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Modeling the Association between EFL Instructors' Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment and Humor Styles

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ABSTRACT

Background: Positive psychology in the field of applied linguistics has recently shifted its focus from L2 learners to L2 teachers as teachers have been revealed to be a pivotal external affordance for the emergence of learners' positive emotions such as enjoyment. Exploring the link between teacher-related constructs can provide deep insights into L2 teachers' emotional agency within L2 classroom context.

Purpose: The current study seeks to examine the association between English as a foreign language (EFL) instructors' enjoyment of foreign language teaching (i.e., personal enjoyment, student appreciation, and social enjoyment) and humor styles (i.e., self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive, and self-defeating humor styles).

Materials and Methods: In order to examine this association, 244 (151 males and 93 females) Turkish EFL instructors voluntarily completed self-report scales measuring their foreign language teaching enjoyment and humor styles.

Results: Results of the structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated that higher levels of student appreciation and social enjoyment are correlated with higher levels of affiliative and self-enhancing humor. In addition, greater degrees of personal enjoyment, student appreciation, and social enjoyment are correlated with lower levels of aggressive humor, while self-defeating humor was unrelated to any of the enjoyment indices. There was also no significant gender difference for any humor styles.

Conclusion: The findings are discussed in view of implications for teacher well-being.

KEYWORDS

Foreign language teaching enjoyment, humor styles, L2 teacher well-being

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INTRODUCTION

The field of educational research was for a long time dominated with the study of negative emotional orientations such as anxiety (Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009), and by virtue of the emphasis on cognitive aspects of second or foreign language (L2) learning, the functions of emotional dispositions have generally been disregarded in L2 research (Richards, 2020). With the rise of the positive psychology (PS) in the late 1990s, there has been a growing surge of interest in positive emotions in domain-general education and consequently in domain-specific field of L2 education (Bigelow, 2019; Derakhshan, Greenier et al., 2022; Li, 2021; MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012).

Emotions abound in the L2 classroom. L2 students at one end of the spectrum and the teacher on the other constitute the major emotional stakeholders in L2 classes. Notwithstanding a wealth of research on psychology of L2 learning, there remains a scarcity of research on L2 teacher emotions in general (Fan & Wang, 2022; Frenzel et al., 2016; Greenier et al., 2021; Keller, et al., 2014). While the significant role of the positive mindset of L2 teacher in teacher well-being and classroom functioning is taken for granted, there is a clear imbalance regarding work on L2 learner and teacher psychology (Mercer, 2018). However, it is noteworthy that, over the last decade, the pendulum has swung from predominantly language learner psychology to



both L2 teacher and teacher psychology. Thus, the field of L2 teaching psychology has increasingly become well-established in SLA studies (Derakhshan, 2022; Mercer, & Kostoulas, 2019).

Over the last decades, classroom enjoyment is one of the affective variables that has gained attention in L2 research (e.g., Boudreau et al., 2018; Li et al., 2022; Tahmouresi & Papi, 2021). Nonetheless, the recent research on this emotional construct has mainly focused on L2 learners, neglecting the investigation of L2 teachers and their specific experiences of teaching enjoyment (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). A few studies which have scrutinized the phenomenon indicate that L2 teacher immunity factors such as well-being and resilience, and L2 grit as a personality trait are predictors of FLTE (e.g., Derakhshan, Dewaele et al., 2022; Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). In other words, it appears that happy, resilient, gritty L2 instructors are more likely to have a higher levels of teaching enjoyment in their classes. Given that previous L2 research has primarily concentrated on L2 learners' foreign language enjoyment (FLE), further endeavors in SLA with the focus on L2 teacher's professional enjoyment would help achieve a better understanding of what shapes their foreign language teaching enjoyment (FLTE).

Meanwhile, many scholars (e.g., Derakhshan, Fathi et al., 2022; McDonough et al., 2013; Shakki, 2022; Tomlinson, 2010, 2013) advocate the premise of emotional engagement in language acquisition for effective and durable learning. Specifically, despite the bulk of studies that argue in favor of humor as a facilitating construct in educational settings, few studies to date have considered the effect of humor on positive mindset, particularly enjoyment, of L2 teachers. Moreover, although exploring the association of individual differences and humor has gained attention for personality research in recent years (Heintz & Ruch, 2019), there are few studies on teachers' humor styles (Liao et al., 2020) which could give a better understanding of how this construct can be linked to affective variables. Hence, the present research is the first investigation into the association between L2 teachers' FLTE experiences and humor styles.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign Language Teaching Enjoyment

Identified as the most prominent (Frenzel, 2014) and the most frequent positive emotion in academic environment settings (Goetz et al., 2014), the construct of enjoyment is generally defined as the feeling of satisfaction and fulfillment elicited from the activity and/or the positive outcomes of the activity (Ainley & Hidi, 2014). Teacher's teaching enjoyment along with anxiety and anger are the most common emotional orientations in the practices of teaching in

the class (Frenzel et al., 2016). Specifically, FLTE refers to L2 teacher's positive joyous emotional experience in the practice of teaching which may result from teacher-external (e.g., students, colleagues, and working environment) and/or teacher-internal (e.g., personality traits and attitudes toward profession) factors.

