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Humor Styles and Engagement Patterns among Grade 12 Second Language Learners of English: Implications For Language Education Policy

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Abstract. Prior studies focused mainly on teacher-driven humor, neglecting the learner's ways of using humor towards fostering engagement in second language (L2) classroom. Anchored with Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, Martin's humor styles, Shi & Tan's typology model of student engagement in classroom discussions, the study's main objectives were to examine the relationship between humor styles and engagement of L2 English learners; and develop a policy brief of this relationship. Specifically, it identified the learner's humor styles: Affiliative, Self-enhancing, Aggressive, and Self-defeating; and determined learner's engagement patterns: Vocal-Acting, Vocal-Feeling, Vocal-Cognizing, Silent-Acting, Silent-Feeling, and Silent-Cognizing. Under explanatory sequential design, 250 student-respondents were selected using stratified random sampling from Grade 12, and included in the two-phase questionnaires. Findings from the study revealed that among humor styles, L2 English learners exhibited a high level of affiliative humor style, followed by a moderately high level of self-enhancing humor style. Meanwhile, in engagement patterns, L2 English learners demonstrated high levels of silent-acting and silent-cognizing engagement. Overall, affiliative humor demonstrated the strongest and most consistent positive correlations among the four humor styles with both vocal and silent engagement dimensions among L2 English learners. These findings imply that the quality and intent of humor drive student engagement, not humor in general. The study develops a policy brief Harnessing Positive Humor as a Complementary Strategy in Communicative Language Teaching to Enhance Engagement in L2 English Classrooms in the Philippine Senior High School Context presenting humor styles and engagement patterns among learners. This present study thereby recommends the policy brief to teachers, learners and future researchers to consider adopting humor-informed engagement policies, provide training programs on humor; incorporate affiliative humor activities into L2 curriculum; and acknowledge silent engagement as legitimate ways of participating.

Keywords: Engagement Patterns; English; Humor Styles; Language Education Policy; Second Language Education

Introduction

Learner engagement in the classroom remains a continuous challenge in second language (L2) education. Many L2 learners experience anxiety, low motivation, or limited interaction during the lesson sessions, all of which hinder meaningful participation and language development (Phung et al., 2023). As advocated by the Department of Education's K–12 Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum, they address these challenges by aiming to produce graduates who can use English effectively across personal, academic, and sociocultural contexts. By promoting multiliteracies, the current curriculum emphasizes that learners must improve the ability to interpret and create meaning in diverse communicative situations, encouraging learners to become reflective and context-aware language users. However, achieving high levels of engagement in L2 classrooms nowadays is still a complex learning concern of English teachers.

Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) have studied various factors influencing L2 engagement, including classroom environment, learner autonomy, and affective variables such as motivation and anxiety (Mammadova, 2024). Among these, humor has emerged as a recent indicator enhancing the L2 learning experience Several studies have revealed that applying humor during lesson sessions can reduce language anxiety, foster social bonds, and increase classroom participation (Endeavour Speech LLP, 2024;

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Neff & Dewaele, 2022). However, much of the existing literature has centered their studies on teacher-led humor strategies in the classroom such as using jokes, role-play, or humorous materials to stimulate engagement and create a more relaxed atmosphere to their students (Rucynski & Prichard, 2021; Zhou & Lee, 2025).

While these approaches have merit, they do not recognize and account for how learners' own humor styles as individual traits might influence their engagement in the L2 learning process as learners have much more time and interactions within the classroom than their teachers. Secondly, the gap lies in the limited focus on L2-specific engagement patterns in existing humor studies. While humor has been associated with positive classroom experiences, prior research inadequately connects humor with core Second Language Acquisition processes such as willingness to communicate, affective filter reduction, discourse participation, and communicative competence (Fehrenbach, 2020). Many studies discuss humor in general educational contexts without examining its specific implications for English language learning where anxiety, hesitation, and communication barriers are more pronounced among L2 learners (Mudra & Herawati, 2024). Thirdly, the underrepresentation of silent engagement in L2 contexts also establishes a significant gap that justifies the study. Traditional engagement frameworks often privilege overt verbal participation such as recitation, discussion, and classroom interaction while overlooking silent but meaningful forms of engagement including attentive listening, emotional responsiveness, reflective thinking, and nonverbal participation (Shi & Tan, 2020). Another important gap is the lack of policy-linked pedagogical applications in humor research. Existing literature commonly discusses humor as a classroom strategy but rarely connects findings to institutional teaching standards, curriculum frameworks, or professional educational policies (Isagan, et. al. 2023). Consequently, humor research often remains theoretical or limited to isolated classroom observations without demonstrating broader educational relevance and applicability (Chen & Martin, 2023). Lastly, existing studies provide insufficient attention to the cultural and inclusive dimensions of humor in L2 classrooms. Humor is frequently treated as universally positive despite the reality that humor is culturally mediated and may become exclusionary, insensitive, or misunderstood depending on learners' linguistic backgrounds, experiences, and social contexts. In multilingual and multicultural classrooms, inappropriate humor may negatively affect learner participation, emotional safety, and inclusivity (Li & Smith, 2023).

Collectively, these research gaps establish the scholarly necessity of the study and position it as a discipline-specific, culturally responsive, and policy-relevant contribution to English language pedagogy and second language engagement research.

Given these gaps, this study finds the relationship between Grade 12 L2 English learners' humor styles and their levels of classroom engagement, and develops a policy brief addressing the relationships of the L2 learners. By focusing on learners' ways of using humor as a personal and social trait, rather than on teacher-driven humor, this research aims to contribute a learner-centered perspective to the broader field of English L2 education. In particular, it seeks to inform more inclusive and healthy responsive approaches to fostering engagement in L2 classrooms nowadays.

Research Questions

This study explores the relationship between humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 English learners and develops a policy brief of the relationship between the variables. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What humor styles are commonly exhibited by L2 English learners, based on the following categories?
   1.1 Affiliative Humor;
   1.2 Self-enhancing Humor;
   1.3 Aggressive Humor; and
   1.4 Self-defeating Humor?
2. What patterns of classroom engagement are demonstrated by L2 English learners, in terms of the following dimensions?
   2.1 Vocal-Acting Engagement;
   2.2 Vocal-Feeling Engagement;
   2.3 Vocal-Cognizing Engagement;
   2.4 Silent-Acting Engagement;
   2.5 Silent-Feeling Engagement; and
   2.6 Silent-Cognizing Engagement?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 English learners?
4. Based on the study's findings, what policy brief can be developed on the relationship between the humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 learners in classrooms?

