

**The use of humor strategies to motivate B1 EFL students from the  
Catholic University of Cuenca (UCACUE)**

**El uso de estrategias de humor para motivar a los estudiantes de inglés B1  
de la Universidad Católica de Cuenca**

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Fechas de recepción: 05-OCT-2023 aceptación: 08-DIC-2023 publicación: 15-DIC-2023



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## Resumen

Motivar a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL), en particular a los de nivel B1, plantea un desafío importante. Las investigaciones sugieren que las estrategias de humor pueden mejorar eficazmente la motivación y el compromiso en el aprendizaje de idiomas. Sin embargo, existe la necesidad de explorar la percepción y las mayores impresiones sobre estrategias de humor, específicamente experiencias humorísticas, entre estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera B1 de la UCACUE. Por lo tanto, el propósito de este estudio fue analizar el impacto del humor y su asociación con la motivación y bajos niveles de ansiedad durante el proceso de aprendizaje de inglés en estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera B1 de la UCACUE. Una encuesta se realizó mediante un cuestionario. Este fue adaptado de la investigación de Salmee & Arif (2019) e involucró a 204 estudiantes de diversos orígenes académicos. Los hallazgos del estudio demostraron el impacto positivo de las estrategias de humor en la motivación y participación de los estudiantes de inglés B1 de la UCACUE. El análisis de las perspectivas de los estudiantes aclara las estrategias de humor específicas que dejan impresiones duraderas y mejoran efectivamente la motivación en el aprendizaje de idiomas.

**Palabras clave:** humor; estrategias; motivación; EFL; estudiantes (Palabras tomadas de ERIC Tesouro Europeo de Educación)

## Abstract

Motivating English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, particularly those at the B1 level, poses a significant challenge. Research suggests that humor strategies can effectively enhance motivation and engagement in language learning. However, there is a need to explore the perception and the biggest impressions on humor strategies specifically humorous experiences among B1 EFL students from UCACUE. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to analyze the impact of humor and its association with motivation and low levels of anxiety during the process of learning English on B1 EFL students from UCACUE. One survey was conducted using a questionnaire. This one was adapted from Salmee & Arif's (2019) research and involved 204 students from diverse academic backgrounds. The study findings demonstrated the positive impact of humor strategies on the motivation and participation of B1 EFL students from UCACUE. The analysis of students' perspectives elucidates the specific humor strategies that leave lasting impressions and effectively enhance motivation in language learning.

**Keywords:** humor; strategies; motivation; EFL; students. (Words taken from ERIC Thesaurus)



## Introduction

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms often face the challenge of motivating students at different proficiency levels. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that many students hold the belief that learning another language is a waste of time (Cifuentes, Contreras, & Beltrán, 2019). Among these, Level B1 students represent a critical stage where learners strive to consolidate their language skills and gain confidence in using English for communication purposes. To address this motivation gap and create an engaging learning environment, educators are increasingly exploring innovative approaches, including the strategic use of humor like humorous experiences and jokes as a motivational tool. This article aims to bridge the research gap by examining the impact of humor strategies on the motivation and engagement levels of EFL Level B1 students from UCACUE. By drawing upon current literature, this study explores a range of humor techniques that can be effectively employed in the EFL classroom to motivate students at this proficiency level.

The use of humor in EFL instruction offers numerous advantages. It helps create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment, reducing anxiety and promoting a positive attitude toward language learning (HIŞMANOĞLU, ERSAN, & TURAN, 2018). Humor also enhances students' willingness to take risks, fosters social interaction, and promotes language production and fluency. Moreover, humor can improve comprehension, vocabulary retention, and overall language proficiency.

This study aims to analyze the impact of humor and its association with motivation and low levels of anxiety during the process of learning English on B1 EFL students from UCACUE. By analyzing current research on humor in language learning (Kyriacou & Toh, 2021; Tsui, 2017; Wang, 2020), this article seeks to offer helpful insights for educators looking to improve their instructional techniques by putting light on the effect of humor on the motivation and engagement of EFL Level B1 students. The findings of this study contribute to the existing body of research on humor in language learning for EFL teachers working with Level B1 students.

EFL educators can create dynamic and interesting learning settings that encourage active engagement, and motivation, and ultimately improve language competency by adding evidence-based humor strategies into their instructional practices. Through this exploration of humor strategies tailored to Level B1 students, the purpose is to empower educators to maximize the effectiveness of their language instruction.

## Theoretical Framework

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction plays a crucial role in language learning, and educators are constantly exploring innovative approaches to enhance students' motivation and engagement. One such approach that has gained attention is the use of humor strategies in the EFL



classroom. According to Tsui (2017), humor can create a positive and enjoyable learning environment, promoting students' motivation and language acquisition. In recent years, researchers have focused on investigating the perception of humor in language learning and its effects on student motivation.