A wealth of domain-general studies has indicated that FLTE is associated with learners' experiences of learning enjoyment (Frenzel et al., 2018), quantity and quality of instruction (Russo et al., 2020), teaching mindset (Frondozo et al., 2020), and success (Stupnisky et al., 2019). Although teacher enjoyment has been thoroughly scrutinized in educational research, there is a small set of empirical studies concentrating on FLTE and its associations with psychological and personality-related variables, stemming from three major publications. The first is from Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) seminal work on the conceptualization and measurement of FLTE. In their study, EFL teachers' resilience and well-being were predictive of FLTE, with resilience being the stronger predictor. The findings highlight the prominence of L2 teacher well-being in shaping their FLTE. In their study, Proietti Ergün and Dewaele (2021) also developed a reliable and valid scale (see Instruments) for assessing language teachers' FLTE. In a second study, Derakhshan, Dewaele et al. (2022) studied 450 Iranian EFL teachers' teaching enjoyment so as to identify the contribution of resilience, well-being, and L2 grit on FLTE. Results established that all three personality-based and psychological variables were strong predictors of FLTE, concluding that EFL instructors' personality trait and well-being possess a major impact on fostering their FLTE in the class. Indeed, the findings of the former study are substantiated in the latter, indicating that FLTE is susceptible to L2 teacher immunity factors and personality traits. In the third study with a cohort of 296 Iranian EFL instructors, Fathi and Naderi (2022) explored the predicting effect of FLTE and L2 teacher resilience on teaching engagement. While both L2 resilience and FLTE significantly influenced L2 teachers' teaching engagement, FLTE exerted a stronger influence than resilience. All in all, studies have indicated that FLTE is highly susceptible to psychological and personality-related factors.

Drawing on emotional transmission theory, L2 teacher's FLTE seems to influence the way s/he interacts and socializes with the learners in the class. In other words, L2 teacher with higher levels of enjoyment can adopt different speaking styles when communicating with learners. In fact, teachers' teaching enjoyment can influence their emotional orientation towards their students and their relationships with them, which can boost students' engagement and motivation (Martin, 2006). More specifically, stemming from his/her professional enjoyment, the way the L2 teacher uses humor while interacting with the learners might correlate with FLTE.

Teacher Humor Styles

Humor is a multi-dimensional construct which possesses significance and purpose in the field of L2 learning and teaching (Neff & Dewaele, 2022). McNamara (2004) underlines the significance of teacher humor in creating a collaborative learning environment and fostering interactions in the class as it creates an encouraging academic environment for the learners (Booth-Butterfield & Booth-Butterfield, 1991). Indeed, humor can be used to effectively foster learning through creating a pleasant and enjoyable learning climate in the classroom (Bolkan & Goodboy, 2015). Additionally, the teaching profession demands emotional labor (Liao et al., 2020). In other words, L2 teachers' success in regulating their positive emotional state and establishing closer emotional relations with the students can foster their FLTE.

There has been a surge in interest in the psychology of humor over the last few decades (Martin & Ford, 2018), and it has been revealed to positively contribute to life satisfaction (Heintz et al., 2020), mental health (Schermer et al., 2019), well-being (Jiang et al., 2020) and physical health (Kuiper & Nicholl, 2004). Based on individual differences, Martin et al. (2003) classified the functioning of humor styles into four: self-enhancing, affiliative, aggressive, and self-defeating. The self-enhancing humor style generally aims to enhance the self, so as to feel better through maintaining a humorous outlook, and finding amusement in life's inconsistencies, even in unpleasant situations. Affiliative humor aims to benignly reinforce the individual's social bonds without being detrimental to oneself or others through, say, cracking jokes, narrating humorous remarks, or engaging in spontaneous witty conversations to entertain others. These two humor styles are hypothesized to have a positive impact on individuals' psychological and social well-being. In contrast, the aggressive humor style refers to malicious uses of humor, including ridiculing, excessively teasing, alienating, or belittling others, albeit generally being disguised with a playful fun, through which the self is enhanced at the expense of others. Excessive utilization of aggressive humor style is likely to be harmful to the relationships and can appear to be potentially malicious to well-being (Martin et al., 2003). Self-defeating humor style points to excessively self-belittling or denigrating oneself by saying or doing funny things, so as to gain or maintain the approval of others. This humor, similarly, if used excessively, is detrimental to well-being since it involves downgrading the self and excluding individual emotional requirements (Martin et al., 2003).

