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Indonesian Gen-Alphanized High Schooler's Humor Responses: A Psycholinguistic Approach to Humorous Discourse Processing

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Abstract

Generation Alpha's digital-native communication style is profoundly shaped by memes, rapid multimodal interactions, and humor-driven discourse. Humor operates not only as entertainment but also as a pragmatic tool for inference, identity performance, and meaning negotiation. This study examines how Indonesian Gen Alpha high schoolers comprehend humorous English content and solve linguistically complex tasks through a psycholinguistic lens. A 16-item Google Form quiz was distributed online, combining eight trap-based multiple-selection questions and eight open-ended tasks, including video-based prompts and one creative writing item. Stimuli were categorized across five domains: humorous implication, disambiguation, linguistic device recognition, humor-triggered memory retrieval, and conceptual structuring inspired by speech production frameworks. Twenty-two students participated; fifteen valid entries were analyzed. Responses were manually coded into seven evaluative categories (Misled, Accurate, Perfect, General, Accepted, Incorrect, Skipped), revealing diverse mechanisms such as ambiguity resolution, autobiographical/schematic memory retrieval, inferential reasoning, and metalinguistic creativity. A notable case included a participant identifying an unintended humor layer within a fandom-related item ("Ouchiha"), demonstrating spontaneous linguistic reinterpretation beyond authorial design. This refinement was incorporated for accuracy because it emerged as a key observation during the conference presentation. Findings indicate that humor-based stimuli effectively activate real-time psycholinguistic processes—conceptualization, inferencing, semantic readjustment, and retrieval—even in an EFL context. Indonesian Gen Alpha students showed strong cognitive flexibility when engaging with humorous digital materials. This refined abstract aligns with conference ethical standards by maintaining anonymized examples, representing the study more precisely, and reflecting clarifications provided during the oral presentation.

Keywords: Discourse processing, Humor comprehension, Gen Alpha, Memory retrieval, Psycholinguistics

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