
Humor effectiveness in L2 classrooms: The case of rural school EFL students

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Abstract

This study aimed to measure types, levels, and perceptions towards the application of humor as a supporting material in EFL classrooms. One hundred and thirteen rural school EFL students were involved as the participants of this mixed-methods study. As for quantitative results, humor was revealed to have positive influence on EFL students' learning development by facilitating the lesson and encouraging learning enthusiasm. Although some aspects of L2 humor were not believed to be helpful, other aspects such as modelling English use and usage and authentic materials proved that such L2 humor was advantageous. Meanwhile, interview results showed that L2 humor was considered paramount that it helped to progress English learning, improve learning strategies, and increase motivation. The combination between both results prove that L2 humor is not only entertaining, but also prospective for those who expect a more realistic or knowledgeable material that does not cause stress or anxiety in learning English, particularly in a rural context. In addition, this study was limited on quantitative and qualitative perceptions, but it did not attempt to implement L2 humor through an action research.

Keywords: L2 humor, English classroom, rural school, EFL students

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1. Introduction

Humor has shifted its function from entertaining and amusing audiences to a new experience teaching English to L2 learners in the L2 classroom. Humor has been pedagogically considered a tactic in teaching and learning English as it consists of various linguistic meanings and interpretations depending on L2 learners' views and language competencies (Rosenbusch, Evans, & Zeelenberg, 2022; Salem, Jarrah, & Alrashdan, 2020; Treger, Sprecher, & Erber, 2013). In the L2 classroom context, the creative learning experience is indicated by how L2 learners perceive linguistic knowledge delivered by L2 teachers who use humor as teaching support (Bell, 2009). Similarly, language use and humor use seem innovative and linguistically distinctive (Rosenbusch, Evans, & Zeelenberg, 2022; Fearman, 2014). L2 teachers who tend to perform humor in their teaching have to select words, phrases, or sentences that are not predictable by the L2 students. Another way to deal with this is by creating a new story or situation that contains a figure of speech, such as metaphor, hyperbole, or personification. As humor consists of various use and usage of L2, it is noted that the learners can develop their English (Bell, 2002). On the other side, L2 teachers as humor makers and L2 learners as learning audiences must understand the grammatical function, selected diction, and meanings of phrases and sentences uttered (Strick et al., 2012; Medgyes, 2001). Meanwhile, the L2 learners, as the object of humor, also need to comprehend their English skills to catch some meaning of the utterance and show that the phrases and sentences are hilarious (Mir & Cots, 2019).

L2 teaching and learning in rural schools have always been exciting topics to be researched in various approaches. The importance of L2 humor has been considered as academic support to strengthen the English knowledge of L2 learners in many schools, including schools in rural areas. The reason is that in rural schools, L2 learners are not always interested in and motivated to learn English as they believe it is a complex subject (Islam, 2021).

Regarding this issue, integrating humor in L2 classrooms in rural schools is expected to be a new solution for the learners to increase their motivation and interest in learning English. As noted, humor is a natural use of the English language, which requires L2 teachers to create it as native-like phrases and sentences (Hofmann & Rodden, 2019). Even though humor has not been widely developed as a proper strategy for L2 teaching and learning (Martin & Ford, 2018), its integration into the classrooms can help L2 teachers and learners configure every use and usage of L2 in different ways.

In the Indonesian context, the application of humor in L2 classrooms remains debatable as its primary function is more on entertaining audiences rather than pedagogically developed for L2 teachers and learners. A plethora of studies of humor in Indonesian contexts has been widely used, including humor through L2 text (Rochmawati, 2011; Andriyani, 2016; Lewier, 2020), humor sense of teachers' humor (Tunnisa, Mahmud, & Salija, 2019), L2 humor as a

tool (Frijuniarsi, 2015; Gunawan & Imelda, 2017) humor as an L2 approach (Nashruddin & Alam, 2021), and humor in L2 skills (Puspasari & Ariyanti, 2019; Pranoto & Suprayogi, 2020). In short, these previous studies discuss the application of humor in L2 teaching and learning by focusing on humor as an approach, tool, and its relationship with L2 skills. Such various perspectives have directed researchers to investigate humor integration into L2 teaching and learning in different research approaches.

