

## The Use of Linguistic jokes in EFL Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

Humor is widely recognized as an effective method for promoting language acquisition and enhancing language skills. Using humor in language training can help students feel more at ease, reduce tension, and encourage good emotions, all of which have a favorable effect on their motivation and engagement. In language-learning environments, linguistic jokes are one sort of humor that has not been well investigated; therefore, this study was focused on investigating the linguistic joke use and its implication in EFL classes. This study uses descriptive qualitative methodologies to investigate the advantages of linguistic jokes in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The subjects of the research were 108 students from three different classes. The linguistic jokes used were pragmatic, phonology, and pun jokes. Data were gathered for the study from interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations involving EFL students. The results show that language learners gain from using linguistic jokes in EFL classes in several ways, including greater motivation, increased engagement, improved communication skills, and decreased anxiety. The study also emphasizes how humor can improve the learning environment by encouraging greater participation and a sense of belonging among students. The qualitative data show that learners have good attitudes toward using humor in language acquisition, which lends credence to these findings. The study implicates that EFL teachers could utilize humor as a teaching method to facilitate language learning and develop language skills due to the fact that linguistic jokes in EFL classrooms can benefit language learners in various ways.

**Keywords:** *Linguistic jokes, EFL classroom, benefits, motivation, humor, language skills.*

### Introduction

The acquisition of a foreign language is widely regarded as a challenging task, especially when it comes to mastering the grammar and syntax of the target language (Abdu & Nagaratnam, 2011; Abdul, 2020; Farooq et al., 2012; Kaçani & Mangelli, 2013). The acquisition process typically involves an understanding of the grammar and norms of the language, as well as its cultural nuances. In order to facilitate the learning process, researchers have explored various approaches, such as humor, to make language learning more enjoyable and effective (Davies, 2015; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Motlagh et al., 2014).

Humor has been recognized as a useful strategy for enhancing language acquisition and improving language skills. When applied in language instruction, humor can help learners feel more relaxed, reduce anxiety, and stimulate positive emotions, all of which have a beneficial effect on their motivation and engagement (Sakamoto & Williams, 2012). Linguistic jokes,

which mock the language and its rules (Attardo, 2017), are a form of humor that has not been extensively studied in the context of language learning.

Linguistic jokes are an effective tool for language instruction because they employ wordplay, puns, irony, and the tone and rhythm of the language, thereby facilitating the learning process (Davies, 2015). Jokes about linguistics can enhance students' critical thinking, creativity, and linguistic proficiency (Oxford & Crookall, 1990). However, the use of linguistic jokes in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom has received relatively little attention.

Hence, this study aims to examine the advantages of utilizing linguistic jokes in EFL classes, utilizing descriptive qualitative methodologies. The study will explore the effectiveness of humor as a teaching aid for enhancing second-language learning and proficiency. This research will contribute to a better understanding of the potential benefits of linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom, with implications for language instruction and

learning more broadly. Furthermore, this study will address a gap in the literature on the use of linguistic jokes in EFL classrooms and will provide insights into the effective use of humor as a teaching aid.

### **Method**

This study aimed to investigate the advantages of linguistic jokes in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom using descriptive qualitative approaches (Merriam, 2018; Mohajan, 2018). A group of EFL students who had been exposed to the usage of linguistic jokes in their language lectures made comprised the study's participants. There were 108 students that became the subject of the research. These subjects were chosen because they were taking the *Discourse Analysis*, *Semantics*, and *Pragmatics* classes. Data were gathered from various sources, such as classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions on learning more about the participants' experiences with using humor in language learning. The jokes used were pragmatic, phonology, and pun jokes. These jokes were selected since they were closely related to the students' lessons and materials.

The observation method was conducted to observe the participant's reactions to using linguistic jokes in language classes. The researcher, who was present in the classroom throughout language lessons, made the observations. To measure the impact of humor on language learning, the researcher observed the participant's responses to the jokes, including their laughing, engagement, and participation.

The interviews gave us important insights into how the participants saw humor's role in language learning (S. Clarke, 2014). Interviews with them were also performed to learn more about the participants' attitudes and perspectives regarding using humor in language learning. Since the interviews were semi-structured, the participants felt free to express their experiences and thoughts using linguistic jokes.

The other method of data collection is focus groups which were held to encourage interaction among the participants (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). The conversations attempted to examine how humor affected the participants' experiences learning languages and how it affected the learning environment. The focus group discussions gave the participants a forum to express their thoughts and experiences regarding using humor in language learning in a

collaborative setting.