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Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This research examines the relationship between humor styles and engagement of Senior High School (SHS) L2 learners of English in the classroom. An explanatory sequential design is employed, with stratified random sampling used to select respondents. Respondents are Grade 12 SHS students with regular status from the four strands: ABM, HUMSS, STEM, and TVL (CS and HRS) at the National College of Science and Technology (NCST) in Dasmariñas City, Cavite, during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Literature Review

Humor Styles

Recent research established that humor is a multi-faceted construct that covers both adaptive and maladaptive humor styles. Thus, Dewi and Yanuardi (2025) cited the developed Martin's Humor Styles Questionnaire, which addresses four dimensions relating to individual differences in uses of humor. These include: using humor to improve one's connections with others (Affiliative); using humor to improve one's connections with oneself (Self-enhancing); using humor to improve one's relationships by embarrassing or harming others (Aggressive), and using humor to improve relationships by giving up or hurting oneself (Self-defeating). The HSQ is useful for studies on humor by evaluating both beneficial and potentially harmful types of humor.

Affiliative humor is employed to show commitment in a relationship, encourage mutual support, or build bonding with other people (Fritz, 2020). Jovial language play, for instance, consists of episodes of playful conversation that are started when a participant talks about something that is relevant to themselves or others within a playful atmosphere either through language play or by presenting made-up or exaggerated scenarios. In addition to providing mutual amusement, language play is said to enable players to moderate or negotiate stances that are carried out through delicate or sensitive social activities. Joking play is said to allow participants to either attach or conceal connections with other participants' moral or affective stances in ways that are sensitive to the social activity in their issue (Vendl, et. al., 2024).

Self-enhancing humor is positively associated with self-esteem, self-efficacy, and positive affect. According to Jiang, et. al. (2020), people who practice self-enhancing humor styles frequently report feeling less anxious and depressed. Moreover, Edalat, at. al. (2025) found out that students who engaged themselves in self-enhancing humor before an exam had less state of anxiety than those who engaged in self-defeating humor or no humor at all. Self-enhancing humor helped students feel less anxious than just instructing students to have a humorous, non-serious attitude in stressful situations. For instance, students find it compelling to approach the stressful math test with a humorous viewpoint. Therefore, in addition to strengthening students' speaking energy, a sense of humor, such as self-enhancing humor, is crucial for improving student-teacher interaction and for fostering an engaging learning environment (Zhou & Lee, 2025). There is something to be said for not taking everything too seriously. When learners are internalizing criticism or judgments, they decrease self-esteem but it may slow the process if a good sense of humor has occurred. Mudra & Herawati (2024) supported this claim, when adaptive humor such as affiliative and self-enhancing in nature is linked to higher levels of self-esteem and happiness despite the stressors of the students. Both forms of humor, self-enhancing humor and even affiliative humor, have a good correlation with interpersonal engagement and interactions, particularly when there is less role conflict and social support (Chen & Martin, 2023).

Self-defeating humor comprises humor to enhance one’s relationships with others by giving up or hurting oneself, and has often been related to lower well-being. However, self-defeating humor is associated with higher state self-esteem, improved interpersonal relationships, and more facial expressions of positive emotions. Additionally, the more positive emotion words are used, the higher the state self-esteem and relationship improvement are. Therefore, it appears that the humor involved in the self-defeating humor style is rather advantageous for oneself as well as for others. According to the study of Cheng (2021), self-defeating humor can increase a person's perseverance on a task over time. Though, perseverance is significantly higher among people with a low self-defeating humor style than among those with a high self-defeating humor style. In a similar vein, Tsukawaki & Imura (2020) found that self-enhancing humor is associated with positive outcomes, while self-defeating humor is associated with shyness, despair, and loneliness. Additionally, it has been discovered that those who use self-defeating humor share many traits with those who have "damaged" self-esteem, or a self-esteem gap in which people have high implicit self-esteem but poor explicit self-esteem. As a result, low self-esteem is discovered.

Aggressive humor or detrimental humor, such as sarcasm and self-disparaging humor, is believed to have potentially negative consequences such as reduced relationship quality and low self-esteem. According to Fritz (2020), it is proposed that the presence of prosocial humor styles is just as significant as the lack of negative humor. In addition, Lu, et al. (2023) discovered that students who exhibit the low levels of aggressive

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and self-defeating humor have unstable high levels of self-esteem than those who exhibit affiliative humor. Thus, it implies that different humor styles are used by people with stable and unstable kinds of self-esteem.

The literature on humor styles highlights the complexity of humor as both a personal trait and a social tool, with adaptive forms namely affiliative and self-enhancing, consistently linked to positive outcomes such as higher self-esteem, reduced anxiety, improved interpersonal relationships, and greater classroom engagement. In contrast, maladaptive styles such as aggressive and self-defeating humor are generally known for giving negative psychological effects. For instance, low self-esteem, shyness, and loneliness are experienced by students, although some findings suggest self-defeating humor may occasionally offer interpersonal or emotional benefits. However still among existing studies, affiliative and self-enhancing humor remarkably emerge as the most conducive to emotional well-being and educational interaction in supportive learning environments. Although the mixed findings on self-defeating humor reveal its complex contribution to perseverance and self-esteem, the recent effects of humor still depend on both its style and its context in which it is used daily. Overall, these distinctions emphasize the need for educators to understand and harness adaptive humor styles to foster student engagement in the classroom.

Engagement Patterns

Student engagement refers to the level of enthusiasm, effort, and commitment students show toward their learning and participation in school-related activities. It encompasses how interested they are in the material, how actively they contribute to tasks, and how much they invest, emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally, in the learning process (Shi & Tan, 2020) The typology model of student engagement in classroom discussions presented by Shi & Tan (2020) complies with the three dimensions of student engagement: behavioural, emotional and cognitive engagement, and two types of student participation in classroom discussion: vocal and silent participation (Xu et al., 2023). Both theories give a perspective that every classroom discussion has students' learning patterns. The student learning patterns in classroom discussions display learning tendencies of student engagement that are applicable to the L2 learners of English.

Vocal-Acting (VA) engagement involves students who are considered to be behaviorally involved in classroom discussions through active vocal participation. For instance, students contribute verbally to class conversations through responding vocally to questions, asking questions if confused, or sharing vocally their insights about the subject matter. This type of engagement is easily noticeable by instructors, making it more likely to address any difficulties the students face during the lesson.

Vocal-Feeling (VF) engagement implies students who express their emotions through vocal participation in classroom discussions such as the use of vocal qualities including pitch, volume, duration, and intonation which intend to not only to communicate content but also to convey emotional expression. For instance, when a student enthusiastically shares an opinion, their voice rises in excitement, or when a student expresses frustration when struggling to grasp a concept, they tend to lower their voice due to disappointment or hesitation.

Vocal-Cognizing (VC) engagement consists of students engaging cognitively when they vocalize their thinking, in the form of explaining their thinking, providing justification, making inferences, or even questioning the ideas shared by others. For example, students can share thoughts with statements like, "I think that this character behaved the way they did because of societal pressures", and follow with an explanation of their reasoning behind this interpretation. This stage of engagement helps run thinking deeper through verbal elaboration, reasoning, and collective thinking.