However, the studies have not addressed integrating humor as a learning tool among L2 learners in Indonesian rural schools. More specifically, this current study investigated the perceptions of L2 learners towards the application of humor in L2 classrooms within rural schools. This study differs from those previously conducted on a similar topic. First, it determines the types and levels of humor in L2 classrooms as experienced by L2 learners. Second, this study was conducted in several schools in remote areas, enriching the uniqueness and new focus on learning English with humor. Third, I differentiated between junior and senior L2 learners and male and female EFL learners. In this case, it is paramount to acknowledge this study as both junior and senior learners in rural schools have some foreign language learning problems and difficulties. The use of L2 humor in the classrooms help to explore their English learning enthusiasm and encourage English motivation under limited tools or facilities in the rural school. In addition, it is valuable that this study adds contribution to the existing literature about learning effectiveness in EFL classrooms as it reveals how EFL learners in rural schools perceive L2 humor as a solution to develop their English skills under some limitations if compared with those in urban schools.

To focus, the following research questions were offered: (1) What are the types and levels of L2 classroom humor for rural school EFL learners? And (2) How do rural school learners perceive the use of humor in L2 classrooms? Each question indicates that there are two different approaches applied in researching L2 humor throughout this current study. An explanatory mixed-methods design consisting of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The reason to apply the design was to ensure that the quantitative data were supported by some descriptions which led to clearance and comprehensiveness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Humor

Humor is everything that is considered to be a joke, amusement, or acceptance (Pinheiro, 2016). Humor is a way of communication that is much comical as it promotes positive feelings and thoughts of people, the community, and their organizations (Fearman, 2014; Sen, 2012). By performing humor in L2 classrooms, it is expected that L2 learners can be happy and laugh, which reduces anxiety in learning English (Fritz, Russek, & Dillon, 2017). Anxiety, according to Mudra and Mckinnon (2022), occurs when EFL students are not aware of their basic competence and they do not attempt to recognize their deeper thoughts.

Moreover, humor is also conceptualized as a skill in social life that helps to avoid suffering from tension, relieves satisfaction and pressure apprehension, and raises personality (Pollak & Freda, 1997).

Humor, in general, can be defined as a tool that enables people to laugh and smile (Ross, 1998; Attardo, 1994). Even though humor shares amusement for many, it is sometimes embarrassing for people who are claimed to be an object of humor (Bitterly, Bradford, & Schweitzer, 2017). In this case, humor is stated as an amusing thing that is more subjective to those who utter phrases or sentences containing humorous meaning (Ocon, 2015). In short, the sense and meaning of humor can be different for different people. Regarding the definitions of humor, it can be concluded that humor is a proper tool to direct people towards happiness and amusement (Martin & Ford, 2018).

2.2 Learning and Humor

It is satisfactory to present a quote saying, “Learned with laughter is learned well” (Teslow, 1995). In terms of learning, the existence of humor is expected by learners who believe that their negative feelings and pressure can be naturally reduced. Humor in the learning context has become an essential issue as it plays a part in the productive atmosphere of classrooms (Aboudan, 2009). Humor enhances the positive relationship between teachers and learners, reduces pressure and stress, and transforms the classroom into an exciting situation (Fritz, Russek, & Dillon, 2017); each advantage plays a vital role in shaping the productive, reliable learning process. Furthermore, humor does not share consistency in terms of educational perceptions. For example, Banas et al. (2011) conceptualized humor as an approach that does not have a homogenous concept. The underlying reason for this is that humor is not only concerned with the learning process but also increases the ability towards group solidarity in the classroom. Besides, the development of habits and targets of learners in the classrooms are influenced by humor as experienced within their group of learning (Romero & Pescosolido, 2008).

Humor has a better impact on learning creativity among the learners as creativity and humor are two aspects that contribute to successful learning (Gignac et al., 2014). In terms of learning competency in the 21st century, humor is an appropriate tool to enable learners to think out of the box. It is stated that even though humor consists of a bunch of strategies for creativity, it can develop innovation in learning beyond imagination (Ford, Lappi, & Holden, 2016). Humor requires learners to consider uttering words, phrases, sentences, or utterances more creatively (Strick et al., 2012). Humor is a creative learning tool that allows teachers to create a classroom atmosphere based on creativity and innovation in learners' minds in all courses. In reality, learners give particular and positive attention to the teachers who use humor to avoid monotonous learning situation and creates learning with much fun. Pollak and Freda (1997) stated that humor with a slight mode could attract learners' attention

during noisy classroom situations. Learners choose to study with teachers who can deliver the materials of a lesson through various kinds of humor descriptions.

