Park 2017). Therefore, in previous research, Rareshide (1993) proposed seven guidelines that teachers must follow when using humor in the classroom. First, teachers need to be aware of and open to the many uses of humor. Second, humor should not be employed to mock / humiliate a learner. Third, humor should not be without purpose; it should always be proactive. Even if humor is used, it should be adapted to the skill level of the student. Fifth, teachers must understand the value of spontaneous and planned humor and incorporate them into their lessons. Sixth, teachers should laugh at themselves from time to time to show their learners if they are real people. Seventh, they should only use sarcasm in a playful manner (Rareshide, 1993).

Many people believe it is up to teachers to spark students' interest in the classroom (Woo et al., 2019) and make it enjoyable (Kavandi & Kavandi, 2016). Making the classroom environment friendly and humorous can help build good student relationships. Teachers can serve as role models for students, demonstrating that using humor is not complicated. Teachers can begin by telling personal anecdotes, using gestures, showing funny things, or telling short stories (Kavandi & Kavandi, 2016). As a result, teachers must be creative in terms of avoiding this type of problem.

### 2.3. Types of Humor

Ziyaemehr and Kumar (2014) classify three types of humor: (1) Verbal (puns, funny comments/stories, riddles, comic irony, word plays, hyperbole, content-related jokes), (2) Nonverbal (gestures, making faces, and funny facial expressions), and (3) Combined verbal and nonverbal humor (skit, parody, impersonation, satire, and monologue).

Chaniotakis and Papazoglou (2019), found that teachers used a wide range of humor. They have classified humor into six different types. These include the teacher's comments related to the lesson, self-disparaging humor, comments made by the teacher towards a student (teasing), jokes, non-verbal humor, as well as the use of irony or sarcasm.

There are two kinds of humor, according to Wanzer et al. (1999): *appropriate* (positive) and *inappropriate* (negative) (harmful or offensive). On the other hand, Wanzer et al. (2006) classify four types of appropriate and four types of inappropriate humor, namely (1) Related humor (jokes, stories, teacher performance, teasing), (2) Humor unrelated to course material (college life stereotypes), (3) Self-disparaging humor (making fun of themselves, making fun of mistakes in class), and (4) Unplanned humor. Inappropriate humor included (1) Disparaging humor directed at others (ethnicity/racial groups, a specific sexual orientation), (2) Disparaging humor directed at students (based on gender, intelligence, appearance, religion), (3) Offensive humor (sarcasm, inappropriate jokes), and (4) Self-disparaging humor.

### 2.4. Student's Responses to Teacher's Humor

Humor may play a significant role in the classroom, particularly in engaging students and creating a positive learning atmosphere. However, not all students respond to humor in the same way, and the effectiveness of a teacher's humor may be affected by some factors. Several researchers have often cited the reasons for using humor in the classroom. Nashruddin and Alam (2021) argues that the students have a positive response toward learning as a result of their teacher's use of humor in EFL learning activities. This is explained in their findings that the teachers' use of humor in class is liked by students. For various reasons, all of the students stated that they enjoyed it. The humor that is

delivered keeps them from getting bored. In addition, every student claimed that they are no longer sleepy since they are more engaged in studying by humor. Additionally, during the teaching and learning process, all students love to hear a few jokes or other forms of humor from their teachers. Furthermore, this is similar to Ravichand (2013) who claims that humor can reduce tension and boredom and stimulate interest because relaxation reduces emotions, a person's sense of the teacher's image and increasing student interest and enjoyment.

Farnia and Mohammadi (2021) stated that the students did not respond negatively; on the contrary, they claimed that the use of humor created a friendly environment. Students were more relaxed and they were able to concentrate on the lesson, express their opinions, and participate more actively in class activities. However, few respondents believed that humor was a waste of the class's time since it was unrelated to the subject. Therefore, while the majority of students responded positively and claimed that using humor that was mostly relevant to the course really facilitated learning, very few students, as seen in the observations, felt uncomfortable. These statements are reinforced by other findings from Hismanoglu, Ersan, and Turan (2018) that argued if students could learn more effectively if their foreign language teacher employed humor because they believed that humor boosted their ability to learn a foreign language by setting up a more comfortable and supportive learning environment. Furthermore, the teacher's use of humor helped students feel closer to him/her.

