

# Indonesian teachers' senses of humor in teaching EFL classes: Students' perceptions

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## ABSTRACT

The absence of good classroom climate sometimes makes students feel bored or even terrified with English lesson. Not only the students, but also teachers feel bored in teaching English in EFL classroom caused by the less ability in conducting interactive and positive classroom atmosphere. The goal of the current study is to examine the kinds of humor utilized by EFL teachers in East Java and the students' perceptions toward them. This current study is a qualitative study and utilizes phenomenological research with descriptive questionnaires analysis. It is done in two Islamic Junior High schools in Jombang with two English teachers. The data are collected through classroom observation, interview, and Questionnaire. The findings showed that the teachers utilized verbal/word-based humor, slapstick/physical humor, related humor, self-disparaging humor, unrelated humor, unplanned humor, riddle, and spontaneous humor. Meanwhile the total mean from the questionnaire analysis result is 41.377 that indicates students' perceptions toward teachers' utilization of humor as positive. By knowing the kinds of humor utilized as strategy of teaching EFL classes and students' perceptions toward them, it is expected that EFL teachers can create positive classroom climate by delivering humor that can be appropriate for students and supporting them in learning.

Keywords: Humor in Teaching EFL Classes, Strategy, Students' Perceptions

## INTRODUCTION

English has become a global language, and its growing importance has intensified the demand for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching worldwide. In Indonesia, the teaching of English is particularly crucial given its role in supporting tourism, education, and international career opportunities (Tang, 2020). Unlike

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English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts, where exposure to English is abundant, Indonesia faces distinctive challenges. While regions such as Bali and Lombok experience higher English use due to tourism, English is not widely spoken across the archipelago, nor is it recognized as a second language nationally. In fact, Bahasa Indonesia itself functions as a second language in several local settings, adding further complexity to language acquisition in the country.

However, there are many barriers in Indonesia's EFL context, such as inadequate training, limited infrastructure, and a lack of exposure to English outside the classroom (Wahyuningsih, 2022; Sugiarto et al., 2024), English background knowledge and cognitive limitations (Widodo et al., 2025) and psychological challenges, such as low confidence, lack of motivation (Octavia et al., 2023) and willingness to communicate (Chojimah & Widodo, 2023). A recurring concern is student boredom, often stemming from repetitive teaching methods, irrelevant tasks, or unengaging classroom activities (Ali El Deen, 2023). Such issues highlight the urgent need for strategies that foster motivation, sustain attention, and create more dynamic classroom experiences.

Humor has emerged as a promising pedagogical tool for addressing these challenges. It can enhance engagement, reduce stress, strengthen teacher-student rapport, and increase language retention (Al-Noori, 2019; Cohen et al., 2009; Tunnisa et al., 2019). Teachers may employ various forms of humor, such as puns, jokes, slapstick, riddles, or lesson-related humor, to create a positive classroom climate (Jiang, 2022; Kaivola-Bregenhøj, 2018; Kench, 2021; Shultz, 1974; Weisi & Mohammadi, 2023). Students often perceive humor as a stress reliever that promotes confidence and participation (Sahin, 2021; Jiang, 2022). However, humor is not universally effective; its success depends on cultural context, timing, and relevance. Inappropriate humor risks disengagement, misunderstanding, or offense (Meyer, 2000; Rianita et al., 2023). This dual potential makes humor an intriguing yet underexplored aspect of language pedagogy.

Students perceive humor as a stress reliever and a motivator. It helps them acknowledge mistakes without embarrassment (Sahin, 2021). Tunnisa et al. (2019) noted that humor makes the learning atmosphere more relaxed and engaging. However, not all humor elicits a response; some jokes may fall flat due to students' differing senses of humor. In Al-Noori's (2019) experiment, humor-based teaching enhanced students' retention of WH-questions. Meral et al. (2023) also emphasized that humor appreciation depends on students' prior knowledge and expectations. Rokhmah et al. (2020) listed positive indicators like reduced anxiety, improved memory, higher engagement, and a better learning atmosphere. On the contrary, Rianita et al. (2023) warned about negative perceptions such as inappropriateness, cultural insensitivity, and disengagement when humor is poorly executed or irrelevant.

