

EFL proficiency and self-reported creativity in the production of comedy screenplays

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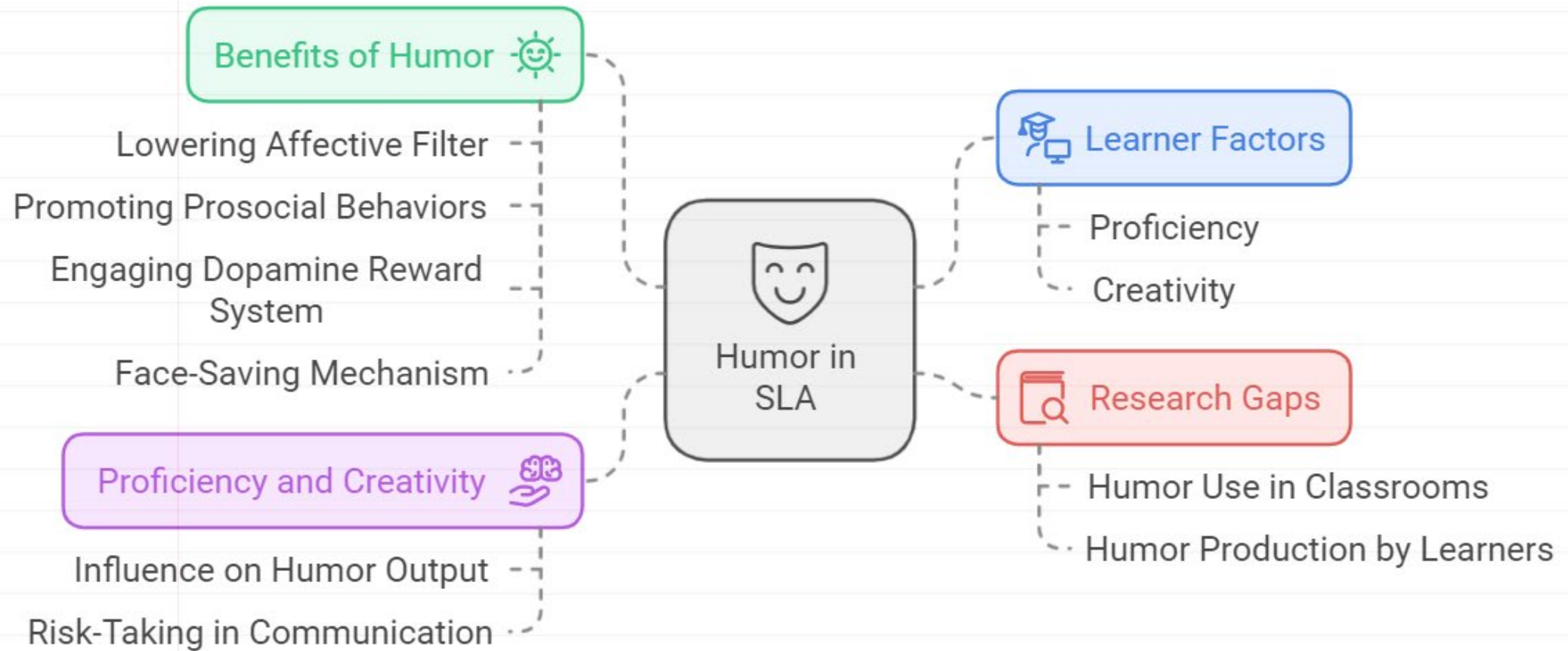
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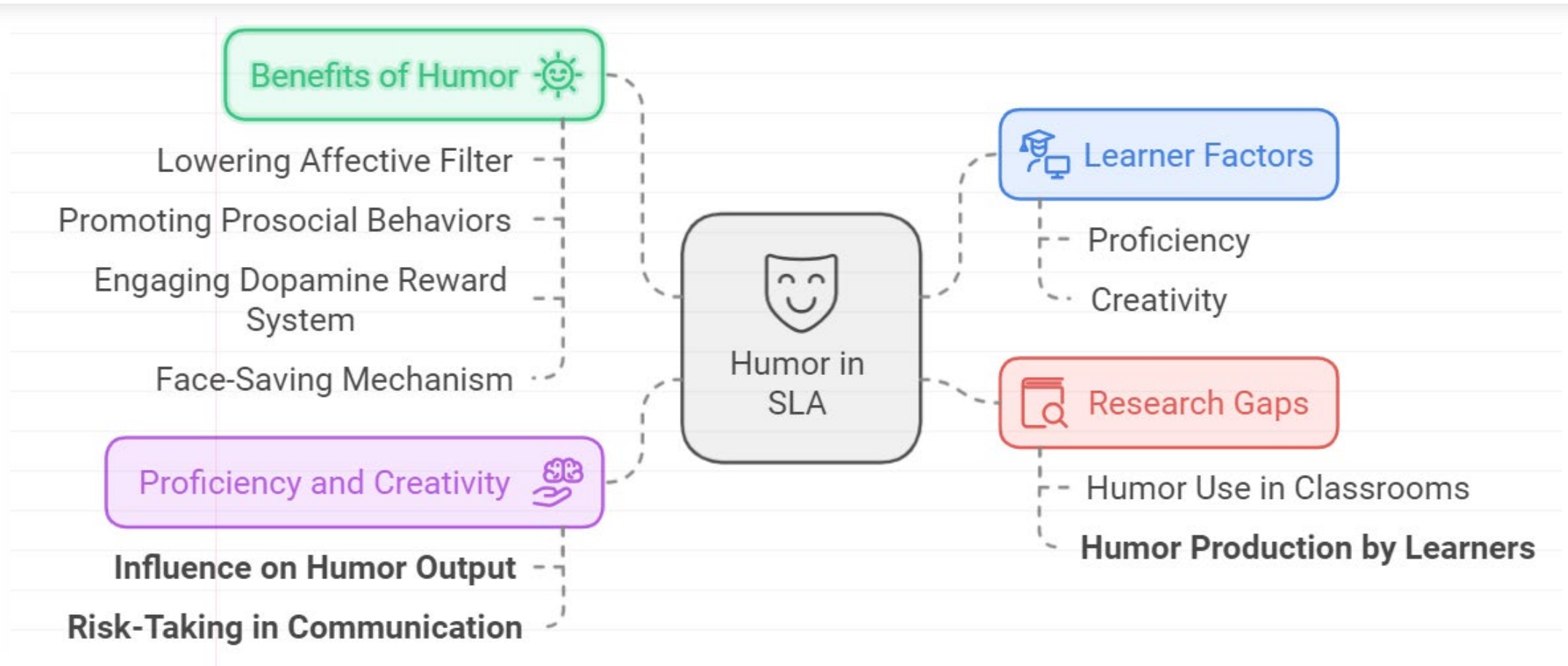
II Congreso Internacional
sobre el Humor Verbal

16-18 de octubre de 2024
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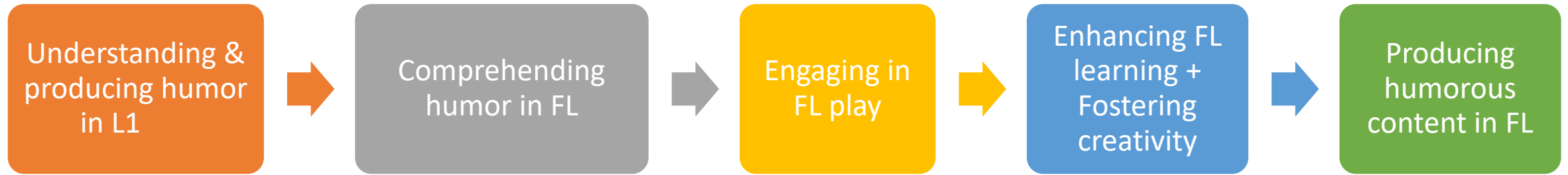
Introduction



