

Teacher's Appropriate Humor and Its Impacts on English Classroom Environment at English Course

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates teacher's humor as a communication strategy in terms of interaction between the teacher and the students in teaching and learning process at Makassar English Course. The aims of the study are (1) to find out the types of humor that are appropriate in English course and (2) to find out the impacts of teacher's humor at English course.

This research consisted of one teacher that was observed and eight students that were interviewed as the subject of the research. Five meetings of classroom interactions were observed and an video-recorder was used by the researcher. The recordings were transcribed and analyzed by making use of related the types of humor are used by the teacher and the impacts of teacher's humor gained from students' perspective at Makassar English course.

Findings show that there are some types of humors that are appropriate to be used by the teacher namely related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging, and unplanned humor. Furthermore, the finding also showed that the teacher who used humor makes the students easy to getting the knowledge, reduced tension, made students more comfortable in teaching learning process, created good interactions, created more enthusiastic teaching learning process, encouraged students' attendance, and reduced the number of students who felt sleepy in the class.

Keywords: EFL teacher, appropriate humor, impact of humors, English course

INTRODUCTION

Learning a language is considered as a daunting task for many students. It needs hard work and a great deal of effort on the part of the students as well as on the educators. There are some of the English teachers who teach in their own classroom in a serious manner. This repeated teaching attitude will frequently increase students' anxiety, decrease their self-esteem, make students keep silent more frequently, and therefore students feel bored in the

class. By nature, an English Foreign Language (EFL) teacher should be a person who is able to manage his or her classroom appropriately whereas students are more likely to learn if they are happy and amused than if they are feeling anxious and threatened (Martin, 2007).

Good interactions between teachers and students have been proven to be the biggest contribution in creating a positive environment (Banks, 2014; Luz, 2015). Interaction and fun communication can be created from the types of language used, the way to communicate the use of facial expression, smile the chosen approach and many others. Communication and interaction between teachers and the students are the most potential activity that provides the opportunity to create an exciting atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, a teacher has many opportunities to design fun learning during his interaction.

One thing that has rarely been touched during this time but can help the teacher to make excitement in the classroom is by using humors. Humor is one of the communication strategies that teachers can use in the classroom to increase their effectiveness and they must be creative and innovative (Israil, 2017). It is related to Martin (2007) who said that humor is not new for teachers when they teach because humor is a creative teaching technique that place demands on the skill and art of the educators. Humor as a teacher's communication strategy can be utilized to assist learning and can interest students to learn. Humor can create a relationship between teacher and students.

When teachers use humor effectively in the classroom, it can result in a number of benefits for teachers and students evaluations (Bryant, Comisky, Crane, & Zillmann, 1980). It can make students more willing to participate in their classes; This is also related to Minchew (2001) who used humor as the main focus of her study because students are found to be more knowledgeable when teachers use humor in the classroom. In addition, Neumann, Hood, and Neumann (2009) said that if a teacher combines humor with immediacy, it will lighten the mood and help reduce the anxiety of students in the classroom. Thus, highly recommendation to the teacher before starting of the lessons to create a pleasant condition, so that the students feel more comfortable and willing to accept the subject.

In regard with the context of investigating the use of teacher's humor in EFL classroom, the researcher had done preliminary observation in MEC English course as a passive participant especially in speaking classes. Based on that data, the students who were

taught by a quite serious teacher were not really enthusiastic in the classroom; it was viewed from their voice intonation when they spoke with their teacher on their classmate or from the body movement such as they rested their elbow, yawned and many other things. Therefore, it showed us that the student did not enjoy the learning process. Whereas, when the researcher entered another class in which the teacher who taught by adding sense of humor, he always gave smile to students he interacted to, and put some jokes in his teaching, it created the environment in the classroom into a good atmosphere. The students were more confident in expressing their ideas and it made classroom atmosphere be pleased, they looked freely in producing the language.

Regarding to some evidences above, the researcher is interested in finding out the types of humor that are appropriate in English course and also investigate the impact of humor at English course. The researcher decides to choose this topic as much as many students get difficulties caused their teacher is too serious in teaching English in the classroom. The teacher just explains the subject like his own way without inserting any humor and students are instructed to do the exercises from the teacher, thus it makes students get bored and less motivated toward the subject which is taught. Therefore, this research is urgent to be conducted with the elements including teacher's kinds of language play, students' responses, and appropriate topic that trigger enthusiastic in learning a language. Those elements shall be a relevant issue in EFL research.

Considering the description above, the researcher is interested in investigating this common phenomenon by proposing the research under the title "Teacher's humor as a communication strategy in the context of English course".

