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Humor and teasing among ASEAN ELF speakers*

Abstract

This paper focuses on humor and teasing naturally occurring in the English as a lingua franca (ELF) conversations of English speakers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries. Participants were eight dyads (participants in four dyads were socially close to each other, whereas those in four dyads were strangers), and each dyad had English speakers from two different ASEAN countries. The data was from the video recordings of each dyad cooking together and retrospective interviews with each participant while watching the recorded video together with the researcher. Close and in-depth analysis was carried out on instances of humor and teasing by participants in the data collected. The data in the study demonstrated how ASEAN ELF speakers construct humor and teasing in their ELF interactions. Generally, participants in the dyads where humor and teasing occurred were responsive to their interlocutors' humor or teasing by jointly constructing humor or teasing with their interlocutors or at least by responding with laughter. The findings showed that humorous talks and teasing were frequently occasioned in ELF interactions of ASEAN English speakers who were close to each other, and, furthermore, the ELF speakers were collaborative and interactive with their interlocutors in constructing humorous talks and teasing in their ELF interactions.

Keywords: ASEAN, ELF, humor, teasing, laughter

1 Introduction

This paper focuses on humor and teasing in English as a lingua franca (ELF) interactions in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) context. Jenkins (2006, 2007) and Seidlhofer (2004) regarded ELF as the use of English between speakers who do not share the same first language. The ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region is multicultural and multilingual, but there is no single language which is mutually understood by people from all the ASEAN member states. This may be the reason why English was adopted as the official language of ASEAN to be used among ASEAN countries as well as to communicate with people from non-ASEAN countries. The present study focuses on humor and teasing in ELF interactions of each dyad in which participants were from two different ASEAN countries. To date, there has been very little attention to humorous talk and teasing practices of ASEAN ELF

* My sincere thanks are to all the participants in this study for generously spending their time on the video recordings and the interviews. I would also like to give special thanks to my supervisor, Dr. Donald W. Peckham, for his suggestion and guidance on this paper. My thanks are also due to the anonymous reviewer(s) for the constructive comments on this paper. All remaining errors are my responsibility.

speakers. This study investigates how ASEAN ELF speakers construct humor and teasing in their ELF interactions.

2 Humor and teasing in ELF talk

ELF is “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (Firth 1996: 240). In this regard, the use of English in the ASEAN context is as a lingua franca, and ELF speakers in the ASEAN context come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. House (2010: 382) states that

ELF users are bilingual or multilingual speakers having in principle more than one language at their disposal and showing it in the way they mark identity, attitudes and alliances, signal discourse functions, convey politeness, create aesthetic and humorous effects, or pragmatic ambiguity and so on – all this is well-known from the rich bilingualism literature.

Given the use of humor and teasing in their ELF interactions, this study presents empirical evidence for the ASEAN ELF speakers’ ELF behavior. As humor and teasing are cultural specific, an ELF speaker’s use of humor or teasing in an ELF interaction may or may not be funny or amusing for the interlocutor who is also an ELF speaker.

2.1 Humor

Humor is regarded as an utterance in an interaction a speaker intentionally creates to amuse the speaker and at least some other participants in the interaction (Holmes 2000; Stark 2009; Walkinshaw & Kirkpatrick 2020). They also assert that humor is context-dependent, interactive, and collaborative, and has entertainment value. Martin (2007) asserts that using humor in conversations can relieve tensions between speakers and create positive feelings toward each other. According to Martin, humor can be found across cultures, and it occurs in all types of social contexts such as between sexual partners, family members, friends, and so on. Martin also mentions that humor can be in different forms such as “jokes, amusing personal anecdotes, spontaneous witty comments, ironic observations, puns, teasing, sarcasm” (2007: 116) and the like. No matter how different the form of humor is, it has an important interpersonal function – to maintain “social harmony and stability” (2007: 116).

There is abundant research on humor but only a few studies were conducted in the ELF context. One of them is Stark’s (2009) study on ELF interactions in a business context. The study shows that the use of humor in meetings is helpful to “create pleasant atmosphere” (2009: 156) as well as to enhance solidarity and bonds among participants in the interaction. She also states that ELF speakers can construct humor in a collaborative way. As an example of the use of humor to create a pleasant atmosphere, she presents a case of the chair and two participants of a business meeting. When those people were waiting for a participant who was late to the meeting, they conducted a small talk in which humor was embedded to break an awkward silent atmosphere. However, the chair changed their topic to start their meeting as soon as the awaited participant arrived. Stark states that changing the topic like this in a conversation is generally not appropriate, but the case was in the business context and so that such kind of topic change from humor to business seemed to be fine.

Unlike Stark’s study, Matsumoto’s (2014) study was in an informal setting. Participants in her study were dormmates. Among the three dyads in her study, two dyads used humor in their talks whereas one dyad did not. According to Matsumoto, there are three variables which influence whether each dyad employed humor in their talks or not. The first one was the participants’ level of English proficiency. Matsumoto assumes that those who are comfortable using English can construct humor more than those who are not. Another variable is “the degree of social distance” (2014: 89) between participants in each dyad. She states that the two dyads in which participants employed humor in their ELF interactions had known each other much longer than the dyad in which participants did not employ humor. The third variable is gender of the participants in each dyad. Participants in the two dyads in which humor was employed were female whereas those in the dyad which humor was not employ were male. Thus, Matsumoto states that male speakers might “not want to engage in face-threatening conversation such as humor” (2014: 90) since “the issues of face and identity are deeply involved when people engage in humorous interactions” (2014: 89).