Silent-Acting (SA) engagement is a way for students to be engaged during the course in ways that are not physically vocalizing, but through quiet engagement but still-visible engagement. While students may not be speaking, they are actively participating through their actions such as nodding in agreement, taking copious notes, highlighting text, engaging eye contact, thus showing their attention. In this way, student engagement is expressed through body gestures and task-related actions.

Silent-Feeling (SF) engagement refers to students who are emotionally engaged with the conversations, but do not directly vocalize or contribute. Based on what is shared during a discussion, students may feel pleasure, agreement, disappointment, or connection. For example, a student may feel silently affirmed if another student shares an idea that closely matches an idea they already had. In these situations, it is often the case that classmates who express these similar styles of emotional engagement act as "emotional representatives" for the other students, thus helping them feel acknowledged, endorsed, and included in the classroom conversation.

Silent-Cognizing (SC) engagement refers to the reflective internal participation of students as they engage in the general discussion. Students who are engaged in SC are mentally participating, thinking through the ideas, analyzing arguments, and are silently wording their own thoughts as others engage in conversation. For example, while attending to a peer's comment, a student engaged in SC might be weighing the logic of the argument being presented, writing silent counter-arguments in their mind, or finding connections between

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new ideas and existing prior knowledge. It is present during listening-heavy moments, where thinking is active even if speech is not.

The typology of student learning engagement reveals that engagement in classroom discussions encompasses a range of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive actions, both spoken and silent. According to Shi & Tan (2020), vocal engagement styles are visible to notice through audible participation in the classroom such as oral recitations, emotional expression through tone and volume of voices, and articulated and right reasoning. On the other hand, silent engagement patterns happen when students reflect internalized meaningful involvement and are not vocalized in the classroom, such as nodding, note-taking, emotional connection, and reflective thinking which are visible in their writing and performance outputs. Together, these highlight that student engagement is a multifaceted process in the classroom that can manifest through both active speaking and attentive silence.

Humor in Language Learning Engagement

Today, experts support that humor comes in many forms and can be used in different ways in every society. In language learning classrooms, humor can be a powerful tool because it is helpful in creating a fun and friendly environment, encouraging students to take part in lessons, and making it easier to remember what they have learned (Isagan, et. al. 2023). This suggests that without humor in the conversation or discussion for learning would mean missing out on something beneficial that can really improve how students feel and perform in class. Lonczak (2020) pointed out that in order to encourage L2 learners to create meaningful interactions with the lessons in the language classroom, teachers incorporate humor into resilience-building activities to enhance good mood, self-esteem, creativity, social bonding, and emotional resilience. Resilience-building activities are designed to help learners cope with adversity, nurture a growth mindset, and practice self-reflection which include gratitude journaling, mindful open-forum, team role-playing, and reflection exercises (Tillott & Neumann, 2020). Thus, to incorporate humor into language classroom activities, language teachers should make efforts to input laughter as a physical reaction of humor which boosts resilience and increases positive atmosphere within learners.

On the other hand, Zhou & Lee (2025) further explained that it is challenging for learners to create humor in context, and perform it spontaneously within the classroom together with the lesson as humor is linked to greater sociability and creativity of humans. When learners are comfortable using humor in real time, it often reflects a supportive environment where they feel emotionally safe and confident in their peer interactions (Chang and Hsu, 2023). This spontaneous humor helps students build rapport, express themselves more freely, and approach problems with greater flexibility which are key components of both social and creative development. As a consequence, learners must develop humor first at home before it reflects in their peer interactions within the classroom. Authority figures such as parents and teachers can use humor and wit to uplift familial and educational relationships of the learners between their peers. This promotes academic excellence of the learners by helping basic foundations for successful learning connections with children before they reach adolescence. Hence, humor as a learning tool is an advantage in the classroom and at home, but humor's uses must be context-sensitive and respectful to remain constructive.

Overall, the literature asserts that humor serves as more than just entertainment, when used thoughtfully in language classrooms to enhance student motivation, participation, resilience, and emotional well-being. Adaptive humor styles have been shown to foster positive classroom climates, improve teacher-student rapport, and support student engagement and retention (Isagan et al., 2023; Mudra & Herawati, 2024; Čekrlija et al., 2024). But, spontaneous and context-appropriate humor can be challenging for learners to produce and apply as it relies on emotional safety, creativity, and prior social development of the learners (Zhou & Lee, 2025). Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that humor's benefits depend on its style and sensitivity to context, while affiliative and self-enhancing humor promote well-being, aggressive and self-defeating humor are linked to lower engagement and psychological risks (Asilioglu, 2021). These literatures suggest that humor could affect student engagement in the classroom and may affect the success of the L2 learning process between learners.

This research examined the relationship between humor styles and engagement of L2 learners of English in Senior High School. The predictor variables are the humor styles including Affiliative, Self-enhancing, Aggressive, and Self-defeating; and the criterion variable are the engagement patterns categorized as Vocal-Acting, Vocal-Feeling, Vocal-Cognizing, Silent-Acting, Silent-Feeling, and Silent-Cognizing. After the data presentation, a policy brief of the relationship between the humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 learners in classrooms had been developed. The hypothesis of the study was there is no significant relationship between the humor styles and patterns of engagement among L2 learners of English.

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Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized an explanatory sequential design. The quantitative data were used to describe variables and examine the relationships between them, followed by the qualitative data which offered deeper explanations into the context based on the quantitative results. An explanatory sequential design prioritizes the quantitative collection and analysis then, using the qualitative collection and analysis as a follow-up to clarify or expand on the initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2021). In this study, this design was applied when the researcher gathered first the quantitative data to determine the humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 English learners. Next, the data underwent quantitative analysis to examine the relationship between humor styles and engagement patterns. After quantitative collection and analysis, the researcher conducted a follow-up qualitative collection and analysis to elaborate the quantitative results of how these learners employ their styles of humor and engage in the language classroom. Then, the findings were used to develop a policy brief of the relationship between humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 learners.

Research Locale

The respondents of this study were Grade 12 SHS students at NCST who were officially enrolled as regular students during the first semester of the 2025–2026 academic year. Students who were in Grade 11, transferees, irregular enrollees, or those who were not considered L2 English learners were excluded from the study.

Research Participants

From a total of 250 qualified respondents, the researcher applied stratified random sampling to select respondents from each academic strand as follows: 35 from the ABM strand; 45 from the HUMSS strand; 126 from the STEM strand; 29 from the TVL-CS strand; and 15 from the TVL-HRS strand. Demographic profiles were gathered such as age, sex, strand, socioeconomic status, first language (L1), and ethnicity. In terms of academic profiles, respondents reported their academic strand, English language proficiency level, and grades in English-related subjects.