The most frequently mentioned affective response to humor is that it helps create a relaxed environment in the classroom, which made students are more open, motivated, interactive with teachers and peers, and learn more effectively as a result. In their research, Mahdiloo and Izadpanah (2017) also confirm that humor can help people learn to be more creative. Rokhmah, Betaubun, and Fenanlampir (2020) confirmed that through humor, students are able to perceive that difficult subject like English language is interesting. Goodboy, Booth-Butterfield, Bolkan, and Griffin (2015) also discovered that using humor in the classroom can significantly positively influence students' learning, class participation, extra effort, and relationship with their teacher.

Research indicates that humor can enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall classroom atmosphere. Because using humor in class not only improves learner performance but also helps them memorize and maintain the materials they have learned. This is consistent with studies that Tunnisa et al. (2019) have found that if the teacher used humor in the classroom, the student was enjoying the teaching and learning process because the teacher's humor developed harmonious interactions among the students, leading to a more passionate teaching-learning process. It also increased student attendance and reduces the number of students who were sleepy in class. Besides, students found that their humorous teacher is admired and energetic (Fata et al., 2018). However, teachers must be mindful of specific student preferences and use humor in a way that is inclusive and respectful of all students.

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## 2.5. Review of Related Studies

Previous studies have written about the pedagogical value of humor, particularly in teaching a second language. Bryant (2012) asserts that the context of humour is altered or modified. Humor in the classroom has various applications. The L2 teacher must decide whether to use conversational jokes, written jokes from the text and literature, or jokes from other sources. Language teachers are frequently advised to use appropriate humor for their students. Also, humor can motivate students and increase their attention span. Mingzheng (2012) also reported that students preferred to learn English in a relaxed and familiar setting with humor.

Much of the research on humor has concentrated on how humor affects students' enjoyment of language learning. Indeed, humor in the language classroom also provides another purpose, which is often to make learning enjoyable and effective. Wanzer, Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, and Smith (2006) also



defined humor as anything funny or amusing to the teacher and/or students. This interpretation implies that humor either from the teacher or the students, from a different source, and may be recognized or only enjoyed by one party. Also, humor psychologically motivates students and reduces tension in English classes because when used to subvert authority, can potentially facilitate reduce learners' anxiety in foreign language learning in the classroom (Kim, 2021).

Furthermore, Akbari (2020) stated that many researchers in education and psychology have focused on humour as a component of a more extensive set of affective behaviors influencing learning in the classroom, known as immediacy behaviors. Another aspect of language play is sociolinguistic competence. However, according to Lei, Cohen, and Russler (2010), the sense of humor is an important teacher characteristic in second language humor, so when used appropriately, it can be an effective pedagogical tool. The teachers should remember that humor serves both positive and negative functions and should be aware of its potential benefits and drawbacks when using it in their language classrooms.

### 3. Methodology

This research aimed to identify the types of humor used in the classroom and the students' responses on teacher's humor in the classroom. In this study, a qualitative approach was employed it was relevant for this study in that the researchers were able to observe the use of humor in learning activities in the classroom and to investigate students' responses to the teachers humor. Furthermore, a descriptive qualitative research design was applied to obtain detailed information. As Creswell & Poth (2016) suggests, descriptive qualitative research elucidates differences in opinions on an issue and suggests how these differences influenced the outcome.

This research was conducted at an ELED (English Language Education Department) at a private university in Yogyakarta in which the data was gathered through observation and interview. In order to understand the types of humor used by the teachers, three classroom observations were conducted. In addition, six students from batch 2020 were included and interviewed to collect the data that can answer students responses towards humor used by the teachers. According to Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), there is no minimum standard for the number of participants in qualitative research.