The following (Example 1) is an example of humor among ELF speakers which was taken from Matsumoto (2014: 90). There were two speakers in the extract, Yuka (Y) and Pham (P), who were dormmates. In the extract, they were talking about the difficulty of their graduate students’ life. In Lines 1 to 3, Y was wondering if they had changed since they began their programs. Then, in Lines 4 to 6, P initiated humorous exchange, asking Y if they would become more intelligent or more stupid. Then, P added laughter at the end of her question, in Line 6. In the next line, Y joined P’s laughter, and then Y said *both* in Line 7 to answer P’s question in Line 5. In this example, Y’s joint laughter, and also her answer to P’s question, showed that she co-constructed humor together with P, based on their common ground as being graduate students. This example provides evidence of ELF speakers’ nature of constructing humor in a collaborative way.

Example 1

1 Y: °I think° when we finish our programs
 2 (.) <if we’re different (.) from the first
 3 when we arrived here,>
 4 → P: ah, we are more intelligent or more
 5 → stupid, do you think?
 6 → aha[haha
 7 → Y: [haha both. [hahaha
 8 → P: [hahaha
 (Matsumoto 2014: 90, original emphasis)

In a study on humor in non-native instructional discourse by Williams et al. (2018), it was found that participants who were international teaching assistants in North American university classrooms (fourteen different nationalities) thought that they had linguistic challenges in using humor in class. One participant mentioned that a lack of English proficiency hindered him/her in using humor when he/she wanted to use it to influence students’ mood in cases when the class was getting boring.

Another challenge participants in Williams et al.’s (2018) study faced was a social challenge. A participant stated that it was difficult for her to identify whether her students were joking her

or not, and that that kind of inability was “a challenge and a barrier during social interactions” (2018: 228). On the other hand, some participants stated that when their students did not comprehend their attempts to use humor, they felt embarrassed. There were also some participants who said that they were successful in using humor in class. “Therefore, while participants were often unsure of student-initiated humor, they were more comfortable initiating humor themselves” (2018: 228).

According to Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick (2020) whose study was based on the ELF interactions from the Asian Corpus of English (ACE) data set, ELF speakers in the data set could use humor very well in their ELF interactions. Despite their different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, ELF speakers, even those whose English proficiency was low, could construct and respond to humor in their Asian multilinguals’ ELF interactions. Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick categorized humor into three main types such as solidarity humor, disaffiliative humor and self-denigrating humor among which self-denigrating humor was “a common feature of the ACE data set” (2020: 22). Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick found that ELF speakers who used self-denigrating humor “often degrade their own face [...] cognisant of increasing their positive self-image as being able to laugh at themselves” (2020: 22). However, most of the instances of humor in the ACE data set were non-face-threatening, and the ELF speakers in that data set would “avoid sensitive topics”, and their humor was “clearly situated within an established jointly-constructed jocular frame” (2020: 22).

2.2 Teasing

Teasing is “a ritualized form of humor, through which the participants playfully made fun of each other” (Kalocsai 2011: 119). Keltner et al. (2001) define teasing as “an intentional provocation accompanied by playful off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target” (2001: 234). Martin (2007) states that teasing is a form of humor, and playful friendly teasing (e.g. saying a negative thing in an ironic way) can occur among people with social relationships such as friends and coworkers, and the tease between the teaser and the teased shows that there is a closeness between them. However, Martin states that teasing is not appropriate among those who do not know each other well.

Kalocsai (2011) found that teasing plays an important role in the ELF communication of the participants in her research. According to one of the participants in her research, teasing is “all [about] joking and *not* to be rude” (2011: 119, original emphasis). An example of teasing among ELF speakers found in Kalocsai’s study is about *chicken*. While traveling to Prague, a participant called Marianne, with a tourist guidebook, told her travel mates that “at a certain hour, the golden chicken on top of a tower would move” (2011: 120). Although Marianne and her travel mates waited for a certain time, they did not see the chicken move. Since then, her friends teased Marianne by asking why the chicken did not move, and later only using the key words “Chicken, chicken!” (2011: 120, original emphasis) was enough to tease Marianne. When her friends teased her like that, Marianne responded them by swearing: “Fucking chicken! Next time the, the, the chicken will move for sure” (2011: 120, original emphasis). According to other participants in the research who were Marianne’s travel mates, this kind of uptake of Marianne’s demonstrated that she also participated in that teasing interaction. This example in Kalocsai’s study showed that ELF speakers jointly created teasing, and this is in line with Boxer and Cortés-Conde’s (1997) *bonding tease* in which speakers co-participate in the talk.

Walkinshaw (2016) looked at the occurrence of teasing within the ACE data set. He categorized teasing into four types: jocular mockery, teasing/jocular agreement with an interlocutor's self-deprecating self-assessment, and jocular insult, and banter. The following (Example 2) is an example of teasing from Walkinshaw's study. In this example, participants were a Thai (ThM), a Vietnamese (VnF), and an unidentified participant (UnF). According to Walkinshaw, the relationship among participants was friendly and collegial.