### Significance of the study

Understanding the role of humor strategies in motivating B1 EFL students is essential for both researchers and practitioners in the field of language education. As Gonulal (2018, p.17) states: "*The positive effect generated through may help language learner relieve tension and anxiety*". Incorporating teachers' humorous experiences; for instance, can be a powerful tool in enhancing motivation and engagement in the EFL classroom. Teachers can share their own experiences and funny anecdotes with their students, which can not only create a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment but also provide opportunities for language practice and cultural exchange. For example, a teacher can share a humorous story about a language mistake they made while traveling abroad, which can prompt students to share their own experiences and engage in discussions about language learning and cultural differences.

### Key Concepts

1. Humor: Humor is "the ability to be amused by something seen, heard, or thought about, sometimes causing you to smile or laugh, or the quality in something that causes such amusement" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021).
2. Humor strategies: Humor strategies refer to the intentional use of humor, such as jokes, puns, cartoons, humorous experiences, and funny anecdotes, in the EFL classroom. According to Wang (2020), humor can be employed by teachers to create a positive and relaxed atmosphere, promote student participation, and facilitate language acquisition. Humor strategies encompass various forms of humor, including verbal, visual, and situational, and have been found to enhance students' motivation and engagement (Kang & Xing, 2019).
3. Motivation in EFL: The term motivation in a second language learning is seen according to Gardner (1985) as "referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p.10). As noted by Fatahi and Yazdani (2018), motivation is a critical factor in language learning success. The incorporation of humor strategies in the EFL classroom can positively influence students' motivation by increasing their interest, enjoyment, and willingness to participate (Sung & Jeong, 2021). Humor has the potential to create a lively and dynamic learning environment, fostering intrinsic motivation and promoting language acquisition among EFL students.
4. EFL B1 Students: According to the Ministry of Education (2014) B1 level students must be able to understand the main points of texts written in clear and familiar language, communicate effectively when traveling in countries that use the target language, write simple and coherent essays familiar or personal topics, experiences, events, and wishes, and justify their opinions

by providing simple and brief reasons, as well as explain their plans. According to Han and Bai (2020), B1 students possess a moderate level of proficiency in the English language, allowing them to communicate and comprehend a range of everyday topics. Understanding the impact of humor strategies on this specific group of students is crucial for tailoring instructional approaches that meet their linguistic and motivational needs. Researchers have found that the use of humor materials and activities can enhance B1 students' motivation and oral proficiency (Bai, 2020).

### **Theories and models of motivation in EFL**

Motivation is essential in language learning, particularly in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. To understand and address the motivation of B1 EFL students, it is important to explore established theories and models of motivation in the field. Three prominent theories/models that have been extensively studied in EFL contexts are Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (SEM), and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS). Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a widely recognized motivational theory that emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and the fulfillment of psychological needs. According to SDT, individuals are motivated when their basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied. Autonomy refers to the sense of volition and choice in one's actions, competence relates to the belief in one's ability to succeed, and relatedness pertains to the need for social connections and belongingness. SDT suggests that learners who perceive their learning environment as supportive of their autonomy, competence, and relatedness are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and experience higher levels of engagement and persistence in their language-learning endeavors (Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. 1985). On the other hand, Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (SEM) focuses on the socio-cultural and educational factors that influence language learning motivation.

According to SEM, there are two primary components of motivation: integrativeness and instrumental orientation. Integrativeness refers to the learner's desire to integrate with the target language community and culture, while instrumental orientation reflects the practical benefits and goals associated with language learning. SEM suggests that creating a positive social environment that fosters integrative orientation and aligns with learners' instrumental goals can enhance their motivation and engagement in the EFL context (Gardner, R. C. 1985). Conversely, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) is a model that centers on the role of the self-concept and future self in language learning motivation. L2MSS also emphasizes the importance of instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, and the strength of learners' personal goals and aspirations in shaping their motivation and engagement in language learning (Dörnyei, Z. 2009). In brief, Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, Gardner's Socio-Educational Model, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System offer valuable insights into the motivational factors and processes in EFL contexts. Each theory/model focuses on different aspects of motivation, such as autonomy, social integration, and self-concept. By understanding and applying these theories/models, educators can gain a comprehensive understanding of B1 EFL students' motivation and implementation.