Introduction

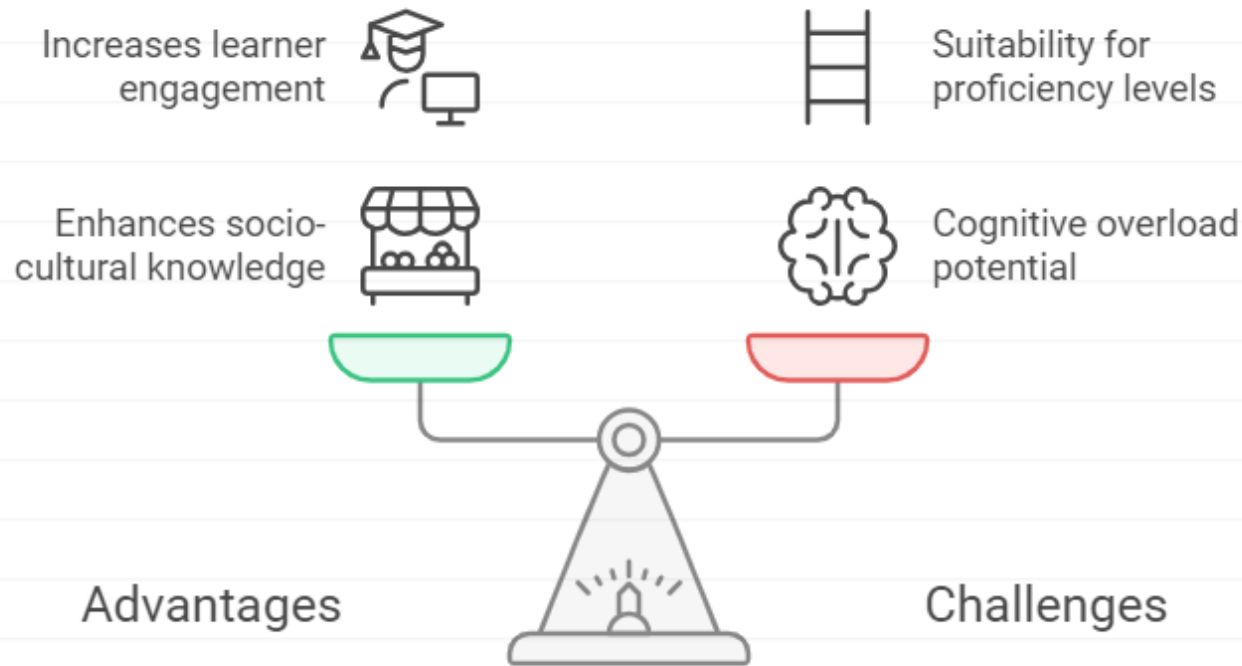


Humor & creativity in FL learning



- Humor considered one of the components of creativity achievement (Carson et al., 2005)
- Learners' attitudes towards humor in language learning play a pivotal role (Neff & Dewaele, 2023)
- FL proficiency as a critical learner factor in the comprehension and interpretation of humor (Chen & Dewaele, 2018)

Potential of learning humor in a FL through audiovisual input

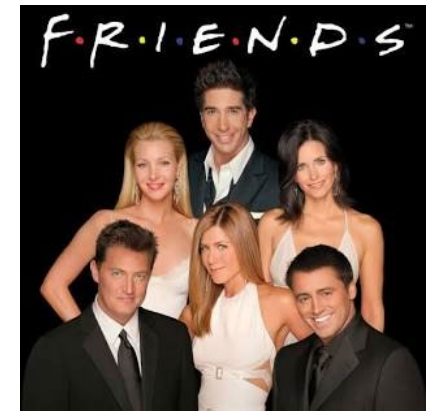
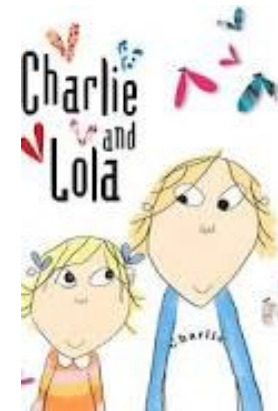


Balancing the use of authentic audiovisual materials in language learning.

Use of comedy & humorous cartoons for FL learning

Vocabulary:

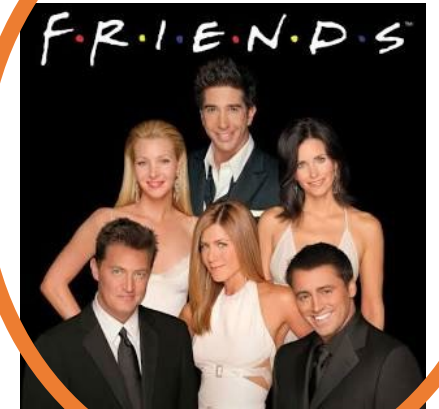
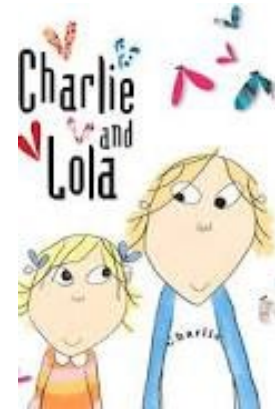
- Early primary education (Avello, 2023)
- Grade 6 (Gesa & Miralpeix, 2023; Gesa et al., in review)
- Secondary school (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2019)
- University (Suárez & Gesa, 2019)
- Wide age range (Moskvina, 2023; Suárez et al., 2021)
- Reading comprehension: Secondary school (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2020)
- Grammatical constructions: University (Pattemore & Muñoz, 2020)



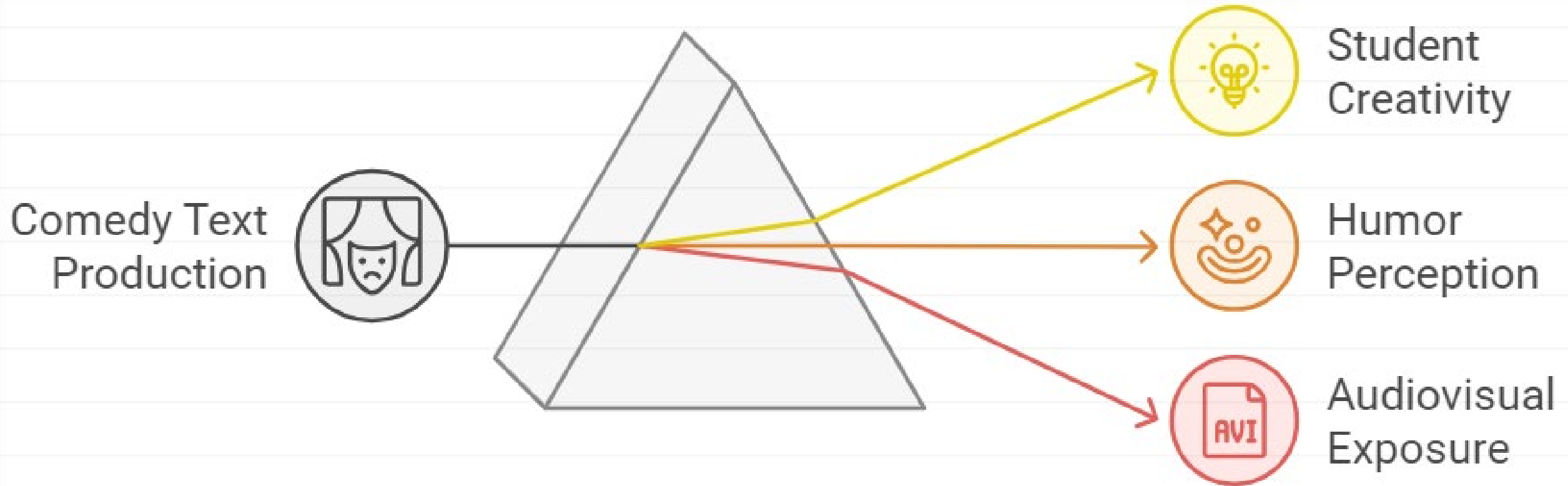
Use of comedy & humorous cartoons for FL learning

