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## Effects of Using Humor in Teaching Speaking Skills on EFL Learners' Speaking Anxiety

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### ABSTRACT

Speaking clearly leads to communicating clearly. However, learning to speak clearly in a foreign or second language is one of the greatest challenges for a learner and often evokes great anxiety. Accordingly, this study is a survey-based investigation of the effects of using humor to teach speaking skills on the speaking anxiety of Saudi Arabian EFL undergraduate students. The objective of this research was to determine how humor affects them and whether it helps them feel less anxious. A quantitative survey methodology was used in this study to fit with the research objectives and questions. The experiment took place over three consecutive weeks, with three hours of instruction each week. 43 freshmen rated their agreement with the FLSAQ's 18 items on a 5-point Likert scale, reflecting fears and self-perceptions about English speaking. Prior to the intervention, speaking anxiety levels among the students were typically neutral to mildly low. Following the application of humor, the post-test results revealed that the pre-test mean (Mean = 48.67) was significantly higher than the post-test mean (Mean = 38.86) and the t-test results between them is statistically significant ( $t = 3.04$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ), indicating that humor had a positive effect on reducing speaking anxiety. These results give teachers a solid framework for teaching speaking skills in ways that will lessen speaking anxiety, which can create a comfortable classroom environment in which communication is valued over correctness, thereby reducing students' fear of making mistakes, increasing their active participation, and in the process promoting their speaking skills.

**Keywords:** EFL Learners; EFL Speaking Anxiety; Humor; Speaking Anxiety; Humor Enhanced Language Learning; Speaking Skills; Comfort Classroom

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# 1. Introduction

Speaking clearly enables people to make themselves understood, which lowers miscommunication in both social and professional settings. Speaking is considered the most fundamental of the four language skills, and a person who is proficient in a language is typically called a speaker of that language<sup>[1]</sup>. According to Richard<sup>[2]</sup>, for many learners of English as a second or foreign language, the primary objective is to become proficient in speaking so as to be able to interact fluently in the language. However, one of the most challenging components of learning a language is producing intelligible speech<sup>[3]</sup>, as it calls for the rapid formulation and simultaneous articulation of ideas, both of which can be intellectually taxing. Thus, learners may possess the ability to read, write, and comprehend the target language but not to speak it comprehensibly, which thwarts communication and often causes them to feel stressed, resulting in a level of anxiety that makes it difficult for them to function well in a foreign language course<sup>[4]</sup>. For this reason, the study has important ramifications for both student outcomes and teaching methods. By shedding light on the importance of defusing anxiety and suggesting successful tactics for doing so, it helps teachers boost student engagement in the practice they need to advance their speaking skills and offers policymakers evidence-based suggestions for curriculum development and resource distribution. Overall, the study is relevant to language teachers' ongoing efforts to create learning environments that are conducive to learners' active participation in overcoming anxiety and practicing speaking.

Horwitz et al.<sup>[4]</sup> defined anxiety as an individual's experience of such emotions as "tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the autonomic nervous system" (p. 125). It is a complex psychological phenomenon that influences language acquisition and is an indicator of poor language proficiency<sup>[4, 5]</sup>. Research has shown that anxiety related to foreign languages is present in listening<sup>[6]</sup>, writing<sup>[7]</sup>, speaking<sup>[8]</sup>, and reading<sup>[9]</sup>. However, speaking is the most anxiety-inducing of the four English language skills<sup>[8, 10]</sup>, which is manifested in such ways as negative performance-related thoughts, fear of being incorrect, feeling afraid to speak in public, and concern that others perceive one as unintelligent. Consequently, it is important to have effective teaching methods that help to reduce the anxiety, a role that humor might play.

According to Walter<sup>[11]</sup>, using humor in the classroom improves students' learning outcomes, especially language learners who suffer from speaking anxiety or fear of embarrassment, which prevents them from engaging in the practice they need to use the target language for self-expression. Humor can help timid language learners feel more included and willing to participate in class<sup>[12]</sup>. Kher et al.<sup>[13]</sup> asserted that humor sparks classroom magic, bringing teachers and students together with positive energy and a passion for learning, so it can be a good tool for alleviating the anxiety associated with learning to speak a new language. The purpose of this study was to test that assertion.