Learning through humor has encouraged teachers and learners to investigate linguistic knowledge of delivered materials. Not all humor is presented in clear, structured utterances or sentences (Holmes, 2003). It implies that humor can be written in terms of the ambivalent model. Consequently, learners, as readers or listeners, cannot catch every critical meaning, leading to misinterpretation of humor. In some consideration, it is necessary to develop a higher understanding of humor to avoid humor's meaning ambiguity through proper linguistic competence knowledge (Honig, 1988). The more the learners comprehend linguistic knowledge, the better their understanding of humor will be, and the easier they configure excerpts of meaning in the form of oral or written humor.

2.3 L2 learning and humor

English teachers believe in integrating humor, creating a successful classroom as it has been used as a new appropriate technique for L2 teaching. Learning English has a link to amusement as successful L2 learning emerges when L2 learners base their learning on fun and enjoyable classroom learning (Hunsaker, 1988). The such statement sets a positive manifestation that can create productive classroom learning, which leads to a willingness to accept new contributions toward learning. In addition, L2 learning requires teachers to develop a creative learning atmosphere and motivates learners to comprehend the meaning of each lesson, such as vocabulary or grammar.

The use of grammar is paramount in L2 learning, and the grammar itself relates to the application of humor in L2 classrooms. In general, grammar is a plot in a language such as English. Many strategies have been applied to teach L2 grammar in the classroom, including implementing the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) as traditional and deductive learning. The deductive method in learning grammar allows L2 teachers to provide learners with rules, followed by some examples (Freeman, 2000). Similarly, grammar rules do not reflect the fundamental learning of grammar (Scrivener, 1994). The application of humor containing the use of grammar helps to develop L2 learners' comprehension of grammar with some amusement and an enjoyable learning atmosphere. When English teachers present funny cartoons containing related L2 grammar, the learners are in the situation of inductive learning of grammar.

Regarding English language skills, humor can be integrated into reading, listening, writing, and speaking skills in an L2 classroom; regarding reading skills, Motlagh, Motallebzade, and Fatemi (2014) mentioned that L2 learners use reading to develop their understanding and knowledge of new information that shares reading interests. There is an essential role of humor in reading skills and comprehension among L2 learners. Humor is a learning tool to promote reading and involve L2 learners in reading activities. Interestingly,

humor attracts learners' attention to focus on reading content and material (Hayati et al., 2011). Various sources of reading materials are highly recommended by L2 teachers as humor increases learning motivation when the L2 learners are indulged in different models of reading with printed sources (Motlagh, Motallebzade, & Fatemi, 2014).

As for listening skills, it is noted that songs are appropriate for teaching English to L2 learners. Songs with humorous lyrics and stories allow L2 learners to recognize both skills in listening to English audio and different use of phonological aspects. Humor can also be promoted through humorous television shows such as comedy movies which directly develop skills in L2 listening. Humorous songs and television shows consist of the pedagogical element in terms of listening skill materials that assist learning to be more enjoyable, entertaining, and satisfying. Funny songs or television shows do not have to be presented in all steps of the listening activity (Ford, Lappi, & Holden, 2016). However, they can be inserted as either primary or supporting materials for the such listening course.

Writing skills in L2 learning is one of the most challenging lessons in L2 classrooms. Humor is used to help L2 learners increase their understanding of writing steps, strategies, and evaluation. Creative writing, for example, can be developed through comprehending how various comic books are organized based on writing procedures and requirements. Hilarious pictures in a book or comic book encourage L2 learners to generate writing ideas from which they develop strategies for presenting new organized writing with similar pictures (Gorijan, 2016). Regarding the trend of authentic materials in L2 learning, it is stated that some authentic sources can be utilized, including newspapers or magazine with humorous contents or pictures.

As the last skill, the speaking ability of L2 learners is productive in that various ideas and descriptions have resulted from such oral learning skills. One of the strategies to integrate humor into speaking skills is asking L2 learners to perform their funny stories or joke as a stand-up comedian usually does. Such activity can be presented directly in front of the classroom to avoid unwillingness due to timid feelings. Oral presentation in terms of monologue and dialogue has to be designed in a comical form which is advantageous for L2 speaking skill development. Television shows containing funny movies or talk shows are appropriate sources to develop L2 speaking skills by understanding how the speakers produce utterances containing hilarious speech (Rosenbusch, Evans, & Zeelenberg, 2022).