Research Instrument

All respondents completed the two-phase questionnaires the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and the Patterns of Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ) were used in Phase One to gather quantitative data, while a follow-up set of open-ended questions was used in Phase Two to obtain qualitative data. Specifically, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ), developed by Rod A. Martin, is a well-established instrument for measuring the humor styles of the respondents namely: Affiliative, Self-Enhancing, Aggressive, and Self-Defeating (Martin, et. al., 2003). The researcher obtained permission to adopt the HSQ directly from the original author via email, and to run for validation and pilot testing. Meanwhile, the Patterns of Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ), a researcher- developed instrument, is designed to measure six types of learner's engagement patterns in classroom, based on the model of Shi and Tan (2020), namely: Vocal-Acting, Vocal-Feeling, Vocal-Cognizing, Silent-Acting, Silent-Feeling, and Silent-Cognizing. Open-Ended Questionnaire (OEQ) is a researcher-developed instrument designed to capture the thoughts, insights, and experiences of respondents, thereby enriching the quantitative findings on humor styles and engagement patterns. The instrument's final content and structure was fixed and validated after the quantitative phase was completed based on the standardized approach of using explanatory sequential design in this study, in which the quantitative results guide the development of the qualitative phase. The OEQ had been constructed to explore deeply the insights and explanations into the significant trends revealed in the quantitative analyses. The validators ensured that the qualitative component complements and extends the quantitative findings. Specifically, to establish the validity of the research instruments, the researcher utilized Aiken's V technique. A panel of three experts evaluated each item: (1) a professor with a PhD in Applied Linguistics; (2) a professor with a PhD in Psychology; and (3) a professor with a PhD in Clinical Psychology. Each validator rated the relevance of each item to its intended construct on a five-point scale (1 = least relevant, 5 = most relevant). After the validation of the three validators, high Aiken's V scores affirm that the HSQ items are highly relevant and appropriate for assessing students' humor styles, making the instrument valid and suitable for use in this study. All listed items above in both humor style domains demonstrate very good to excellent content validity, while items scored below 0.83 were removed to the final items of HSQ for this study. This suggests that the items are highly appropriate and relevant for assessing humor styles among students. Meanwhile, all items of PSEQ received high ratings, with coefficients ranging from 0.83 to 1.00, indicating very good to excellent content validity. Each engagement domain demonstrated consistently strong validity, affirming that the items are highly relevant and appropriate for measuring the patterns of student engagement. After the quantitative

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phase was completed, the researcher ensured expert validation of the Open-Ended Questionnaire (OEQ) in which each question was constructed based on the quantitative findings. This validation ensured that the qualitative phase supports the quantitative findings. The same panel of experts evaluated and validated each item using Aiken's V technique. As a result, all items in the OEQ received excellent ratings, with coefficients ranging from 0.92 to 1.00. These results confirm that the instrument is highly reliable, with items demonstrating clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for eliciting meaningful responses from L2 learners regarding their experiences with humor in language learning and classroom engagement. Meanwhile, to assess the internal consistency of the instruments, the researcher conducted a pilot test with 30 participants not involved in the main study. Their responses were gathered and analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha to assess reliability which was performed in SPSS. It reveals that the HSQ is overall reliable to measure the humor styles. To specify, affiliative (0.84) and self-enhancing (0.86) humor styles receive both good reliability which means consistent measurement of positive humor traits. While, acceptable reliability was interpreted for aggressive (0.76) and self-defeating (0.78) humor styles suggesting reasonable consistency in capturing less positive humor behaviors. At the same time, PSEQ consistently measures different forms of student engagement with strong reliability across all sections. Particularly, vocal engagement ranges from acceptable (Acting at 0.78) to good (Feeling at 0.81; Cognizing at 0.86). In terms of silent engagement, it shows good to excellent reliability, with Silent Acting at 0.88, and both Silent Feeling (0.92) and Silent Cognizing (0.91) rated excellent.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher first secured ethical approval from the institution's Ethics Review Committee (ERC) and permission from the NCST-SHS administration before conducting the study. The researcher ensured that all participants met the inclusion criteria and obtained informed consent and assent, including parental consent for respondents under 18. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw voluntarily. For the quantitative phase, the Humor Styles Questionnaire (HSQ) and Patterns of Student Engagement Questionnaire (PSEQ) were administered through Google Forms. Responses were securely stored, anonymized, and analyzed using descriptive statistics and correlational analysis through SPSS. The results guided the subsequent qualitative phase, in which structured open-ended questionnaires were administered to the same respondents. Their answers were transcribed and analyzed using coding and thematic analysis, with the themes and interpretations reviewed by a professor with a PhD in Applied Linguistics to ensure accuracy and rigor. The quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between humor styles and classroom engagement among L2 English learners. Based on the integrated findings, the researcher developed a policy brief containing the study's background, key findings, implications, and recommendations for promoting appropriate humor styles as pedagogical tools to support student engagement. The policy brief was intended for dissemination to L2 English teachers, learners, and educational institutions to inform teaching practices and educational policies. Finally, the researcher acknowledged the school and participants, shared a summary of the findings with the institution, and ensured that all research data were securely stored and would be permanently deleted after the approved retention period in accordance with institutional policies, data privacy laws, and ethical guidelines.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What humor styles are commonly exhibited by L2 English learners, based on the following categories: Affiliative Humor; Self-enhancing Humor; Aggressive Humor; and Self-defeating Humor?

Table 1. Humor Styles of L2 English Learners

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Affiliative Humor Style	5.43	1.11	High Level
2. Self-Enhancing Humor Style	5.21	1.23	Moderately High Level
3. Aggressive Humor Style	2.32	1.11	Low Level
4. Self-Defeating Humor Style	3.30	1.48	Moderately Low Level
Overall Humor Styles	**4.06**	**0.74**	**Average Level**

Table 1 suggested that L2 English learners occasionally use humor in both social and emotional situations but not uniformly across all humor types as exhibited an average level of overall humor (M = 4.06). Learners predominantly use humor to build positive relationships and cope with stress as both observed in the highest mean in Affiliative Humor (M = 5.43), followed by Self-Enhancing Humor (M = 5.21). In contrast, learners generally avoid humor that offends others or weakens themselves as both Aggressive Humor (M =

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2.32) and Self-Defeating Humor (M = 3.30) scored lower than affiliative and self-enhancing humor. These quantitative findings suggest that L2 English learners favor positive, relationship-oriented humor styles that contribute to a friendly and emotionally stable classroom atmosphere.