Vocabulary:

- Early primary education (Avello, 2023)
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- Reading comprehension: Secondary school (Pujadas & Muñoz, 2020)
- Grammatical constructions: University (Pattemore & Muñoz, 2020)



What's the gap?



Research questions

1. What **humorous devices** (in terms of **quantity** and **variety**) do EFL learners use in a written comedy screenplay after being exposed to 10 episodes of a fantasy comedy depending on:
 1. the students' EFL proficiency level?
 2. the students' self-reported creativity in humor, creative writing, and theater and film?
2. To which extent do **proficiency** and **self-reported creativity** in humor, creative writing, and theater and film **influence** the **quantity and variety** of humor elements in screenplay writing?

Method: participants



82 Catalan/Spanish bilingual students learning EFL



1st or 2nd year of the Media Studies degree



3 intact classes for Oral and Written Communication in English subject



Part of a larger study: enhanced captions group (n = 34) and captions group (n = 48)



EFL proficiency range A1 to C2, mean of B2 (Oxford Placement Test - Allan, 2004).



For comparison purposes, the students were categorized into three proficiency groups: A1-A2 (n = 16), B1-B2 (n = 44), and C1-C2 (n = 22).

Audiovisual materials

- 10 episodes (2 episodes / week) = 227 minutes
- Fantasy comedy set in the “afterlife” (a purgatory where you cannot swear)
- Main study aim: grammar constructions (grammar post-tasks every 2 episodes)
- Viewing preceded by culture-oriented introductions to episodes





Two sessions of explicit instruction on...



comedy subgenres



diverse humor types
(aggressive, affiliative, self-enhancing, and self-defeating)



General Theory of
Verbal Humor (Attardo &
Raskin, 1991)



humor categories based
on the target audience
(intentional, unintentional, and
unintended humor)



humor devices and
strategies (e.g.,
malapropisms, hyperboles,
irony, sarcasm, vulgar
language...)



influence of individual
personality and
creativity on humor
appreciation and
comprehension

After each episode...

- Between 3 and 5 excerpts were analyzed in terms of humor features and humor perception/ comprehension (data yet to be analyzed)



Instruments: EFL

The producers of *The Good Place* are looking for new ideas!

How is Tahani going to keep Eleanor in The Good Place? What is her plan? Write a conversation between the main characters describing what they are going to say to each other and what they are going to do to save Eleanor. Try to reflect the characters' sense of humor in your screenplay.

Write between 200-220 words. Try to use as many phrases as you can from what you heard/read/learnt while you were watching *The Good Place* show.

Write the first conversation of the next episode using the background story given.

You have 40 minutes to complete the task.

- Oxford Placement Test (OPT – Allan, 2004)
- Screenplay writing task (students previously trained on screenplay writing conventions)



INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE AT THE GOOD PLACE -(TIME?).....

Tahani, Chidi, Jason, and both Eleanors break into Michael's office without knocking and interrupt his conversation with Janet. Tahani impatiently sits on the chair and starts explaining her plan. Everyone is listening to her and discusses her plan when she finishes.

Instruments: creativity

- Creative Achievement Questionnaire (CAQ – Carson et al., 2005)

Creative Achievement Questionnaire
Shelley Carson
Harvard University

I. Place a check mark beside the areas in which you feel you have more talent, ability, or training than the average person.

- ☐ visual arts (painting, sculpture)
- ☐ music
- ☐ dance
- ☐ individual sports (tennis, golf)
- ☐ team sports
- ☐ architectural design
- ☐ entrepreneurial ventures
- ☐ creative writing
- ☐ humor
- ☐ inventions
- ☐ scientific inquiry
- ☐ theater and film
- ☐ culinary arts

I. Theater and Film

- ___0. I do not have training or recognized ability in this field.
- ___1. I have performed in theater or film.
- ___2. My acting abilities have been recognized in a local publication.
- ___3. I have directed or produced a theater or film production.
- ___4. I have won an award or prize for acting in theater or film.
- ___5. I have been paid to act in theater or film.
- ___6. I have been paid to direct a theater or film production.
- * ___7. My theatrical work has been recognized in a national publication.

F. Humor

- ___0. I do not have recognized talent in this area (Skip to Inventions).
- ___1. People have often commented on my original sense of humor.
- ___2. I have created jokes that are now regularly repeated by others.
- ___3. I have written jokes for other people.
- ___4. I have written a joke or cartoon that has been published.
- ___5. I have worked as a professional comedian.
- ___6. I have worked as a professional comedy writer.
- ___7. My humor has been recognized in a national publication.

E. Creative Writing

- ___0. I do not have training or recognized talent in this area (Skip to Humor).
- ___1. I have written an original short work (poem or short story).
- ___2. My work has won an award or prize.
- ___3. I have written an original long work (epic, novel, or play).
- ___4. I have sold my work to a publisher.
- ___5. My work has been printed and sold publicly.
- ___6. My work has been reviewed in local publications.
- * ___7. My work has been reviewed in national publications.

II. *Place a check mark beside sentences that apply to you. Next to sentences with an asterisk (*), write the number of times this sentence applies to you.*