Research on these four humor types have indicated that there are significantly positive correlations were found between benign humor and different psychological variables, inclusion empathy (Hampes, 2010), happiness (Ford et al., 2016), emotional intelligence (Karahana et al., 2019), mental health (Schneider et al., 2018) and life satisfaction (Dyck & Holtzman 2013). They have also found to negatively correlate with personal distress (Hampes, 2010), neuroticism (Plessen

et al., 2020), and depression (Dyck & Holtzman 2013), On the contrary, aggressive and self-defeating humor have been acknowledged to be positively correlated with depression (Tucker et al. 2013) and loneliness (Schermer et al. 2017), while being negatively associated with social wellbeing (Kuiper & Nicholl, 2004), and happiness (Ford et al. 2016).

Among a sample of 1456 trainee teachers, Karahana et al. (2019) found that self-enhancing and affiliative humor types are closely associated with problem-solving skills, while it exhibited a negative relationship with the other two humor styles. In their study, women exhibited a higher tendency to use benign rather than detrimental humor styles. In a different study on teacher's well-being, Ho's (2016) study with 539 K12 schoolteachers and Tümkaya's (2007) exploration with 283 university instructors similarly indicated that self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles were negatively associated with depersonalization and affective exhaustion, while positively linked with accomplishment. In Tümkaya's (2007) study, aggressive and self-defeating humor styles were positively related with burnout. Kuiper and McHale's (2009) study with middle school teachers indicated the facilitating role of affiliative humor style in building social support network. Echoing the results of the above-mentioned studies, in a meta-analysis study of subjective well-being, benign humor was found to improve subjective wellbeing (Jiang et al., 2020). Clearly, the studies highlight the strong relationship between the teacher's humor style and their psychological wellbeing.

While a wealth of research in the literature exists on students' FLE and its association with in-class humor (Neff & Dewaele, 2022), L2 achievement (Gomez et al., 2010; Jin & Zhang, 2018), willingness to communicate (Lee, 2020), thinking skills (Boardman, 2004), learner attitudes (Dewaele & Proietti Ergün, 2020), and teacher characteristics (Dewaele et al., 2019), research on L2 teachers' teaching enjoyment remains scant (Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). Although teachers' perceived humor styles have been investigated in association with their positive mindset such as emotional labor (Liao et al., 2020) and emotional intelligence (Karahana et al., 2019), the studies on the affinity of L2 teachers' humor styles and FLTE is lacking (Frenzel, 2014; Keller et al., 2014; Proietti Ergün & Dewaele, 2021). Thus, in the present study, we sought to explore the relationship between L2 teachers' FLTE and their senses of humor.

Hypothesizing the Associations between FLTE and Teacher Humor

The interplay between FLE and humor is indicated in Neff and Dewaele's (2022) study, in which FLE and L2 learners' preferences of humor strategies were found to be closely correlated. In their study, FLE and perception regarding the utilization of humor were indicated to possess a major impact on L2 learners' learning strategy preferences. Although this study explored the construct of FLE, not specifically FLTE,

humor was indicated to be correlated with L2 enjoyment. Given that teachers' psychological well-being and positive emotions appear to be related to teaching effectiveness (Ruzek et al., 2016), their individual humor styles also seem to be relatively associated with their psychological well-being (Liao et al., 2020). Teachers' positive emotions are, in fact, linked to the effectiveness of their instruction (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Being positively related to self-esteem and psychological well-being (Martin et al., 2003), in the present study, L2 teacher's self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles are firstly hypothesized to be positively correlated with teacher enjoyment in the classroom.

Secondly, language teachers who do not (hypothetically) enjoy their profession are more likely to adapt aggressive humor styles which may appear to be face-threatening to L2 students. A student's emotional dissonance (see Jansz & Timmers, 2002), which is a feeling of unease as a result of a threat to his or her identity, seems to be a potentially unavoidable consequence of aggressive humor. The frequent use of this malicious humor type through teasing, belittling or ridiculing students in the classroom is not only malicious to well-being (Martin et al., 2003), but more importantly can lead to devastating effects on students' perception of teacher support and can thereby negatively influence classroom enjoyment (see Jin & Zhang, 2018). In contradiction to loving pedagogy (see Wang et al., 2022), a teacher's aggressive humor style, such as destructive modification of speech style, may result in lower levels of student enjoyment, as well as teacher enjoyment in the class.