Data analysis was conducted by implementing the thematic analysis (V. Clarke & Braun, 2016; Kiger & Varpio, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017) to examine the information from classroom observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. The analysis aimed to find themes and patterns in the data that emerged from the participants' experiences using humor to learn a language. The qualitative data analysis enabled a thorough examination of the advantages of humor in language acquisition and offered insightful information about the participants' views toward its application.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Since it is thought to favor language acquisition and student engagement, the use of humor in the classroom has been a subject of interest in language learning research for many years (Hismanoglu et al., 2018; McGhee, 2019; Nashruddin & Alam, 2021; Neff & Rucynski, 2017; Petraki & Nguyen, 2016). The usage of linguistic jokes in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes has gained popularity in recent years. By analyzing the advantages of employing linguistic jokes in EFL classes, particularly concerning language learners' motivation, engagement, communication skills, and anxiety levels, this study seeks to add to the body of existing knowledge.

#### ***Linguistic Jokes***

The linguistic jokes used in this study were taken from social media such as Facebook and Instagram. The jokes used in this research were pragmatic joke, phonology joke, and pun joke. Pragmatic jokes are a type of linguistic humor that plays with the various functions of language in communication (Tang, 2016). Pragmatics is the study of how context influences meaning in language use. Pragmatic jokes, therefore, rely on the listener's understanding of the social and cultural context in which the joke is being told, as well as their knowledge of how language is used to convey meaning beyond the literal meaning of words.

A pragmatic joke might involve a play on words that relies on the listener's understanding of the multiple meanings of the words being used. Alternatively, a pragmatic joke might involve a humorous use of language that subverts the normal expectations of communication, such as sarcasm or irony.

Pragmatic jokes can be particularly

effective in language instruction because they require students to engage with the social and cultural context of the target language, as well as the various functions of language in communication (Gamage & Kondowe, 2019). By using pragmatic jokes in the classroom, language teachers can help students develop a deeper understanding of the nuances of language use, as well as improve their ability to communicate effectively in real-world contexts.

The sample of the pragmatic joke is as follows:

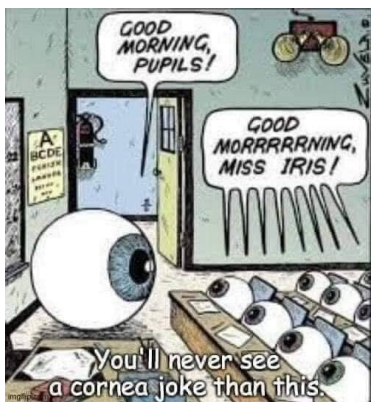


Image 1 Sample of Pragmatic Joke

The second joke used was the phonological joke. Phonology jokes are a type of linguistic humor that plays with the sounds and pronunciation of words (Bentum & Oppong-Adjei, 2022). Phonology is the study of the sound patterns of language, including the relationships between sounds and the rules for combining them to form words.

Phonology jokes often rely on homophones, and other types of wordplay that use similar or identical sounds to create humorous or unexpected meanings. For example, a phonology joke might involve a play on the similar sounds of two words that have different meanings, such as "night" and "knight."

Phonology jokes can be a fun and engaging way to teach pronunciation and listening skills in language instruction (Bentum & Oppong-Adjei, 2022). By using phonology jokes in the classroom, language teachers can help students develop their ability to distinguish between similar sounds, as well as improve their ability to produce the correct pronunciation of words. Additionally, phonology jokes can help students develop a sense of humor and an appreciation for the creative potential of language use. The sample of the phonology joke used in this research is as follows:



Image 2 Sample of Phonology Joke

The third joke used in this research was the pun joke. Pun jokes are a type of linguistic humor that play with the multiple meanings of words, often through a play on words that sound the same or similar but have different meanings (Crapo, 2018; Kasiyarno & Sarage, 2019). A pun is a form of wordplay that exploits the various meanings of a word or phrase for humorous effect.

Pun jokes can be particularly effective in language instruction because they require students to engage with the various meanings and uses of words in a playful and creative way (Crapo, 2018). By using pun jokes in the classroom, language teachers can help students develop their vocabulary, as well as their ability to recognize and use wordplay for humorous effect. Additionally, pun jokes can help students develop a sense of humor and an appreciation for the playful and creative potential of language use. The sample of the pun joke is as follow:

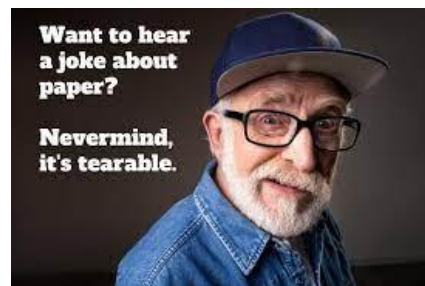


Image 3 Sample joke 3

Having done analyzing the data, there were four benefits that can be found from implementing linguistic jokes in EFL classroom, such as enhanced motivation, increased engagement, Improved communication skills, and reduced anxiety. Each of them is elaborated as follows.