Although several previous studies have highlighted humor's benefits and limitations, little is known about its use in Indonesian EFL classrooms. More specifically, research on students' perceptions of humor within culturally rich regions such as East Java remains limited. East Java's cultural tradition of "Ludruk", a form of comedic theatre,

suggests that learners may have unique perspectives on humor in classroom settings, yet this has not been sufficiently examined in language education research.

This study aims to fill that gap by investigating the types of humor used in English classrooms in Jombang, East Java, and analyzing students' perceptions of its impact. The research seeks to explore both the positive influences, such as motivation, confidence, and engagement, and the potential drawbacks of humor in classroom practice. The study contributes to existing scholarship by providing culturally grounded insights into humor's pedagogical role. Its findings are expected to benefit students by making learning more enjoyable and less stressful; teachers by offering practical strategies to integrate humor effectively; and the ELT community and policymakers, by highlighting the importance of culturally relevant approaches to EFL pedagogy in Indonesia.

## METHODS

### Research Design

This study employed a phenomenological research design to investigate the lived experiences of EFL teachers and students in relation to the use of humor in English classrooms in Jombang, East Java. Phenomenology was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of how participants perceive, interpret, and experience humor in natural learning environments (Bonyadi, 2023). The design is particularly suited for examining both the affective and pedagogical aspects of humor, enabling the researcher to capture not only what humor looks like in practice but also how it is felt and understood by learners and teachers. This approach is crucial in a cultural context such as East Java, where humor traditions like *Ludruk* potentially shape the way humor is interpreted in classroom interactions.

### Participants

The participants in this study consisted of seventy-three individuals, comprising sixty-nine seventh-grade students and four EFL teachers. Two schools were purposively selected, namely MTsN 5 Jombang and MTs Al-Azhar Peterongan, because both schools were recognized for having teachers who frequently employ humor in their teaching practices. The seventh-grade level was chosen due to its transitional stage, where students are particularly sensitive to classroom atmosphere and first impressions of English learning. Teachers were included based on recommendations from school leaders and colleagues who identified them as instructors known for their humorous teaching style. The combination of students and teachers provided complementary perspectives: students offered insight into how humor was received, while teachers elaborated on their intentions, strategies, and reflections on its pedagogical role.

### Data Collection

Three primary methods of data collection were employed: classroom observation, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. Observations were carried out using a structured checklist adapted from Tunnisa et al. (2019), alongside documentation

such as lesson notes and classroom photos, to capture the overall classroom climate (Al-Duleimi & Aziz, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both teachers and students, guided by frameworks developed by Tunnisa et al. (2019) and Weisi and Mohammadi (2023). This format allowed for flexibility in probing deeper into participants' perspectives while maintaining consistency across interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2019). Additionally, a Likert-scale questionnaire adapted from previous studies (e.g., Askildson, 2005; Ary et al., 2010; Olajoke, 2013) was administered to students to measure their perceptions of humor in EFL classrooms. The questionnaire items focused on emotional responses, classroom engagement, and perceived benefits of humor in language learning.

### Data Analysis

Data were analyzed following Miles and Huberman's (1994) model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Observational and interview data were coded and categorized thematically to identify emerging patterns in teachers' use of humor and students' responses. Triangulation of observation, interview, and questionnaire data was employed to strengthen the validity of findings. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were processed using descriptive statistics, including mean and median scores. A scoring interval was applied to classify students' perceptions into categories ranging from "very positive" to "very negative," thus complementing the qualitative insights with numerical interpretation.

## RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings derived from data analysis, discussed in relation to existing theories and prior studies. The study explores:

### Kinds of humor

Kinds of humor employed by English teachers at MTsN 5 Jombang and MTs Al Azhar Jombang will be explained below

#### Verbal/Word-based humor

Verbal humor, which relies on the playful use of language, frequently emerged during classroom interactions. In a "How to cook fried rice" lesson, teachers incorporated wordplay and acronyms to engage students. This type of humor reflected students' preferences for jokes that were simple, relatable, and rooted in their linguistic background.

#### Extract 1

*It seems that the students accept and understand the simpler joke like the homophone between English words and Javanese words as their mother language which has a total different meaning, even the contrary. For example, shallot = bawang merah (English to Indonesian), and Silit = Anus (Javanese to English) (Teacher 1)*

Teacher 1 humorously highlighted a student's mispronunciation, playing on the Javanese-English homophone "syelet/silit" (anus). Although the content bordered on inappropriate, the students responded with laughter, showing how linguistic contrasts between English, Indonesian, and Javanese created humorous moments in class.

The verbal humor was also found in Teacher 2. He explained viral acronyms that students used without knowing the meaning.

#### **Extract 2**

*Sometimes I tell them and write on the whiteboard some words like KEPO and YOLO. "Do you all ever know these words guys? Are they familiar to you?" some of them are familiar with those words because those are usually shown in the game they are playing. Then I ask them the meaning of those words, and I tell them You Only Live Once. You only live once so don't make it difficult. (Teacher 2)*

Teacher 2 introduced popular acronyms such as KEPO (Knowing Every Particular Object) and YOLO (You Only Live Once). By using humor to redefine "YOLO" as a reminder against unnecessary difficulties, he connected classroom learning with students' everyday expressions from digital culture.

#### **Physical humor**

Physical humor, which relies on exaggerated or visually amusing actions rather than words, frequently appeared in classroom interactions. Teachers used physical gestures to manage student attention, create engagement, and add entertainment to lessons.

#### **Extract 1**

*I use exaggerated gestures like mock throat-cutting to manage disruptive students, ensuring class support first. Approaching with faux anger, I theatrically "slaughter" their head, triggering laughter while maintaining control. This physical comedy, though ridiculous, works because students recognize it as intentional humor. The over-the-top performance diffuses tension, redirects focus, and reinforces classroom expectations without real hostility, keeping the atmosphere light yet structured. (Teacher 1)*

Teacher 1 used dramatic gestures, such as mock throat-cutting, to manage classroom behavior. Students recognized the performance as intentional humor, which diffused tension and maintained engagement without causing fear or discomfort.

#### **Extract 2.**

*I use light physical humor, like playfully moving students' heads (still attached!), to create a fun classroom atmosphere. While the "victim" tolerates it, the class laughs, shifting focus to my gestures rather than my speech. This intentional distraction helps regain attention and maintain classroom engagement. The humor remains mild yet effective, balancing amusement with control. My head-patting antics, delivered deadpan, become an expected quirk that students enjoy while keeping lessons productive. (Teacher 1).*

By keeping a deadpan expression, Teacher 1 ensured that playful actions were interpreted as humor rather than anger. Students responded positively, demonstrating the effectiveness of physical humor in maintaining attention.

### Extract 3

*Yeah, I ever use slapstick when I want to make a game about describing. I make an example as a clue. It can be given as words or a gesture. At that time, I gave them an example by imitating the gesture of monkey hehehe. My students say that I put my soul into it, in becoming a monkey. (Teacher 2)*

Teacher 2 used physical comedy, such as impersonating a monkey, to engage students during games. This self-deprecating humor strengthened rapport and encouraged participation by making the learning environment enjoyable.

### Related humor

Related humor occurs when teachers blend educational content with amusement, enhancing student engagement and comprehension. This form of humor allows students to participate in creating comedy through wordplay, cultural references, or imaginative ideas.