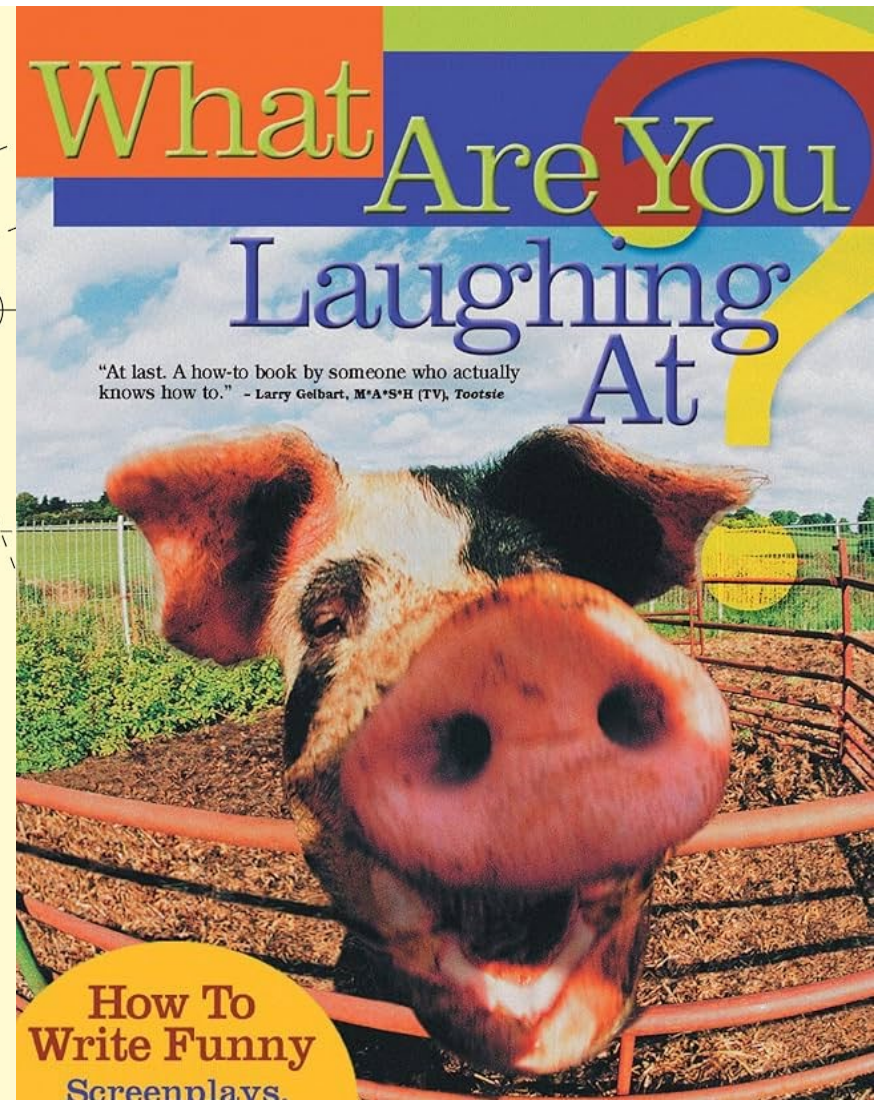
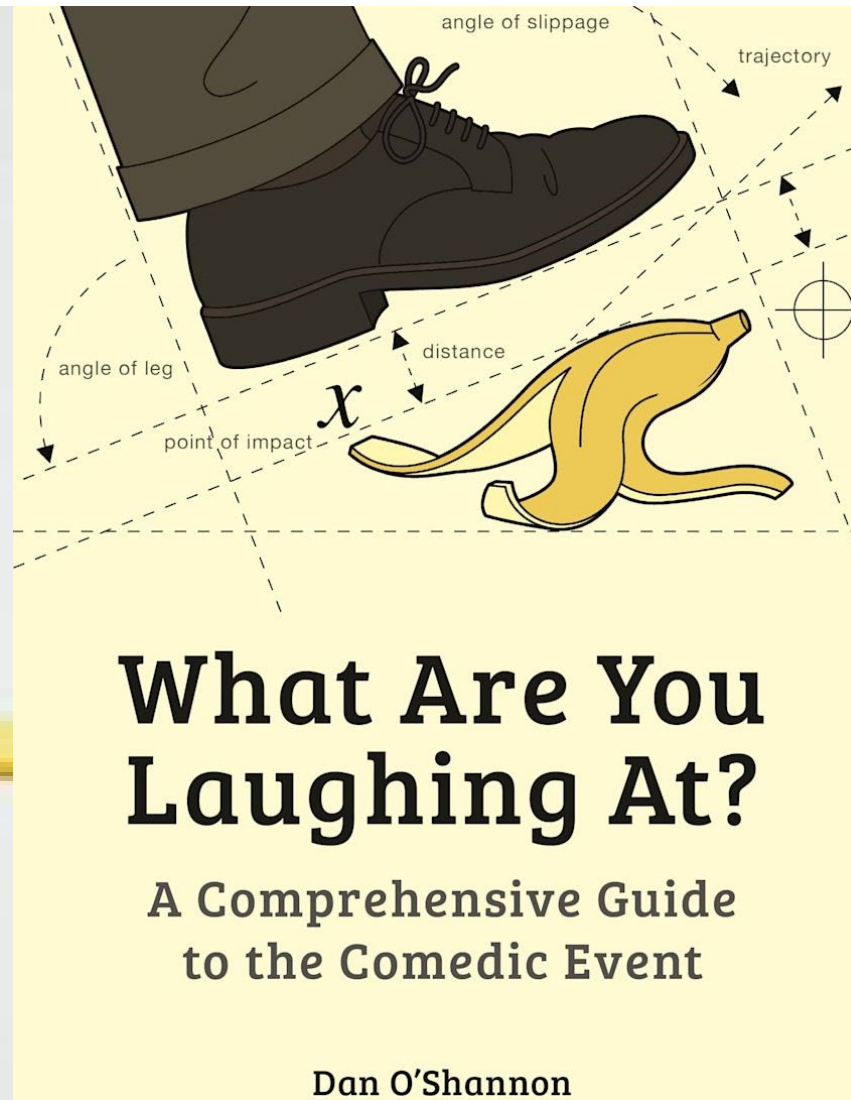
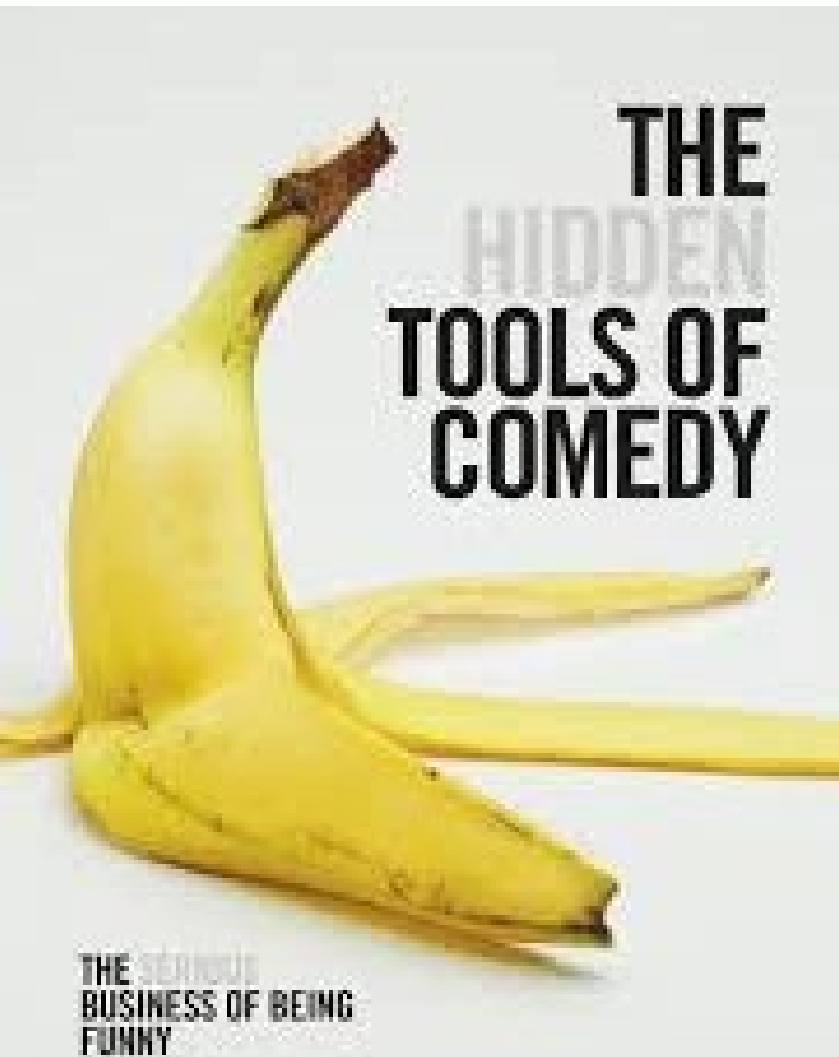
Instruments