Example 2

- 1 VnF: why you (.) why you like vietnamese coffee
 2 ThM: (0.3) maybe because i like vietnamese girl that's why (and so)
 3 VnF: excuse me: [i kno:w]
 4 ThM: [(I have to) put my] soul in the vietnamese style
 5 VnF: even you [can-]
 6 ThM: [and then that makes me happier]
 7 → VnF: even you drink a ton of coffe- vietnamese coffee you couldn't
 8 get vietnamese girl
 9 → okay?
 10 SS: ((general laughter))
 11 ThM: where yeah yeah
 12 SS: ((general laughter))
 13 ThM: i- i ↑KNOW i ↑KNOW [it's not tsk]
 14 VnF: [cos i know] the one he targeting in is
 15 (.) out of his HAND (.) aha ↑ha
 16 UnF: o:h wo:w
 17 ThM: o::h i KNOW [it's not (person' s name)]
 18 UnF: [okay (.) mhm (.) yeah]
 19 ThM: oh my god ha ha
 20 SS: ((general laughter))
 (Walkinshaw 2016: 260, original emphasis)

In the example, ThM constructed humor in Line 2 when he answered VnF's question in Line 1 i.e. why he liked Vietnamese coffee. When ThM said he liked Vietnamese coffee maybe because he liked Vietnamese girls, and VnF responded to ThM's humor with teasing as shown in Lines 7 to 9, saying that even if ThM drank a ton of Vietnamese coffee, he could not get a Vietnamese girl. According to Walkinshaw, this kind of teasing is a jocular insult which is an insult by a speaker mocking at the interlocutor, expecting the result to be some good humor. In the example, after VnF's tease to ThM, co-participants in their conversation jointly laughed, and ThM also seemed to take it as a jocular, agreeing VnF with *yeah yeah*, in Line 11. Moreover, ThM's agreement in Lines 13 and 17, and also his laughter in Line 19 sounded like he accepted VnF's teasing without any negative feeling towards VnF's words. Walkinshaw states that this kind of jocular insult can "create solidarity by displaying familiarity, demonstrating that the relationship can withstand teasing and target-oriented humor" (2016: 260).

2.3 *Humor and teasing across culture and in cross-cultural communication*

As mentioned earlier, there is abundant research about humor in general in the previous literature. Reviewing the literature for the use of humor across cultures, it was found that Kuiper et al. (2010) and Saroglou and Scariot (2002) employed Puhlik-Doris and Martin's (1999) four humor styles to investigate Canadian people's use of humor, French-speaking Belgian university students' use of humor respectively. One part of Kuiper et al.'s study reveals that Canadian university and high school students use humor more with those who have close relationships with them than with those who have distant relationships with them. Their study shows that closeness between participants influences their use of humor. In their study, validating cross-culturally, Saroglou and Scariot (2002) mention that not only their Belgian participants "but also Germans ... report a lower sense of humour ... than Canadians or Americans" (2002: 51).

Looking at the previous literature about the use of humor in cross-cultural communication, Chiaro's (2009) research reveals that cross-cultural, bilingual couples in Germany know that there is "complexity of the creation of humor in interaction with their partner" (2009: 221). However, the couples consider humor as "a bonding agent" although there are factors such as linguistic difficulty as well as cultural diversity which influence on the success of their use of humor with their partners.

Unlike Chiaro's (2009) study, participants in Habib's (2008) study do not have any language problems in their communication as they all are highly advanced speakers of English. Habib found that the three international students from Greece, Portugal, and Syria and their international advisor (American) are close to each other. Thus, although they come from different cultural backgrounds, they can construct humor as well as disagreement in their interactions successfully. As in Chiaro's (2009) study, participants in Habib's study also prove that the strong personal bond among them influences their use of humor.

In the previous literature, some studies state that Easterners do not use as much humor as Westerners. There are some studies about Chinese people's use of humor. In their studies, Chen and Martin (2007), and Yue et al. (2016) found that Chinese people have less humor appreciation than Canadians. However, Jiang et al. (2019) argue that "Chinese like to use humor in coping with face threats" (2019: 6). Jiang et al. state that there are factors influencing Chinese people's use of humor such as individual differences (whether one is shy or with high self-esteem), and in which situations people are (e.g. facing face-threatening/saving situations). Other perspectives on Chinese people's use of humor are mentioned in Nesi's (2012) study. First, students from mainland China are not comfortable with their teachers' use of humor in class. Next, in places like Hong Kong, where English is used as a second or foreign language, although academic lectures are delivered in English, lecturers may not use English with their students for other non-lecture related purposes.

Looking at the previous literature about the use of humor in cross-cultural communication which are empirical studies about the experience of Chinese people, Lee (2006) found that although professors and other speakers at a North American university use humor in academic spoken discourse, international students have difficulty understanding American humor. Wang (2014) also found that there is linguistic difficulty for Chinese students to understand humor in academic lectures by teachers in Britain.