### Extract 1

During present continuous lessons, I guide students' quick responses to unintentionally create humor through delayed realization, letting them generate comedy themselves through timing and wordplay.

- Teacher 1: Okay guys, I believe you can do it, change them into continuous verbs, are you ready?
- Students: Ready, sir!
- T1: Sweep?
- Ss: Sweeping
- T1: Mop?
- Ss: Mopping
- T1: Watch?
- Ss: Watching
- T1: See?
- Ss: Seeing
- T1: Drive?
- Ss: Driving
- T1: Ride?
- Ss: Riding
- T1: Ngis?
- Ss: Ngising

Students laughed immediately after realizing that the nonsensical word "ngis," when converted to "ngising," formed a Javanese word meaning "taking a dump." Because the students shared a Javanese cultural background, the wordplay was culturally resonant and humorous. This example demonstrates how language and cultural knowledge can be leveraged to create educational humor.

This kind of humor was also used by Teacher 2 when he delivered a material about procedure text, like the data that is shown in Extract 2 below:

**Extract 2.**

*Because at that time, my students make some unusual ideas. So, I do not want to lose the game by giving an example like "Tutorial of doing Ruqyah in English". a lot of ideas that they make like "how to make a nettle soup, then amethyst juice. Do they really want to get hallucinated? there also some examples like how to burn a dormitory, how to make a human meatball and etc (Teacher 2)*

Teacher 2 adopted students' creative and humorous contributions, incorporating terms such as "lateng" (nettle) and "kecubung" (amethyst) into playful examples. By linking students' imaginative ideas to the lesson content, he encouraged laughter while bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, enhancing both engagement and understanding.

**Self-disparaging humor**

Self-disparaging humor involves teachers making fun of themselves, sharing personal or awkward experiences to engage students and create a relaxed classroom atmosphere.

**Extract 1**

*While guiding students at Borobudur, I encountered foreigners and mischievously taught them Javanese swear words without explaining the meaning. I recorded their innocent recitations and shared the clips with Javanese friends for amusement. (Teacher 1)*

Teacher 1 used personal anecdotes humorously, teaching foreigners Javanese bad words and recording the reactions for friends. This approach allowed him to share humorous experiences while avoiding offense, demonstrating how self-deprecating humor can engage students through storytelling.

Self-disparaging humor was also used by Teacher 2. He used it intentionally just to break the ice and kill the boredom among students. The data about Teacher 2's experiences are shown in the result in extract 2 below.

**Extract 2**

*Using humor is essential to break classroom monotony, often through sharing my own amusing experiences. I recount school-day mishaps, like being punished while classmates laughed, or my encounter with a forgetful foreigner at an East Java beach. Acting as his translator, I faced unexpected drama when a coffee seller scolded me because the foreigner hadn't returned a cup. Frustrated, I then nagged at the foreigner—likely making me the first local to scold a bule in Indonesia! These self-deprecating stories not only lighten the mood but also humanize me, making lessons more engaging while strengthening student-teacher rapport. hahaha. (Teacher 2)*

Teacher 2 intentionally shared embarrassing or amusing personal experiences, such as school mishaps and travel incidents, to break the ice and alleviate classroom

boredom. These narratives fostered rapport, humanized the teacher, and encouraged a more lively, interactive learning environment.

### Unrelated humor

Unrelated humor occurs when teachers use jokes or actions that are not directly connected to the lesson content but aim to capture attention, relieve tension, and create a fun classroom atmosphere.

#### Extract 1

*Sometimes, I intentionally act like a killer teacher who cannot be serious. I give them a threat while laughing, or sometimes I threaten them by using hyperbolic and melancholic words like "well, I will burn your pity souls....". That kind of violent persona that I have been building for this latest 6 years.*  
(Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 used exaggerated "killer teacher" behaviors, combining contradictory seriousness and playfulness to wake up daydreaming students. These antics created humor and established a dynamic, engaging classroom environment.