Creative Achievement Questionnaire
(CAQ – Carson et al., 2005)

Scoring and preliminary analysis

- CAQ and OPT as indicated in the manual
- Chi-squares (binary scores) for creativity to check for independence of variables: $p > .05$
- Mann-Whitney tests to check for significant differences between captions and enhanced captions group and creativity / proficiency: $p > .05$ (Spearman) → eliminated
- Part II of the CAQ (students' creative achievements) and humor devices in the screenplay: $p > .05$ (Spearman) → eliminated
- Humor devices: 24 data driven categories

Sources for the humor categories



Humorous strategies data-driven categories

L2-related types 3/24

- Malapropism
- **Vulgar language (shirt, fork...)**
- Wordplay

L2-unrelated types 21/24

- Intertextuality
- Situational irony
- Dramatic irony
- Irony
- Slapstick
- Wit
- Sarcasm
- Understatement
- Exaggeration
- Dumbness
- Confusion
- Misbehavior
- **Caricature/parody in character**
- Sexual jokes
- Pathos
- Surprise/ Plot reversal
- Comedy comes in 3s
- Psychological defense
- Heightened sense of reality
- Irreverence
- Somebody's pain

RQ1

What **humorous devices** (in terms of **quantity** and **variety**) do EFL learners use in a written comedy screenplay after being exposed to 10 episodes of a fantasy comedy depending on:

1. the students' EFL proficiency level?
2. the students' self-reported creativity in humor, creative writing, and theater and film?

Number of humor devices / proficiency

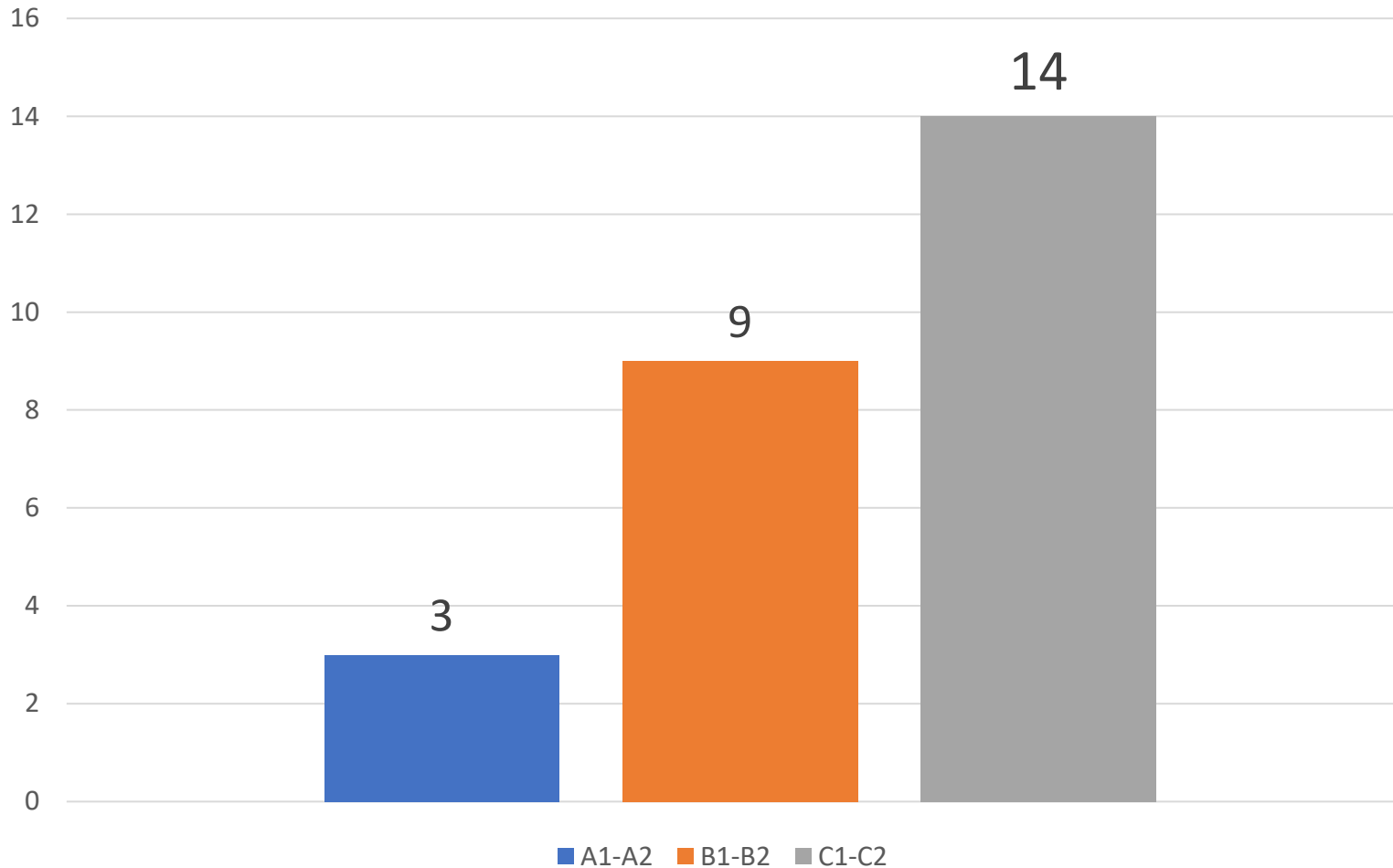
Proficiency	N	Language-related humor devices		Language-unrelated humor devices		Total of humor devices	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
A1-A2	16	.63	.62	5.31	2.82	5.94	2.74
B1-B2	44	.93	.97	6.61	3.99	7.55	4.31
C1-C2	22	.95	.84	7.41	2.84	8.36	2.88
Total	82	.88	.88	6.57	3.54	7.45	3.74

Kruskal-Wallis: $p > .05$

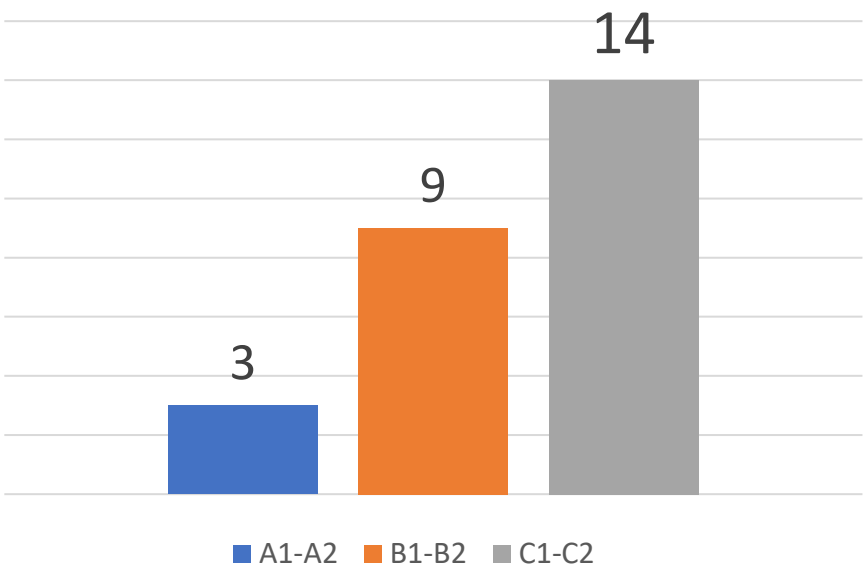
Number of humor devices / proficiency total scores