To conclude about humor and teasing across cultures, the previous literature shows that closeness or distance in relationships is a factor influencing Canadian use of humor, and that Canadians as well as Americans have a higher sense of humor than Belgians and Germans. Compared with Westerners, Chinese people have less humor appreciation and also use less

humor than Westerners. However, some empirical studies about humor in cross-cultural communications reveal that Chinese students in American and Britain universities have linguistic difficulty in understanding humor in academic lectures. Despite the consideration of humor as a bonding tool in couple relationship, bilingual couples in Germany reveal that not only some linguistic difficulty but also cultural diversity influences the use of humor in cross-cultural communication. However, international students from different countries at an American university prove that having a very good command of English and being close to each other in their social relationships make them use humor and disagreement in their interactions without any problem.

There is abundant research about humor across culture and in cross-cultural communications, and as can be seen in sections 2.1 and 2.2 above, some studies were conducted in the ELF interactions. However, none of the previous studies about humor and teasing in ELF interactions explored this in wider ASEAN ELF interactions. That's why, in my study, how ASEAN ELF speakers practice humor and teasing was investigated.

3 Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were eight dyads, with each dyad having two English speakers from two different ASEAN countries. As one of the participants was included in two activities, there were only 15 participants instead of 16 participants in the study. These 15 participants (7 male and 8 female) were from nine ASEAN countries, and they were students at Hungarian universities at the time of the data collection. The participants in each dyad and their profiles are listed in Table 1.

Group	Dyad	Code	Gender	Age	Nationality	Relationship
Dyads in which participants were close with each other	1	B1	M	35	Burmese	Close friends (Former roommates)
		V1	M	29	Vietnamese	
	2	I1	F	28	Indonesian	Flatmates
		M1	F	27	Malaysian	
	3	B2	F	33	Burmese	Flatmates
		L1	F	20	Laotian	
	4	B1	M	35	Burmese	Close friends
		V2	F	27	Vietnamese	
Dyads in which participants were not close with each other	5	C1	M	20	Cambodian	Strangers
		F1	F	23	Filipino	
	6	F2	F	34	Filipino	Strangers
		M2	M	19	Malaysian	
	7	F3	F	22	Filipino	Strangers
		S1	M	25	Singaporean	
	8	L2	M	31	Laotian	Strangers
		T1	M	26	Thai	

Table 1. Participants according to gender, age, nationality, and the relationship between speakers in each dyad

3.2 Data collection

The data was collected via video recordings of each dyad's ELF interaction while together cooking a participant's traditional dish. The recorded videos were watched together with the researcher for retrospective interviews with each participant. The interviews were based on the researcher's observation notes during the video recording. In the observation notes, instances of humor and teasing during participants' cooking activities were marked. Then, while watching the videos, these instances were cross-checked with the participants who had created humor and/or teasing in their interactions. When there was a moment of humor and/or teasing, and when there was a question to ask to the participants, the video was paused. If one of the participants in a dyad did not want their interlocutor to be with them during the interview, the interview with that participant was conducted individually.

3.3 Data selection and analysis

The data in this study was mainly transcriptions of the recorded videos in which instances of humor and/or teasing were included. The instances of humor and teasing were the ones which were cross-checked with the participants during the retrospective interviews. In the transcripts, participants' names were coded with initials of their respective nationalities (such as 'M' for Malaysian, 'V' for Vietnamese and 'S' for Singaporean) and a number as there were more than one participant from each country. Then, conversation analysis along the lines of Atkinson and Heritage (1984) was employed, also using an adjusted version of their transcription conventions (which are included at the end of the article).

4 Humor and teasing in ASEAN ELF talk

Out of the eight dyads, humor and teasing were found only in five dyads. Each instance of humorous talk below demonstrated how humor and teasing were constructed in each dyad, and how each participant responded to his/her interlocutor's humor and teasing.

An example of humor used by participants in the study can be seen in Example 3. This example was an extract from the conversation of Dyad 1 in which B1 (a Burmese) and V1 (a Vietnamese) were participants. They were former roommates at a dorm, and V1 said that B1 was one of his best and closest friends in Hungary. They cooked Vietnamese chicken rice on the day of the video recording and the cooking activity was at V1's flat.

In Line 3 of the following extract, after putting all ingredients into the rice pot and stirring them, B1 closed the cover of the electric rice cooker. Then, B1 took the power cord of the electric rice cooker from V1 and connected it to the electricity. At that time, V1 told B1 to remember to press the ON button of the electric rice cooker, in Line 11. Then, V1 told B1 an anecdote in Lines 14, 16, 18 and 20. It was about his previous experience of forgetting to press the ON button of the electric rice cooker while cooking. As soon as V1 started talking about it in Line 14, B1 started laughing, and B1 co-participated in V1's humor as shown in Line 17. Example 1 demonstrates that ASEAN ELF speakers construct humor in a collaborative way, and the co-participant's laughter in the example was a proof of having an entertainment value for the speaker's humor.