Accordingly, humor functions in four major themes which all align with the learners' preference for affiliative and self-enhancing humor rather than aggressive and self-defeating humor. These functions where humor reduces stress and anxiety, increases enjoyment and motivation to learn, strengthens classroom relationships, and creates a positive and welcoming atmosphere. These qualitative results reinforced the above quantitative patterns. Moreover, humor supports engagement and camaraderie, supporting the quantitative trend that students employ humor as a constructive tool for both emotional regulation and social bonding. As one student shared, *"When my classmate's jokes before a quiz, it makes me less nervous,"* while another explained, *"We become closer when we laugh together."*

Overall, the results are consistent with the studies of Mudra & Herawati (2024) and Chen & Martin (2023) supporting the claims that L2 learners are in favor to use affiliative and self-enhancing humor reinforcing humor's vital role in promoting engagement and well-being in English learning environments than aggressive and self-defeating humor.

Research Question 2: What patterns of classroom engagement are demonstrated by L2 English learners, in terms of the following dimensions: Vocal-Acting Engagement; Vocal-Feeling Engagement; Vocal-Cognizing Engagement; Silent-Acting Engagement; Silent-Feeling Engagement; and Silent-Cognizing Engagement?

Table 2. Patterns of Classroom Engagement of L2 English Learners

Indicators	Mean	SD	Verbal Interpretation
1. Vocal-Acting Engagement	4.79	1.30	Moderately High Level
2. Vocal-Feeling Engagement	5.12	1.19	Moderately High Level
3. Vocal-Cognizing Engagement	5.13	1.20	Moderately High Level
4. Silent-Acting Engagement	5.76	1.07	High Level
5. Silent-Feeling Engagement	5.23	1.17	Moderately High Level
6. Silent-Cognizing Engagement	5.88	1.08	High Level
Overall Patterns of Student Engagement	**5.32**	**0.84**	**High Level**

Table 2 presented those L2 English learners exhibited an overall high level of engagement (M = 5.32), showing that they are actively and meaningfully involved in their learning across various dimensions. Among the six engagements, Silent-Cognizing scored the highest (M = 5.88), followed closely by Silent-Acting (M = 5.76), both interpreted as High Levels. Learners demonstrate strong internal engagement in these findings through attentive listening, reflection, and note-taking, even when they do not speak. In contrast, learners are less verbally expressive, possibly due to language confidence or social inhibitions as obtained in Vocal-Acting (M = 4.79). L2 learners are more cognitively and emotionally engaged in silent, reflective forms in overall pattern, rather than overt verbal participation, supporting the idea that internal engagement is an equally vital dimension of active learning.

In qualitative findings, humor sustains engagement even in silence by keeping students mentally attentive and emotionally connected which strengthen the quantitative patterns. Many learners described humor as a bridge that transforms quiet moments into active listening: *"Even if I'm quiet, I'm still listening and laughing when something funny happens,"* and *"I'm quiet, but I'm still mentally participating because the humor makes me listen."* Most of the responses reflected a positive impact, emphasizing that humor fosters inclusion, reduces anxiety, and maintains focus as one shared: *"When the class laughs together, I feel part of it even if I don't say anything."* It is evident that humor creates a fun and friendly environment, encourages students to take part in lessons, and makes it easier to remember what they have learned (Isagan, et. al. 2023). Overall, these findings challenged the study of Shi and Tan (2020) asserting that humor complements high levels of silent engagement by promoting comfort, belonging, and cognitive alertness. Thus, while quantitative data reveal that L2 learners engage most strongly through internal reflection, qualitative evidence explains that humor enhances this engagement by emotionally activating quiet learners, proving that silence in the classroom can embody deep, meaningful participation.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 English learners?

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Table 3. Test of Significant Relationship between the Humor Styles and Engagement Patterns of L2 English learners

Predictor Variable	Criterion Variable	Rho	p-value	Decision	Conclusion
1. Affiliative Humor Style	Patterns of Engagement	.373	<.001	Reject Ho	Significant
2. Self-Enhancing Humor Style	Patterns of Engagement	.264	<.001	Reject Ho	Significant
3. Aggressive Humor Style	Patterns of Engagement	-.148	.019	Reject Ho	Significant
4. Self-Defeating Humor Style	Patterns of Engagement	-.105	.096	Failed to Reject Ho	Not Significant
Overall Humor Style	**Overall Patterns of Engagement**	**.116**	**.068**	**Failed to Reject Ho**	**Not Significant**

Table 3 presents the results indicating that the relationship between humor and engagement is not uniform, but rather varies depending on the type of humor used, highlighting that the quality and intent of humor shape student engagement more than the mere presence of humor in the classroom.

Among the four humor styles, affiliative humor demonstrated the strongest and most consistent positive correlations with both vocal and silent engagement dimensions. Significant correlations were observed in OPSE ($\rho = .373$, $p < .001$). Although these correlations fall within the weak to moderate range, they consistently indicate that relationship-building humor encourages both observable participation and internal engagement such as attention, reflection, and emotional comfort. These quantitative findings were further clarified through the qualitative responses gathered from open-ended questionnaires. Many students described humor as a social tool that reduces classroom tension and encourages interaction. For instance, one participant explained, *"Humor makes me confident to talk because it lightens the mood,"* while another stated, *"When we laugh together, I want to join the discussion."* These responses suggest that affiliative humor functions as a mechanism for creating emotional safety and social connection, which are critical factors for encouraging participation in second language learning environments where learners often experience communication anxiety. This supports the view of Fritz (2020) that affiliative humor promotes collaborative classroom climates that stimulate both expressive and reflective engagement.

Self-enhancing humor also showed several significant positive correlations with engagement patterns with OPSE ($\rho = .264$, $p < .001$) in both vocal and silent engagement dimensions. These results suggest that students who maintain a positive outlook through humor are more likely to sustain emotional stability and attentiveness in class. However, not all engagement indicators showed significant relationships. Vocal-Cognizing and OPSE did not reach statistical significance, indicating that while self-enhancing humor supports emotional resilience and attentiveness, it may not directly translate into deeper cognitive processing or extended engagement behaviors. Qualitative responses help clarify this pattern. Some students reported that humor helps them manage nervousness and remain attentive, such as one participant who shared, *"Even if I'm nervous, humor helps me relax and keep listening."* Another stated, *"It motivates me to learn and speak even if I make mistakes."* These narratives indicate that self-enhancing humor primarily functions as a coping mechanism for anxiety, which indirectly supports engagement by maintaining learners' emotional readiness to participate. This observation aligns with Zhou and Lee (2025), who highlight the role of self-enhancing humor in sustaining psychological resilience in challenging learning contexts.