3. Method

3.1 Participants

This present study involved 113 EFL learners from several rural schools in Indonesia. One hundred twenty informed consents were prepared and distributed to the learners before their acceptance as participants. The informed consent mentioned learners' readiness, permission,

and volunteer status as participants. By sending the informed consents via Google Forms, I received 113 signed consents which stated that the number of learners allowed themselves to be the participants who voluntarily followed each step of the study. The rest of the learners did not return the informed consent or sign the consent as a participant. Moreover, as 113 participants were involved in accomplishing a given questionnaire in quantitative data, fifteen learners were asked to attend an in-depth interview to collect some qualitative data. As for in-depth interviews, the learners were selected through a purposive sampling technique which enabled the researchers to determine the participants based on the purpose of the second problem in terms of a qualitative approach. The reason for selecting such a number of participants was based on the idea of Emmel (2013) who stated that at least ten to fifteen percent of the total participants can be determined as interviewee. Moreover, it is noticed that the total number of participants shared a common base to be selected as the interview participants. Each of them had information related to how they perceive L2 humor in learning English in rural schools.

3.2 Instruments

To conduct the present study, two types of instruments were utilized: questionnaires and interviews. As for the first instrument, the Humor in English Language Teaching (HELT) scale developed by Margoob (2017) was used to measure the levels and types of Humor in L2 classrooms among rural school learners. This scale is developed based on five Likert scales comprising entirely disagree (1) to agree (5). This scale consists of six sub-indicators, including learning with Humor (e.g., Humor is a natural ice-breaking tool in the English classroom), academic projects (e.g., Humor works as an authentic material in classroom teaching), Humor as motivation support (e.g., Humor motivates learners to communicate in English outside the classroom), skills in using language (e.g., Humorous pictures helps to generate new ideas to work on writing skill), management of classes with Humor (e.g., Humor helps to build a good relationship between teacher and students), vocabulary and grammar through Humor (e.g., To understand humor learners need a good linguistic understanding), and harmful cultural impact of Humor (e.g., Humor and culture share a close relationship). As for the value, Cronbach's alpha was .87, which proved that the scale is reliable to be utilized as a proper instrument in this research. It is in line with Roberts (2019) who proved that a research instrument or scale with internal consistency more than .80 has higher reliability level. A proper instrument is said to be reliable when it contains higher Cronbach's Alpha ranging from .80 to .90 (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011).

As for the second instrument, I used an in-depth interview guide to investigate L2 learners' experiences with the application of humor in their L2 classrooms. The interview guide was synchronized with the statistical analysis results estimated using the questionnaire. In this case, I focused on asking the L2 learners about their preferences and interest in humor.

Otherwise, as several L2 learners could not improve English learning with humor, such an issue was then discussed in the interview guide.

3.3 Data Collection

This present study consisted of quantitative and qualitative data collections, which were combined, respectively. The use of explanatory mixed-methods design was based on the rationale that I concerned with examining levels of the topic being discussed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative analysis helps to explain the results of such statistical results that are limited to numbers. In collecting quantitative data, I sent informed consent to the participants to see their reading for accomplishing the questionnaire. Having received the informed consent, I distributed 120 questionnaires via the online system in terms of Google Forms to the participants. The participants were given two weeks as time allocation to complete the given questionnaire about their perceptions of humor in L2 classrooms. The allocated time was to limit participants' extensive or additional schedule to complete the questionnaire. The two-week time was believed be sufficient for them to read, fulfil, and resubmit the completed questionnaire. Eventually, I received 113 questionnaires, meaning that all participants followed the quantitative research step.

To collect qualitative data, I enlisted interview guides and selected the most relevant interview questions based on the purpose of this present study. I then asked 7 participants to become the informants of the in-depth interview. The semi-structured interview was undertaken by asking one-by-one L2 learners to answer the question face-to-face. Such interview format was chosen as it enabled the researcher to determine core questions while exploring participants' views or perceptions through probing and additional questions based on their responses. Meanwhile, it is advantageous to apply semi-structured interview as the researcher can organize interview responses systematically and explore participants' deeper thoughts without any limitation (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The time was not allocated to ensure that both interviewer and interviewee could describe their perceptions accurately. In addition, the semi-structured and in-depth interviews were conducted for two and a half weeks to ensure the quality of each interview without any rush time limitation.