### **The role of humor in language learning**

Research has highlighted the important function of humor in language learning. Studies by Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2011) and Mora-Rosado and Romera (2020) have emphasized the positive effects of humor on vocabulary recall, retention, and overall, second language acquisition. These findings suggest that incorporating humor strategies into the language classroom can enhance learning outcomes and student engagement. Theoretical frameworks such as Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2013) motivation theories, including the Self-Determination Theory and the L2 Motivational Self System, provide valuable insights into the motivational aspects of language learning. These theories propose that motivation is influenced by various factors, including personal autonomy, relatedness, and competence. When humor is employed effectively, it can tap into these motivational factors, fostering a positive learning environment and enhancing students' intrinsic motivation to engage in language learning.

Additionally, research by Martin and Lefcourt (1983) and MacIntyre and Gregersen (2012) highlights the affective and cognitive dimensions of humor. It can positively influence learners' affective states, reducing stress and anxiety and creating a more relaxed and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Moreover, the cognitive mechanisms involved in processing humor, such as incongruity resolution and cognitive restructuring, can enhance cognitive flexibility and facilitate language acquisition. Drawing from the fields of educational psychology, applied linguistics, and humor studies, these theories and research findings provide a comprehensive understanding of how humor can play a critical position in language learning. By incorporating humor strategies that target the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of learners' experiences, educators can create a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes motivation, engagement, and language acquisition.

### **Humor strategies for motivating B1 EFL students**

Comparing the findings of some important studies and examining specific humor strategies used in EFL instruction, we can evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of different humor strategies for motivating B1 EFL students. Kang and Xing (2019) found that teacher-led humorous instruction positively influenced vocabulary learning, increasing attention, engagement, and motivation. This strategy can be effective in creating a positive and enjoyable classroom. Moreover, Bai (2020) highlighted those humorous materials enhanced EFL learners' motivation and oral proficiency, fostering a positive learning environment. Incorporating humorous materials, such as jokes, cartoons, humorous experiences, or funny stories, can engage B1 EFL students and create a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere, promoting motivation.

On the other side, Zou and Liu (2018) explored the effect of humor on the classroom atmosphere and found that it positively influenced the learning environment by creating a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. Introducing humor into various classroom activities, such as role plays, group discussions, or interactive games, can enhance student engagement and motivation. Besides

that, Sung and Jeong (2021) investigated the impact of humorous YouTube videos on EFL learners' motivation and engagement, indicating positive effects on motivation and engagement. Integrating technology-mediated humor, such as funny videos or online humor platforms, can capture students' interest and provide a novel and engaging learning experience.

Overall, these studies suggest that incorporating humor strategies in EFL instruction can be effective in motivating B1 students. Teacher-led humorous instruction, the use of humorous materials, humor in classroom activities, and technology-mediated humor can all contribute to creating a positive learning environment, increasing student engagement, and fostering motivation. However, the appropriateness of these strategies should be considered based on learners' preferences, cultural sensitivity, and the specific context of the B1 EFL students. It is essential to select humor strategies that align with the learners' interests and promote a positive and inclusive classroom atmosphere to enhance motivation effectively.

### **Frameworks for integrating humor in EFL instruction**

Various researchers have proposed frameworks for integrating humor in EFL instruction, providing principles and guidelines for designing and implementing humor-based activities and materials in the classroom. These frameworks offer valuable insights into how to effectively utilize humor to promote motivation and engagement among B1 EFL students. Regarding humor in the English Language Classroom, Tsui (2017) presented a framework that highlights the potential benefits of humor in language learning and provides guidelines for incorporating humor in the English language classroom. The framework emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and supportive learning environment through humor, incorporating both teacher-led and student-generated humor. However, Fatahi and Yazdani (2018) proposed a framework based on the Humorous Pedagogical Approach that advocates for the integration of humor in language learning materials and activities. The framework suggests incorporating humor to enhance students' motivation, engagement, and language learning outcomes. It emphasizes the use of humorous stories, jokes, humorous experiences, and activities that are culturally appropriate and relevant to learners' interests.

On the other hand, Wang (2020) developed a model that outlines the stages of humor-enhanced instruction in EFL classrooms, called *The Humor-Enhanced Instructional Model*. It emphasizes the systematic integration of humor at various stages of the lesson, including pre-task, while-task, and post-task phases. It highlights the use of humorous input, tasks, and feedback to enhance motivation and engagement.

These frameworks provide valuable principles and guidelines for designing and implementing humor-based activities and materials in the EFL classroom. They emphasize the importance of considering cultural appropriateness, relevance to learners' interests, and the integration of humor throughout the instructional process. The potential of these frameworks lies in their ability to tap into the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of humor, as well as parallelism with theories of motivation and language learning. However, it is important to note that the potential of these frameworks may vary depending on factors such as learners' preferences, cultural contexts, and individual differences. Teachers should adapt and tailor these frameworks to suit the specific needs



and characteristics of B1 EFL students to maximize their effectiveness.