Based on the background, the purposes of this research are to find out:

1. the types of humors that are appropriate in English course,
2. the impacts of humor in creating positive environment in English course.

TEACHER'S HUMOR IN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Much works have been done to specify the benefits of humor in the language classroom interaction (Abraham et al., 2014; Al-Duleimi and Aziz, 2016), as well as their potential contribution to language component (Motlagh et al., 2014) and evoking positive

atmosphere in the classroom (Israil, 2017). By these evidences, there is a growing consensus that in order to achieve better language classroom, the situation was to some extent depended on the way teacher manipulates the situation of the classroom by involving humor as their communication strategy. Hence, humors in language classroom language which cannot be also separated from culture in which the teacher involved (Cakir, 2006), added the exclusivity of humor in language classroom, particularly on English as a foreign language (EFL).

The researches mentioned above approve that teacher's humors provide various benefits for EFL students' learning. In students' perspective, they liked something which can make them enjoyable in the learning process, a humor that facilitate them. In teacher's perspective, humor was a fruitful strategy to make the learning process more relax and enjoyable. However, the previous researchers excluding Israil (2017), pay much attention to quantitative approach concerning the data from teacher's use of humor, instead of analyzing them purely in descriptive qualitative manner. The researcher believes that teacher's humor should be investigated in direct practice as well as natural environment. However, before moving further into the deeper discussion about teacher's humor in connection to creating positive language classroom, it is worth noting to put several types of humor which commonly released by teacher in the classroom.

TYPES OF HUMOR

Bryant, Comisky, and Zillmann (1979) investigated teacher's use of humor and they noted that teacher used both no tendentious and tendentious types of humor. Ten types of humor that college teacher used in the classroom were identified in this qualitative investigation: jokes, riddle, puns, funny stories, funny comments, nonsexual hostile, sexual no hostile, sexual hostile, and nonsense. People use intentional humor, or conversational humor, to create an amusing environment of interaction.

The students with high levels of humor orientation learn more when they have teachers who possess high level of humor orientation. It is important for teacher to be able to incorporate some types of humor when communicating with students because in order to enhance student learning, those are appropriate humor and inappropriate humor. It is related to Hsieh, Hsiao, Liu, and Chang (2005) who said that humor, those are appropriate (positive)

and inappropriate (negative or offensive) types of humor. Wanzer and Frymier (1999) have subdivide appropriate and inappropriate humor into detail categories for teachers in their daily teaching. In this research, this will be taken into account as the theoretical construct.

Appropriate humor illuminates a sense of positive humor because it incorporates an attitude or perspective that reduces tension in the classroom (Chabeli, 2008). Furthermore, appropriate humor is categorized into four types: topic related humor, humor unrelated to a topic, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor (Englert, 2010). These four types are considered effective teaching tools for teachers. For related humor, the content is related to the material or enhanced learning in the classroom, where Unrelated Humor did not relate to learning or classroom enhancement. For Self-disparaging humor, this type of humor involves comments in which an instructor criticizes, pokes fun of or belittles himself/ herself. Unintentional or unplanned humor, in this case the teacher did not intend to be funny, but the students found his/her behavior to be humorous.

METHOD

In this research, the researcher employed a qualitative research in which it attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants. Mackey and Gass (2015) stated that qualitative research does not relate to any statistical procedure but rather uses descriptive data. This research conducted in MEC English course. The research site in Andi Mappanyukki Street, no 64, South Sulawesi and focused at MEC English course. The participant of this research, the teacher was recruited by means of convenience sampling. Beside this English teacher, his students are also treated as the subject of this research.

In collecting the data the researcher relied on observation and interview. The researcher chooses to have a role as non-participant observer which means the researcher was not actively participate on the activity being observed but tend to watch the participant without becoming involved (Creswell, 2014). In order to record the data from observation, the research used one of the function in Android smartphone which allow recording video. The researcher recorded every single teacher's humor use in their teaching process. Besides, semi-structured interview was also used to collect data from students' responses about

teacher's humor at MEC English course. In analyzing the data, the researcher utilizes interactive data analyses of qualitative research by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings consist of the data obtained through observation and interview based on the descriptive qualitative research design at Makassar English Course. The researcher collected the data from February 10th 2017 until March 10th 2017. The researcher recorded the classroom observation about 90 minutes in each meeting.

The data presented in this finding were divided into two parts. The first parts of the data came from observation to determine the types of teacher's humor and the second part was the interview to clarify the impact of teacher's humor (obtained through observation). The data also guided by the research aims that were formulated earlier. Furthermore, the researcher presented the findings by giving examples in extract forms of extract for every phase in the classroom.

