

AN ANALYSIS OF HUMOR IN CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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Abstract

Humor is essential in educational context in order to build harmonious relationship between teachers and students. This study concerns to the use of humor by teachers in classroom interaction that affect classroom atmosphere and students' feeling. The participants in this study were the teacher and students at Senior High School in Padang that chosen purposively by considering who usually used humor during classroom interaction. The data of this research comprised classroom observations by using video-recordings and field notes during classroom interaction. It was found that teachers' humor help the students to be comfortable, enjoyed, and motivated in teaching learning process. Humor made them happy and enthusiastic to learn because of funny thing although the humor used was not sometime relevant to material learning. If the teacher did not use humor in classroom, the students are just silent and boring. After the teacher gives the example of the material in learning with humor statement, the students are excited to learn. Humor is the skill that should be possessed by teachers to motivate the students in learning.

Keywords: humor, classroom interaction, motivation, EFL

Abstrak

Humor perlu sekali dalam konteks pendidikan untuk menciptakan hubungan yang harmonis antara guru dan siswa. Penelitian ini menyangkut penggunaan humor oleh guru pada interaksi kelas yang berpengaruh pada suasana kelas serta perasaan siswa. Partisipandalam penelitian ini adalah guru dan siswa di Sekolah Menengah Atas Padang yang dipilih secara purposive dengan pertimbangan pengguna humor selama interaksi kelas. Data penelitian ini diperoleh melalui observasi dengan menggunakan rekaman video dan catatan lapangan selama interaksi kelas berlangsung. Ditemukan bahwa humor guru membantu sisiwa merasa nyaman, senang dan termotivasi dalam proses belajar mengajar. Humor juga membuat siswa gembira dan antusia belajar karena sesuatu yang lucu walaupun terkadang tidak relevan dengan materi ajar. Jika guru tidak menggunakan humor, siswa hanya diam dan merasa bosan. Ketika guru memberikan contoh materi ajar dengan pernyataan lucu, siswa bersemangat belajar. Humor merupakan kecakapan yang harus dimiliki oleh guru untuk memotivasi siswa belajar.

Kata kunci: humor, interaksi kelas

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, humor has become interesting study in the emphasis of playing its role in social interaction. It was found that humor is a fundamental component of social life giving positive interpersonal manner that perceived to be playful, safe, non-serious, or benign in daily life interaction (Chan, Hsu, Liao, Chen, Tu, & Wu, 2018). In educational context, humor provides the situation that helps students to be awake and attentive to the learning process especially when the course is hard for them because of the harmonious relationship given by teacher (Ashipaoloye, 2013, p. 116). It is suggested for teachers to use humor in classroom, because humor is beneficial to learners whether socially or psychologically. Socially, humor can create a good relationship among classmates and a comfortable classroom atmosphere while psychologically, it helps students to be relax and more enjoyable in learning (Bell, 2009, p. 241). Consequently, by using humor, teacher can raise students' interest in learning.

Several studies have examined humor in ESL and EFL classroom setting. In Iran, Farnia and Mohammadi (2021) reported that EFL teachers and learners had a positive attitude towards the use of L2 humor in the classroom. Kim (2021) investigated the features of humor and their function in primary English teaching classrooms in South Korea. Jawhar (2018) found that utilizing L1 as a source of humor effectively facilitated EFL students in Saudi Arabia who have limited linguistics resources. Neff&Rucynski (2017) surveyed university students in Japan to know the importance of humor for language learning and proficiency as well as its significance in understanding cultural differences. Embalzado&Sajampun (2020) revealed that Thai students have a quite positive perception on the use of humor in the classroom. Thai students believe that humorous classrooms is more interesting and fun. It significantly help them feel relieved from tensions and stresses. Students feel more comfortable in participating in class discussions and activities when the class atmosphere possesses certain degree of humor as it seemingly creates a positive classroom environment. Sahin (2021) found that secondary school teachers in Turkey used positive humor and situational humor in teaching and learning.