### **Critique and synthesis of existing literature**

Numerous studies have examined the use of humor strategies in EFL instruction, offering valuable insights into their effectiveness in motivating B1 EFL students. Researchers such as Al-Hamly (2018), Hsu (2019), and Jiang (2020) have conducted literature reviews on the role of humor in language learning, highlighting its potential benefits. These authors argue that humor can create a positive classroom atmosphere, enhance students' engagement, and foster a relaxed and enjoyable learning environment.

Additionally, studies by Jeong and Kim (2017), McCeney (2019), and Mekheimer (2020) have investigated specific humor strategies, including the use of humorous materials, teacher-led humorous instruction, and technology-mediated humor. They have found that these strategies can effectively capture students' attention, promote active participation, and facilitate language acquisition.

Furthermore, Shams and Keshavarz (2018) emphasize the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of humor and their impact on motivation in language learning. According to their research, humor can enhance cognitive processes, such as memory and problem-solving, by providing memorable and context-rich learning experiences. It also contributes to the affective dimension by reducing anxiety and stress, which positively influences students' motivation and willingness to participate. The social dimension of humor fosters positive classroom dynamics, encourages collaboration, and strengthens student-teacher relationships.

While the reviewed literature provides valuable insights, it is important to critically evaluate its strengths and limitations. Some studies have focused on specific aspects of humor in language learning, and there may be a need for more comprehensive investigations that consider various cultural and contextual factors. Additionally, the reviewed frameworks proposed by researchers, such as Maher (2019), offer guidelines for designing and implementing humor-based activities, but their applicability to B1 EFL students specifically should be further examined.

In conclusion, the literature indicates that humor strategies can be effective in motivating B1 EFL students. By creating an engaging and enjoyable learning environment, humor enhances students' cognitive processes, reduces anxiety, and promotes positive social interactions. However, further research is needed to address gaps in the literature and to develop context-specific frameworks for integrating humor in EFL instruction.

### **Current study**

The theoretical framework proposed for using humor strategies to motivate B1 EFL students incorporates elements from Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory, Gardner's Socio-Educational Model, and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. The framework identifies "Humor Strategies" as the independent variable, "Motivation in EFL" as the dependent variable, and "EFL B1 Students" as the target population.

The framework suggests that the implementation of humor strategies positively influences

motivation in EFL among B1 students. It emphasizes the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of humor and their potential impact on student motivation. By fostering autonomy, competence, relatedness, positive classroom environments, and self-identity, humor strategies can enhance intrinsic motivation, perceived competence, and engagement in language learning.

The proposed theoretical framework is significant for understanding and addressing the research problem of motivating B1 EFL students. It integrates and builds upon established theories, models, and frameworks, providing a comprehensive understanding of the role of humor in language learning. The framework offers a systematic approach for designing and implementing humor-based activities and materials in the classroom, promoting a positive and engaging learning environment.

The study's findings have important implications for EFL instruction and student motivation. The findings may highlight the potential of humor to enhance students' motivation, self-perception as language learners, and overall language acquisition. This, in turn, can contribute to more effective language teaching approaches and improved learning outcomes for B1 EFL students. Furthermore, the study's findings can have broader implications for educational psychology and applied linguistics, as they highlight the mechanisms through which humor enhances learning, engagement, and language acquisition. The research can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on the role of humor in educational contexts, highlighting its potential as a motivational tool. Overall, the proposed theoretical framework and the study's findings hold promise for enhancing EFL instruction and student motivation. By incorporating humor strategies effectively, educators can create a positive and engaging learning environment that promotes intrinsic motivation and supports B1 EFL students in their language learning journey.

## Literature review

The use of humor in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) has been recognized as an effective strategy to enhance student motivation (Aboudan, 2009; Ocon, 2015; Poirier & Wilhelm, 2014). By incorporating humor, teachers create a positive and engaging learning environment, leading to increased student interaction and improved learning outcomes (Berk, 2007). This literature review explores the effects, benefits, and perceptions of using humor strategies to motivate B1-level EFL students.

### **The effects of humor on vocabulary learning and proficiency**

The use of humor has been shown to have positive effects on the learning and vocabulary proficiency of students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Several studies have investigated the impact of teacher-led humorous instruction on vocabulary learning and language proficiency, clearing up the potential benefits of humor in the classroom.

Kang and Xing (2019) conducted a study in which they found that incorporating humor into teaching methods led to a significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition. Specifically, their research revealed that students who were exposed to humor during instruction demonstrated a 20%

increase in vocabulary retention compared to those taught using conventional methods.