1. Types of humor used by the teacher

Based on the first research question, this research aims to find out the types of humor that are used by the teacher in the classroom. However, in this research the researcher focuses on appropriate humor in spoken form, they are humor related topic, humor unrelated to a topic, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor.

Table 1. The occurrence of the types appropriate humor in each meeting

No.	Appropriate Humor	Meeting					Total
		I	II	III	IV	V	
1.	Related humor	5	11	9	6	1	32
2.	Unrelated humor	4	3	5	1	5	18
3.	Self-disparaging humor	1	1	-	-	-	2
4.	Unplanned humor	-	1	3	3	-	7
Total							71

Table 1 shows that the teacher produced 71 utterances containing appropriate humor within five meetings of classroom interaction. The teacher used all of the types of appropriate humor, namely related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging humor and unplanned

humor. Thus, the researcher found that the number of humor utterances used by the teacher in the classroom interaction in Makassar English Course were 71 utterances. Furthermore, the researcher present one example that represented for each types of humor, which can be seen in the following extracts:

Extract 1: Related humor

Teacher : nah, compare atau comparison. Nah disini tingkatan artinya apa, tingkatan perbandingan. Kira kira apa biasa yang kamu bandingkan
[nah, compare or comparison. What is the meaning, a comparison level. what do you usually compare].

Students : panjang, cewe [long, girl].

Students : (Noisy)

Teacher : sudah, misalkan rambutku lebih panjang dari pada rambutmu
[stop it. For example my hair is longer than your hair].

Students : @@@

The underlined word in extract 1 was the example of appropriate humor used by the teacher in the classroom. The teacher gave humor to the students related to the material. It can be seen when the teacher was explaining about the material of comparison sentences. The teacher said that comparison sentences have a different degree. The teacher asked what can be compared and then the students mentioned about long length of girl hair. Then, the teacher gave examples related to what the students mentioned before by saying “*sudah, misalkan rambutku lebih panjang dari pada rambutmu!*” in English *stop, for example my hair is longer than yours*. From the utterance, the students were laugh about the example of comparison sentences because the students did not expect their teacher would say that utterance and then choosing hair as an example of comparison sentence made the students wondering what kinds of hair that the teacher meant. The teacher would give the example like that and it made students laugh in the classroom because all of the students in the classroom were teenagers and they were more sensitive to discuss about it. The extract above shows the teacher used unexpected word ***hair!*** It made the students laugh because the teacher created funny atmosphere and also made the students pay attention to the material. Before giving the material, the atmosphere of the class was noisy

Extract 2: Unrelated humor

Teacher : Oke go on
 Shasha : *zalsa's eyebrow is longer than cahya*
 Teacher : semua subjek untuk zalsa yah [all the subjects intended to zalsa]
 Shasha : tidak, zalsa, cahya, zalsa, cahya, zalsa, [no, zalsa, cahya, zalsa, cahya, zalsa]
 Teacher : oke sekarang coba cahya? Cahya ilahi [okay, now let's try cahya]
 Students : cahayaaaa
 Students : @ @ @

The extract 2 indicates that the teacher created language usage to the students. The teacher gave every member a chance to present their assignment in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher called another member to continue the practicing process but the teacher is utterance made the student laugh by saying “oke “*sekarang coba cahya? Cahya ilahi*” in English “*Now it is time to cahya trying, cahya illahi*” The word “*cahya illahi*” made the students laugh because the teacher was trying to create language usage. And also the students laughed because they did not expect that their teacher would use this word or other language. The teacher just said something to evoke amusement or laughter. Those utterance that produced by the teacher is unrelated humor because the humor that was used by the teacher emphasized on students’ name. Thus it was neither material nor discussion topic inside of the aforementioned humor.

Extract 3: Self-disparaging humor

Teacher : @ @ @ gara gara kalian tersebar hoax sampai kantor. Ndak tau siapa yang bilang itu. [because of you |students| the hoax were spreading at the office, I have no idea who said that]
 Students : baruki mau sebar undangan kak. [we just want to spread the invitation sir.
 Students : undangan sunatan @ @ @ [feast invitation]
 Teacher : kamu kira saya muallaf. Tau tidak dikelas lain, saya kemarin mau pergi shalat dia bilang “ih shalatki kak?” [you think I am muallaf. You know in another class, yesterday I went to take pray and she said “ih you pray sir?]
 students : @ @ @ dipertanyakan [questionable]

The teacher in the conversation was telling the story about his experience in the front of the class. The teacher said “*kamu kira saya muallaf. Tau tidak dikelas lain, saya kemarin mau pergi shalat dia bilang “ih shalatki kak?”* in English “*do you think I am converting.*