Example 3: An example of humor found in the conversation of Dyad 1

- 1 B1: After that?
 2 V1: After that put ((gesture of closing the electronic rice cooker))
 3 B1: Cover [and]= ((closes the rice cooker))
 4 V1: [Cover] [and]
 5 B1: =[we] can start.
 6 V1: ((holds the power cord of the rice cooker)) Yeah.
 7 B1: OK OK please give me. ((takes the power cord and connects it to the
 8 electricity))
 9 V1: Yeah.
 10 B1: OK.
 11 V1: ((points at the rice cooker)) Please remember (.) yeah press.
 12 B1: ((presses the power switch of the rice cooker))
 13 B1: Hm.
 14 V1: Sometimes I forget when I cook.
 15 B1: ((laughs))
 16 V1: After one hour,=
 17 B1: [You remember.]
 18 V1: =[I remember] I- the food and ((points at the stove)) ah:: finished.
 19 B1: ((laughs))
 20 V1: When I open, ((points at the rice cooker)) why water and rice.
 21 B1: ((laughs))

Another example of humorous talk found in the study was in the conversation of Dyad 2 in which I1 (an Indonesian) and M1 (a Malaysian) were participants. They were flatmates and they cooked Malaysian coconut rice in their kitchen on the day of the video recording. Example 4 was extracted from their ELF interaction while cooking. In the extract, I1 and M1 were preparing ingredients for their cooking activity. Since the beginning of their cooking activity, M1 had been explaining to I1 what ingredients she would use in their cooking, and she also told I1 that she brought the ingredients from Malaysia. In Lines 1 and 2 of the extract, M1 was telling I1 that she bought the chilies they were using from Malaysia. Then, when M1 took out a blender from the storeroom, she laughed and said that it was also from Malaysia, in Line 7. Hearing this, I1 told M1 that M1 had brought everything from Malaysia, concluding with laughter as shown in Line 9. Then, M1 agreed with I1 in Line 10, and there was shared laughter. After that, I1 started talking about the expensiveness of buying things in Hungary.

In this example, when M1 talked about her blender, she signaled with laughter that it was humor. Then, I1 co-constructed the humor, by teasing M1 suggesting that M1 brought everything from her country. Here, participants' turn-taking in the construction of humor and their shared laughter later showed that they were collaborative and interactive with each other in this humor construction. Later, in the retrospection, both I1 and M1 said that they used to talk humorously and joke and also tease at home.

Example 4: An example of humor found in the conversation of Dyad 2

- 1 M1: Right now, on the stove we have the red chilies, I bought it I bought
 2 the red chilies because ah it will give you the spiciness and also will

- 3 soften the red chilies
 4 I1: Hm hm.
 5 M1: And also we can get rid of the seed, because I already cut the red chilies.
 6 I1: ((puts the stuff she cut off from the red onion into a plastic bowl)) OK.
 7 M1: Yeah. I'm taking out my blender. ((laughs)) Also from Malaysia. ((puts
 8 the blender on the table near the stove)) ((coughing)) Oh my god!
 9 I1: You brought everything from Malaysia. ((laughs))
 10 M1: Yeah. ((laughs))
 11 I1: ((laughs)) I just checked the price of the blender here. Oh my god!
 12 It's so expensive.

Another example of humorous talk found in the study was in the conversation of Dyad 5 in which C1 (a Cambodian) and F1 (a Filipino) were participants. They were strangers to each other before the day of the video recording. Their meeting in the researcher's flat for their cooking activity was their first time meeting each other.

Example 5 was an extract from Dyad 5's cooking activity in which they cooked a Filipino dish. They fried some potatoes and set them aside. While waiting for chicken to be cooked, C1 pointed at the fried potato pieces and asked F1 whether he could eat a piece of fried potato or not as shown in Line 1 in the following extract. Upon hearing C1's question, F1 laughed and gave an answer in a humorous way, in Lines 2 and 3, saying that C1 could eat fried potato because he cooked it. Again, while eating the fried potato piece, C1 said it was delicious in Line 4, and then, he added a reason why it was delicious, creating humor in his explanation as shown in Line 6. Here, F1 co-constructed this humor, saying C1 cooked that fried potato, and he had to love what he cooked, in Line 7. Then, F1 ended her co-constructed humor with laughter. C1 tried to respond F1's humor with laughter, but his mouth was full of potato, and thus he did not laugh out loud.

Example 5: An example of humor found in the conversation of Dyad 5

- 1 C1: ((points at fried potato pieces)) Can I have one?
 2 F1: Yes, of course. ((points at the fried potato bowl)) ((laughs)) You cooked
 3 it, so you can eat it.
 4 C1: ((eats a potato piece)) Hm: it's good.
 5 F1: It's good.
 6 C1: Yeah because I cooked it.
 7 F1: ((smiles)) Yes you cooked it. (.) You have to love what you cook.
 8 ((laughs))
 9 C1: ((laughs)) ((chewing fried potato))

An example of teasing found in the study was in Example 6. This was extracted from the conversation of Dyad 3 in which B2 (a Burmese) and L1 (a Laotian) participated. They were flatmates. In the retrospection, B2 said that because of their age difference, they were like an aunt and a niece. Their cooking activity was in their kitchen. After cooking fried noodles according to L1's recipe, in the extract, B2 asked L1 how much it would cost in Line 4. First, L1 asked for a clarification in Line 5. Then, when she understood what B2 was asking her, L1 started teasing B2 in Line 7, by asking B2 if B2 wanted to pay her for that dish they had cooked

together, and concluded her teasing with laughter. Then, B2 teased L1 back in Line 8, saying B2 did not want to pay L1, with laughter at the end. Here, although B2 said *no* in Line 8, her utterance final laughter signaled her support of and participation in L1's teasing. Then, they were joking each other till Line 11. In the retrospection, they said that as they were flatmates, they were used to cooking together and chatting with each other. In the extract, when L1 started the teasing, B2 noticed L1's teasing immediately and responded with teasing back to L1. Their teases each other and their laughter demonstrated that ELF speakers construct teasing in a collaborative and interactive way.