## 1.1. Purpose of the Study

The specific objective of this research was to determine how humor affects undergraduate Saudi Arabian EFL students' anxiety levels in English speaking classes and whether it helps them feel less anxious. A second objective was to provide insight into speaking anxiety in EFL speaking class.

## 1.2. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study arises from the fact that learning to speak English is crucial for Saudi EFL students to be prepared to engage in international communications. Thus, the results of this study can suggest helpful strategies for educators to foster a relaxed and stimulating learning environment in the classroom, which may reduce students' anxiety and enhance their English-speaking abilities. Additionally, this study adds to the literature on ways to promote spoken language learning, the psychology of language learning, particularly ways to reduce anxiety, and the function of humor in teaching and learning. Using humor in L2 classes has been associated with several beneficial outcomes. Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research on humor in EFL learning, particularly in the Saudi context. This study is the first to investigate how using humor in teaching English speaking skills to Saudi Arabian EFL undergraduate students can reduce their speaking anxiety.

# 2. Literature Review

## 2.1. Humor in Classroom

Martin and Lefcourt<sup>[14]</sup> stated that a sense of humor could be determined by "the frequency with which the in-

dividual smiles, laughs, or otherwise displays amusement in a variety of situations” (p. 147). Similarly, Bruner<sup>[15]</sup> described humor as the characteristic that gives something a comical, entertaining, or ridiculous appearance while one is speaking, writing, or otherwise performing. In a language learning context, humor could have a significant impact by creating a pleasant classroom atmosphere that encourages student engagement. Cefai and Cooper<sup>[16]</sup> stated that humor is the quality that students of different ages most value in a teacher. Although humor can be harmful if it is used improperly, such as at someone’s expense, researchers contend that it can also improve and deepen the social ties that bind students and teachers together<sup>[17]</sup>. In addition, researchers have found humor to be an effective method to reduce stress<sup>[18]</sup> and to alleviate test anxiety<sup>[19]</sup>. Some educators refrain from utilizing humor in the classroom because they lack confidence in their comedic skills, fear losing control, or are concerned about upsetting the equilibrium in a classroom<sup>[20]</sup>. Such resistance often results from a lack of understanding of how to use humor successfully<sup>[21]</sup>. Therefore, it is critical that EFL teachers know how to use humor to establish a productive environment in the classroom.

Among numerous studies on humor in the classroom, Neff & Dewaele<sup>[22]</sup> investigated the use of humor during instruction in relation to L2 learners’ enjoyment in the classroom, attitudes toward learning, and L2 proficiency, as well as their responses to different types of humor strategies. The results showed that learner preferences were not affected by proficiency levels, and enjoyment while learning the foreign language had the greatest effect on the other aspects. The most favored strategies were spontaneous humor and cartoons. Bolkan et al.<sup>[23]</sup> however examined the effects of incorporating humor on students’ ability to retain information from instructive lessons and transfer it to other contexts with results that ran counter to most other findings. The researchers conducted two experiments, in which they compared the effects of using humorous and non-humorous examples on learning outcomes. After the results of the first study showed that students exposed to non-humorous examples performed better on a test, they conducted the second study, this time using an open-ended assessment, and obtained similar results.

## 2.2. Types and Forms of Humor

To integrate humor into their lesson plans in order to foster a supportive learning environment and improve student engagement, teachers should be mindful of the different kinds of humor, which have been categorized differently by different researchers (e.g.,<sup>[24-27]</sup>). Among these, Shade offered a comprehensive description of humor that can be used for instructional purposes, dividing it into four primary subcategories: Figural humor (*comic strips, cartoons and caricatures*), Auditory humor (*noises, impersonations, impressions, and sounds*), Verbal humor (*satire, jokes, puns, riddles, limerick, parody, irony, wit, and anecdote*), and Visual humor (*sight gags, clowning, practical jokes, impersonations, impressions*). This framework was adopted in the present study.

Teachers can use these four types to enhance the learning process in the classroom and encourage students to increase their participation. Figural humor, such as caricatures, can visually engage students and motivate them to retain what they learn. Auditory humor, such as voice impersonations, can create auditory impressions that aid transfer to long term memory. Verbal humor, such as satire and jokes, can evoke the relaxation of laughter and stimulate critical thinking. Finally, visual humor, such as bodily impersonations, can cultivate an atmosphere of merriment, defuse, anxiety and open the mind to learning. Applying these four types of humor can, as Greenberg stated<sup>[28]</sup>, create optimum moments to make important teaching points.