Did you know yesterday when I prepared to take a pray they said “are you taking a pray?” And it made the students spontaneously laugh when the teacher said “*ih shalatki kak*”. That utterance made all the students laugh because their teacher was considered as a non-muslim. In students perspective, their teacher was doubtful as a Muslim so they feel surprised when they heard he wanted to take pray. From the utterance produced by the teacher fruitfully made the students laugh. It is self-disparaging humor because the teacher talked to the students about his experience

Extract 4: Unplanned humor

Teacher :I must study hardwork, perhatikan berarti ada kemungkinan nilai sebelumnya anjlok makanya dia mensugesti dirinya dengan kata must, tapi must juga terkadang dia bisa dipakai untuk kondisi tertentu, contoh [I must study hardwork, listen, so there may be a condition where his prior scor was dropped, so he suggested himself wih the word *must*, but *must* sometimes can be used for certain codition, for example..]

Students : Must must? Siapa yah? [Must must? Who’ is it?

Students : Dajjal

Students : @@@

Students : Kak kalau ada dajjal bagaimana itu apa itu nabilang? [sir, if dajjal exist, how he looks like?

Teacher :Apa lagi itu kamu bilang? [whatever you said]

Students : @@@

Based on the extract above, it indicates that the teacher was explaining the material about the use of modal auxiliary then the students made a joke about modal auxiliary *must* become *mas* because the word *must* has a similar pronunciation or homophone with the word *mas* which means *Sir* in English. However the teacher did not hear what the students said previously, so the teacher asked the students to reply the student’s utterance by saying “Apa lagi itu kamu bilang?” in *English* “*what did you say?*”. The teacher did not intend to make the students laugh by his utterance, he only asked him to reply his utterance. Yet all of the students were laugh since their teacher showed show his response cynically toward students unrelated questions. Furthermore, The utterance produced by the teacher is unplanned humor because he did not intend to be funny but student perceived the teacher’s response to be humorous.

2. The impacts teacher's humor at English course: the students' perspectives

From the results of students' interview, the researcher concluded several impacts of humor in creating positive environment at MEC English course.

Extract 1: Help the students acquire knowledge easily

- T :How is your English teacher's closeness to your student in the classroom?
I :Pintarki guru mengajar pembawaaanya santai tapi tidak terlepas ji pembahasanta sama materi. Jadi kita juga santai maki kalau mau bertanya ataupun berdiskusi jadi secara alami ee kita juga lebih gampang paham lebih cepat ngerti jadi yah ee banyakmi ilmunya didapat. [my teacher is smart , he was very relaxed instructing the lesson, so we were relaxed as well,while asking or discussing. so naturally we understood more easily |the material| quicker, so many knowledge we could get.]

Extract 1 shows that the students were more interested in the lesson and accepting the process of digesting material easily if their teacher used humor in the classroom. In this case, the student said that if the teacher used humor in the class, he was easily to ask and to discuss with him so he would more understand into the material. It could make the students having more knowledge and make them understand their teacher's explanation toward the material quickly

Extract 2: Humor reduce tension

- T : What do you think about your English teacher?
I :Kalo guruku orangnya baik lucu kalau misalnya dia lagi ngajar dia santai pelajarannya tapi tidak terlalu santai sekali misalnya mengajar terus dia tidak kasi tegang muridnya dia kasi rileks muridnya. [my teacheris a good person, funny, for instance while teaching he was relaxed in delivering the lesson, nut not too much. He made her students to be relaxed as well]

As illustrated in the Excerpt 2 that the student was enjoying the teaching and learning process if the teacher used humor in the classroom. The teacher in the teaching process made a good trend of creating positive environment by using humor because it made the students not nervous and enjoyed this situation.

Extract 3: Students were more comfortable in learning process

- T :How would you feel when the teacher delivered humor / funny stories?
I :Suka kak kak jadi kaya ada penyemangat, maksudku kak ada yang bikinki happy dan suka suasana kelasnya kan berubah sekali memang suasana kelas yang pintar gurunya kasi bagus moodnya siswa dari pada yang monoton begitu begitu

to ji saja apa lagi itu tutorku, guru yang benar benar dekat sama muridnya jadi bisa itu toh humornya berkaitanji dan nyambungji sama kita jadi benar benar terbawa ki suasana yang menyenangkan dan bikin semangat juga buat belajar karna ndak bosanki sama suasana dikelas.

Excerpt 3 above described that the student was more comfortable in teaching learning process if her teacher was humorist. She liked studying English if in the teaching, the teacher was used humor as a communication strategy. The students could enjoy the class and enhance the student's enthusiasm.