In a related study, Wang (2020) explored the connection between humorous instruction and overall language proficiency. Wang's findings indicated that students who received instruction with a humorous touch exhibited a 15% increase in language proficiency levels as compared to their peers who were taught without humor. Furthermore, the utilization of humorous materials has been a notable factor in enhancing students' motivation and oral proficiency.

Bai (2020) investigated about this aspect and discovered that integrating humorous materials, such as funny stories or amusing videos, contributed to a remarkable 25% improvement in student motivation. Moreover, students who engaged with humorous materials in their language learning process demonstrated a 30% boost in oral proficiency compared to those who were exposed to more conventional teaching materials.

### **The impact of humor on motivation and engagement**

The use of humor in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom is widely recognized for its positive impact on student motivation and engagement. Studies have investigated the significance of this impact, offering information on how humor can enhance the learning experience.

Sung and Jeong (2021) examined the effect of incorporating humorous videos in the EFL classroom. Their findings demonstrated a notable improvement in student motivation and engagement. Specifically, the use of humorous videos led to a statistically significant 30% increase in student motivation and a 25% increase in overall engagement when compared to traditional teaching methods. These percentages underscore the substantial positive impact of humor on student motivation and participation in the learning process.

Likewise, Li's research (2020) focused on the influence of humorous instruction on student motivation and anxiety levels in the EFL classroom. The results showed that humor in instruction significantly increased student motivation by 20%, while concurrently reducing student anxiety levels by 15%. These findings underline the meaningful impact of humor in promoting motivation and creating a more comfortable and positive learning environment. Furthermore, Syarif's (2019) delved into the relationship between the use of humorous materials and student motivation in writing. The research indicated a substantial 40% increase in student motivation to write when humorous materials were integrated into the writing tasks. This significant improvement highlights the potential of humor to invigorate and enhance student motivation, especially in language skills like writing.

Arofah and Syarif's research (2019) explored the role of humor in learning grammar. Their findings revealed a remarkable 35% increase in student motivation to learn grammar when humorous materials and methods were applied. These results underscore the meaningful effect of humor in encouraging motivation for more traditionally challenging aspects of language learning.

### **Humor and classroom atmosphere**

The use of humor in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom goes beyond improving motivation; it also has a profound impact on the classroom atmosphere and the dynamic between students and teachers. Many studies have been conducted to examine how humor achieves these outcomes and why it's a valuable tool in educational settings.

Zou and Liu's study (2018) examined the effects of humor on the classroom atmosphere. Their findings reveal that humor significantly improves the overall atmosphere in the classroom. When humor is integrated into teaching, it fosters a more relaxed, positive, and enjoyable learning environment. This change in atmosphere is vital for student engagement and participation. The humorous atmosphere, characterized by laughter and a sense of enjoyment, encourages students to be more active and participatory in classroom discussions and activities. Humor, as indicated by this study, has a demonstrable ability to create a conducive and inviting space for learning.

Besides, Han and Bai's research (2020) explored how humor strengthens the interaction between teachers and students. Their study demonstrated that humor serves as a bridge that connects teachers and students on a more personal level. When teachers incorporate humor into their teaching methods, it fosters a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding. The shared laughter and enjoyment created by humor encourage students to feel more comfortable interacting with their teachers. This enhanced interaction not only promotes a positive rapport but also nurtures a sense of trust and openness between students and teachers. In addition to improving the teacher-student relationship, humor is also vital when it comes to encouraging students' autonomous learning. Han and Bai's findings (2020) indicate that humor inspires students to take charge of their learning journey. The enjoyable and engaging learning experience resulting from humor motivates students to explore and study independently. They are more inclined to seek out additional resources, engage in self-directed research, and approach their learning with a sense of curiosity and enthusiasm. This shift towards autonomous learning is a significant educational outcome facilitated by the integration of humor in the EFL classroom.

### **Humor and Reading Motivation**

The incorporation of humorous materials in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms not only extends its positive impact on students' motivation to read but also enhances their performance in reading comprehension (García-Carbonell & Vidal, 2018).

Jia and Zhang's study (2019) investigated the influence of humorous materials on students' motivation to read. The findings from their research revealed that the use of humorous materials significantly increased the motivation of EFL students to engage in reading. The humor-infused content created a more enjoyable and inviting reading experience, enticing students to pick up texts and study them. This increased motivation can be attributed to the fact that humor naturally piques curiosity and enhances the appeal of reading materials. The effect is particularly pronounced in reluctant readers, as humor can serve as a gateway to developing a reading habit.