In contrast, aggressive humor demonstrated several negative correlations with engagement indicators, particularly in OPSE ($\rho = -.148$, $p = .019$). These findings indicate that sarcastic, teasing, or ridiculing humor may reduce students' attentiveness, emotional comfort, and reflective engagement. The qualitative data provided insight into how learners interpret such humor. While only a few respondents explicitly mentioned negative experiences, some acknowledged that excessive or inappropriate humor can become distracting. One student explained, *"Sometimes too much humor makes others not take things seriously,"* while another noted, *"If the joke is too much, I lose focus."* These statements suggest that aggressive humor may create subtle discomfort or distraction that discourages silent cognitive engagement, even if it does not always affect overt classroom participation. This pattern is consistent with Lu et al. (2023), who argue that negative humor styles can weaken psychological safety and reduce students' willingness to cognitively invest in classroom activities.

Self-defeating humor displayed limited relationships with engagement patterns. A negative correlation was observed with OPSE ($\rho = -.105$, $p = .096$), while the remaining engagement indicators showed non-significant results. This pattern suggests that excessive self-deprecating humor may subtly influence students' comfort and attentiveness but does not strongly shape overall participation. Qualitative responses shed light on this outcome. One learner explained, *"When someone keeps making fun of themselves, it feels awkward and sad instead of funny."* Such responses imply that self-defeating humor may sometimes create emotional ambiguity rather than genuine amusement, which may reduce attentiveness without necessarily discouraging

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all forms of engagement. Tsukawaki and Imura (2020) similarly argue that self-defeating humor can reflect underlying insecurity, which may weaken positive classroom interactions.

Taken together, these findings indicate that humor should not be viewed as a universal strategy that automatically increases engagement as shown in OPSE ($\rho = .116$, $p = .068$). Rather, its effectiveness depends on its form, intention, and alignment with the learning context. As highlighted by Chen and Martin (2023), constructive humor styles foster belonging and emotional safety, whereas negative humor styles may undermine motivation and psychological comfort in second-language learning environments.

Research Question 4: Based on the study's findings, what policy brief can be developed on the relationship between the humor styles and engagement patterns of L2 learners in classrooms?

Policy Brief: Harnessing Positive Humor as a Complementary Strategy in Communicative Language Teaching to Enhance Engagement in L2 English Classrooms in the Philippine Senior High School Context

Executive Summary

This policy brief presents the integrated findings of an explanatory-sequential study on humor styles and engagement patterns among Grade 12 second language (L2) learners of English and translates them into policy-aligned, pedagogy-grounded recommendations. Quantitative findings reveal that affiliative ($\rho = .373$, $p < .001$) and self-enhancing humor ($\rho = .264$, $p < .001$) are positively associated with both vocal and silent engagement, while aggressive and self-defeating humor demonstrate negative relationships with participation. Qualitative data reinforce that humor functions as a relational and affective mechanism supporting engagement. However, this brief repositions humor as a complementary pedagogical strategy to communicative language teaching that enhances established English language teaching practices such as oral language skills. The recommendations are explicitly aligned with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers, ensuring that humor-informed practices remain pedagogically sound, ethically grounded, and policy-relevant.

Policy Alignment and Institutional Consistency

The policy brief fully respects and aligns with existing macro-level educational policies of the Department of Education, particularly the K–12 Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum (LAMC), learner-centered instruction mandates, and the Bilingual Education Policy. The study does not propose replacing, revising, or contradicting national language education policies. Instead, it offers localized classroom-level engagement enhancements that support the existing objectives of English instruction and L2 acquisition within established curricular frameworks.

Under the DepEd's Grade 12 Oral Language and Fluency Domain, the communicative competence, meaningful interaction, discourse participation, collaborative learning, and effective oral communication in authentic contexts are emphasized (Saysi, J., & Batuctoc, 2023). This policy brief serves as a complementary policy-responsive enhancement to existing English language curriculum by critically examining how classroom engagement mechanisms may further support the curriculum's communicative and learner-centered goals. While the Oral Language Domain already promotes interaction, dialogue, and purposeful communication, the present brief argues that its classroom implementation may be strengthened through structured and culturally responsive humor-informed engagement practices that support participation among English L2 learners, including those demonstrating silent or nonverbal engagement. This recommendation does not amend the curriculum's intended learning competencies nor contradict broader macro-level policies such as the Bilingual Education Policy; instead, it proposes evidence-informed implementation enhancements aligned with communicative language teaching, inclusive classroom participation, and learner engagement principles already embedded within DepEd policy frameworks.

Under the Communicative Language Teaching, the humor-informed strategies recommended in the policy brief are complementarily implemented only within structured English learning activities that reinforce communicative competence, discourse participation, collaborative interaction, and meaningful language use, all of which are already promoted within the national curriculum (Hui, & Yunus, 2023). Besides, the policy brief recognizes that humor is culturally mediated and therefore recommends culturally responsive, inclusive, and professionally appropriate implementation practices consistent with institutional teaching standards and learner protection principles. To ensure institutional consistency, the policy brief explicitly aligns its recommendations with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers. As a result, humor is positioned as a supplemental classroom engagement mechanism that strengthens the implementation of existing English

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language education mandates while remaining fully compliant with national educational policies and professional teaching standards.

PPST Policy Anchoring

Beyond its L2 classroom relevance to English, these findings have important implications for professional teaching standards. In the Philippine SHS context, fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment aligns with the competencies outlined in the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), particularly within Domain 2: Learning Environment, which emphasizes creating safe, respectful, and engaging classroom spaces, and Domain 3: Diversity of Learners, which recognizes learners' differences in learning backgrounds (Ebisa & Alang, 2025). Understanding how humor functions as a relational and motivational tool allows educators to evaluate whether its integration supports professional practice while maintaining ethical and pedagogically sound instruction.

Therefore, by linking classroom humor practices with the expectations of the DepEd and the PPST framework, the study provides evidence-based insights that may inform teacher training, classroom engagement strategies, and policy discussions on fostering inclusive and responsive English L2 learning environments. To strengthen the policy brief by translating the research findings on humor styles and engagement patterns of English L2 learners into specific professional teaching competencies, a PPST Mapping Table helps make the recommendations actionable for school administrators and teacher training programs aligned with the PPST implemented by the DepEd.