		L2-related humor devices	L2-unrelated humor devices	Total of humor devices
Proficiency (N = 82)	Spearman's rho	.072	.283**	.284**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.518	.010	.010

Highest score on humor device category depending on proficiency



Highest score on humor device category depending on proficiency



Humor device	A1-A2		B1-B2		C1-C2		Total	
	(n = 16)		(n = 44)		(n= 22)		(N = 82)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Intertextuality	.50	.82	.18	.45	.41	.67	.30	.60
Slapstick	.94	.93	.75	.78	.73	.94	.78	.85
Dumbness	.25	.45	.25	.49	.23	.43	.24	.46

Categories with the highest tokens

Humor device	A1-A2		B1-B2		C1-C2		Total	
	(n = 16)		(n = 44)		(n = 22)		(N = 82)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Intertextuality	.50	.82	.18	.45	.41	.67	.30	.60
Slapstick	.94	.93	.75	.78	.73	.94	.78	.85
Dumbness	.25	.45	.25	.49	.23	.43	.24	.46
Caricature	1.50	1.50	1.77	1.45	1.82	1.18	1.73	1.38
Situational irony	.75	.78	.82	.97	.95	.79	.84	.88

Categories with the highest tokens: L2-related

Humor device	A1-A2 (n = 16)		B1-B2 (n = 44)		C1-C2 (n= 22)		Total (N = 82)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Intertextuality	.50	.82	.18	.45	.41	.67	.30	.60
Slapstick	.94	.93	.75	.78	.73	.94	.78	.85
Dumbness	.25	.45	.25	.49	.23	.43	.24	.46
Caricature	1.50	1.50	1.77	1.45	1.82	1.18	1.73	1.38
Situational irony	.75	.78	.82	.97	.95	.79	.84	.88
Malapropism	.00	.00	.02	.15	.00	.00	.01	.11
Vulgar language	.56	.51	.70	.90	.68	.78	.67	.80
Wordplay	.00	.00	.02	.15	.09	.29	.04	.19

Types of humor devices / proficiency

Proficiency		A1-A2 (n = 16)	B1-B2 (n = 44)	C1-C2 (n = 22)	Total (N = 82)
L2- related types	Mean	.63	.73	.73	.71
	SD	.62	.66	.55	.62
	Min	0	0	0	0
	Max	2	2	2	2
L2-unrelated types	Mean	3.75	4.77	5.36	4.73
	SD	1.73	1.99	2.04	2.01
	Min	1	1	3	1
	Max	7	10	9	10
Total types of humor devices	Mean	4.38	5.50	6.09	5.44
	SD	1.86	2.19	1.99	2.14
	Min	1	2	3	1
	Max	8	10	9	10

- Kruskal-Wallis $p > .05$ in all cases

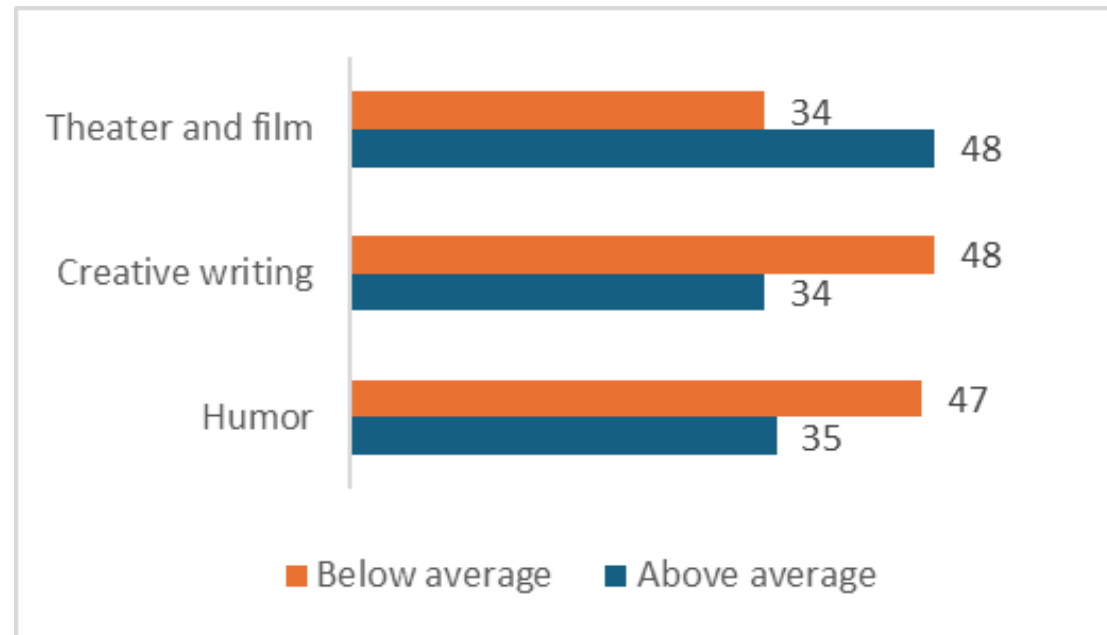
Types of humor devices / proficiency

Proficiency		A1-A2 (n = 16)	B1-B2 (n = 44)	C1-C2 (n = 22)	Total (N = 82)
L2- related types	Mean	.63	.73	.73	.71
	SD	.62	.66	.55	.62
	Min	0	0	0	0
	Max	2	2	2	2
L2-unrelated types <i>r = .279</i> <i>p = .011</i>	Mean	3.75	4.77	5.36	4.73
	SD	1.73	1.99	2.04	2.01
	Min	1	1	3	1
	Max	7	10	9	10
Total types of humor devices <i>r = .265</i> <i>p = .016</i>	Mean	4.38	5.50	6.09	5.44
	SD	1.86	2.19	1.99	2.14
	Min	1	2	3	1
	Max	8	10	9	10

- Kruskal-Wallis $p > .05$ in all cases

- Weak yet significant Spearman correlations with proficiency total score.

Creative Achievement Questionnaire: Descriptives



Humor tokens depending on creativity

Creativity variable		N	L2-related humor devices		L2-unrelated humor devices		Total of humor devices	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Humor	Above	35	.94	.91	7.94	3.97	8.89	4.13
	Below	47	.83	.87	5.55	2.81	6.38	3.04
Creative writing	Above	34	1	.95	7.15	4.16	8.15	4.30
	Below	48	.79	.82	6.17	3.01	6.96	3.24
Theater and film	Above	48	.90	.97	6.10	3.40	7	3.52
	Below	34	.85	.744	7.24	3.67	8.09	3.98