In the Indonesian EFL context, a number of researches of humor in classroom interaction have been studied by researchers. For instance, Antonius Ali Wutun et al (2021) conducted a study at Pharmacology Institute of Makassar. They investigated how humor can be presented in the classroom through local language terms. Sundari (2018) tried to find out the classroom interaction practices based on the experienced-teachers' perspectives at SMP (junior high school). She found that teachers are aware of their roles to build a good rapport with the students by giving praise and humor. Lewier (2020) revealed that university students speaking skills was improved when presenting humorous recount. Rianti et al (2020) report the vocational high school students' perceptions regarding ideal teacher. The results draw that best teacher according to students should have capability to build a positive relationship with the students, such as, having an individual consideration, easy going, having a deep empathy, motivating, performing comprehensible teaching,

enthusiastic, humorous, assertive, humble and patient. Tunnisa et al (2019) investigated the types of humor that teacher used in teaching English in an English course. They found three types of humor that were utilized by the teacher. They were related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor. While Nashruddin&Alam (2019) tried to find the kinds of humor that English teachers used to motivate learner in online learning setting and students responses toward the teacher's humor. They categorized the kinds of humor according to the thoery that English teacher used into three, namely pun fan, joke, innuendo, malapropism, and absurdity. Interestingly, they also found new types of humor: local humor and *plesetan* humor.

Based on the previous studies, the research related to humor mostly conducted in tertiary level. There are still few in secondary level. Besides, the aforementioned study most frequently investigated kinds of humor that English teacher applied. Therefore, there are still a room to conduct a research regarding to humor in the classroom. This present study is really necessary to give English teachers insight to motivate students in learning English, particularly in classroom setting. According to this, this study aims to find out the role of humor in classroom interaction in senior high school students in Padang.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In many cultures experience, a sense of humor is a common characteristic of human (Sawahata, Komine, Morita, & Hiruma, 2013, p. 1). So, that is why humor is preferable in social interaction. Especially in EFL across the world, the use of humor has been believed as the way to create a more comfortable and productive classroom environment in language learning (Stroud, 2013, p. 72). Similarly, because positive humor can relieve anxiety and build trust in the classroom, it is suggested for English language teachers to establish humor in language classroom (Goebel, 2011). Teachers can use humorous materials or jokes in appealing learners' motivation to reduce anxiety and build trust in the classroom. In fact, the design of humor into EFL classes and courses gave positive effects on learning (Stroud, 2013, p. 72). In short, humor in classroom interaction is the interesting topic to be researched.

Furthermore, humor has been viewed as an effective tool to increase thinking and information acquisition in human experience (Ashipaoloye, 2013, p. 118). However, in Indonesia context, the study of humor in classroom interaction is rarely conducted. Whereas humor in classroom gives benefit idea to make the classroom comfort and contribute the motivation to learn for EFL students. So, this study is aim at analyzing humor in classroom interaction that focus on sociolinguistics perspective that applied in teaching and learning process. Face to face interaction with a sociolinguistics perspective is the focus of discourse analysis (Kotthoff, 2011)

Historically, the concept of humor has changed from one era to the other. At the Renaissance Period, humor was perceived as negative thing. During the mid 18th century, it was evolved into getting pleasure. In the 19th century, humor has become a literary

concept for entertainment on literary in social or cultural occasions such as in academic disciplines whether on campuses or in schools. In fact, perspectives about humor and its effectiveness as a teaching or social device have varied in the academic atmosphere (Ashpaoloye, 2013, p. 116).

Neurologically, it has been found that the neural correlates on humor processing into comprehension and elaboration that caused by a the predicted mental state from single trial brain activity data using the decoding approach (Sawahata, Komine, Morita, & Hiruma, 2013, p. 2). Related to this finding, several studies have used verbal jokes or riddles to examine brain regions in investigating humor process (such as incongruity, resolution and appreciation), humor structure (such as logical mechanisms or humor techniques), humor content (such as hostile jokes), humorlessness, and sex/gender differences in humor. The present study has found that the neural correlates with humor appreciation in different targets and motivations (Chan, Hsu, Liao, Chen, Tu, & Wu, 2018). While some might consider that humor play the role in building and maintaining relationships, emotional health, and cognitive function, because humor has effects psychologically and biologically to improve understanding of the neural systems involved that relevance to study human health and behavior (Neely, Walter, Black, & Reiss, 2012, p. 1784).

Pragmatically, Attardo (1994), in his book, defines humor as a text that the perlocutionary intended laugh effect. This definition considers humor as a social phenomenon that related to the 'speech act' theory proposed by Austin (1962). According to this theory, words not only mean something, but also do something. In daily conversation, perlocutionary act influences the receiver. Humor tries to lead the listener to laugh (Mahna, 2012, p. 44). Humor is essential in social act that occurs in groups of people, although it mixed in social status. Joke reinforces individual power within high social status. In addition, only people who have power can enjoy a sense of humor that perceive as a positive character trait (Tapley, 2006, p. 421). However, from various dictionaries, humor is translated in English as amusing, interesting, entertaining, exciting, thrilling and witty (Stroud, 2013, p. 73).