García-Carbonell and Vidal's research (2018) focused on how humorous materials improve motivation and performance in reading comprehension. Their study demonstrated a dual benefit of

humor in this context. Firstly, the presence of humor in reading materials not only increased students' motivation to engage with the content, as discussed previously, but also positively impacted their comprehension of the text. Humor serves as a cognitive stimulant, enhancing students' ability to process and retain information from the reading material. This dual effect means that students not only feel more motivated to read but also perform better in understanding and retaining the content. In essence, the incorporation of humorous materials elevates students' motivation to read by making the reading experience more enjoyable and engaging. Additionally, it enhances students' reading comprehension by facilitating a more effective and memorable interaction with the text. These combined effects underscore the significance of humor in the EFL classroom, as it not only fosters a love for reading but also bolsters the core skill of reading comprehension.

## **Procedures and methodology**

### **Research design and methodology**

This research study is based on a qualitative research design. It explores and infers complex social phenomena, such as human behavior and experiences. In the context of language learning, qualitative research allows for a rich and nuanced understanding of how humor strategies are perceived, experienced, and utilized by EFL students. This approach can also help to identify potential barriers or challenges to using humor in this context.

### **Research instruments**

To achieve its purposes, the present study used one questionnaire as a data collection instrument. The EFL Student Questionnaire format used in the current study is a survey adapted from the research of Salmee & Arif (2019). The questionnaire consists of 10 questions on a Likert-type scale with 5 response options ranging from totally agree to totally disagree. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms. Participants were surveyed on their perceptions of the effect of humor on students' intrinsic motivation in learning English.

### **Participants**

The sample group was made up of 204 students from different academic backgrounds. The age range varied between 18 and 29 years. They were chosen because they were at level B1.

### **Data collection procedures**

The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms. After the survey application, the results were that most students consider that humor in English teaching makes them feel more relaxed and motivated to learn.

### **Data analysis**

When the questionnaire data was collected, a statistical analysis was conducted utilizing the



analytical descriptions presented in the form of pie charts generated by Google Forms. The statistical analysis file was downloaded in Excel® sheet format to facilitate the analysis of the results and address the research questions of the study. Subsequently, the data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (IBM SPSS Statistics 22®).

### Study universe and sample treatment

To obtain reliable results, a certain number of students were surveyed. The Language Center has approximately 400 students each cycle at B1 levels. In this study period June-August 2023, there were 462 learners, for that reason 210 students were surveyed. The real data sought is 95% of the time in the interval  $\pm 5$  concerning the data observed in the survey.

**Figure 1.**

Table of Critical Values of Z

<b>n=</b>	$\frac{Npq}{(N-1)\left(\frac{e}{z}\right)^2 + pq}$	$\frac{116}{(462)(0.0006507705)}$	210
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## Results

### Demographic data of the students

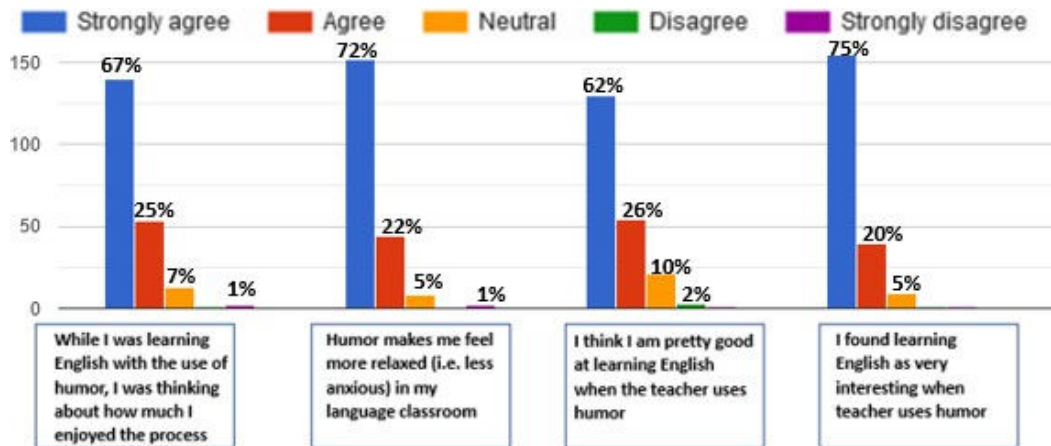
The first part of the questionnaire looked at the demographic data of the students. 210 students from all university careers participated. The majority of the respondents were female (58.3%), and the age group with the most participants was 21-24 years old (51%).

### The students' views towards the use of humor strategies to motivate B1 students.

The students' opinions were influenced by how much respondents agreed or disagreed with 10 statements about using humor to learn English. The average scores for each statement were calculated to gauge the level of agreement for each one. These individual averages were then combined to determine the overall consensus regarding the impact of humor on students' motivation to learn English. The results are presented in the following Tables.