Example 6: An example of teasing found in the conversation of Dyad 3

- 1 L1: Maybe like (her name) style I-I-I-I [don't know.]
 2 B2: [Own of] your menu.
 3 L1: Yeah.
 4 B2: How much forint for this?
 5 L1: Pardon?
 6 B2: How much forint?
 7 L1: Oh I- Do you want to give me your money? ((laughs))
 8 B2: No. I don't want. ((laughs))
 9 L1: Really?
 10 B2: I don't want. Just if you open-
 11 L1: Free. It's free for everyone.

Another example of teasing in the study was in Example 7, which was extracted from the conversation of Dyad 4. Participants were a Burmese (B1) and a Vietnamese (V2) who were close friends from the same program at the same university. As they lived in the dormitory, their cooking activity was in the researcher's kitchen. They cooked a Burmese dish. First, they boiled eggs, and when eggs were cooked, they were cooled down in cold water. Then, to peel the eggshell, B1 told V2 to break the tip of the egg where there is airspace so that it would be easier to remove the shell from the egg. V2 followed B1's suggestion when she peeled the first egg, and she found that it was easy to peel the eggshell in that way. Thus, V2 asked B1 how he knew that, as shown in Line 1 in the following extract. When V2 asked that question for the second time in Line 5, B1 teased V2. In the retrospection, B1 said that he wanted to say he knew things better and more than V2 as he was older than her. Hearing that, V2 rejected B1's comment, in Line 7. Then, B1 laughed and teased V2 again, saying that he was an expert with eggs, in Line 8, and he started talking about a childhood experience as shown in Line 10. However, V2 finished peeling eggshells, and changed the topic as shown in Line 11, signaling B1 to tell her what to do next.

In this example, when B1 teased her, V2 did not share laughter with B1, but she was responsive to B1's teasing. In the retrospection, B1 said that as V2 was much younger than him, he assumed she was a very young sister of his. He also said that he used to tease V2 in their daily life, and when she was teased, she usually disagreed the teasing and used to argue with B1. V2 seemed she did not like B1's treating her as the younger one and wanted him to treat her like a friend of the same age.

Example 7: An example of teasing found in the conversation of Dyad 4

- 1 V2: How do you know?
- 2 B1: I know every egg like that. Yeah.
- 3 V2: Yeah.
- 4 B1: Hmm. Hmm.
- 5 V2: But how do you know?
- 6 B1: I know. I am older than you. That's why.
- 7 V2: Not everything.
- 8 B1: Hmm. ((laughs)) I'm expert in in the egg. That's why.
- 9 V2: Hmm. ((finished peeling eggshells))
- 10 B1: In my childhood, I know about it very well.
- 11 V2: OK. So, finished?

V2's responses to B1's teasing varied in the study. Example 8 was an extract from the conversation of B1 and V2's cooking activity. In the extract, while they were cooking, B1 and V2 were about to put masala into the pan. In the retrospection, B1 said that he did not know how to say masala in English. He said:

"First, I was about to say masala. Then, I remembered that it's an Indian word."

Thus, B1 did not utter the word. Instead, B1 used an explanation of what kind of powder masala is. First, he said the origin of masala in Line 1. Then, he told V2 an attribute of masala i.e. *good smell* and in what kind of food masala is used i.e. *curry* in Line 3. After that, V2 took the masala bottle from B1 to put masala into the pan. At that time, V2 found that it was a new bottle. Then, when V2 tried to open it, B1 offered her his help to open the masala bottle, in Line 5, but V2 rejected his help as shown in Line 6. Here, B1 started laughing at V2 and teasing her in Line 7. Here, although B1 delivered the teasing, both beginning and concluding it with laughter, signaling V2 that what he had said was not serious, but just teasing her, V2 did not respond to B1's teasing neither with a smile nor a shared laughter. V2 was silent, and just opened the masala bottle. Then, when she had finished opening it, she said OK in Line 8.

Example 8: An example of a speaker's teasing without the interlocutor's response

- 1 B1: (.) Eh: This is a kind of Indian food.
- 2 V1: Hm hm.
- 3 B1: Good smell, for the curry.
- 4 V1: ((takes the masala bottle from B1)) Oh, it's new. Should I open it?
 ((The masala bottle has not been opened yet. It's a new bottle.))
- 5 B1: Yeah. Can I help you?
- 6 V1: No need. Just tell me.
- 7 B1: ((laughs)) I'm expert. So funny. But, you don't know. Look. ((laughs))
- 8 V1: ((opened the masala bottle)) OK.
 ((Now, masala is ready to be used.))