Trustworthiness in this study was done to ensure the data can be trusted. Connelly (2016) stated that the trustworthiness of a research, also known as its rigor, relates to the degree of credibility that may be placed in its data, their interpretation, and the procedures that were utilized to acquire those findings. The researchers used triangulation to enhance the accuracy of the study. According to Cohen et al. (2007), the triangulation of data is a method that may be utilized to improve the credibility and validity of research findings. In this current study, the researcher gathered information through observation and interviews. Furthermore, triangulation is a method of examining data by using anything outside of the data to check back or compare data that has been gathered. It is intended to guarantee and enhance the validity of the collected data. To maintain the participants' identity, pseudonyms were used.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1. Types of Humor

The first research question was to discover what types of humor the teachers utilized in the classroom. The data related to this study were acquired through classroom observations. Based on the results from many classroom observations, several findings regarding to the different types of humor employed by teachers have been identified. Several types of humor used by the teachers were categorized into six types, including 1) teasing, 2) self-disparaging humor, 3) lesson-related humor, 4) sarcasm, 5) hilarious comments, and 6) gesture. These findings are further elaborated on in the following descriptions.

#### 1) Teasing

The use of teasing as a teacher's humor was employed inside the classroom setting. The situation happened as the teacher commenced the lesson by extending greetings to the students, followed by teasing them. The following is a transcript of the situation that occurred.

Table 1. Situation 1

<b>Teacher</b> :	<p><i>OK, kita memulai kelas kembali setelah Hari Raya Idul Adha, ya. Bagaimana kabar kalian? Apakah badan kalian masih tercium bau-bau kambing atau sapi?</i></p> <p><i>/ OK, we'll go back to school after 73i dal-Adha. How are you guys doing? <b>Do you still have a goat or cow smell on your body?</b> /</i></p> <p>[Many students laughed]</p>
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In this situation, the teacher begins the class by addressing the students. Since this class begins after a long holiday, the teacher employed humor by teasing students about the smell of goats or cows, alluding to the Eid al-Adha, which was associated with sacrificed animals such as goats, cows, and others. Therefore, in this situation, the teacher builds on the classroom environment by teasing to students and topics that can help liven up the mood in the classroom.

Teasing is a statement with a humorous element directed at the student. The teacher made attempts at humor that were both pertinent to the situation and, at the same time, directed at the students. This type of humor is in line with Chaniotakis and Papazoglou (2019) who classified teasing as parts of teachers' humor in the classroom.

#### 2) *Self-disparaging*

The utilization of self-disparaging humor by the teacher was employed in the classroom. The situation occurred during the teacher's explanation on artificial intelligence (AI) technology, whereby he employed humor by facetiously alluding to his own old and obsolete, so eliciting laughter from the students.

Table 2. Situation 1

<b>Teacher</b> :	<p>Kalau dulu saya sering tahu perkembangannya ya, sekarang lama-lama saya sudah ketinggalan jaman.</p> <p><b>/In the past, I often knew about the updates, but now that I'm older, I'm obsolete. /</b></p> <p>[Many students laughed]</p>
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In this context, this humor emerged as the teacher discussed the evolution of AI technology. The discussion surrounding AI (artificial intelligence) technology commences and persists, posing difficulties for the teacher to sustain engagement with the ongoing dialogue. Therefore, in order to swiftly finish the discussion on AI, the teacher concluded the discourse on AI technology by employed self-disparaging

humor, "I am antiquated and rendered obsolete."

In addition to the previous situation, Table 3 presents another situation of self-disparaging humor by the teacher. In this case, the teacher used self-disparaging humor when she was listening to a student's opinion but was unable to hear the student's words, so she joked that she was deaf and asked the student to repeat himself.

Table 3. Situation 2

<b>Teacher</b> :	<p><i>Bisa diulang nggak tadi sama suaranya dibesarkan? Saya sedikit agak budi (budek) ya, ini.</i></p> <p><i>/ Could you please enlarge the sound of your voice and repeating what you are saying?</i></p> <p><b>Sorry, I'm a bit deaf (clueless/lost). /</b></p> <p>[Many students laughed]</p>
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At this moment, humor appeared when the teacher asked the student's opinion. When the student expressed his opinion, the teacher appeared confused and struggled to comprehend what the student was saying. Evidently, the teacher found it difficult to hear the student's opinion because of the distance between them and the student's low volume. Thus, the teacher used humor to put herself down by stating that she was 'budek' (deaf) and requested the student to repeat the previously expressed opinion.