3.4 Data Analysis

Two types of data analysis were conducted respectively, including quantitative and qualitative analysis. First, the quantitative analysis began from checking whether the questionnaire has missing data. It was, then, followed by estimating means, standard deviations, and percentages based on questionnaire responses. All of which was run in JASP 17 statistical application. In this case, descriptive statistics were used to determine such quantitative analysis. It was chosen as this study only focused on perceptions which can be

revealed clearly through a descriptive statistical analysis. The estimation was supposed to find out the extent humor can influence EFL students' English learning quality. As for qualitative analysis, NVivo was used to categorize data from the interviews and the data were given a code. Each selected excerpt was coded and grouped into based on a particular category. The category consisting of various codes with similar topic was integrated into some themes which made it easier to understand the data. Each selected theme was provided with its excerpts as coded earlier. Finally, to integrate findings from quantitative and qualitative data, it is noted that quantitative results were internalized into qualitative interviews. Both results were triangulated through relating each finding based on study goals. The interpretations were added into each qualitative finding to strengthen the research focus on EFL students' perceptions towards use of L2 humour.

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1. Findings

4.1.1 RQ1: What are the types and levels of L2 classroom humor of rural school EFL learners?

Descriptive statistics proved that various types and levels of L2 humor were found. The data were obtained from surveys and analyzed quantitatively by presenting statistical results for each factor, including humor and learning, activities and tasks factor, motivation via humor, language skills, humor and classroom management, humor and vocabulary, grammar, culture and negative aspect of humor. Each response was configured in terms of percentages and its scoring levels were abbreviated by ED (Entirely Disagree), D (Disagree), NS (Not Sure), A (Agree), and EA (Entirely Agree). Seven tables describing seven scale factors and one table describing overall descriptive statistics were provided.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics results of humor and learning factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humor is a natural ice breaking tool in English classroom	13.3	18.6	20.4	16.8	31
2.	Humor is successful to facilitate second language learning	15.9	7.1	5.3	63.7	8
3.	Humor creates a positive impact in learner's mind	10.6	5.3	43.4	35.4	5.3
4.	Humor can be an important tool to explain difficult topics in second language	2.7	10.6	8	61.9	16.8

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
5.	Humor is a teaching strategy for you	10.6	6.2	34.5	31.9	16.8
6.	Humor has sometimes adverse effect in second language learning in classroom	12.4	30.1	7.1	36.3	14.2
7.	Humor promotes critical thinking	15.9	6.2	32.7	31.3	13.3
8.	Humor creates optimism in learning	9.7	-	-	74.3	15.9

Table 1 above indicates that the most promising response of rural EFL students was their belief towards effectiveness of humor in developing English language ability (63.7%). Similarly, the use of humor can be an important tool for an EFL teacher to help students understand a complicated lesson or material (61.9%). Such belief and view were much convincing that humor enabled both teacher and students to be more optimistic in achieving L2 learning objectives (74.3%). However, some doubts emerged as humor was not believed to create positive implication for EFL students' thoughts (43.4%) and critical thinking (32.7%). In short, it did not allow the students to deal with particular learning strategies for their English lesson (34.5%).

Meanwhile, the EFL students showed their disagreement towards humor as an ice breaking strategy that can reduce learning stress and burden (18.6%). It implies that there may be other influencing ice breaking strategies during an English lesson. Although humor was said to be effective to help students achieve L2 learning goals and objectives, half a number of students seemed to be skeptical that only humor can reduce L2 learning anxiety. Therefore, the problem in using humor as an L2 teaching or learning tool was whether it keeps students from becoming aware of learning difficulties.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics results of activities and tasks factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humor defuses anxiety in classroom activities	4.4	44.2	26.5	9.7	15
2.	Using humor in test items is perfectly fine	4.4	5.3	61.9	9.7	18.6
3.	Humor works as an authentic material in classroom teaching	4.4	36.3	31	13.3	15

The effectiveness of humor in L2 classrooms was not reflected from its capacity as a tool that decreases English learning apprehension among rural school students (44.2%). The students did not believe that humor worked properly to prevent them from becoming anxious

in learning English. On the other hand, such humor was not considered as an important aspect to be included into an English test (61.9%). The students did not find it suitable when their EFL teachers attached humor as a part of their test in a formal setting. Moreover, such use of humor in EFL classrooms was not perceived to be authentic in terms of its content or meaning (36.3%). In this case, humor was believed as an additional material created by the English teachers themselves without any authentic support.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics results of motivation via humor factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humor creates intrinsic motivation among learners	4.4	8.8	12.4	54.9	19.5
2.	Humor develops group cohesion among learners	7.1	6.2	26.5	41.6	18.6
3.	Humor motivates learners to communicate in English outside classroom	4.4	3.5	21.2	54	16.8