Table 4. PPST Strands and Humor-Based Engagement Strategies

PPST Domain & Strand	Description of Standard	Humor-Informed Strategy	Expected Engagement Outcomes
2.1 Safe and Secure Learning Environment	Teachers maintain a positive and respectful classroom climate conducive to learning	Use affiliative humor (shared laughter, light anecdotes, inclusive jokes) to build trust and reduce language anxiety in L2 classrooms	Increased Vocal-Feeling and Silent-Feeling engagement as learners feel psychologically safe to participate
2.2 Fair Learning Environment	Teachers promote respectful and inclusive participation among learners	Avoid aggressive humor or ridicule that may embarrass students; encourage humor that respects cultural and linguistic diversity	Reduction of disengagement behaviors and improvement in Silent-Acting participation
2.3 Management of Classroom Structure and Activities	Teachers organize engaging learning activities that sustain learner participation	Integrate humor-supported instructional examples, storytelling, and relatable analogies to clarify academic concepts	Increased Vocal-Cognizing and Silent-Cognizing engagement during discussions
2.4 Supportive Learning Environment	Teachers support learners' emotional well-being and motivation	Apply self-enhancing humor to normalize mistakes in language learning and encourage persistence	Increased Vocal-Acting participation and reduced communication anxiety
3.1 Learners' Gender, Needs, Strengths, and Interests	Teachers adapt strategies based on learner characteristics	Use culturally sensitive humor and student-generated humor to acknowledge diverse classroom backgrounds	Inclusive engagement across both vocal and silent learners
3.2 Learners' Linguistic, Cultural, and Socioeconomic Backgrounds	Teachers incorporate learners' experiences into classroom learning	Encourage student-initiated humor and storytelling that reflect local culture and experiences	Strengthens peer rapport and Vocal-Acting engagement
3.3 Learners with Disabilities, Giftedness, and Talents	Teachers create accessible learning opportunities	Use humor carefully to avoid sarcasm or ambiguous expressions that may confuse learners with different processing styles	Maintains Silent-Cognizing engagement while preserving inclusivity

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Table 4 focuses mainly on Domain 2 and 3, where humor-informed engagement strategies are most pedagogically relevant When applied thoughtfully, affiliative and self-enhancing humor can support emotional safety, reduce communication anxiety, and encourage active participation among L2 learners. However, the findings also highlight that humor must be used strategically and ethically. Negative humor styles such as aggressive or excessive self-defeating humor may undermine psychological safety and reduce student engagement. Therefore, teacher professional development programs under the Department of Education may consider including guidelines on humor-informed engagement strategies as part of classroom management and learner-centered pedagogy training (De Castro & Bactasa, 2023).

English Language-Focused Disciplinary Anchoring

This policy brief is explicitly anchored in the Second Language Acquisition and the Communicative Language Teaching, positioning humor as a language-supportive mechanism directly connected to English acquisition processes. Grounded in SLA principle of Affective Filter Hypothesis, the study recognizes that L2 learners often experience anxiety, linguistic hesitation, and fear of making errors, which may limit participation and communicative interaction in English classrooms (Mammadova, 2024). Within this context, humor functions as a pedagogically structured tool that lowers learners' affective barriers, creates psychologically safer communicative spaces, and encourages active participation in English discourse. Furthermore, humor supports language comprehension and meaning-making by providing contextualized, relatable, and interaction-driven language input that enhances learner processing, discourse engagement, and retention of linguistic concepts (Enriquez, Evora, & Garga, 2020). The study expands traditional understandings of participation by recognizing both vocal and silent engagement as meaningful forms of language involvement in L2 settings. Through peer interaction, contextual communication, and collaborative classroom discourse, humor contributes to authentic opportunities for language use, social negotiation of meaning, and communicative development. Therefore, the study strengthens the disciplinary anchoring of humor research by demonstrating that humor is not used for entertainment purposes alone, but as a structured pedagogical mechanism that facilitates learner engagement, interaction, comprehension, and communicative participation within English language acquisition and learner-centered instructional practices.

Anchoring Humor within Communicative Language Teaching Pedagogy

Within Communicative Language Teaching, humor is framed as a complementary engagement mechanism embedded to support authentic interaction, peer discourse, collaborative communication, and contextualized meaning-making, all of which are essential to L2 acquisition of English (Qasserras, 2023). Humor anchors directly into communicative classroom tasks such as role-playing, oral interaction, collaborative dialogue, storytelling, and discussion-based learning rather than treating it as informal classroom behavior. Consequently, humor complementarily operates only within structured pedagogical learning competencies aligned with communicative competence, learner participation, and English language development outcomes already established in the K–12 Language Arts and Multiliteracies Curriculum for Grade 12 L2 learners under the subject English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP). This positioning ensures that humor strengthens existing pedagogical practices rather than functioning independently from them. Each strategy and activity explicitly targets language outcomes first, and uses humor as a supporting engagement mechanism with an objective of using affiliative and self-enhancing humor to promote inclusive engagement while maintaining professional classroom standards.

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Table 5. Humor-Informed Engagement Framework in EAPP under CLT Pedagogy

EAPP Lessons	Macro Skill	Humor-Based Strategy	Classroom Activity	Engagement Pattern Targeted
1. Determine the structure and purpose of academic texts	Reading & Speaking	Affiliative humor introduction	Teacher introduces humorous academic headlines and asks students to interpret meaning and intent	Vocal-Cognizing, Silent-Cognizing
2. Use appropriate critical reading strategies in evaluating academic texts	Reading& Speaking	Humor interpretation	Students analyze humorous satire articles and identify claims, tone, and bias	Silent-Cognizing, Silent-Acting, Vocal-Cognizing
3. Use appropriate language in academic writing	Writing & Speaking	Error humor reframing	Students correct intentionally humorous grammar mistakes in a text	Vocal-Acting, Silent-Acting, Silent-Cognizing
4. Determine the features of academic writing	Writing & Speaking	Self-enhancing humor	Teacher shares humorous examples of common writing mistakes to normalize errors	Vocal-Feeling, Silent-Feeling
5. Use various techniques in summarizing academic texts	Writing & Speaking	Collaborative humor summarization	Students rewrite a dense academic paragraph into a short humorous but accurate summary	Vocal-Acting, Vocal-Cognizing
6. Deliver an effective academic presentation	Speaking & Listening	Affiliative humor in presentations	Students present a topic using a short opening anecdote to build audience connection	Vocal-Acting, Vocal-Feeling
7. Use appropriate tone and audience awareness in communication	Speaking& Listening	Audience-friendly humor	Students practice introducing research topics using relatable examples	Vocal-Cognizing, Vocal-Acting
8. Use appropriate critical reading strategies in evaluating academic texts	Reading& Speaking	Humor interpretation	Students analyze humorous satire articles and identify claims, tone, and bias	Silent-Cognizing, Silent-Acting, Vocal-Cognizing
9. Integrate information from various sources	Reading & Writing	Humor in synthesis	Students create a short "academic meme explanation" summarizing multiple sources	Silent-Cognizing, Vocal-Cognizing
10. Write a reaction paper to an academic text	Writing & Speaking	Reflective humor	Students describe how humor helped them understand complex ideas	Silent-Feeling, Silent/Vocal-Cognizing
11. Present academic outputs professionally	Writing & Speaking	Collaborative humorous skit	Groups present a short humorous scenario illustrating misuse of academic sources	Vocal-Acting, Vocal-Feeling Vocal-Cognizing

Table 5. demonstrates that humor can function as a complementary strategy mechanism rather than informal classroom entertainment. When aligned with academic competencies and professional teaching standards, humor can support psychological safety and peer belonging, active and reflective engagement, communication confidence in L2 classrooms, and inclusive participation for quiet learners. The framework also reflects the study's findings that engagement outcomes depend on the type and intent of humor, reinforcing the need for teachers to prioritize affiliative and self-enhancing humor while avoiding aggressive or self-defeating humor that may discourage participation.