Such humor situation aligns with Wanzer et al. (2010) who asserted that this kind of humor includes a teacher making fun of, criticizing, or putting down himself or herself. In fact, the usage of this self-disparaging humor was proven to increase students' motivation to comprehend information (Wanzer et al., 2010).

### 3) Lesson-related humor

The implementation of lesson-related humor by the teacher was utilized inside the classroom when the teacher explained the final assignment and made the students laugh by adding humor about it.

Table 4. Situation 1

Teacher :	Sumber nya yang jelas ya, jangan tanya ke mas-mas tukang bengkel, ya? Harus clear dan terpercaya sumber yang kalian dapatkan. / <b>The source for finding this is clear, don't ask the mas-mas mechanic, OK?</b> The sources you use must be clear and credible. / [Students laughed]
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The teacher's statement elicited humorous content relevant to the lesson. In this context, the teacher explained the students' final assignment. Then, while explaining the requirements that students had to follow, one of the requirements was that students had to cite credible sources. The teacher then continued what had been said about the citation source by throwing in some humor by stating that it was not permitted to use other people's sources, such as mechanics. This referred to lesson-related humor or teacher comments related to the lesson.

Lesson-related humor depends much on the material or the subject discussed. The use of lesson-related humor in class that occurs on the spur of the moment and is not specifically planned for. The finding was in line with Wanzer et al. (2010), who discovered that course-related humor had a positive relationship with learning-related emotions. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that humor related to course material appears to be directly linked to students' general emotional well-being.

### 4) Sarcasm

In the classroom, the use of sarcasm humor by the teacher was found. The events occurred while the teacher was discussing a platform, and making the students laugh with her sarcastic humor.

Table 5. Situation 1

Teacher :	<i>Kalau saya sih termasuk yang tidak setuju untuk melarang kalian menggunakan aplikasi tersebut. Saya tahu kalau kalian (mahasiswa) itu semakin dilarang, semakin dilanggar gitu ya.</i> / I am one of those who do not agree to prohibit you from using the application. <b>I'm aware that the more you (students) are forbidden, the more you break it, isn't?</b> / [Many students laughed]
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During the discussion regarding the potential applications of the ChatGPT platform, the teacher afterwards expressed that many teachers restricted students from utilizing the site due to its perceived negative aspects. The teacher, on the other hand, expressed her disagreement with the prohibition of students use the application, subsequently providing her reason in a manner that had a hint of sarcasm. She expressed in an easy-to-understand way that students might have a stronger interest for using the platform if they were forbidden from using it.

This type of humor is in line with Wanzer & Frymier who classified sarcasm into type of humor. It is a type of verbal irony in which a sentence is semantically understood in the opposite direction of its literal meaning. If a teacher were to establish a good relationship with their students, it is probable that the students would be more receptive to the teacher's use of sarcasm and perceive it as hilarious.

### 5) Funny/Hilarious comments

The implementation of funny comments by the teacher was utilized inside the classroom. The event happened when the teacher delivered a detailed description of the final assignment and smoothly integrated humor into the discussion, resulting in the laughter of the students.

Table 6. Situation 1

Teacher	:	<p><i>OK, jadi tidak bisa dadakan gitu ya, tidak seperti tahu yang digoreng dadakan itu, ya.</i>  <i>/ OK, so it can't be impromptu, like the fried tofu. /</i>            [Many students laughed]</p>
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In this context, humor arised when the teacher cautioned students against completing assignments overnight or on the spur of the moment due to the need for extensive preparation. Subsequently, the teacher humorously drew a connection between the concept of fried tofu. In Indonesia, particularly in Java, sellers of fried tofu were renowned for their peculiar melody when selling fried tofu. Therefore, in this humor context, the word '*dadakan*' was used by the teacher as a connection to make funny comments that enabled students to laugh.