### ***First Benefit: Enhanced motivation***

It is commonly known that a key component of successful language learning is motivation (Dörnyei, 2014). Many variables, such as the classroom climate, the enthusiasm of the teachers, and the methods used in instruction, might affect motivation. Humor has been discovered to have a favorable effect on motivation when used in the setting of language learning (Falk, 2016). The first advantage of employing linguistic jokes in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom is increased motivation. Linguistic jokes can motivate students to learn and advance their language abilities in EFL classes. According to the interview, the jokes improved their drive in four different ways:

- a) Linguistic jokes can contribute to a nice and calm learning environment that is favorable to learning. Comedy has been demonstrated to alleviate stress and promote well-being. A comfortable and happy learning atmosphere can increase students' motivation to learn in the setting of language study. When students feel comfortable, and at ease in the classroom, they are more likely to participate actively in the learning process and class activities.
- b) Jokes about linguistics can boost students' involvement and enthusiasm in language acquisition. Comedy is a well-known attention-getting device that can make language learning more engaging and pleasurable. Grammar rules, vocabulary, and pronunciation can be illustrated humorously and engagingly using linguistic jokes. When students are engaged in the subject matter being taught, they are more likely to remain motivated and invested in learning.
- c) Mnemonic devices are memory aids that aid in the retention of knowledge. Linguistic jokes can be used as mnemonic devices to aid in language learning. Linguistic jokes can be used to associate the language being learnt with the hilarious substance of the joke. This linkage can aid in learners' retention and recall of language knowledge. Because language knowledge is easier to retain and retrieve, students are more likely to feel motivated and confident in their language learning abilities.
- d) The usage of linguistic jokes can boost the confidence of language learners. Comedy may foster a sense of community and camaraderie among students and between students and their instructors. When language learners feel supported and connected to their peers and teacher, they are more willing to take risks and

have greater confidence in their abilities. This boost in confidence can result in greater motivation and a stronger desire to engage in the language-learning process.

Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) can add linguistic jokes into their courses to motivate students and improve language learning outcomes. The usage of linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can have a favorable effect on the motivation of language learners to learn in this is in line with the study conducted by the other researcher regarding the use of humor in classroom (Nashruddin & Alam, 2021). Many advantages of employing humor in language learning include providing a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, increasing attention and engagement, working as a memory device, and boosting language learners' confidence.

### ***Second Benefit: Increased engagement***

Using linguistic jokes in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom has the additional benefit of boosting student engagement. Students must be actively involved in the learning process for good language acquisition. Students are more likely to remember information, participate in classroom activities, and enjoy the learning experience when actively engaged. It has been demonstrated that humor increases student involvement in the classroom. Students who find something amusing are more likely to pay attention to the lesson and maintain concentration. Humor stimulates the brain's reward system and triggers the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that plays a vital role in motivation and pleasure. As a result, pupils are more optimistic and involved in the learning process, which can result in improved language learning outcomes.

Moreover, linguistic jokes can be used to introduce and reinforce language topics, increasing student interest in the learning process. A teacher may, for instance, employ a pun or a play on words to illustrate the meaning of a term or a grammatical concept. Therefore, the instructor can make the session more engaging and exciting for the pupils.

When students feel comfortable and at ease in the classroom, they are more likely to engage in class discussions, ask questions, and cooperate with their classmates. This might result in a classroom environment that is more dynamic and participatory, promoting student engagement and learning. Moreover, comedy can be used to establish a positive classroom environment that

encourages student participation.

Research indicates that humor can improve student engagement by fostering a positive learning environment. Humor, for instance, can foster a sense of community among students, boosting their involvement and participation in class. When students have a sense of belonging to a group, they are more likely to be interested and invested in learning.

Moreover, humor can foster a safe and supportive learning atmosphere that promotes risk-taking and experimentation. It can result in a more positive and engaging learning environment that encourages engagement and learning. When students feel they can make mistakes without fear of being judged, they are more inclined to participate in classroom activities.

### ***Third Benefit: Improved communication skills***

According to the interview and observation findings, linguistic humor benefits pupils in four ways: humor and jokes enhance and facilitate the use of language in a fun and participatory situation. As a result, pupils are more inclined to communicate with one another and the teacher, resulting in enhanced fluency and proficiency in the target language.