Thirdly, a teacher's self-defeating humor style is hypothesized to positively correlate with teacher's FLTE. The teacher's excessive reliance on self-belittling or denigrating himself by saying or doing funny things, so as to gain or maintain the approval of students not only can be harmful to well-being (Martin et al., 2003), but also can exhibit teacher's coping attempt to ameliorate any negative feelings s/he possesses. This type of detrimental-to-self humor style can be regarded a self-defense mechanism (Freud, 1960) aimed at protecting the self against negative emotional feelings, such as anxiety. Hence, this type of teacher humor can make the teacher feel useful and might hypothetically lead to a higher level of teaching enjoyment. However, given that this humor involves downgrading the self, it can threaten a teacher's professional identity. Underlining the close interplay between identity and the self, Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) identify self as one of the key-issues associated with professional identity. At the beginning of their professional journey, teachers engage in the process of identity formation, which involves developing a sense of self and establishing a connection between their identity and the external context of their classroom or school environment (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Thus, teachers who excessively use self-defeating humor to make students laugh may succeed in potentially increasing the enjoyment levels of the learners but at the expense of jeopardizing their professional identity

development! Finally, an increasing consensus of findings on gendered speech and interaction suggest that female tend to be more careful in terms of socialization, since they are more cognizant of social status and more sensitive to how others may judge them (Yule, 2015). Hence, in the present study, it is also hypothesized that male L2 teachers are more likely to utilize, if any, aggressive and self-defeating humor styles in relation with their FLTE. In general, the hypotheses are summarized below:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Higher levels of foreign language teaching enjoyment would be associated with greater use of self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Levels of foreign language teaching enjoyment would be negatively related to aggressive humor style.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): A positive pattern of relationship would be evident between foreign language teaching enjoyment and self-defeating humor style.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): There would be a significant gender difference for FLTE and teacher humor styles.

METHOD

Participants

The research sample was 244 (151 males and 93 females) Turkish EFL university instructors in Istanbul in the autumn 2022 (2021-2022 academic year). They were general English instructors teaching at the English preparatory schools of Turkish universities in Istanbul. At first, a corpus of more than one thousand email addresses from the university websites was randomly collected and the online questionnaire that consisted of two scales measuring their FLTE and humor styles was administered to them. At the beginning of the questionnaire, we explicitly mentioned that participation was voluntary, and their demographic information would remain confidential. We also obtained the informed consent of the participants.

Instruments

FLTE Scale

The EFL teachers' teaching enjoyment was measured by Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) adapted 9-item FLTE scale. The questionnaire consists of three components, namely, Student Appreciation (3 items), Personal Enjoyment (3 items), and Social Enjoyment (3 items). The items are rat-

ed from 1 to 5 on a Likert's scale. The internal consistency of the measure was high (Cronbach alpha = 0.85).

Humor Styles Questionnaire

The EFL teachers' humor styles were assessed by Martin et al.'s (2003) 32-item Humor Styles Questionnaire, which measures individuals' self-focused or other-focused benign as well as detrimental humor styles. The components of the scale include affiliative humor (8 items), self-enhancing (8 items), aggressive (8 items), and self-defeating (8 items) on a 5-point Likert's scale. The results indicated high reliability of .83, .78, .73, .81 for the four components, respectively. The other studies also indicated a satisfactory internal consistency of the measure (Vrabel et al., 2017).

Data Collection

The scales were shared in the form of a single Google Form through an email to the cohort of EFL university instructors for voluntary participation. After filling in the demographic information, the participants filled in the scales assessing their humor styles and ELTE. It is notable that the participants were asked to complete the questionnaires by self-evaluating their holistic emotional experiences in their teaching practices at university. The data collection continued for three whole months. After data collection, some incomplete responses were removed. As a result, a total number of 244 responses (93= 38.1 % males & 151= 61.9 % females; mean age = 28.3 years old) remained, which constituted an approximate rate of 94 %

Data Analysis

Mplus 8.4 was used for the analyses of the hypotheses. In order to address the non-normality of the data, a maximum likelihood estimator with robust standard error was utilized (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). The exploratory SEM was generated using existing literature and theories (see Figure 1). The researchers decided to use SEM to analyse the data since it provides for variable latent modelling while accounting for measurement error (Ullman & Bentler, 2012). Consequently, the aspects could be studied particularly with the focus on the larger predictors and outcomes (Figure 1), with unbiased estimates, offering a richer understanding of the associations between constructs (Ullman & Bentler, 2012).