This finding aligns with Petraki and Nguyen (2016) statement that hilarious comments were a brief statement containing a humorous element and also the form of humor that the majority of the time was utilized in the classroom settings. The comments could be on anything having to do with the lesson, the class, or the classroom, including the content of the lesson, the students, the teachers, the behaviors of the students, the replies of the students, the classroom equipment, and other similar topics.

#### 6) *Gesture*

The teacher employed the use of humor gestures within the classroom setting. The event occurred during the lesson session, where the teacher explained the topic's materials, simultaneously creating laughter from the students by employing exaggerated hand and body movements (gesture).

Table 7. Situation 1

Teacher	:	<p><i>Seperti tadi yang sudah saya bilang, observerbal behaviour. Jadi hal yang bisa langsung kita lihat. Contohnya seperti, oh mereka berangkulan, atau mungkin jambak temennya, hehe tapi tidak boleh ya.</i>  <i>/As I already said, observerbal behavior. So, things that we can directly see. For example, "Oh, they're hugging each other, or maybe they're pulling their friend's hair," hehe but that's not allowed, OK. /</i>  <b>[The teacher acts out pulling someone's hair]</b>            [Many students laughed]</p>
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In this situation, the teacher's gesture shows a sense of humor. Initially, the teacher explained something relevant to the learning material. The teacher then made a joke by performing exaggerated hand movements, such as grabbing hair, which caused students to laughed later. This was merely an attempt by the teacher to make the classroom atmosphere lively through the students' laughter.

The finding is consistent with the study done by Loehr (2007) that gesture refers to the deliberate and organized synchronization of speech production with movements of the body. The facial expressions and body language can significantly affect how the humor is perceived and received. These are beneficial for indicating a joke, emphasizing the punchline, and provoking laughter. Other gestures, such as smiling, winking, raising the eyebrows, or making humorous expressions, can be used to indicate that the situation is not serious. In addition, it might enhance the dramatic effect or employ exaggeration in their speech by the use of hand, shoulder, or head gestures.

## 4.2. Student's Responses towards Teacher's Humor

The following section of this chapter covers how students' response the teacher's humor in the classroom. The data related to this study were acquired through students' interview and the students' response was based on their experience. The findings are divided into seven categories: 1) fostering enjoyable learning activities, 2) stimulating student interest, 3) reducing classroom anxiety, 4) assisting comprehension of materials, 5) motivating class participation, 6) alleviating tension and boredom, and 7) enhancing student engagement. These findings are elucidated on in the following paragraphs and linked to a few references.



### 1) *Fostering enjoyable learning activities*

As reported by the participants, the student response to the teacher's humor in the classroom is to generate fun learning activities. According to the one of the participants, Becca, "The use of humor by teachers in the classroom facilitates pleasant learning activities" (p1.3). Moreover, another participant, Natalie felt the same way. She contended that "When the lecturer employs humor, the class becomes brighter and less stressful" (p3.7). All of the participants, including Falicia, share the same response to the teacher's humor, "Humor makes students laugh a lot, which keeps the classroom atmosphere exciting" (p5.4) and Billie who stated that "Humor brightens the classroom atmosphere by causing many students to laugh, making the class more exciting and active" (p6.3).

The most recent reason why humor may result in fun learning activities was because it offers students with a comfortable and supportive learning atmosphere. According to Hismanoglu, Ersan, and Turan (2018), students could learn more effectively because they believed that humor boosted their ability to learn a foreign language by setting up a more comfortable and supportive learning environment. The participants perceived that humor had good effects. Furthermore, Hismanoglu et al. (2018) also added that in the classroom, the use of humor had positive effects; establishing a more pleasant and conducive learning environment, helping students feel more relaxed.

### 2) *Stimulating student interest*

The second finding showed that using humor in the classroom can stimulate student's interest. Falicia stated that "Humor in the classroom increases student concentrate and enthusiasm in learning" (p5.7). Becca also shared a similar opinion by saying that, "Humor can increase student interest in the topic" (p1.6). Furthermore, Ashley also pointed out that humor "makes students enthusiastic, more interested in the topic discussed" (p2.4). Based on their opinions, humor can make students feel more interested in the topic or lesson in the classroom.