The issue regarding the relationship between humor and motivation is increasing these days. In this study, it was found that humor has an essential role on increasing intrinsic motivation among EFL students (54.9%). In doing this, it created academic interaction between student-student and teacher-student (41.6%). It also developed students' awareness and interests to speak English either inside or outside the classrooms (54%). The role of motivation has positive relationship with rural EFL students' learning as it enhanced interaction and communication needed in EFL classrooms.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics results of language skills factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humorous pictures helps to generate new ideas to work on writing skill	4.4	14.2	25.7	21.2	34.5
2.	Different comic strips improve reading skill	2.7	35.4	34.5	6.2	21.2
3.	Different humorous shows aids to work on listening skill	19.5	37.2	8	10.6	24.8
4.	Sharing humor helps to overcome nervousness and stimulate speaking skill	3.5	44.2	20.4	7.1	24.8

It is interesting that in writing English text pictures of humor helped to build new thoughts and ideas (34.5%). However, other English language skills did not seem to be positively influenced by such humor. Reading skill, for example, was not increased even by using various comics with their colorful pictures and humorous strips (35.4%). Another problem appears when EFL students were not able to develop their listening skill after watching humorous videos such talks show or other types of visual shows (37.2%). Similarly, the students did not think that humor helped them to avoid any kind of learning apprehension when they began speaking in English inside or outside the classrooms (44.2%). To sum up, most English skills are not predicted to be developed by using humor as a supporting learning tool.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics results of humor and classroom management factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humor makes learners attentive in the classroom	2.7	56.6	17.7	7.1	15.9
2.	Sometimes it is tough to create humor in classroom	2.7	51.3	23.9	8	14.2
3.	Humor portrays teacher's personality in classroom atmosphere	1.8	49.6	4.4	26.5	17.7
4.	Humor helps to build a good relationship between teacher and students	5.3	35.4	17.7	17.7	23.9
5.	Humor ensures active participation of learners in classroom	1.8	41.6	19.5	18.6	18.6

Table 5 above revealed impacts of humor on English classroom management. Unfortunately, in this factor rural EFL students did not believe in humor effectiveness for English language improvement. Attention towards an English lesson, for example, could not be influenced by the application of humor in EFL classrooms (56.6%). The EFL teacher managed the classroom to increase students' attention to every part of the lesson. Consequently, the EFL students opted not to take a part in teacher's lesson actively (41.6%).

On the other side, psychological impacts of classroom management were not fulfilled when humor became a learning tool. First, the EFL students did not consider any relationship with their English teachers through the use of L2 humor. The found that some teachers were not able to create L2 humor that allowed them to learn in a relaxed circumstance. Uncertainty in using L2 humor in English lesson caused some disbelief towards its importance (51.3%). In addition, English teacher's personality was not perceived to be influenced by humor (49.6%). They thought that there might be other factors that determine English teacher's characteristics.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics results of humor and vocabulary, grammar factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humorous poetic vocabulary helps to learn English language	7.1	36.3	24.8	14.2	17.7
2.	Humor play a big role to grammar learning	4.4	40.7	17.7	19.5	17.7
3.	To understand humor learners need a good linguistic understanding	4.4	44.2	17.7	13.3	20.4

In the above table, it is noted that humor was believed to work with a matter of content, but not its word, phrase, or sentence structures. To meet better understanding towards humor in L2 classrooms, the rural school students were of higher certainty that they did not need to have sufficient level of linguistic proficiency (44.2%). The impact of such perception is that the students were of the opinion that L2 humor did not teach them how to use correct English grammar (40.7%). Surprisingly, L2 humor through literary work was not recognized to impact the rural school students' English grammar or vocabulary (36.3%).

Table 7. Descriptive statistics results of culture and negative aspect of humor factor

No	Statements	Responses (%)				
		ED	D	NS	A	EA
1.	Humor and culture shares a close relationship	22.1	18.6	21.2	16.8	21.2
2.	Humor sometimes does not balance racism, sexism issues in classroom	31.9	20.4	24.8	10.6	12.4

Culture and negative aspect of humor shared balanced perceptions from the rural school EFL students. Half a number of students considered that humor was interrelated with culture (21.2%), while 21.1% students did not find any relationship between L2 humor and culture. A neutral perception (24.8%) was identified when the students faced the statement saying 'humor sometimes does not balance racism, sexism issues in EFL classrooms.'

4.1.2 RQ2: How do rural school learners perceive the use of humor in L2 classrooms?

In this subpart, the results of interviews are presented along with each emerging theme, including humor and language understanding, learning progression, learning motivation, and social support. As for ethical aspect, each participant was coded by 'P' for participant. There were seven participant taking a part in this semi-structured interviews. Codes consisted of P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, and P7 and they remained pseudonyms.