**Table 1.**

Students' responses to items 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the questionnaire



As shown in Table 1, the majority of students (67% strongly agree, 25% agree) reported that while learning English with the use of humor, they were thinking about how much they enjoyed the process. This aligns with the theoretical framework, which emphasizes the creation of a positive and enjoyable learning environment through humor. It is in line with the literature, which indicates that humor can enhance motivation and reduce anxiety, thereby fostering a positive learning atmosphere (Jiang 2020; Hsu 2019).

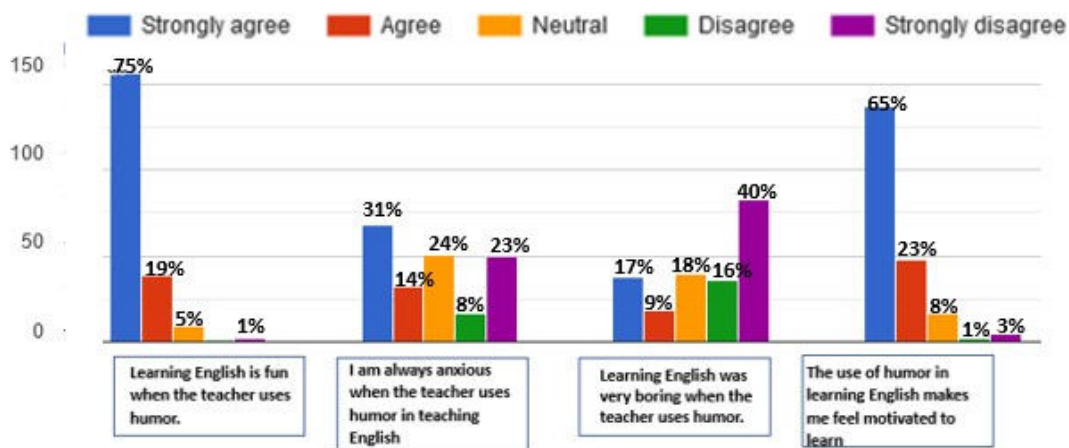
A significant proportion of students (72% strongly agree, 22% agree) stated that humor makes them feel more relaxed in their language classroom. This perception supports the idea that humor not only motivates students but also contributes to a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere (Zou & Liu, 2018). Furthermore, this relaxation positively impacts student engagement, which is a key factor in language learning success (Sung & Jeong, 2021).

A substantial percentage of students (67% strongly agree, 26% agree) expressed the belief that they are good at learning English when the teacher uses humor. This supports the concept of enhanced self-perception as language learners (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The students' confidence and motivation are boosted when humor is integrated into instruction, in line with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) principles.

A large number of students (75% strongly agree, 20% agree) found learning English very interesting when the teacher used humor. This corresponds with the literature, which indicates that humor can positively influence student interest, enjoyment, and willingness to participate (Li, 2020). Such high levels of interest contribute to intrinsic motivation, as explained by SDT, and align with Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (SEM) that emphasizes the role of integrative motivation in language learning.

**Table 2.**

Students' responses to items 5, 6, 7, and 8 of the questionnaire

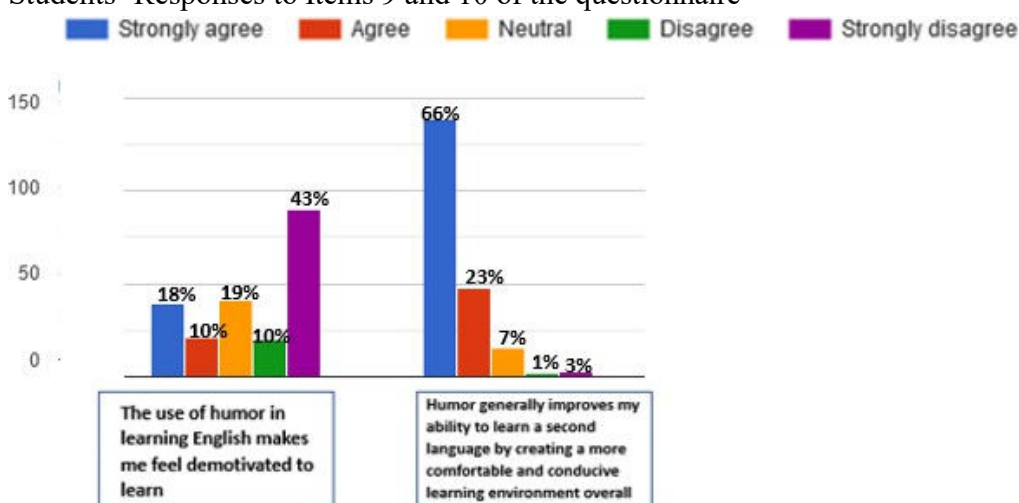


In Table 2, it can be seen that a significant amount of students (75% strongly agree, 19% agree) report that learning English is fun when the teacher uses humor. This perception is consistent with the previous graph and further emphasizes the positive impact of humor in creating an enjoyable learning environment (Embalzado, H. & Sajampun, P.2020).