There are various reasons why humor in the classroom might can stimulate the interest of students. The finding was in line with Ravichand (2013) who stated that humor makes a non-intimidating learning environment, it can help increase the interest of students in learning. Furthermore, humor has the potential to create interest among students in the learning process by concentrating on the knowledge they need to acquire and by creating a positive, emotional, and social environment. Also, Nasiri and Mafakheri (2015) have similar statements that students' interest and deep learning can be developed and maintained through the use of humor.

### 3) *Reducing classroom anxiety*

The third finding is that teacher's humor in the classroom result in low-anxiety learning in the classroom. By giving humor, teacher can help the students to reduce anxiety, tension, and boost self-esteem. This is revealed by Taylor's perception. She said that "Humorous lecturers make students feel more relaxed in the classroom, helping them to be less anxious when they confront learning challenges" (p4.11). In addition, Natalie added, "When the lecturer employs humor, the class becomes brighter, minimize anxiety, and less stressful" (p3.7). In the same perception, Billie stated that "Humor makes students feel more comfortable, relaxed, refreshed, reduce classroom anxiety, and more focused in the classroom" (p6.4).

From the participants' answers above, it was revealed that the responses of students to teacher's use of humor in the classroom can result in low-anxiety learning in the classroom. The findings aligned with Horwitz (2001) statement that the teachers' sense of humor can play a role in reducing language learner anxiety while also enhancing learning in order to control student perceptions of anxiety, which threatens student achievement in the target language. Moreover, the use of humor in the classroom can help students relax, especially when dealing with challenging topics or situations that are generally seen as anxiety-inducing by students, such as exams.

### 4) *Assisting comprehension of materials*

According to the data collected, humor was effective in helping students recall the subject more easily. One of the participants, Ashley stated, "When teachers use humor to explain a subject, it makes me easier to understand the materials" (p2.3). Furthermore, Billie added, "Humor enhanced me to recall of the course material" (p6.5). In addition, Taylor emphasizes a comparable one by saying, "I felt that I had a better understanding of the material after the lecturer's explanation using humor" (p4.6).

Based on the previous assertions, teachers' humor was beneficial to students. They remember the content more easily when the lecturer employed material-related humor. The finding aligns with the study conducted by Garner (2006), who indicates that students will typically remember a message better if it is conveyed with humor. Furthermore, Abdulmajeed and Hameed (2017) concurs with this study, stating that humor enhances students' ability to retain lecture material. This indicates that recognition of humor could improve students' attention, as well as their ability to recall information and learn new material.

#### 5) *Motivating class participation*

According to the data gathered, humor in the classroom motivates students to learn. As Becca said, "Humor makes me more motivated to join the class" (p1.14). Falcia also stated, "Humor in the classroom makes me as a student more excited and motivated to come to class" (p5.15). Furthermore, Natalie also explained that humor "Improve student's learning mood by feeling motivated, and enthusiastic about learning in the classroom" (p3.9). It could be seen on their interview result from that the students are more motivated and able to learn as a result of teacher humor may also communicate as engaged and enthusiastic learners who appreciate the learning process.

Based on the answers provided by the participants, it was found that students' responses to the teacher's use of humor in the classroom have a positive impact on their motivation to participate actively in class activities. The finding was in line with Goodboy et al. (2015), that discovered if humorous occur in the classroom, students may be more motivated to engage in discussing their experiences, not because it will help them get better grades, but because it will be pleasurable to do so. As has been shown above, students are more motivated to comprehend course material when their teachers utilize humor, and this previous study implies that such humor motivates all students to be more actively involved in the learning process.

#### 6) *Alleviating tension and boredom*

Humor can be used to reduce tension, relieve boredom, and encourage interest. It is proved by the statements from three participants. As Ashley said that "Using humor in a lesson makes the classroom less boring and monotonous" (p2.1). Similarly, Becca also said that "Humor encourages me to engage with the learning material without feeling burdened, reduces tension, and boredom" (p1.9). In another statement by Natalie, "Humor makes me feel comfortable, less stressed, and reduces the burden on the mind. I feel like the classroom learning goes faster" (p3.5).