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Structural Pedagogical Safeguards against Entertainment-Based Teaching

The study fully acknowledges that humor is subjective and may become ineffective or inappropriate when used without pedagogical structure. For this reason, the policy brief does not advocate unrestricted or entertainment-driven humor use. Instead, humor is operationalized within structured instructional and theoretical frameworks grounded in L2 Acquisition and Communicative Language Teaching pedagogy. Specifically, the study anchors humor within SLA principles such as the Affective Filter Hypothesis, where humor is treated as a mechanism that facilitates participation, lowers linguistic anxiety, and encourages communicative interaction in English classrooms.

Furthermore, the study adopts the framework of humor styles with careful emphasis on constructive and pedagogically appropriate humor while critically recognizing the potential risks of superiority-based humor under the Superiority Theory (Farmaniyan & Rashed, 2021). Rather than normalizing ridicule or exclusionary humor, the study uses this framework analytically to demonstrate why humor must be implemented ethically, inclusively, and professionally. The policy brief therefore recommends explicit pedagogical safeguards, including culturally responsive humor practices, alignment with lesson objectives, learner sensitivity considerations, and teacher professional development on appropriate humor management. Humor is only considered educationally acceptable when it contributes to discourse participation, comprehension, collaboration, communicative interaction, or learner engagement outcomes. Thus, language learning remains the central instructional objective, while humor merely serves as a structured facilitative support mechanism within the broader pedagogical framework.

Cultural and Inclusivity Integration

Humor must be treated as a culturally situated practice, not a universally positive tool. The findings confirm that affiliative and self-enhancing humor promotes inclusion, but only when culturally appropriate and context-sensitive; aggressive humor may reinforce power imbalances, linguistic insecurity, or social exclusion; and self-defeating humor may negatively affect learner identity and confidence in L2 use.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Acknowledge Peer-Driven Humor Cultures: Stakeholders must formally recognize humor as a regulated pedagogical support tool, not an informal teaching practice. Peer-driven humor plays a vital role in building class relationships and sustaining attention between L2 learners.

Promote Affiliative Humor Pedagogy: Stakeholders must encourage affiliative and self-enhancing humor in classroom activities to cultivate comfort, trust, and motivation among learners. They must establish clear policies discouraging sarcasm, ridicule, and self-deprecating humor that threaten psychological safety.

Empower Teachers as Humor Facilitators: Stakeholders must provide teacher training to manage students' humor constructively, transforming it into teachable moments. Teacher training programs must include explicit modules on ethical, inclusive, and language-focused humor use.

Value Silent Engagement: Stakeholders must reframe participation metrics to appreciate cognitive and reflective forms of engagement especially among quiet learners who connect through shared laughter or attentiveness.

Ethical Considerations

Accompanying the ethical principles of Bhandari (2021), the study remained sensitive and careful to respect participants, prevent psychological or reputational harm, and maintain comfort and safety throughout the data collection. To address these issues, participants were informed that they may choose not to answer questions that make them uncomfortable, and they may withdraw from any part of the survey or interview at any time. Soon after completing the survey, researchers ensured that a short debriefing session was conducted for the participants to review the study's objectives, address misconceptions, and receive contact information for both the researcher and the guidance office for follow-up concerns. In compliance with the Philippine Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173), confidentiality and anonymity were strictly observed in all procedures, ensuring that personal data remains anonymous, securely stored and accessible only to the research team. Overall, these measures were all for the participant's identity protection, maintained ethical integrity, and the study's trustworthy and responsive efforts.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that among humor styles, L2 English learners exhibited a high level of affiliative humor style; followed by a moderately high level of self-enhancing humor style; and both low levels of aggressive and self-defeating humor styles. Meanwhile, L2 English learners demonstrated high levels of silent-acting and silent-cognizing engagement. Also, moderately high levels of

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engagement were observed in silent-feeling, vocal-acting, vocal-feeling, and vocal-cognizing engagement among L2 English learners. In general, most L2 learners engage more silently than vocally. Overall, among the four humor styles, affiliative humor demonstrated the strongest and most consistent positive correlations with both vocal and silent engagement dimensions among L2 English learners. Thus, the null hypothesis is retained, emphasizing that the quality and intent of humor drive student engagement, not humor in general. Therefore, the policy brief established that humor in L2 English classrooms is a co-constructed, socially mediated practice that can enhance engagement when used appropriately. However, its effectiveness depends on clear pedagogical boundaries, cultural sensitivity, and alignment with professional standards. By anchoring humor within the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers and positioning it as a complementary strategy in English L2 pedagogy, this policy brief ensures that humor contributes meaningfully to L2 learning, inclusive education, and professional teaching practice in the Philippine Senior High School context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed. For L2 English Teachers, they must promote positive humor in class. Teachers should integrate affiliative and self-enhancing humor into classroom activities through icebreakers, storytelling, language games, and collaborative tasks. They should also establish clear guidelines to prevent aggressive and self-defeating humor that may undermine learners' confidence and peer relationships. In addition, L2 English Teachers must recognize different forms of engagement. Teachers should recognize silent-acting and silent-cognizing as meaningful forms of classroom engagement. They should provide opportunities for both verbal and nonverbal participation through reflective journals, silent discussions, digital activities, and think-pair-share tasks to accommodate different levels of learner confidence. Furthermore, L2 English teachers and L2 English learners must develop humor literacy. Both teachers and learners should develop the ability to recognize and use humor appropriately, considering its purpose, timing, quality, and impact. Teachers should incorporate content-related and inclusive humor, while regularly gathering learner feedback to ensure that humor supports learning rather than causing distraction or discomfort. Specifically, L2 English learners must practice responsible humor. Learners should use humor that promotes respect, inclusion, and positive peer relationships. They should avoid jokes or humorous remarks that embarrass, offend, or discourage others, particularly quieter and more anxious classmates. On the other hand, for school administrators and educational institutions, they must institutionalize humor-informed practices. Schools should provide professional development opportunities that equip teachers with strategies for integrating constructive humor into English instruction. They should also encourage humor-based collaborative activities and adopt assessment tools that recognize both verbal and silent forms of engagement. Likewise, for future researchers must further investigate humor and engagement. Future researchers should explore how different humor styles influence learners' emotional, behavioral, and cognitive engagement across different educational contexts. Further studies may also examine the long-term effects of humor-integrated instruction and the effectiveness of the proposed Humor Integration Framework. These recommendations aim to promote a psychologically safe, inclusive, and engaging L2 English classroom where constructive humor supports language learning, positive relationships, and meaningful participation.

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