Teacher 2 also used unrelated humor for his ice breaking. It was the time when he held a fun teaching with game. The result of the data is shown in the extract 2 below:

#### Extract 2

*I've used ice-breaking games where students mimic monkeys, and competitions with playful punishments, like powdering losers' heads. When powdered, bald students resemble 'Tuyul,' a Javanese mythical creature, creating hilarious classroom moments that energize learning* (Teacher 2)

Teacher 2 applied unrelated humor through icebreakers and playful competitions. Punishments like powdering students' heads produced visual comedy, as some students resembled 'Tuyul,' a mythical creature, generating laughter and energizing the class.

### Unplanned humor

Unplanned humor occurs when a teacher or student unintentionally provokes laughter, often through unintended wordplay, actions, or mistakes. This type of humor is spontaneous and not planned by the speaker.

In the extract 1 below, Teacher 1 said a pair of words. But his students responded it with laughter even though he noticed the joke later.

#### Extract 1

*I ever find my students laugh caused by the homophone which relates to a bad word they used daily in Javanese language like "chore". At that time, I teach them about V1, V2, and V3. When I give them an example like "have you done chore?" they laugh at it. Then I realize it later that it will be responded as Javanese harsh word.* (Teacher 1)

Teacher 1 observed students laughing at the homophone "done chore," which sounded similar to the Javanese profanity *dancok*. Though unintended, the joke arose

from linguistic coincidence and was recognized as a playful way to manage language use.

Unplanned humor emerged when a student's Javanese accent unintentionally amused Teacher 1 and classmates, creating spontaneous laughter in the classroom.

#### **Extract 2**

*It is the moment when I hear one of my students says "Making a Fried Egg" (Javanese= Nyeplok Endog). in my opinion, that is cool and funny. It is like she has an identity as a pure Javanese. Hearing that accent, I have followed it up by saying a joke like "you are so Javanese, your accent does tell me that"). (Teacher 1).*

A student's pure Javanese accent unintentionally created humor, which Teacher 1 acknowledged and extended. The joke was culturally specific, resonating with Jombang-based students who shared the linguistic background.

Unplanned humor was also found in Teacher 2's TL activity. It was the moment when he acted randomly and unintentionally.

#### **Extract 3**

*My students have ever laughed at me even though I do not intend to be funny. That is when I unintentionally wear my cap (peci) upside down. Then they remind me that I wear it wrong, and I ask them why they laugh. (Teacher 2)*

Teacher 2's incorrect wearing of a peci unintentionally violated cultural norms, eliciting laughter from students and highlighting the humorous potential of accidental behavior.

This kind of humor was not only produced by Teacher 2 unconsciously, but his female students also made his mind travelling. Those were adult jokes that came from innocent thoughts and mistakes of students. The details of the jokes can be seen in the Extract 4 below.

#### **Extract 4**

*While teaching procedure texts to 7th graders, I encountered hilarious student errors—like misspelling "slim" as "slime" (triggering adult connotations) and a group boldly naming themselves "7 Lonte" (seven bitches), creating unexpected classroom comedy. (Teacher 2)*

Students' unintended errors, such as miswriting and provocative naming, generated unplanned humor. These spontaneous moments created double-layered jokes and enhanced the liveliness of the classroom.

#### **Riddle**

Riddles in the classroom function as a form of humor when answers are unexpected or mind-blowing, eliciting laughter from students. This type of humor was observed in Teacher 1's class to create enjoyment during lessons. The example can be seen as the extract 1 below:

**Extract 1**

- T1 : Langkah pertama adalah...? (the first step is...?)  
 S1 : mengatur kecepatan? (setting up the speed?)  
 T1 : wrong  
 S2 : putar? (turn it around?)  
 T1 : salah. Cukup mudah. Langkah pertama yaitu menjadi tinggi.  
 (Wrong.