4.1.2.1 Humor and language understanding

As for the first theme, several participants admitted that humor has greater influence on understanding English in a rural school context. To them, humor was not only entertaining, but it also contained various uses of grammar and vocabulary that were easier to understand. One of the participant commented:

“I like humor very much, because it always helps me to improve my English abilities. I not only focus on its entertaining goal, but how my English teachers chose types of humor was interesting. They always provide L2 humor materials by using pictures on the whiteboard and we are asked to listen to them describing the humor. It is really entertaining and it also increases my understanding towards English only by focusing on the use of grammar and words.” (P5)

Another participant also confirmed similar thoughts about the way humor influenced English language understanding.

“I was not interested in humor when the English teacher showed us by using a projector. After that, I became aware of humor importance towards my English. I think humor affects me to speak English more and more like the teacher does. One way to be a good English non-native speaker is by adding humor in our speech. Our teacher uses English with humor and I finally enjoy every word or phrase contained in her sentences.” (P7)

On the other side, a participant has different perception on how humor helps to develop English language understanding. P2 stated “audiovisual humor encourages me to imitate the way actors and actress speak in English.” Moreover, speaking is the most dominant English skill that can be directly developed through watching L2 humor. Pronunciation, for example, is one of speaking skill elements. P6 confirmed that “L2 humor is a functional tool to learn English pronunciation, as the EFL students can both entertain themselves and pronounce words like the native speakers do in a video simultaneously.”

4.1.2.2 Humor and learning progression

Learning English should begin earlier and continue to future time. Humor, an additional learning tool, is dealt with English learning development among EFL students in rural schools. As P1 believed:

“Humor in English context has made me aware of my development in learning English in this rural school. It is because English humor is not only a tool, but also a greater material to be taught to us as beginner English students. When the humor becomes a

material in English lesson, it seems easy for me myself to upgrade my grammar and vocabulary.” (P1)

One of the participants experienced humor advantages when he learnt English for the first time in a rural school. He confessed that learning English in rural school was not as easy as that in urban context. The students have to struggle with a lack of supporting tools such as technology for English learning. Fortunately, English teacher’s creativity and effort in utilizing audiovisual tools and providing humor in L2 classrooms helped them to achieve better English progression. He believed:

“Our English teacher has great effort to show us audiovisual humor in English classrooms. I myself feel satisfied that learning English through L2 humor is entertaining and it also gives much English knowledge for us.” (P4)

4.1.2.3 Humor and learning motivation

Some rural school students felt motivated to learn English through the use of humor in English classrooms. Motivation, for English students, helps to manage English learning focus and time discipline, particularly for beginner English students in rural schools. A participant encouraged her English learning through L2 humor and she said:

“Humor motivates me when I find it difficult to understand various English skills such as listening, speaking, writing, and reading. I know that humor is not related to listening or reading. Yet, it encourages me to learn every English skill which is considered complicated by many rural school students.” (P3)

When asked about the type of learning English motivation through L2 humor, a participant confirmed:

“When I read a humorous text as additional learning tool, I feel motivated from inside my mind. L2 humor does give me new motivation insight during English lesson. It is weird that my feeling to learning enthusiasm emerges as I read such text more seriously.” (P7)

On the other hand, another participant (P2) believed that humorous materials “create extrinsic motivation when intrinsic motivation is absent.” The idea seems to be supporting towards previous thought about humor and learning motivation. In short, humor in English classrooms can motivate students to learn English either directly or indirectly.

3.2 Discussion

This subpart is underpinned by research focuses, including types and levels of L2 humor and rural EFL students’ perceptions towards the use of L2 humor. The findings revealed there are various types and particular levels of humor applied by English teachers in L2 classrooms.

To begin, it is stated that humor has a greater influence on EFL students' English learning quality. Such L2 humor is used as a supporting tool to facilitate students towards focused materials or lessons. In rural school context, English is considered challenging for both English teachers and students as it requires great effort and proper strategies to learn English as foreign language. Humor emerges as a new learning tool that bridges between English learning plan and its objective. A study by Jaworska (2014) found that L2 humor introduces EFL students to new topics that are not yet comprehended. The application of humor can be indulged through a direct method where the English teacher has to present such L2 humor to reduce students' stress or anxiety towards an English lesson (Fritz, Russek, & Dillon, 2017). Another method to present humor is by utilizing technological tools such as audiovisual videos to find out how gestures work with English learning (Wilks-Smith, 2022). Such technological tool is believed to be more effective to entertain and educate EFL students simultaneously (Syam, 2022), including use of online videos for self-learning method (Aprianto, 2023). Fortunately, both methods share similar goal to help students increase their English through L2 humor application (Strick et al., 2012; Bell, 2009).

