

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains about the background of the research, research questions, purpose of the study, contribution of the study, theoretical framework, research methodology, and research ethics.

A. Background of the Research

Indonesias' demographic bonus represents a valuable human resource asset with significant potential to be harnessed as a foundation for development (Triono, 2022). By 2045, this demographic advantage could serve as either a strength or a challenge for the nation, depending on the efforts undertaken today to prepare for it. The demographic bonus is envisioned as a crucial driver for transforming the current generation into the golden generation of 2045—one that is exceptional, capable, productive, literate, skilled, character-driven, and highly competitive. Enhancing the quality of education is a key strategic measure to fully realize the potential of the demographic bonus and achieve this vision (Nurrohmah, 2021).

The skills needed by future generations to live a decent life in a global society in the 21st century include 16 skills divided into three main groups: basic literacy (foundational literacies), competencies (21st Century Competencies), and character qualities. The basic literacy group includes six types of literacy, namely language and literature literacy, numeracy, science, finance, information and communication technology, and culture and citizenship. Meanwhile, the 21st century competency group consists of four main skills (4C/4K), namely critical thinking and problem solving, creative and innovative thinking, communication, and collaboration (Rahmawati, 2022).

Critical thinking is one of the 21st century competency groups, in which one of components of critical thinking is evaluating skills (Sarigöz, 2023). Evaluating skills play an important role in higher education that can help students make logical and evidence-based decisions. This skill should be possessed by students to assess reasoning, including assessing the validity of arguments, considering evidence, and determining the relevance of claims

(Mason, 2008). In context of Blooms' Taxonomy, evaluating skills also include the ability to assess the validity of arguments, identify bias or hidden messages, and determine the relevance of information to the context (Anderson, 2001).

Evaluating skills allow students to assess the validity of arguments, identify biases, and determine the relevance of information in various contexts. Stand-up comedy, as a form of communication that is full of humorous elements such as irony, satire, and wordplay, offers unique potential to train these skills (McGraw, 2014). Through the analysis of humorous elements that often require in-depth interpretation, students are not only invited to understand the context, but also to assess the logic and hidden messages in the material presented, making it a relevant medium to support the development of evaluation skills.

In this case, the use of stand-up comedy to boost evaluating skills in university students in English language learning has emerged as a topic that has sparked debate. Askildson (2005) stated in his journal entitled *"Effects of Humor in the Language Classroom: Humor as a Pedagogical Tool in Theory and Practice"*, that this approach is considered capable of contributing to improving students' analytical and assessment skills of language and culture through humor. Similarly, Heidari-Shahreza (2024) highlights that humour-integrated language learning (HILL) can significantly enhance learners' critical and analytical thinking skills by fostering a playful yet reflective learning environment.

This current research is important as humor-based approaches, particularly stand-up comedy, offer a unique way to develop university students' evaluating skills, serve their learning preferences directly. English stand-up comedy offers a unique approach to developing evaluating skills. Humor in stand-up comedy often contains elements such as irony, satire, and wordplay that force the audience to evaluate the context, logic, and hidden messages in jokes. To understand this humor, students should base their judgments on cultural, social, and linguistic understanding.

The topic of boosting evaluating skills has been widely explored by researchers, including Parsazadeh (2018), who explores how technology-based

learning, especially mobile learning, can improve students' online information evaluation skills. In this research, a cooperative and interactive learning framework was used to motivate students to critically evaluate information. The authors found that this approach successfully improved evaluation skills by leveraging direct interaction, collaboration, and feedback.

Similarly, Kusumo et al. (2024) in their study published in the *International Journal of Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis* found that integrating technology in the learning process significantly enhances student engagement and academic achievement. They emphasized that technology-based learning encourages active participation, fosters peer collaboration, and provides immediate feedback, thereby supporting the development of critical evaluation skills in students. The research provides a foundation that digital technology media can support the development of evaluation skills. This research takes inspiration from the concept, but replaces the technology media with stand-up comedy as an innovative tool to boost students' evaluation skills. Humor in stand-up comedy encourages students to evaluate elements of logic, irony, and contextual relevance, expanding the application of evaluation in cultural and social contexts.

Meanwhile, previous studies have highlighted humors' value in education, gaining strong interest from academics. Tianli (2024) emphasized that humor fosters a relaxed classroom environment, strengthens student relationships, and enhances enjoyment in learning. This aligns with the preferences of today's university students, as noted by SEA - *Practical Application of Science* (2019), which found this digital generation favors interactive, culturally relevant, and humorous content. Humor can also improve problem-solving abilities and stimulate creative and critical thinking (Dorman & Biddle, 2006; Wanzer et al., 2010). Heidari-Shahreza (2024) further supports this by proposing Humour Integrated Language Learning (HILL), which integrates humor to boost engagement, reduce affective barriers, and foster a positive learning atmosphere while encouraging critical and creative thinking.

Although previous studies have demonstrated the benefits of humor in learning, few studies have examined in depth how specific elements of stand-up comedy can engage students in evaluating arguments among university students. This generation of university students, characterized by unique learning preferences and a strong affinity for interactive digital content, is highly responsive to humor and pop culture.