In the retrospection, V2 said that she was serious at that time. She did not want to joke around with her interlocutor. Significantly, the teasing sequence ended immediately in Line 7 when V2 did not respond the topic of B1's teasing her in any way. In the retrospection, B1 said that when he teased her in their daily life, she was usually responsive: usually talking back or giving him

a retort. However, in Example 8, V2 was silent. This example showed that not all the teasing in ASEAN ELF talks was responded or not all the teasing was collaboratively and interactively constructed by the interlocutor in the ASEAN context.

5 Discussion

In the study, it was found that humor and teasing occurred only among five dyads. Among those five dyads, participants in four dyads (Dyads 1, 2, 3, and 4) were close with each other: those in Dyads 2 and 3 were flatmates whereas those in Dyads 1 and 4 were close friends (see Table 1). According to Matsumoto (2014), the degree of social distance between speakers has an effect on whether the speakers used humor in their ELF interactions or not. In my study, it was obvious that there was a strong bond between participants in each close dyad. For example, both participants in Dyad 1 used a kinship term *bro* (the short form of *brother*) to call each other instead of using their names. In Dyad 3, B2 said that L1 was like a niece for her. Thus, it is not surprising that they used humor and teased each other during their cooking activities regardless of their age gap between two speakers in each dyad (e.g. B1 was 35 whereas V1 was 29 in Dyad 1, and B2 was 33 whereas L1 was 20 in Dyad 3 at the time the videos were recorded for this study) as shown in Table 1.

In the previous literature, Matsumoto (2014) stated that male speakers might not want to engage in a kind of face-threatening talk like humor as participants who employed humor in her study were female whereas those who did not employ were male. In my study, the gender of participants did not play a role since participants who employed humor and teasing were both male and female. For example, participants in Dyad 1 were both male, those in Dyads 2 and 3 were female, and Dyad 4 was a pair of different gender, having a male and a female participant. Thus, it was possible to say that participants in my study employed humor and teasing regardless of their gender.

Regarding the language level of participants in Dyads 1, 2, 3 and 4, some of the participants' English language proficiency level was not high. They mentioned this in their self-reported English proficiency level, and also mentioned it in the retrospective interviews. In the examples used in this study, it can be seen that some participants had difficulties expressing what they wanted to say whereas others did not have difficulties to do so. Although Williams et al. (2018) found in their study that there was a linguistic challenge in using humor and that a lack of English proficiency hindered participants using humor, in my study, participants whose English language proficiency was not high constructed and responded to humor and teasing well in their ELF interactions. This finding was in line with Walkinshaw and Kirkpatrick's (2020) argument that the multilingual ELF speakers, even those whose English proficiency was low, can construct and respond to humor in their ELF interactions.

On the other hand, among the other four dyads in which participants were strangers who had never known each other before the day of the video recording for this study, humor and/or teasing were found only in Dyad 5. To look at the age and gender of participants in each dyad, participants in Dyads 5 and 7 were in a similar age group, but there was an obvious age gap between participants in Dyad 6 i.e., F2 was 34, whereas M2 was only 19. In Dyad 8, the participants' age gap was not big and both speakers were male. Among these four dyads, the practice of humor and/or teasing were found only in Dyad 5's interaction. The other three dyads did not employ humor and/or teasing in their interactions. It seemed that age and gender play

important roles in whether participants who were strangers to each other employed or did not employ humor and/or teasing in their interactions.

In the retrospections, participants discussed their use of humor and teasing, as is shown in the following comments and extracts from that data. F2 said that she rarely used humor and/or teasing with strangers. With those who were close with her, she even used rude words or sometimes swore in her humor or teasing. For example, she reported using the word *bitch* to her close friends in her teases. However, she added that she never engaged in this kind of rudeness if the interlocutor was older than her no matter how close they were.

Another participant, M2, said, in extract 1:

1) Actually I do use a lot of humor and sarcasm in my daily life, but because me and (his interlocutor's name) were strangers at that time and she is older than me, I didn't use it. It's definitely true. If the person was younger although I didn't know them, I would have talked to them a little bit more expressive.

Another participant, S1, said that although his interlocutor and he seemed to be same age, his interlocutor seemed to be friendly but a bit shy. Also, the cooking activity for this study was the first time he met her. Thus, it was not good to employ humor and/or teasing.

Another participant who said social distance was a factor influencing her humor and teasing nature was F1. She noted, in extract 2:

2) I use humor/teasing but very rarely. I only use it with friends, like with those who are closed to me such as my friends and my flatmates.

Regarding her experience with the interlocutor on the day of the video recording, she said:

3) We just met for the first time and it's still awkward for me to joke around him. However, I could say that I am comfortable talking with him.

From the retrospection with participants, it was found that social distance with the interlocutor was a variable which had an influence on their use of humor and/or teasing in their interactions. In addition, age was also found as a variable for F2 and M2.

However, C1, a participant of a dyad who employed humor and/or teasing with their interlocutor although they were strangers to each other, gave a different perspective in the retrospection. C1 said, in extract 4:

4) I usually use humor to start in a conversation with strangers. Yet after I can feel a similarity with them, I will start to put some teasing phrase along the conversation or joke and it happens only when I can see that there is a green light from other party.

He also explained:

5) Green light to me means that I perceive a connection between perspective and personality. And I might not or won't use any of those who are much older than me as well, age would be ranging from 35 up.