English, for most rural EFL students, remains a complicated subject to be enhanced by those whose English abilities are lower and whose English is used as a foreign language. Beach and Prickett (2017) proved that the use of humor directs students to learn English more easily with its entertaining and pedagogical goals. Meanwhile, when students are aware of humor usefulness for English learning development they automatically become enthusiastic to always read English books, listen to records, write texts, and talk in English. Enthusiasm is a basic aspect of students to begin learning English from various resources, teachers, or classmates. Beal and Mullan (2017) stated that EFL students who are lack of enthusiasm cannot manage their learning compared to those who rely upon their enthusiastic thoughts. The use of humor helps to encourage EFL students' enthusiasm before, during, and after learning English. A study by Brock (2017) confirmed that without learning enthusiasm, EFL students do not have idea to plan, proceed, and evaluate their own learning. In other words, learning English through humor uncovers students' interests in terms of increasing enthusiasm and decreasing the absence of quality learning needed in L2 classrooms (Martin & Ford, 2018; Morain, 1991).

The objective of learning English based on 21st century skills is to promote critical thinking and communicative competence. This concept is much related to the use of L2 humor for teaching English. L2 humor contains words, phrases, or sentences with various interesting semantic, pragmatic, or sociolinguistic meanings. Critical thinking and communicative competence require EFL learners to use English more comprehensively, not only based on its surface meaning, but also contextual meaning as they obtained in L2 humor. What has been shown so far, excluding entertaining goal, humor teaches EFL students strategies to think critically and communicate effectively. In humor, its discourse content

enables students to analyze a topic critically. Humor contains either logical or rational implication for language students who expect to be analytical towards an issue being talked (Bell, 2005; Chapman, 1983). Meanwhile, communicative competent is another important skill that can be developed through humor as English learning materials. With its various transactional dialogues, humor educates EFL students to use English as a communication tool (Munoz-Basols, Adrjan, & David, 2003), and not only as a mere subject in a curriculum. Humorous dialogues convince the EFL students to learn communication strategies through a complex pragmatic rules and semantic criteria implied in each content (Lin, 2013; Attardo, 2010; Jonsson, 2010; Long & Graesser, 1988). Particular communication strategies are needed when the EFL students engaged in a situation which requires communicative competence as a foundation to succeed speaking English (Auliyah & Sujannah, 2023). In addition, Treger, Sprecher, and Erber (2013) and Dynel (2011) found that L2 humor empowers students' communicative competence based on consideration that they are able to use English orally in various situations.

Basically, humor in EFL classrooms is included into an authentic material. As the term implies, the authentic material provides real-life situation of English use and usage, but it is not specifically proposed as an intended material for language learning (Mir & Cots, 2019; Bell, 2009; Goldstein, 1990). The English teachers have to ensure that learning materials for EFL students should be developed based on their needs (Dewi et al., 2023). Fortunately, humor as an authentic material is relevant to be used as a supporting material since it consists of real-life English. Such use of language allows the EFL students to adapt with native-like or native English experiences as their learning materials. Banitz (2018) mentioned that foreign language students take advantage of L2 humor material as it provides both real linguistic use and cultural aspects of English experiences. Self-efficacy is needed by students in enhancing their English skills (Wene & Vantaosen, 2023). In many EFL classroom context authentic materials are always paramount that they indulge students into real use or usage of English which cannot be easily found in teacher-based English learning materials (Medgyes, 2001) and they incorporate meaning in natural English classroom context (Kusuma, Indriyani, & Xenia, 2023).

5. Conclusion

Learning English through L2 humor has several advantages such as developing learning competence, encouraging motivation, and facilitating learning development. The use of L2 humor can be adapted regarding direct and direct strategies depending upon the EFL teachers. Each type of L2 humor for EFL learners is considered progressive for both students and teachers as humor allows them to be engaged in a real-life or authentic situation that is useful in learning English. Meanwhile, as rural EFL students are not used to adapt with complicated English competence, L2 humor emerges as an important supporting material beside its entertaining aspect which also attracts students' enthusiasm. As for practical implications, it

is noticed that EFL teachers should use various L2 humor to integrate students' enthusiasm through a contextual, but pragmatically meaningful method. However, this study only focused on perceptions towards L2 humor effectiveness without researching any application of such humor through another strategy such as action research.

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