## 2.3. Speaking Anxiety

“Speaking anxiety” is experienced by people who become highly nervous when they must speak in public or in front of a group. This kind of anxiety may take a range of forms, including uneasiness or apprehension to fear or actual panic. According to Price<sup>[29]</sup>, FL students frequently experience speaking anxiety when they are expected to present in front of the class or speak spontaneously. Price<sup>[29]</sup> and MacIntyre<sup>[30]</sup> attributed learners’ speaking anxiety primarily to two factors: their apprehension about committing pronunciation mistakes and their concern about embarrassing themselves in front of their classmates. These factors may considerably reduce their willingness to engage in classroom speaking exercises.

Several researchers have investigated speaking anxiety<sup>[10, 31–33]</sup>. For instance, Öztürk and Gürbüz<sup>[32]</sup> conducted a mixed methods study on speaking anxiety involving 383 pre-intermediate EFL learners in Turkey. The quantitative results of the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) indicated that most of the participants experienced little anxiety when speaking English as an FL. However, the qualitative data showed that many students reported that speaking made them anxious. Among their concerns were pronunciation, answering unexpected questions, fear of making mistakes, and fear of receiving a poor grade.

Bashori et al.<sup>[10]</sup> examined whether interacting with web-based language programs with Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), might lessen foreign language speaking anxiety (FLSA) among 573 Indonesian occupational secondary school pupils. Eleven students and five English teachers were interviewed as part of a mixed methods approach. The findings indicated that pupils had moderate to severe FLSA, expressed favorable opinions of language learning websites, and thought that web-based learning could help them, as they felt less anxious when speaking to ASR-based websites than in front of their peers.

Chen<sup>[31]</sup> investigated whether and how technology-enhanced instruction with AI-generated feedback can lessen public speaking anxiety (PSA) among EFL students. For four weeks, they were taught through lectures, mobile devices, or virtual reality. Following the treatment, the students in all three groups perceived that their PSA levels decreased, though the results of only the virtual reality group reached statistical significance. Overall, the results indicated that participants' PSA was lowered by the AI-generated instructional feedback.

Zarei and Rezadoust<sup>[33]</sup> compared the effects of scaffolded and unscaffolded feedback on the speaking anxiety and self-efficacy of 90 intermediate-level EFL learners, who were allocated at random to one control group and two intervention groups. The students filled out questionnaires measuring their speaking anxiety and self-efficacy before and after ten treatment sessions. The study's results demonstrated that scaffolded feedback improved self-efficacy and reduced speaking anxiety.

### 3. Methodology

A quantitative survey methodology was used in this study to investigate the effect of incorporating humor into

the teaching of speaking skills on language learners' levels of speaking anxiety. A quantitative methodology, a broad category of techniques for the methodical examination of social phenomena through the use of numerical or statistical data<sup>[34]</sup>, was chosen for this study as the best fit for the research objectives and questions of this study. A survey was used to elicit the students' subjective experience of anxiety. The present study was guided by the following two research questions:

- (1) Does speaking anxiety affect Saudi university-level EFL students taking EFL speaking classes? If so, how severe is this anxiety?
- (2) What impact does humor have on Saudi university-level EFL students' speaking anxiety, and is there a statistically significant difference in anxiety levels between the responses to pre- and post-treatment questionnaire?

#### 3.1. Participants

The research participants comprised 43 freshman university students in three speaking classes offered by the English Language Department at Majmaah University in Saudi Arabia. Their ages ranged between 18 and 20, and they all were male. Hence, gender was not a variable in this study. All participants were native Arabic speakers learning English as a foreign language.

#### 3.2. Instrument

The instrument employed in this study was based on the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz et al.<sup>[4]</sup>. The questionnaire used was Saltan's<sup>[35]</sup> modification of the FLCAS, which included 18 of the original 33 items. The modified version, which focused only on speaking skills (e.g., I'm never quite confident in my ability to communicate in English.), was designated the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Questionnaire (FLSAQ) and subsequently validated by Öztürk and Gürbüz<sup>[32]</sup>. Respondents used a 5-point Likert-scale to rate their level of agreement with the FLSAQ's 18 items, which address fears, nervousness, and self-perceptions related to speaking English in classroom settings or with peers. The questionnaire was administered prior to and following the treatment to measure the effect of using humor in English instruction on

students' levels of speaking anxiety.