*It is easy enough. The first step is to be tall.)*

Teacher 1 used a riddle format to guide students through unexpected answers. The twist in the response "the first step is to be tall" deviated from the students' logical guesses, producing delayed but collective laughter once the joke was understood.

**Spontaneous humor**

Spontaneous humor occurs without prior preparation, emerging as a teacher adapts to unexpected classroom situations. This form of humor was observed in both Teacher 1 and Teacher 2's classes during TL activities.

The result of the data analysis revealed that this form of humor was used by Teacher 1. Following up the data in physical humor, especially in Extract 1 below, when he dealt with an unexpected moment.

**Extract 1**

*When noticing a sweaty student's head, I joke, "Oil factory?" or "Sharing lice?"—playfully mimicking monkeys. These absurd yet harmless remarks grab attention. References like "najis mugholadhoh" (Islam's strictest impurity) add comedic contrast, turning discomfort into engagement. The strategy isn't mockery but using spontaneous physical humor to maintain focus and lively lessons. (Teacher 1)*

The teacher gave some comments in hyperbola to make some jokes. While playing student's head, he had ever felt his hand oily and wet caused by the oily and sweaty head of the student.

This kind of humor was also found in data collected from Teacher 2. He humorously linked a falling whiteboard to his lesson on procedure texts, joking about "steps to keep teachers out of class."

**Extract 2**

*Yes, at that time, the whiteboard is falling down. And my students try to hold it with, in my opinion, their thighs. How could it happen? I laugh seeing the shaking white board then I say "the white board is angry with you guys. I say it spontaneously. Because it is as if the white board does not want to be used by my students. (Teacher 2)*

When the whiteboard fell, Teacher 2 responded with spontaneous Ludruk-style humor, inspired by East Javanese comedy troupes like *Karya Budaya*, *Supali*, and *Trubus*, turning shock into laughter through witty banter with students.

### Students' perceptions of teachers' humor in EFL classes

This study of 69 students (51 dormitory residents without smartphones) from MTsN 5 Jombang and MTs Al-Azhar revealed overwhelmingly positive perceptions of classroom humor (mean score: 41.377/42). Most students agreed humor reduced anxiety (65/69) and created a fun atmosphere (100%), while all acknowledged its memory-boosting benefits. Though English jokes were less universally understood (53/69), humor significantly enhanced engagement, making lessons more interactive and time pass faster. Importantly, 85.5% reported feeling closer to humorous teachers. Negative perceptions were minimal, with 91.3% disagreeing about joke inappropriateness and 92.8% affirming joke relevance. The findings demonstrate humor's effectiveness in creating positive, productive learning environments with minimal drawbacks.

Most students (79.571%) had positive perceptions, agreeing that humor created a relaxing environment, improved retention, and increased engagement, supporting [Rokhmah et al. \(2020\)](#), [Sahin \(2021\)](#), and [Al-Noori \(2019\)](#). Humor also reduced stress, as noted by [Meral et al. \(2023\)](#).

However, 20.429% had negative views due to Inappropriateness, Lack of interest, and Sensitivity issues. Teachers acknowledged the risk of offending students. Despite this, the majority appreciated humor, proving that teachers' efforts to understand students' worlds and select appropriate jokes were effective. Cultural familiarity (Javanese context) also played a key role in humor reception.

## DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that humor in EFL classrooms is a deliberate and multifaceted pedagogical strategy that enhances student engagement, reduces anxiety, and strengthens teacher-student rapport. Teachers in this study adapted humor to the students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, blending English with Javanese and Indonesian to ensure comprehension. Teacher 1 leveraged students' interests, such as references to *Mobile Legends*, while Teacher 2 encouraged creative input from students, illustrating co-constructed humor that fosters participation and a sense of ownership over learning. This aligns with [Cook \(1997\)](#), who highlights that humor grounded in students' experiences supports cognitive and social engagement, and extends [Weisi and Mohammadi's \(2023\)](#) findings on the educational value of wordplay in facilitating language processing. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that culturally responsive and contextually relevant humor enhances both comprehension and motivation in EFL settings.