According to the participants' perceptions above, humor can relieve tension and boredom. The finding concurs with the research conducted by several researchers, such as Wanzer (2009), Ravichand (2013), Serafini and Coles (2015), who defined that using humor reduces anxiety, stress, and boredom, fosters more positive attitudes about learning, and boosts students' perceptions of how much they have learned. Basically, among the most frequently mentioned reasons for using humor were: its influence as a relaxing, comforting, and tension-reducing device, its effect on teacher image, and its effect on maintaining/increasing student engagement and enjoyment.

#### 7) *Enhancing student engagement*

The last response revealed in this research that humor is an appropriate and effective tool to enhance students' engagement in the classroom. The finding showed that humor can influenced students' learning and class participation. This revealed by Billie that "Humor increases the level of student engagement in the classroom" (p6.6) and also by Taylor that "The students participated more active and enthusiastically in the classroom" (p4.3). In addition, findings on humor can improve relationships with teachers pointed out by Falcia, "Because of humor in the classroom, there are several interactions between lecturers and students, which strengthens the teacher-student relationship" (p5.9).

Based on the answers provided by the participants, it was found that students' responses to the teacher's use of humor in the classroom was the students have a positive response toward learning as a result of their teacher's use of humor in EFL learning activities. The finding was in line with Goodboy et al. (2015), who stated that using humor in the classroom can significantly positively influence students' learning, class participation, extra effort, and relationship with their teacher. Moreover, Baid et al. (2010) and Hismanoglu et al. (2018) also argued that using humor in the classroom helps break down the barriers between the teacher and the students by putting students at ease. This finding of the research proves that the participants discovered that the use of humor in

learning can make the teacher more approachable, enhance student-instructor relationships, and increase student engagement in the lesson.

## 5. Conclusion

In acquiring a language, such as English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia, it is crucial to maintain a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. For some students, acquiring a foreign language in an EFL class can be depressing, especially if their basic foreign language skills are inadequate. Teachers are expected to increase student interest and learning of course materials by creating a learning environment in the classroom. Many teachers have to figure out how to make their lectures interesting and motivating for students; one method is using humor into their learning. In light of the context surrounding the motivations for conducting this research, two research questions have been developed for this study. The research questions are to figure out the types of humor used by teachers in the classroom and how students respond to the use of humor in the classroom. Using qualitative approach and descriptive qualitative research design, six participants from English Language Education Department students were involved. Using classroom observation and in-depth interviews, six findings related to the types of humor and students' responses towards humor were revealed. The findings related to the types of humor used by the teachers in the classroom consist of 1) teasing, 2) self-disparaging humor, 3) lesson-related humor, 4) sarcasm, 5) humorous comments, and 6) gesture. In addition, regarding students' responses towards humor used by the teachers revealed seven findings consisting of: 1) fostering enjoyable learning activities, 2) stimulating student interest, 3) reducing classroom anxiety, 4) assisting comprehension of materials, 5) motivating class participation, 6) alleviating tension and boredom, and 7) enhancing student engagement.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that due to the positive impact of humor on student engagement and learning outcomes, it is recommended that EFL teachers in Indonesia and similar contexts integrate humor into their teaching strategies. In an attempt to apply humor effectively, teachers should understand the classroom dynamics to assess the most appropriate types of humor, use humor purposefully to support lesson objectives, be culturally sensitive to ensure appropriateness, encourage student participation to foster interaction, and continuously reflect on and adapt their strategies based on student feedback and learning outcomes. By adopting these practices, teachers can create a more relaxed and supportive learning environment, ultimately improving student performance and engagement in EFL classrooms.

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- Ethics Declaration** : We as the authors acknowledge that this work has been written based on ethical research that conforms to the regulations of our university and that we have obtained permission from the relevant institutes when collecting data. We support TEFL Journal in maintaining high standards of personal conduct and practicing honesty in all our professional practices and endeavors.
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