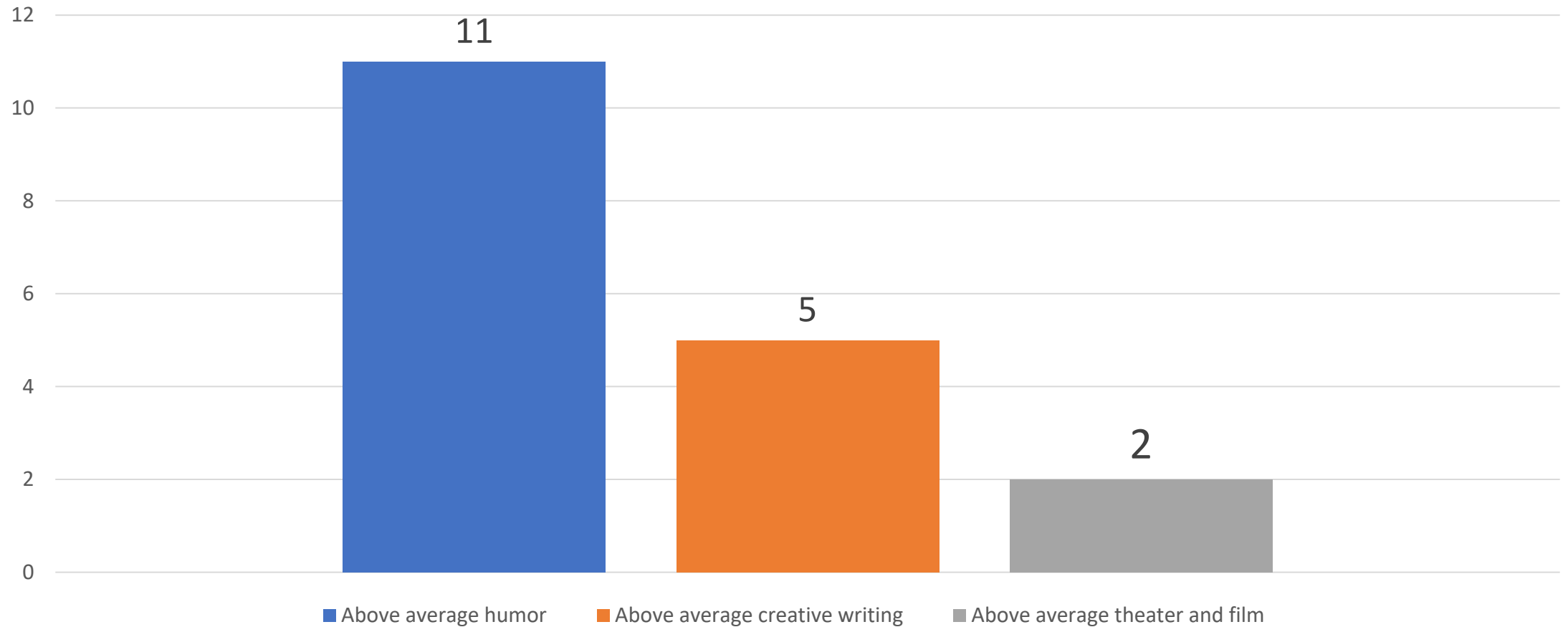
Mann-Whitney tests:

Humor above average vs below average: L2-unrelated ($p = .006$) and total ($p = .010$)

Creative writing and Theater and film: $p > .05$

‘Above-average humor’ always show a higher use of humor devices than above-average creative writing and theater and film, except for creative writing and L2-related devices, though no significant differences were found.

Highest score on humor device category depending on creativity aspect



Creativity and variety of humor devices

Creative skills		Humor		Creative writing		Theater and film		Total
		Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	
L2-related types (out of 3)	Mean	.71	.70	.79	.65	.71	.71	.71
	SD	.62	.62	.70	.57	.65	.58	.62
	Min	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Max	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
L2-unrelated types (out of 21)	Mean	5.31	4.30	5.06	4.50	4.48	5.09	4.73
	SD	2.14	1.80	2.24	1.81	1.91	2.11	2.01
	Min	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Max	10	9	10	9	10	9	10
Total types of humor devices (out of 24)	Mean	6.03	5	5.85	5.15	5.19	5.79	5.44
	SD	2.20	2	2.35	1.95	2.02	2.28	2.14
	Min	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
	Max	10	9	10	9	10	9	10

Creativity and variety of humor devices

Creative skills		Humor		Creative writing		Theater and film		Total
		Above	Below	Above	Below	Above	Below	
L2-related types (out of 3)	Mean	.71	.70	.79	.65	.71	.71	.71
	SD	.62	.62	.70	.57	.65	.58	.62
	Min	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Max	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
L2-unrelated types (out of 21)	Mean	5.31	4.30	5.06	4.50	4.48	5.09	4.73
	SD	2.14	1.80	2.24	1.81	1.91	2.11	2.01
	Min	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
	Max	10	9	10	9	10	9	10
Total types of humor devices (out of 24)	Mean	6.03	5	5.85	5.15	5.19	5.79	5.44
	SD	2.20	2	2.35	1.95	2.02	2.28	2.14
	Min	2	1	1	1	2	1	1
	Max	10	9	10	9	10	9	10

Mann-Whitney: Only significant differences in above vs below in **humor** in the L2-unrelated ($p = .039$) and the total types of humor devices ($p = .040$) categories.

RQ2

To which extent do **proficiency** and **self-reported creativity** in humor, creative writing, and theater and film **influence** the quantity and quality of **humor elements** in screenplay writing?

Standard multiple regressions

Humor tokens	Predictive power	
	<i>p</i>	%
Proficiency	.004	8.8
Humor	.001	12.25
Creative writing	.336	0.92
Theater and film	.116	2.50

$F(4, 77) = 6.083, p < .001, R^2 = .240$

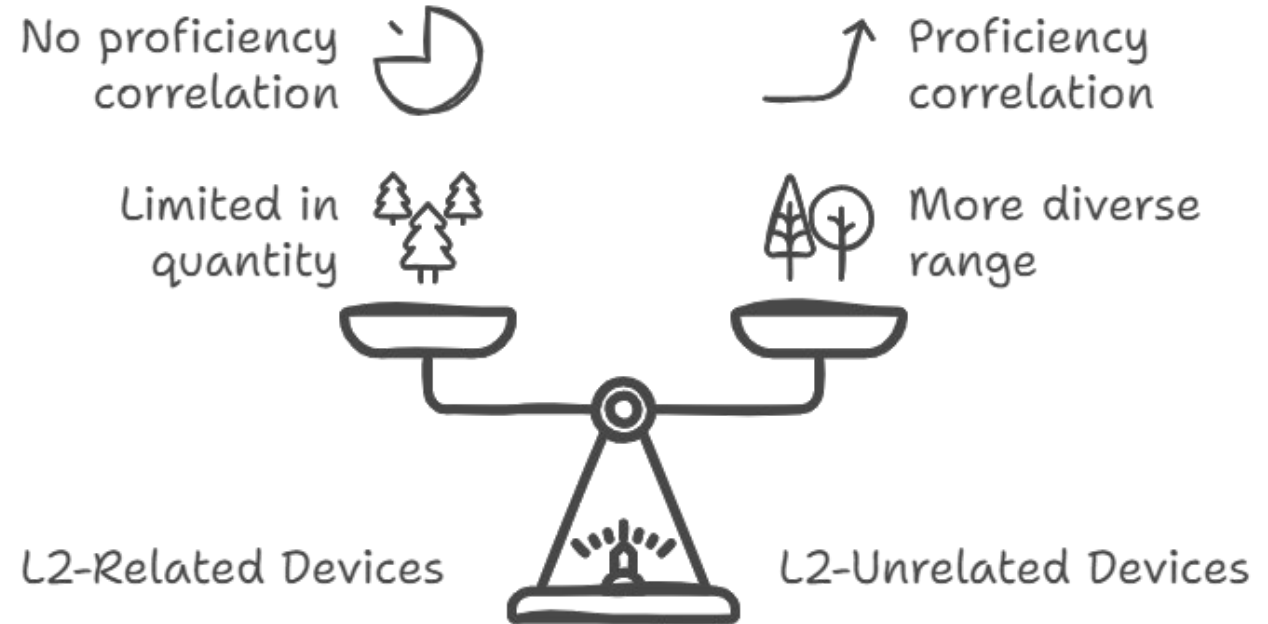
Humor variety of devices	Predictive power	
	<i>p</i>	%
Proficiency	.002	10.76
Humor	.013	6.6
Creative writing	.380	1.72
Theater and film	.153	2.62