In this research context, experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) serves as the foundational framework, which emphasizes active learning through experience, and incongruity theory (Morreall, 1983), which sees humor arising from unexpected contrasts, fostering critical reflection. Humor is viewed as a cognitive tool that boosts memory, creativity, and engagement (Apte, 1985; McGhee, 1979). Additionally, Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) frames learning as socially influenced, with humor bridging linguistic, cultural, and cognitive aspects. Therefore, this research aims to explore how students develop their evaluation skills through exposure to stand-up comedy. Using a narrative inquiry approach, this study explores students' stories and reflections on their experiences in understanding stand-up comedy elements and providing evaluations of them.

B. Research Problems

This research aims to introduce a fresh perspective on boosting students' evaluation skills, which are a critical component of 21st-century competencies. As evaluation skills are essential for making informed judgments and decisions, they are particularly crucial in supporting efforts to realize Indonesia's Golden Vision 2045. However, Traditional teaching methods often struggle to effectively engage students in the process of developing these skills. Therefore, this study explores the use of English stand-up comedy as a learning medium to specifically boost evaluation skills in a more engaging and culturally relevant way.

Humor has long been recognized as a powerful educational tool that enhances cognitive engagement, retention, and creative thinking (Chapman & Foot, 1976: 94; Forsyth et al. 1997: 2–3; Berk 2002: 10; Gurtler 2002: 5). Stand-

up comedy, in particular, employs elements such as irony, satire, and wordplay, which require deeper analysis and interpretation to fully understand (Aarons, 2017). Prior research suggests that humor can contribute to learning, yet few studies have examined how stand-up comedy specifically boosts evaluating skills. By encouraging students to critically assess the logic, context, and hidden meanings behind jokes, stand-up comedy has the potential to serve as an innovative medium for developing higher-order thinking.

While previous studies on humor in education highlight its positive effects on student engagement and cognitive processing, they lack a detailed focus on how specific elements of humor contribute to evaluating skills. Additionally, humor-based approaches remain underexplored. Given that today's university students, particularly Gen Z, prefer interactive, culturally relevant, and engaging content (SEA, 2019), stand-up comedy could be a particularly effective pedagogical tool.

This study aims to fill this research gap by investigating how English stand-up comedy boosting students' evaluating skills, identifying which stand-up comedy elements contribute most to critical thinking, and providing practical insights for educators. The research is feasible within the available time, resources, and expertise, and it holds notable potential to contribute to the field by introducing a creative and engaging approach to teaching evaluating skills in university-level English education.

C. Research Questions

To guide this study in exploring the potential of stand-up comedy as a tool for boosting students' evaluating skills, the following research questions are formulated:

1. How do university students learn evaluating skills when exposed to stand-up comedy?
2. How do students' narrative reflections reveal the contribution of stand-up comedy on their evaluating skills?

3. What elements of stand-up comedy contribute noticeably to boost students' evaluating skills?

D. Purposes of the Study

The first purpose of this study was to determine how students learn evaluating skills when exposed to stand-up comedy. The second is to identify which stand-up comedy elements noticeably contribute to boosting students' evaluating skills. Third, this study explores students' experiences in interpreting humor and their perspectives on evaluating arguments embedded in irony and satire through a narrative inquiry approach. Additionally, it displays the results of students' narrative reflections, revealing the contribution of stand-up comedy to their evaluation skills.

E. Contributions of the Study

This study has the potential to make multiple contributions:

1. Theoretical Contribution

This research expands the academic discourse on experiential and humor-based learning by providing empirical evidence linking humor with the development of evaluating skills in language education. This study explores how stand-up comedy elements, such as irony and satire, can support students' ability to assess arguments, identify biases, and determine contextual relevance.

2. Practical Contribution

It also offers practical insights for educators on incorporating stand-up comedy in English language classes to enhance student engagement and support the development of evaluating skills. By demonstrating how humor can facilitate evaluating reasoning, this research provides innovative strategies for bridging traditional methods with today's university students' learning preferences.

3. Methodological Contribution

This research pioneering an interdisciplinary approach by combining experience-based methodology and humor, exploring its effectiveness as a tool to foster evaluation skills in university students. This study highlights the use of narrative inquiry as a method for understanding how students reflect on and improve their evaluating reasoning through humor-based experiences.

In conclusion, this chapter has outlined the importance of the research on using English stand-up comedy as a pedagogical tool to boost university students' evaluating skills, a critical component of 21st-century competencies. The background of the study has highlighted Indonesia's demographic bonus, the importance of developing skills for the future workforce, and the centrality of evaluating skills in higher education. It has also reviewed the theoretical underpinnings, including experiential learning, incongruity theory, and sociocultural theory, which support humor as a cognitive tool for enhancing critical thinking and evaluation abilities.

Furthermore, the research questions and objectives have set a clear direction for exploring the impact of humor, specifically stand-up comedy, on the development of evaluating skills. By examining students' experiences and reflections on stand-up comedy elements such as irony and satire, this study aims to bridge the gap in existing literature and provide a fresh, engaging approach to teaching evaluating skills. The contributions of this study, both theoretical and practical, highlight its potential to influence teaching strategies and provide valuable insights for educators seeking innovative ways to engage students in critical thinking. Through this research, the study offers a promising avenue for developing effective educational tools that align with students' evolving learning preferences, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of enhancing educational outcomes in Indonesia's higher education landscape.