In order to assess the fitness of the model, we employed various goodness-of-fit indices, including Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), comparative fit index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). To achieve a satisfactory model fit, TLI and CFL values of .90 or higher, SRMR value of .08 or lower, and SRMR value of .05 show sufficient and strong fit indices. Furthermore, we examined McDonald's non-cen-

trality index (NCI) and Gamma hat metrics (see McDonald, 1989; Steiger, 1989) as they are not affected by sample size and complexity of the model (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002). The literature recommends $NCI \geq .90$ and $\text{Gamma hat} \geq .95$ as cut-off values (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Lastly, when examining measurement invariance across different genders, we considered the following metrics as indicators of invariance: $\Delta\chi^2 p > .05$, $\Delta CFI \leq .010$, $\Delta RMSEA \leq .015$, $\Delta SRMR \leq .03$ (Wang & Wang, 2020), $\Delta \text{Gamma} \leq .001$, and $NCI \leq .02$ (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

RESULTS

Preliminary Analysis: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient

Table 1 indicated descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient matrix for two constructs and their subfactors.

Main Analysis: SEM

The model achieved sufficient fit ($\chi^2(df) = 211.453 (12)$, $p < 0.05$; CFI/TLI = 0.943/.924; RMSEA = 0.045; SRMR = 0.051; Gamma=.964; NCI= .915). The results indicated that some hypothesised pathways in the model were statistically insignificant. However, regarding the exploratory nature of this research, this is not an unexpected finding. The first hypothesis was partially supported. That is, there were statistically significant correlations between FLTE, self-enhancing and affiliative humor styles. The affiliative humor style was positively correlated with both student appreciation enjoyment ($r = .46$; $p < .001$) and social enjoyment ($r = .41$; $p < .001$). The self-enhancing humor style was also positively associated with both student appreciation enjoyment ($r = -.31$; $p < .001$) and social enjoyment ($r = .52$; $p < .001$). However, personal enjoyment was uncorrelated with affiliative and self-enhancing humor. Hence, it could be concluded that the FLTE and teacher humor style are co-dependent in the language classes.

Figure 2 also indicates the associations between the three measures of FLTE and aggressive and self-defeating humor. As expected, lower levels of aggressive humor were correlated with greater levels of personal enjoyment ($r = -.30$; $p < .001$), student appreciation ($r = -.27$; $p < .001$) and social enjoyment ($r = -.35$; $p < .001$). Self-defeating humor was unrelated to any of these indices of FLTE. These patterns similarly indicate that, as described in H2, FLTE is correlated with aggressive humor in the expected directions. However, there is no support for the relationship between FLTE and self-defeating humor (H3).

Figure 1
Hypothesized SEM

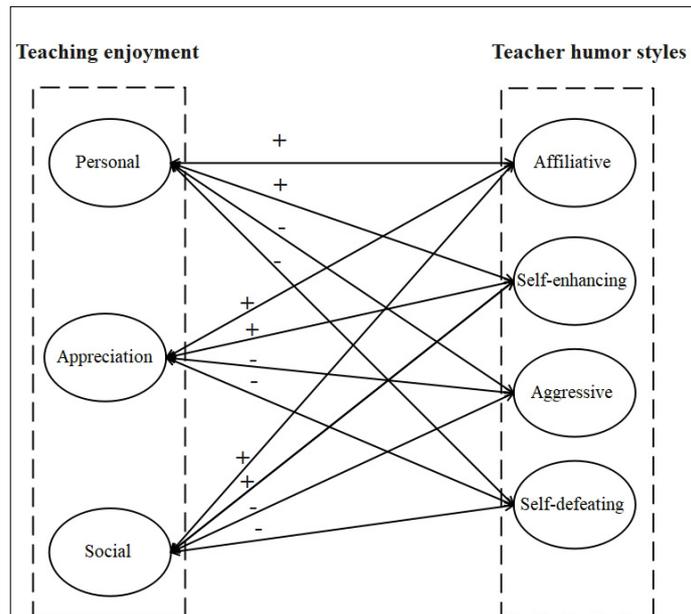


Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for All Variables

Variable	M	SD	Personal	Appreciation	Social	Affiliative	Self-enhancing	Aggressive	Self-defeating
Personal	3.75	.51	—	.53***	.63***	-.09	-.13	-.31*	-.13
Appreciation	4.22	.44		—	.58**	.48**	.34**	-.28*	-.09
Social	4.34	.32			—	.42**	.54***	-.37**	-.13
Affiliative	5.8	.32				—	.40***	-.08	.06
Self-enhancing	5.87	.30					—	-.07	-.09
Aggressive	2.02	.37						—	.44**
Self-defeating	2.06	.32							—