$F(4, 77) = 5.038, p < .001, R^2 = .207$

Discussion

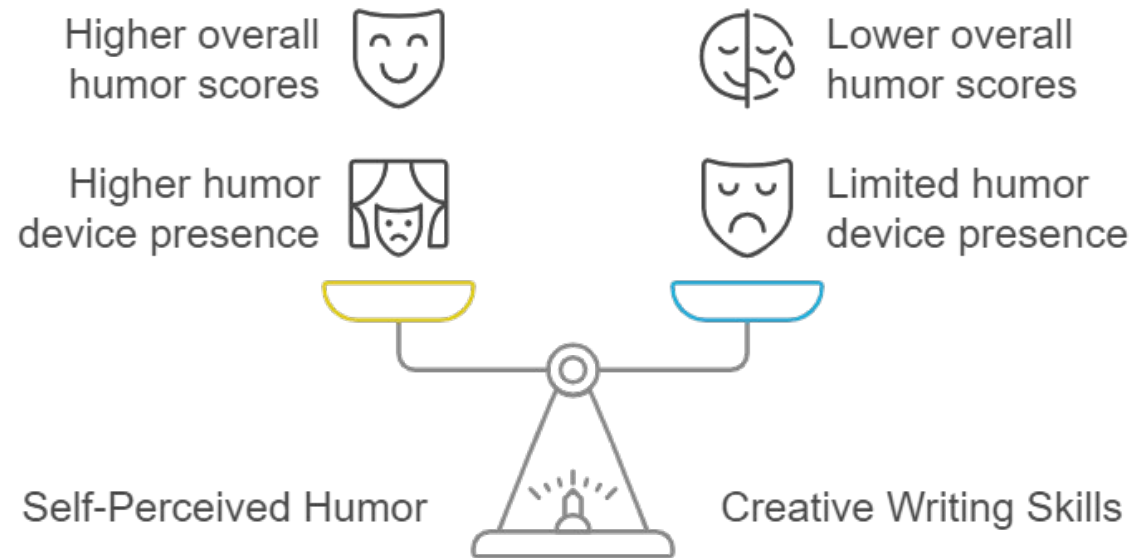


Unlocking Humor
Through Proficiency



**Comparing L2-related and L2-unrelated
humor devices in screenplays.**

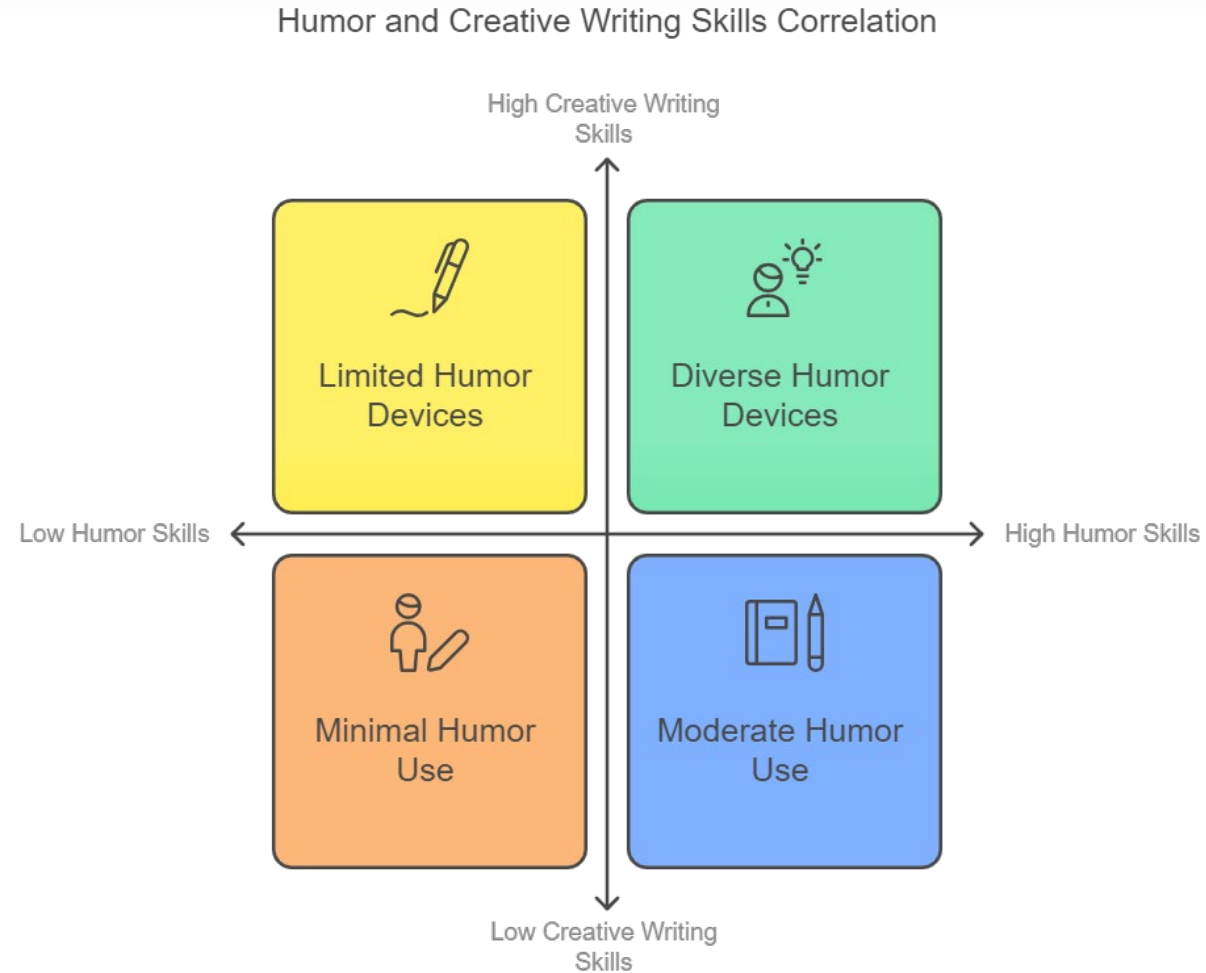
Discussion



Self-perceived humor skills enhance humor device usage and scores.

- Theater and film skills are nowhere to be found.

Discussion



Discussion

Proficiency vs. Creativity



Proficiency

Essential for diverse humor



Creativity

Enhances humor
adaptation

Conclusions & limitations

- Comedy audiovisual input facilitates humor use in FL
- Proficiency threshold for the use of humor devices (B1-B2 vs C1 on CEFRL)
- Humor in one's L1 needed to create humor in FL
- Creative writing skills also influential
- Uncontrolled variables:
 - instruction on humor during the term
 - Students' actual L1 humor skills
 - Number of humor types and tokens in the 10 episodes (audiovisual input exposure)
 - Students' preference for TV genres



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Suárez, M.M. (2024, in review). Comedy screenplay writing after original version extensive viewing: Proficiency might be necessary, but so are humor skills. In A. Pattemore & F. Gesa (Eds.), *Foreign language learning from audiovisual input: The role of original version television*. Springer.

II Congreso Internacional sobre el Humor Verbal

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Universidad de Alicante

Thank you!

Contact: mmsuarez@ub.edu

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