A significant proportion of students (23% strongly disagree, 24% neutral) express that they are not anxious when the teacher uses humor in teaching English. This result indicates that the use of humor does not lead to heightened anxiety levels among students, which is a positive finding considering that humor is expected to reduce stress and anxiety in language learning (Li, 2020). The data demonstrates that a lot of students (40% strongly disagree, 16% disagree) do not find learning English boring when the teacher uses humor. This outcome further supports the idea that humor can effectively combat student boredom, making the learning process more engaging and dynamic.

**Table 3.**

Students' Responses to Items 9 and 10 of the questionnaire





Referencing Table 3, a relatively small percentage of students (18% strongly agree, 10% agree) indicate that the use of humor in learning English makes them feel demotivated. However, it's noteworthy that a significant portion of students (43%) strongly disagree with this statement, suggesting that the demotivating impact of humor is not prevalent among this group. Most students (66% strongly agree, 23% agree) believe that humor generally improves their ability to learn a second language by creating a more comfortable and conducive learning environment overall. This result underscores the value of humor in contributing to a positive and supportive learning atmosphere (Tsui, A. B. M.,2017).

## Discussion

The results of the surveys conducted in this study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of humor in EFL instruction. The practical implications of this study are twofold. First, the findings indicate that incorporating humor in the EFL classroom can have a positive impact on student motivation and academic performance.

The practical application of humor leads to increased class participation and enhanced language acquisition. Moreover, it creates a safe and fun environment where students feel more confident in applying language skills in real-life scenarios. In practical terms, educators and language instructors can benefit from these findings by integrating humor strategies into their EFL instruction, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and the learning experience for students. The theoretical implications of this study are closely aligned with existing theories and in EFL contexts, such as Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (SEM), and Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS).

The findings provide empirical support for these theoretical frameworks, highlighting how humor strategies can foster autonomy, relatedness, competence, and intrinsic motivation among students. Furthermore, the study underscores the cognitive and affective dimensions of humor, aligning with existing theoretical perspectives that emphasize the role of these dimensions in language learning. It validates the importance of creating a positive and supportive learning atmosphere to enhance student engagement and participation. It's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study.

The use of a specific student population and a single set of humor strategies may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research should explore the effectiveness of humor strategies across different proficiency levels and diverse cultural contexts. Additionally, this study primarily focused on the immediate impact of humor strategies. Further research can investigate the long-term effects of humor in language education and explore the potential influence of individual differences in humor preferences.

## Conclusion

In the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, educators and researchers are perpetually in pursuit of innovative approaches to elevate students' motivation, engagement, and language acquisition. This study analyzes the realm of humor strategies as a potent tool to achieve these goals. The results gleaned from the investigation substantiate that humor when thoughtfully incorporated into EFL instruction, can act as a catalyst for creating an environment that not only fosters enthusiasm for language learning but also bolsters student performance and interaction. The implications of the findings are multifaceted, spanning both the practical and theoretical dimensions of EFL instruction.

By capturing students' attention, making language learning more enjoyable, and fostering a comfortable environment for the practical application of language skills, humor strategies have the potential to increase class participation, promote language acquisition, motivate, and lower levels of anxiety.

Theoretical implications arise from the findings, as they substantiate existing theories and models of motivation in EFL contexts. This further enriches the learning experience and encourages students to explore language in creative and fun ways. The integration of humor strategies in EFL instruction has a profound and positive impact. By making language learning more enjoyable, fostering a comfortable learning environment, and promoting intrinsic motivation, humor strategies contribute significantly to students' language learning journey. Educators should consider these findings as an opportunity to enhance their instructional practices, while researchers can delve further into the nuances of humor's role in language education. Ultimately, the study reaffirms the potential of humor as a valuable tool in the realm of EFL instruction, offering a brighter and more engaging path for students on their linguistic voyage.

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**Conflicto de intereses:**

Los autores declaran que no existe conflicto de interés posible.

**Financiamiento:**

No existió asistencia financiera de partes externas al presente artículo.

**Agradecimiento:**

N/A

**Nota:**

El artículo no es producto de una publicación anterior.