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

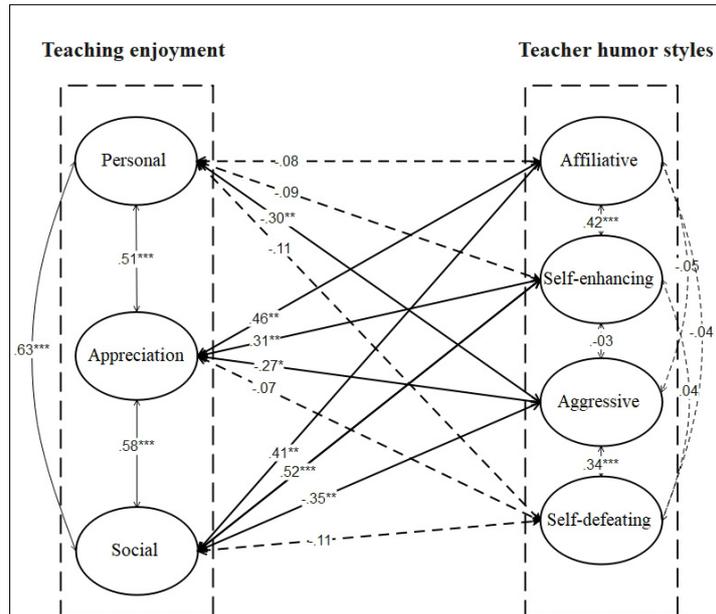
Test of Measurement Invariance across Genders

In order to examine the extent of invariance across genders, we performed measurement invariance tests for the two scales using a sample of 151 males and 93 females. The three models being investigated exhibited a good fit for the FLTE scale and all specified equality constraints demonstrated the stability of the measurement model (Table 2). We also considered the indices of fit model in our invariance measurement. The values of ΔCFI and $\Delta RMSEA$ indices were trivial across the models. In addition, the difference in NCI and Gamma hat did surpass the suggested values, indicating that the measurement model exhibited stability across gender for the FLTE scale.

Secondly, for the HSQ scale, the three models under investigation also indicated a good fit to the data. The p -value of the $\Delta\chi^2$ across the models were nonsignificant (Table 3). Moreover, similar to the FLTE scale, the $\Delta RMSEA$ and ΔCFI values were trivial across the models. Nor did the differences in NCI and Gamma hat exceed the suggested values. Consequently, our results confirmed measurement invariance across genders for the HSQ scale.

Finally, an independent t -test revealed no significant gender difference for affiliative $t(242) = .30, p < .75$ and self-enhancing humor $t(242) = -.77, p < .44$. Nor was there a significant gender difference for aggressive $t(242) = -.34, p < .73$ and self-defeating humor $t(242) = 2.85, p < .65$, with the 151 female participants scoring non-significantly higher than the 93 male participants in aggressive (Mean = 2.03 versus

Figure 2
SEM Results



Note. *** $p < .001$ ** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

Mean = 2.01), with males scoring non-significantly higher than female in self-defeating humor (Mean = 2.13 versus Mean = 2.07). Therefore, the fourth hypothesis, which assumed a significant gender difference for FLTE and teacher humor styles was rejected. In sum, the suggested model was found to sufficiently match the data, and the majority of hypothesised correlations were verified. The model revealed a complex network between the three FLTE subfactors, each having distinct influences with the subfactors of teacher humour styles.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the study was fourfold: we firstly looked at L2 teachers' level of FLTE and examined the correlation between L2 teacher's benign humor styles and their FLTE. L2 teachers exhibited the highest level of enjoyment in social enjoyment, while personal enjoyment was reported as the lowest level of enjoyment. In other words, L2 teachers self-evaluated their highest level of profession enjoyment in being together with their colleagues. Therefore, colleagues as a teacher-external factor had the most supporting role in teacher enjoyment in general. However, teacher-internal factors such as attitudes toward profession do not seem to possess a significant role as teacher-internal urges in FLTE. The findings are aligned with Jiang and Dewaele's (2019) study, in which L2 learners' FLTE was found to be more subject to peer and teacher factors than internal factors. Li et al. (2021) similarly identified that the impact of class setting as a learner-external factor was larger than that of trait emotional intelligence, as an internal-factor in learners' foreign

language enjoyment. Although these two studies were conducted with a cohort of L2 learners, they are aligned with the findings of the current study. They highlight that instructors' FLTE, akin to L2 learners' FLE, is a socially constructed phenomenon and is susceptible to contextual and external factors (e.g., colleagues and teaching environment) than individual characteristics (e.g., attitudes or emotional intelligence).