To measure the original 33-item instrument's (FLCAS's) reliability, the consistency of responses across several items was evaluated using a Cronbach's Alpha analysis, which yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.9260, signifying excellent reliability. As a result, the 18-item (FLSAQ) can be considered reliable for investigating the target construct in this study, anxiety related to speaking English.

The 5-point Likert scale of the FLSAQ, with 5 representing "strongly agree" and 1 representing "strongly disagree," yielded a total score between 18 to 90. As indicated by Öztürk and Gürbüz<sup>[32]</sup>, a score of less than 54 signifies a low level of foreign language speaking anxiety, a score of 54 to 72 a moderate level, and a score of more than 72 a high level.

To obtain the most accurate data, I translated the questionnaire to Arabic, the participants' first language. For validation and reliability purposes, and to give the participants the best chance of comprehending the items, the questionnaire was back-translated by a bilingual professor whose specialization is translation.

### 3.3. Procedures

The experiment took place over three consecutive weeks, with three hours of instruction each week. The total of nine hours was determined as the best duration to accommodate the competing interests of sufficient data collection, participant convenience, and instructional depth. In the first class, the students were given the modified FLSAQ to test their speaking anxiety level prior to the application of the humor instructional strategies. After that, during the roughly nine hours of the three-week intervention, in which figural, verbal, visual, and auditory humor were used in teaching them, the students were encouraged to speak in class and deliver presentations in front of their classmates. For example, students were given figural humor by showing them a short video clip from a comedy show related to the lesson as a model for them to practice dialogue. As an example of verbal humor, students were encouraged to tell a real or fictional story that would elicit laughter as a way to build a good relationship with their classmates while practicing speaking skills. In the end, all the students were again given the FLSAQ, the scores of which were compared with those of the pre-test to determine whether their speaking anxiety

had been successfully reduced. No participants requested that their data be withdrawn from the analysis.

## 4. Results

As noted, the participants' pre- and post-test scores on the FLSAQ were contrasted to find changes in the participants' anxiety levels following the intervention in which humor was incorporated into their English speaking instruction.

### 4.1. Findings Concerning the Initial Research Question

The initial research question of the study addressed the EFL students' levels of speaking anxiety, which were assessed by the administration of the FLSAQ, an 18-item questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale to rate the response to each item, yielding an overall score ranging from 18 to 90. Based on this score, each respondent's level of English-speaking anxiety was designated as low (less than 54), moderate (54 to 72), or high (more than 72). As shown in **Table 1**, the participants' mean EFL speaking anxiety score, was 48.67, suggesting that the group's average anxiety level was within the low range of the scale. There was a moderate amount of diversity in the responses, as indicated by the computed standard deviation of 15.50.

**Table 1.** The average level of the participants' EFL speaking Anxiety.

<b>EFL Speaking Anxiety</b>	
Mean	48.67
Standard Deviation	15.50

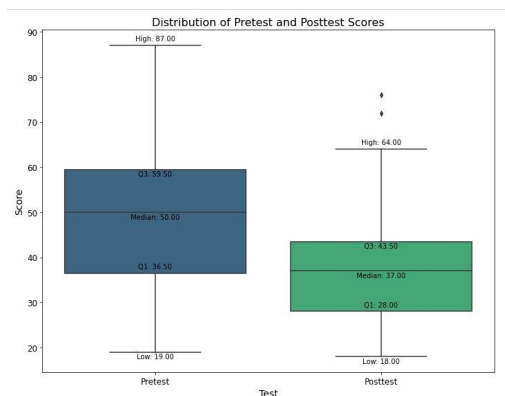
These results imply that although speaking anxiety was low for the group, there were discernible variations in anxiety levels among participants. According to **Table 2**, the average score on a 5-point Likert scale for all participants on all items is roughly 2.70. Given that the scale goes from 1 (strongly disagree = low anxiety) to 5 (strongly agree = high anxiety), this score suggests that the students generally experienced neutral to mildly low levels of speaking anxiety. There is moderate variety in the responses, as indicated by a standard deviation of 0.86. Anxiety levels varied across items.