Thus, for C1, social distance between him and his interlocutor did not affect whether he used humor and/or teasing with his interlocutor or not. However, age was a factor influencing him whether to or not to use humor and/or teasing in his interaction.

To look at how much social distance affects the speakers' use of humor and/or teasing in their ELF interactions, it was found in the study that the use of humor and/or teasing were found in all the dyads with participants who were close with their interlocutors. There was only one dyad in which the use of humor and/or teasing were found where the speakers in the dyad were strangers. However, the use of humor and/or teasing found in that dyad was much less than those found in the dyads where participants were close with each other (see Table 2.). Thus, it might be possible to conclude that social distance was found as an important factor influencing the use of humor and/or teasing among participants in this study.

Group	Dyad	Relationship	Duration of the cooking activity	Token of humor and/or teasing	Frequency of humor and/or teasing per minute
Dyads in which participants were close with each other	1	Close friends (Former roommates)	46 min	4	0.09
	2	Flatmates	66 min	7	0.11
	3	Flatmates	38 min	2	0.05
	4	Close friends	23 min	4	0.17
Dyads in which participants were not close with each other	5	Strangers	55 min	3	0.05
	6	Strangers	85 min	-	-
	7	Strangers	48 min	-	-
	8	Strangers	35 min	-	-

Table 2. Distribution of the use of humor and/or teasing in each dyad

As discussed in section 2.3, in the previous literature about humor across culture, and in cross-cultural communications, social distance (whether there is closeness or distance in relationships between speakers), linguistic difficulty, and cultural diversity are found as factors influencing the use of humor and understanding humor in communication.

The data in the present study relates to these previous findings concerning international communication and cross-cultural humor and teasing. Participants in my study are ELF speakers from different ASEAN countries who come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Although participants in my study were not highly advanced English speakers like the international students at an American university in Habib's (2008) study, they co-constructed humor and/or teasing successfully in their ELF interactions. This proves that linguistic difficulty is not a factor influencing the use of humor and/or teasing among ASEAN ELF speakers. However, as in the Canadians' use of humor found in the study by Kuiper et al. (2010), whether participants had a close relationship between them or not is a factor influencing ASEAN ELF speakers' use of humor and/or teasing in their ELF interactions. Most dyads who used humor and/or teasing in my study had close relationship between participants.

In one of the few studies about the use of humor or teasing in ELF interactions, i.e. the study by Walkinshaw (2016), the author states that teasing is frequently found in Asian ELF interactions. He also found that "there are no instances of offense being expressed by a tease recipient" in the study (2016: 249). Similarly, in my study, although there were relatively few occurrences of humor and/or teasing, most of the occurrences did not involve offense by the recipients.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, participants in the dyads who employed humor and/or teasing with their interlocutors skillfully participated in or co-constructed humor and/or teasing in their ELF interactions regardless of their age, gender and English language proficiency level. Most participants who employed humor and/or teasing in their interactions were close with their interlocutors. Most participants who did not use humor or teasing in their interactions cared about social distance between them and their interlocutors and their age difference with their interlocutors, but gender did not play an important role in whether they used humor and/or teasing or not.

Generally, participants in the dyads with humor and teasing were responsive to their interlocutors' humor or teasing, at least by responding with laughter, or by jointly constructing humor or teasing with their interlocutors. Humor and teasing were frequently occasioned in ELF interactions of ASEAN English speakers who were close with each other, and the ELF speakers were collaborative and interactive with their interlocutors in constructing humor and teasing in their ELF interactions.

In previous literature on ELF, House (2010) states that although the actual linguistic resources of the ELF speakers may still need to be improved, on the other hand, regarding norms, ELF speakers are independent from the native speakers' usage, creating their own norms among ELF speakers or using their own L1 norms in their ELF interactions. In the study, it can be clearly seen in the examples that some of the participants' English language competency was not high. Despite their English competency, ELF speakers in the study can construct humor and/or teasing well, and their use of humor and/or teasing may be based on their own norms among ELF speakers or may be based on their own L1 norms. In this regard, the examples of the ASEAN ELF speakers' humor and/or teasing in this study may be responded to differently by other English speakers who are from non-ASEAN region.

In brief, ASEAN ELF speakers in the study are skillful in creating and participating in humor and teasing regardless of their language proficiency level, and their practice of humor and teasing is usually with interlocutors who they know well. If there is social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor, and if there is an age gap between them, ASEAN ELF speakers rarely use humor and teasing in their interactions. However, as this study was conducted in a social setting of the ASEAN ELF speakers, results may be different if the study is conducted in other settings such as in academic or business or diplomatic settings. Nevertheless, humor and teasing can be an integral part of ELF interaction.

Transcription conventions

The video-recorded materials were transcribed according to the following notation system which was an adapted version of Heritage and Atkinson (1984).

,	a continuing intonation
.	a stopping fall in tone
:	an extension of the sound or syllable it follows, more colons prolong the stretch
?	a rising inflection
!	an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
wor-	a halt or cutoff, a word or clause not produced in its entirety
-word-	syllables of a word or strings of words to show stammering

((word))	a non-vocal action, description of conversational scene
[overlapping (start)
]	overlapping (end)
=	a continuous utterance, a continuing intonation
(.)	pause

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