As already mentioned, it was hypothesized that L2 teachers with greater levels of FLTE are more likely to use benign humor so as to enhance their social bonds with the students and the self. Indeed, L2 teacher's psychological status and positive mindset might influence their preference in humor styles, and it can eventually influence their relationships with students. This hypothesis is echoed in the findings, indicating a strong association between FLTE and affiliative/self-enhancing humor styles. In different studies, these two benevolent humor types have also been indicated to be positively correlated with happiness, relationship satisfaction and emotional closeness (see Ford et al., 2016; Schneider et al., 2018).

Emotional crossover points to emotional transmissions from one person to another in the identical social context (Hartel & Page, 2009). In an educational environment, transmissions of emotions are inevitable in teacher-student interactions. A teacher's emotional status or flow of emotions can directly influence students' emotional orientations in the classroom environment. Indeed, L2 teacher enjoyment as an emotional phenomenon can beget L2 learner enjoyment through adopting benign humor styles. In studies on the influence of

Table 2*Test of Measurement Invariance between Male and Female for FLTE Scale*

Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	p	Df	$\Delta RMSEA$	ΔCFI	ΔTLI	$\Delta Gamma$	ΔNCI
Configural x Metric	43.411	.38	7	.006	.009	.015	.000	.012
Metric x Scalar	21.752	.61	7	.003	.007	.008	.000	.014

Note. Δ : differences; χ^2 : chi-square; df : degrees of freedom; TLI : Tucker-Lewis index; CFI : comparative fit index; $RMSEA$: root mean square error; $SRMR$: standardized root mean square residual; $Gamma$: Gamma hat; NCI = noncentrality index.

Table 3*Test of Measurement Invariance between Male and Female for HSQ Scale*

Model comparison	$\Delta\chi^2$	P	Df	$\Delta RMSEA$	ΔCFI	ΔTLI	$\Delta Gamma$	ΔNCI
Configural x Metric	32.415	.41	9	.008	.008	.011	.000	.011
Metric x Scalar	23.187	.23	9	.004	.005	.009	.000	.013

Note. Δ : differences; χ^2 : chi-square; df : degrees of freedom; TLI : Tucker-Lewis index; CFI : comparative fit index; $RMSEA$: root mean square error; $SRMR$: standardized root mean square residual; $Gamma$: Gamma hat; NCI = noncentrality index.

teachers' enjoyment on learners' learning enjoyment, Frenzel et al. (2009) and Frenzel et al. (2018) indicated that teachers' professional enjoyment can be indirectly transmitted to learners through perceived teacher enthusiasm and enthusiastic teaching style. The emotional crossover theory posits that individuals' emotions are more likely to be transmitted to their social counterparts in prolonged class contacts. L2 teachers' higher levels of FLTE accompanying benign humor styles can result in the emotional transmission of teacher enjoyment, well-supported by self-enhancing and affiliative humor. This can eventually lead to social contagion of L2 teacher's FLTE. In a nutshell, enjoyment begets enjoyment. Aligned with the discussion on the emotional crossover theory, Talebzadeh et al.'s (2020) study indicated that the transmission enjoyment between students and teachers is influenced by the non-verbal signals exchanged during their interactions. Their study also revealed that the L2 teachers' enjoyment experience of enjoyment was unconsciously conveyed to the students, and vice versa, through their vocalization, movement, body language, and facial expressions. Proietti Ergün and Dewaele's (2021) study similarly indicated that resilient and happy teachers who enjoy their profession prove the bedrock for students' accomplishment. They advocate that the pleasant emotional environment created by teachers in the classroom is a prerequisite for psychological, as well as linguistic growth. All these studies highlight the prominence of teacher enjoyment in educational settings and the way in which it can pave the way for more effective education in the class.

Congruent with teacher enjoyment, a teacher's benign humor style can strengthen L2 teacher's social bonds with their colleagues and students and eventually result in higher levels of social enjoyment and student appreciations. Moreover, a teacher's perceived social enjoyment by virtue of his/her humor adaptation can boost the sense of belonging to the profession and contribute to the positive attitudes towards teaching profession. A positive attitude towards

teaching is one of the seven constructs that identify language teacher immunity (see Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017). A body of studies (e.g., McDonough et al., 2013; Tomlinson, 2010, 2013) also advocate the premise of affective engagement in language acquisition, stating that it is essential for effective and durable learning. The L2 teacher's benign humor can also result in a higher level of positive classroom affectivity, as a prerequisite for student as well as teacher wellbeing (see Hiver & Dörnyei, 2017).