**Table 2** demonstrates that students showed higher lev-

els of anxiety in response to items 5, 8, 15, 16, and 18, for which the mean scores were above the midpoint 3, indicating that certain situations evoke more anxiety than others, such as being unprepared to answer questions, being unable to deal with the number of English rules of grammar, and not understanding the teacher’s English. On the other hand, in areas like fear of peer mockery or shame when offering responses, students reported comparatively low levels of anxiety for items 6, being embarrassed to volunteer answers in class, and 17, fear of being ridiculed by other students.

## 4.2. Findings Concerning the Second Research Question

The second research question addressed the effects of humor-enhanced speaking instruction on reducing the speaking anxiety that EFL students experienced. The box plots in **Figure 1** provide a visual distribution of the pre- test and post-test scores, including medians, interquartile ranges (IQRs), and potential outliers. The median for the post-test group (37) is lower than the pre-test median (50), evidence that humor reduced students’ speaking anxiety. The IQR is smaller for the post-test group (28 to 43.5) than for the pre-test group (36.5 to 59.5). Also, the whiskers in the post-test boxplot are shorter (with a maximum of 64 compared to 87 in the pre-test), indicating a decrease in the variability of anxiety scores across students. The lower median, smaller IQR, and shorter whiskers in the post- test boxplot all point to lower anxiety levels and more consistent responses after the humor intervention. These visual insights suggest a positive effect of humor on reducing speaking anxiety. However, more statistical analysis was needed to confirm that interpretation.



**Figure 1.** Visual Distribution of Scores for the Pre- and Post-tests, Including Medians, Interquartile ranges (IQR), and Potential Outliers.

The mean scores of the pre-test and post-test (**Table 3**) show that the participants reported elevated higher level of speaking anxiety before (Mean = 48.67) than after (Mean = 38.86) the intervention. This change suggests that, on average, participants experienced a reduction in anxiety after humor was incorporated into instruction.

Also, as shown in **Table 3**, the t-test results indicate that the difference in means between the pre-test and post-test is statistically significant ( $t = 3.04, p = 0.00311$ ). This finding suggests that the decrease in anxiety levels following the use of humor is not due to random chance but represents a genuine effect.

## 5. Discussion

The first research question addresses whether Saudi University EFL students have speaking anxiety when called to participate in the classroom. The participants’ average pre-test EFL speaking anxiety score was 48.67, meaning that at the outset of the intervention their anxiety level was typically in the lower range of the scale. This result aligns with Öztürk and Gürbüz’s study<sup>[32]</sup>. Additionally, the mean score for all questions and participants is roughly 2.70, which indicates that, on average, Saudi students tend to have neutral to slightly low speaking anxiety.

Cultural influences can impact language anxiety, and the way that people experience it might vary from one culture to another<sup>[36]</sup>. Also, anxiety levels rise when learners are unable to adjust to the target language’s culture and feel alienated from it<sup>[37]</sup>. It could be claimed that Saudi EFL university students have low speaking anxiety because their cultural values include respect for instructors, which may help create a supportive learning atmosphere in which students are at ease making mistakes and learning from them. Such a communal learning environment, which fosters mutual support rather than competitiveness, is highly valued in many Saudi classrooms. However, some students reported relatively high anxiety in certain situations, such as apprehension when responding to unanticipated questioning and difficulty understanding teachers’ comments or the intricate rules of the target language. This response indicates the need for targeted support in these aspects of learning. Most saliently, these insights point to the importance of creating a balanced and encouraging learning environment where

**Table 2.** The means and standard deviation scores of individual items.

Item	Mean Score	Std. Deviation
1. "I am never quite sure of myself when I am speaking in English."	2.44	1.16
2. "I am afraid of making mistakes in English classes."	2.47	1.2
3. "I tremble when I know that I am going to be called on in English classes."	2.35	1.51
4. "I get frightened when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English."	2.84	1.41
5. "I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in English classes."	3	1.23
6. "I get embarrassed to volunteer answers in English classes."	1.86	1.1
7. "I feel nervous while speaking English with native speakers."	2.98	1.18
8. "I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting."	3.63	1.22
9. "I don't feel confident when I speak English in classes."	2.37	1.27
10. "I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make."	2.44	1.31
11. "I can feel my heart pounding when I am going to be called on in English classes."	2.56	1.47
12. "I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do."	2.77	1.36
13. "I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students."	2.56	1.18
14. "I get nervous and confused when I am speaking in English classes."	2.67	1.34
15. "I get nervous when I don't understand every word my English teacher says."	3.07	1.22
16. "I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English."	3.47	1.32
17. "I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English."	1.93	1.24
18. "I get nervous when the English teacher asks questions for which I haven't prepared"	3.28	1.45
<b>Overall Average Score &amp; Standard Deviation</b>	2.70	0.86