- a) A good and supportive classroom environment can assist language learners to feel more confident in their language skills, which is necessary for developing successful communication skills. As students are more comfortable and at ease, they are more willing to communicate with their classmates and teacher, which improves their communication abilities. Comedy in the form of linguistic jokes can contribute to a relaxed and comfortable classroom environment, which can be especially advantageous for language learners who may feel apprehensive or intimidated while using the target language.
- b) Using linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can allow students to practice listening, speaking, and even writing abilities. For instance, when a teacher tells a linguistics joke, students must listen attentively to comprehend the punchline and the comedy behind it. It improves their listening abilities since they must focus on intonation, stress, and timing to complete the joke. In addition, students can practice their speaking skills by retelling the joke or by creating jokes utilizing language and grammatical structures. This method can be especially beneficial for children who struggle with more formal

language-learning activities, such as grammar drills and vocabulary exercises.

- c) Using linguistic jokes can help improve language learners' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. It involves creative thinking and the application of linguistic abilities in a more abstract manner. Students must be able to recognize and interpret the linguistic intricacies and wordplay frequently used in jokes to comprehend them completely. By exercising these
- d) Using linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can also increase cultural awareness and appreciation among language students. Several jokes in linguistics are based on cultural references or puns specific to the target language. By employing humor to investigate these cultural references, students can gain a deeper knowledge of the norms and values of the target language's culture. It improves their communication abilities and promotes cross-cultural understanding and competency.

In conclusion, employing linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can benefit language students, including enhanced communication skills. As stated by the other researchers, humor may be useful for language acquisition by creating a calm and comfortable environment, providing practice opportunities, building critical thinking abilities, and fostering cultural awareness (Alatalo & Poutiainen, 2016; Bolkan et al., 2018; Praag et al., 2017; Reddington, 2015). Hence, EFL teachers might consider introducing linguistic jokes into their teaching procedures to assist students in developing more effective communication skills.

### ***Fourth Benefit: Reduced anxiety***

Humor has always been an integral part of human communication and interaction. In the educational context, humor can be a powerful tool for facilitating language learning, particularly in EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms. This research finding has shown that linguistic jokes can help reduce anxiety among language learners and create a positive learning environment.

Anxiety is a common barrier to language learning, which can be caused by various factors such as fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and embarrassment. The use of linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can help reduce anxiety by creating a non-threatening environment for language work. When the subjects of this study are involved in a humorous

scenario, their attention shifts from their insecurities to the punchline of the joke or their peers' interactions. This shift in focus can help students overcome their fear of making mistakes and improve their willingness to participate in classroom activities.

The findings also show that humor can alleviate tension and produce a positive emotional state, which can contribute to a favorable learning environment in the EFL classroom. A positive learning environment, in turn, can foster a more positive attitude toward language learning, enhance motivation to study, and improve overall language competency.

Furthermore, the use of humor in the EFL classroom can help create a sense of community among students. Humor is a universal language that can bring people together, and when used appropriately, it can help students develop stronger interpersonal relationships with their peers and their teacher. This sense of community can lead to increased engagement and participation in classroom activities, which can ultimately enhance language learning outcomes.

In addition, the use of linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can also help students develop their language skills in a fun and engaging way. Jokes often contain wordplay, idioms, and cultural references that can be challenging for language learners. By incorporating linguistic jokes into language instruction, teachers can help students improve their understanding and use of the language while also having fun.

It is important to note that the use of humor in the EFL classroom must be appropriate and culturally sensitive. What may be considered humorous in one culture may not be in another, and teachers must be mindful of this when selecting jokes to use in their classroom. In addition, humor should never be used to ridicule or embarrass students, as this can have the opposite effect of creating a positive learning environment.

In short, the use of linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom can be an effective strategy for reducing anxiety. As such, it is an essential aspect of effective language instruction and should be integrated into language teaching practices.

## Conclusion

The utilization of linguistic jokes in English as a foreign language (EFL) class has several advantages. Firstly, it enhances motivation by creating a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, increasing attention and engagement, working as a memory device, and

boosting language learners' confidence. Secondly, it increases student engagement by making the learning process more dynamic and participatory, fostering a sense of community, and promoting a safe and supportive learning atmosphere that encourages risk-taking and experimentation. Thirdly, it improves communication skills by facilitating the use of language in a fun and participatory situation, resulting in enhanced fluency and proficiency in the target language.

This research contributes to a better understanding of the potential benefits of using linguistic jokes in the EFL classroom. By doing this research, the author hopes to present a good understanding of how humor can be used effectively in language teaching and learning. The author also hopes to provide insights into the effective use of humor as a teaching aid. This research can also have implications for language instruction and learning more broadly the research since the findings could be important not just for EFL classrooms, but for language instruction and learning in general. This research was also attempting to fill a gap in the existing research on the topic of using humor in EFL classrooms. The author believes that there is not enough research on this topic, and this research results add to the body of knowledge in this area.

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