In the study by Frenzel et al. (2016), teacher enjoyment had a strong positive correlation with appealing teaching practices, such as teacher support and caring, and clarity of instructional methods. Teaching enjoyment was also reported to be negatively correlated with more unpleasant teacher behavior such as teacher disrespect toward students. In congruence with Frenzel et al.'s (2016) argument, the present study indicated that FLTE is negatively correlated with an aggressive humor style which might be employed to belittle or ridicule students in the classroom. Indeed, L2 teachers who do not possess a higher level of enjoyment in their profession may employ aggressive humor resulting in teacher disrespect toward students. As already mentioned, the devastating outcomes of such misconduct could negatively influence learners' classroom enjoyment (see Jin & Zhang, 2018) while students' perception of teacher support could consequently fall into disfavor.

The role of emotional teacher support during the students' learning process has been indicated to possess a major impact on learners' classroom enjoyment (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). It can influence varying emotional traits in the classroom (Van Ryzin et al., 2009). Indeed, being introduced as type of a positive academic emotion (Pekrun et al., 2002), enjoyment has been confirmed as positively relating with teacher support (Lei et al., 2018). A wealth of empirical research has similarly revealed that learners who receive greater support from their teachers tend to experience

greater levels of positive emotions, such as enjoyment (e.g., Aldridge et al., 2012; Birgani et al., 2015). Aligned with the present study findings, a teacher's aggressive humor may lead to L2 learners' dissatisfying perceptions toward teacher support and thereby result in lower levels of learner enjoyment in the class.

The findings also align with Chen and Martin's (2007) study, which indicated that there was no significant gender difference in four humor styles among the Chinese university students. However, in their study, the Canadian male sample reported more use of aggressive and self-defeating humor than females. Dyck and Holtzman's (2013) study similarly exhibited a significant gender difference for aggressive humor only. With regard to FLE, there is a relatively limited number of studies that specifically concern gender differences in FLE (Mierzwa-Kamińska, 2021). In an investigation that explored the association of FLE and gender variable, Mierzwa (2019) found no gender difference in ELTE.

According to Kuiper et al. (2016), greater identity development is more closely related to affiliative and self-enhancing humor styles. They add that self-defeating humor is consistent with negative aspects of the self, such as emotional instability and low self-acceptance. Employing self-defeating humor, the self-offending joker (teacher) may be unaware of being face-threatening to himself and jeopardizing professional identity. Hence, teachers who fail to regulate their professional emotions are less likely to experience higher levels of enjoyment in the class, since they are void of a clear sense of self-definition. Given that there is an association between damaged self-esteem and self-defeating humor (Stieger et al., 2011), and since self-esteem is predictive of professional identity (Motallebzadeh & Kazemi, 2018), L2 instructors who excessively rely on self-defeating humor may fail to effectively engage in professional identity development process. In addition, deficient identity development is closely related with a preference for using self-defeating humor as this type of humor style aligns with the negative characteristics of the self that relate to increased confusion about one's role in a community (Kuiper et al., 2016). In fact, L2 teacher's poor self-acceptance, lack of emotional instability, and an unclear sense of self-definition are some negative self-relevant features which are closely related with excessive use of self-defeating humor (Kuiper et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which FLTE and L2 teacher humor are associated in the context of higher education in Turkey. The findings indicated that Turkish EFL teachers' FLTE and both benign humor styles

were significantly and positively related. While there was no support for the association between FLTE and self-defeating humor, aggressive humor was negatively correlated with all indices of FLTE. Finally, no significant gender difference was identified for FLTE and L2 teacher humor styles. Based on the results, it can be concluded that joyous L2 teachers are more likely to adopt benevolent humor to enhance the self and maintain a benign relationship with learners and colleagues. However, aggressive humor can be injurious to L2 teacher's relationship with learners and colleagues by virtue of being harmful to the self and malignant to others.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Our results need to be considered with their limitations. Firstly, we examined self-reported EFL teachers' FLTE and humor style without considering learner perceptions. Future research may consider scrutinizing perceived correlation between FLTE and teacher humor styles through L2 learners' viewpoint, as well as the extent to which teacher enjoyment and teacher humor are likely to result in L2 learners' FLE. Secondly, we asked the participants to self-evaluate their emotional orientations during the holistic practice of teaching English. Considering the dynamicity of affective variables, future studies might consider adopting an experience sampling method to collect data from a sample of teachers and their students across different time intervals. This would more accurately measure the dynamic nature of humor and enjoyment and identify L2 teachers' real-time emotional experiences in the classroom. Emotional crossover studies on the transmission of enjoyment from teacher to student would also be a fruitful area of research.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Mehdi Solhi: Conceptualization; Investigation; Methodology; Project administration; Resources; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing

Majid Elahi Shirvan: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Software; Validation; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing

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