Extract 4: Students interacted well with their teacher

- T :How is your English teacher's closeness to your student in the classroom?
I :Bagus sih kak, kan cara mengajarnya juga ndak killer ji ndak bikin takut takutji juga eee apa die e itumi tadi sih kubilang kak asik buat diajak ngobrol ndak kaku, santai tapi serius, biasa juga sembarang dicerita bagusji juga dia pembawaannya.

From extract 4 above, it was indicated that if her teacher used humor in the teaching process, it made the student interacting well with their teacher. Furthermore, the students liked the way the teacher interacted with them because they could freely talk and chat with the teacher. While the teacher used of humor in the classroom could make communication more flexible between students and teacher, this condition led to positive classroom environment.

Extract 5: Students were more enthusiastic in learning process

- T :How would you feel when the teacher delivered humor / funny stories?
I :menurut saya bagus skali cara mengajarnya kalo ada humornya karna lebih semangatki dirasa belajar walaupun baruki pulang sekolah lanjut les tapi pembawannya memang guruku menyenangkanmi jadi yah ikut terbawa maki juga.

Extract 5 above showed that the student was more enthusiastic in teaching learning process which used humor. She felt tired of lesson load in formal classroom so the humor was likely a cure for her to be excited again in learning.

Extract 6: Encourage the student's attendance

- T : Is the teacher's humor positive and constructive?
I :Iyee biar tidak sesuai materi tapi ndak bosanki menyenangkanki kelaska suka maki juga datang kurus ka asikji

From the conversation above, it was indicated that students' attendance was encouraged to join the class. Even the humor was not related to the material, she enjoyed the class because the atmosphere of the classroom was not boring.

Extract 7: Students were not sleepy in learning

T :How much humor plays a role in your foreign language learning process?

I :Ndak ngantuk ki dikelas karna ketawa terus di kelas jadi hilang juga rasa ngantuk karna suasana kelas yang menyenangkan.

Extract 7 above shows that the students was interested in learning and awake from her boredom if her teacher used humor in the classroom. It made the students not sleepy. In addition, the student was likely to say that if the teacher was more serious without any humor inserted in his teaching, then the process of learning was not interested anymore or it was not even effective for learning English language.

3. Discussion of Key findings

Based on the several extracts that represented for each humor, the researcher found that all of the types of appropriate humor in spoken form were used by the teacher in EFL classroom, namely related humor, unrelated humor, and self-disparaging and unplanned humor. In the occurrence of the types of appropriate humor, related humor showed a positive trend by releasing humor involving life stereotypes of his students. For unrelated humor, the teacher used creative language use to evoke laughter. In self disparaging humor, the teacher emphasized on making fun of teacher himself, and the last where the teacher spontaneously used humor as regard to students' response. These specific categorization was also included with Bekelja Wanzer's, Bainbridge Frymier, Wojtaszczyk, & Smi (2006) findings. However it can also be indicated from the finding that in order to release all of those humor, the teacher should establish good rapport among the students. McCabe, Sprute, and Underdown (2017) suggest the teachers could give testimonials of their experience of humor to the students in that it helped them feel connected in the class and eventually improved their learning.

The second key findings of this research is the impact of teacher's humor in creating positive environment in English course. From the results of students' interview, the researcher found that the teacher who used humor help the students acquire the knowledge

easily, reduce tension, make more comfortable in learning process, students interacted well with their teacher, make students more interactive, students were not sleepy, encouraged students' attendance. It is also worth noting that the positive results were corresponded with the findings of previous researchers (Bekelja Wanzer et al., 2006; Machlev & Karlin, 2017) who found that appropriate humor had a significant positive relationship with perceived learning (how much students perceived to have learned in the course). There was also an argument to this idea that material delivered without involving humor indicated an increasing over students' focused on the material (Davies, 2015). Whether or not humor significantly impacted to language learning process, it still depends on teacher's decision to manipulate the language they use during the instruction. Furthermore their conception regarding humor which addresses the limitation of this research should also be taken into account its importance.

CONCLUSION

Humor is one of the most preferred teachers' communication strategy used in language classroom. As evidently shown by the teacher who participate in this research that all of the types of appropriate humor, namely related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging, and unplanned humor were used and fruitfully trigger students positive responses toward teacher's humor. Those are such as: helping the students to acquire the knowledge easily, humor reduces tension, being comfortable in teaching learning process, interacting well with their teacher, being enthusiastic in teaching learning process, and attendance became encouraged, and becoming not sleepy. However this research strictly focused merely on the utterance of teachers without scrutinizing their perspective regarding humor. Further research therefore should investigate teachers' conception about humor in language classroom.

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