**Table 3.** Pre-Post test Means, Standard deviations, and T-test Results.

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	p-Value
Paired samples t-test	Pretest	43	48.67	15.50	3.04	84	0.00311
	Posttest	43	38.86	14.38			

students feel comfortable and confident in their abilities.

Concerning the second research question, which addresses the impact of humor in teaching speaking on Saudi university-level EFL students' speaking anxiety, the current study confirms that using humor in speaking classes is a viable practice. Humor helped the participants reduce their anxiety and feel less nervous when speaking, as evidenced by the group's post-test median score of 37 compared to their pre-test median score of 50. Accordingly, the reduction in anxiety levels that occurred after humor was used can reasonably be interpreted not as chance but as a genuine effect. Not only do the mean scores show a significant reduction in anxiety, but the t-test confirms that this difference is statistically meaningful, providing strong evidence that humor can play an effective role in reducing speaking anxiety in EFL students.

These findings add to those of other researchers who investigated ways to alleviate EFL learners' target language speaking anxiety, such as Bashori et al.<sup>[10]</sup>, who

found that web-based platforms could help learners, as they felt less anxious when speaking to ASR-based websites; Chen<sup>[31]</sup>, who reported that participants' PSA was lowered by AI-generated instructional feedback; and Zarei and Rezadoust<sup>[33]</sup>, who demonstrated that scaffolded feedback improved self-efficacy and reduced speaking anxiety. However, in none of these studies is the use of humor specifically discussed as a teaching method to reduce speaking anxiety in EFL learning. Therefore, the present study supports a prospective strategy for alleviating speaking anxiety among Saudi Arabian EFL students: incorporating humor into English teaching methods.

Using humor in teaching sets in motion a chain of events, in which humor lightens the classroom environment, which increases students' comfort level, which in turn lessens the apprehension of committing mistakes, encouraging students to speak more freely. Regarding practical recommendations for educators, first, they can begin with light humor such as a joke to break the ice and create a relaxed atmosphere

to put students at ease. Second, they can show amusing visuals such as cartoons or memes and have students discuss the humor, promoting dialogue in the target language without exerting pressure. Third, they can share humorous anecdotes from their own lives to demonstrate their vulnerability, which increases the teacher's relatability, and invite students to share their anecdotes, thus promoting camaraderie among learners. Fourth, they can employ role-playing exercises that involve humorous scenarios such as a miscommunication in a cafe. Finally, they can model being casual by naturally incorporating humor into their own speech and interactions with students, maintaining a demeanor that helps lessen students' speaking anxiety.

## 6. Conclusions

This research offers important insights into Saudi students' Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA) and how humor can be an effective tool to reduce it. The main outcome of this study is evidence that undergraduate EFL students generally experienced neutral to mildly low levels of speaking anxiety before the intervention. After humor was implied, the post-test results show a statistically significant ( $t = 3.04$ ,  $p = 0.00311$ ) reduction in means, signifying speaking anxiety was decreased because of the genuine effect of humor.

These findings give educators a path to follow in order to reduce students' speaking anxiety. This research contributes to the existing literature on language learning, the role of humor in teaching and learning, and psychological factors affecting language learning, especially classroom anxiety. As humor is highly dependent on culture, further studies on the use of humor in teaching to reduce speaking anxiety should also include cross-cultural designs to shed more light on different humor strategies and which types of humor might be acceptable in one culture but harmful to another. To conclude, the use of humor as a teaching strategy can create a comfortable classroom environment in which communication is valued over correctness, thereby reducing students' fear of making mistakes, increasing their active participation, and in the process promoting their speaking skills.

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## Institutional Review Board Statement

Not applicable.

## Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study.

## Data Availability Statement

The data analyzed for this study can be made available upon formal request.

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## Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest

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