Verbal humor, including homophones and wordplay, was frequently employed to reinforce linguistic awareness while bridging cultural gaps. These complements [Heidari's \(2021\)](#) assertion that intercultural humor can serve as a medium for cultural exchange in teaching, providing students with opportunities to navigate and appreciate multiple linguistic contexts simultaneously. Physical and slapstick humor further captured attention and diffused classroom tension, consistent with [Kench \(2021\)](#), who emphasizes the effectiveness of multimodal humor in sustaining engagement. The combination of verbal and physical humor demonstrates a

synergistic effect, supporting Wanzer and Frymier's (1999) findings that humor simultaneously facilitates learning and strengthens relational dynamics in classrooms. Related, self-disparaging, and unplanned humor humanized teachers and fostered a relaxed learning environment, reinforcing Tunnisa et al.'s (2019) observations regarding humor's motivational and social benefits.

A novel contribution of this study is the identification of spontaneous humor, where teachers adapted in real time to unexpected classroom events. Teacher 2's Ludruk-inspired improvisations and Teacher 1's quick, playful gestures illustrate how improvisational humor transforms potential disruptions into engagement opportunities. This aligns partially with Wijaya and Poedjiastutie (2019), who propose that improv principles in teaching cultivate responsive, adaptive, and interactive learning environments. By combining verbal, physical, and spontaneous humor, teachers create dynamic and multimodal experiences that enhance student engagement, memory retention, and enjoyment of the learning process.

Students' overwhelmingly positive perceptions confirm the pedagogical value of humor. They reported reduced anxiety, improved attention, and increased engagement, indicating that humor effectively facilitates language learning while also building rapport. Minor concerns regarding inappropriateness were largely mitigated by teachers' cultural sensitivity and careful joke selection. The findings highlight the importance of understanding students' cultural and linguistic contexts when employing humor, suggesting that effective classroom humor is contextually grounded, responsive, and student-centered.

Limitations of this study include the small sample of only two teachers from two schools, which limits generalizability. Data collection relied on observations, surveys, and interviews, which may have been influenced by social desirability bias. Furthermore, the Javanese cultural context may restrict the applicability of these findings to other linguistic or cultural settings. Future research should expand the sample size, include longitudinal designs, and explore humor strategies across diverse student populations to enhance the generalizability and applicability of the results.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigated humor in EFL classrooms at MTsN 5 Jombang and MTs Al-Azhar Jombang, focusing on the types of humor used by teachers and students' perceptions. Findings revealed that teachers employed verbal, physical, related, self-disparaging, unplanned, and spontaneous humor to engage students, reduce anxiety, and strengthen teacher-student rapport. Humor that incorporated students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds, especially Javanese and Indonesian, was particularly effective in enhancing comprehension and participation. Students overwhelmingly responded positively, highlighting humor's role in creating a lively, interactive, and culturally sensitive learning environment. Limitations include the small sample size, reliance on observation and self-reported data, and the focus on a Javanese context, which may limit generalizability.

Based on these findings, teachers are encouraged to explore diverse humor styles, blending English with local languages to maximize comprehension and engagement. Students should be supported to create humor themselves, fostering creativity, cultural understanding, and active participation. Future research should examine cultural sensitivity in humor, investigate modern forms of humor such as digital memes, and assess the effectiveness of cross-cultural humor in EFL contexts beyond Javanese culture to broaden understanding of humor as a pedagogical tool in language education.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

## AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

Huda, V.T.: Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), writing –original draft (lead), review (supporting), securing funding. Hartono, H.: Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing –original draft (supporting), review (supporting), editing (supporting). Sabilah, F.: Conceptualization (supporting), methodology (supporting), writing –original draft (supporting), review (lead), editing (lead).

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