Furthermore, Ashpaoloye (2013) categorizes the components of humor as physiological, behavioral, emotional and cognitive components that occur in every sense of humor. In addition, some the theoretical approaches have led humor to three main theories: incongruity theory, superiority theory and relief theory. Incongruity Theory perceives that humor is the moment of realization of incongruity between concepts of the situation to be humorous. Superiority Theory perceives something becomes funny when the viewer is made to feel superior to the person(s) in the event. Relief Theory views that humor is a socially acceptable way of releasing tension by reducing psychological tension (Ashpaoloye, 2013, pp. 117-118).

Moreover, language instructors and educators with a repertoire of pedagogical skills will help learners to develop the required knowledge resources in acquiring language. Instructor humor is the skills that can offer beneficial functions in language classes.

Examples of verbal humor can be included wordplays, funny stories, puns, content related jokes, comic irony, metaphor, teasing, hyperbole, metonymy, riddles, tongue twisters and, funny examples/stories (Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2014, p. 3). These kinds of humor can be used by teacher in classroom interaction.

The main aim of learning language is to use it for communication purposes in the class setting that can be achieved in classroom interaction (Lucha & Berhanu, 2015, p. 294). Interaction between English teachers and their students in EFL classroom was useful to develop students' speaking abilities (Lucha & Berhanu, 2015, p. 295). In classroom interaction, humor is a tool for the English teachers in explaining the lesson easily. When students laugh about something in a piece of literature, they are accepting it, at least nodding, as the approval thing for students to understand (Boerman-Cornell, 1999, p. 69). There are four advantages of humor in classroom interaction, they are; student wants, needs and goals; as a site for experiment naturally; complex humor; and to provide language acquisition (Bell, 2009, p. 249). In short, language-related verbal humor provided considerable attention regarding to its application in English classroom (Ziyaeemehr & Kumar, 2014, p. 4).

2. METHOD

The participants in this study were the teacher and students at Senior High School Padang that chosen purposively by considering who usually used humor during classroom interaction. The data of this research comprised classroom observations by using video-recordings and field notes during classroom interaction. The video-recorded data were transcribed and coded manually in line with qualitative social analysis focus on selected features of text or corpus (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis it can be found that there are some situations that make the teacher use humor in classroom interaction.

Situation 1: the teacher used humor when some students did not focus in learning process. The boy student threw the pen to other boy student in several times. This situation disturbed the other students who want to follow the class seriously. The teacher reminded these students by using humorous words to get students' attention.

Datum 1:

Teacher : "Kenapa kalian daritadi lempar-lemparan? nanti terjadi pula LGBT disini"

(Why do you throw the pen each other several times? It makes me worry about LGBT happened here)

Students :(all students laugh)

After hearing the teacher, all of the students laugh, because the teacher relates throwing pen and LGBT. In their mind it was funny to hear that the cause of LGBT is throwing pen each other. Although they knew that the teacher says it to make them more attentive in learning process. This humor was used to ask the student stop playing and focus to teacher explanation. The teacher can continue the explanation of the lesson. The teacher, in this situation, used humor to show her power in making classroom enjoyable and calm.

Situation 2. The similar situation was also happened in the other class. Humor was used to remain the students to pay attention when they lost their attention in learning process. When the teacher explained the material but some students were busy teasing their friends. The classroom atmosphere was almost out of control. Naturally, the teacher say humorous utterances that make the students laugh.

Datum 2

Teacher: heeey, kenapa you cubit cubitan berdua daritadi?

(heeeey.... Why do you pinch each other?)

Students: ha... ha... (all students laughing for awhile)

The word ‘cubit-cubitan’ was chosen to make the students laugh, because this word usually used for the playful situation. It’s impossible for students to do it in serious situation such as in teaching and learning process. After the students hear the teacher, all of the students laughing together for a minute. It makes the students more fresh to learn and raise their interest to learn. After that, the teacher continued to explain the teaching material. Humor was used to make secure classroom atmosphere. From this context, humor used by teacher to make good relationship between teacher and students, and teaching and learning process was run well and enjoyable without the anger of teacher.

The function of humor in this situation is to manage teachers’ anger, so it did not hurt students to be silent in teaching and learning process. When the teacher gave some humor, the students listened and paid attention very well and laugh together in the class.

Situation 3: When the teacher explained material in teaching learning process. Humor that relevant to the material was used to create example of the material. The material is hortatory exposition. In this material the text about “corruption” was given to the students. The teacher gave the example related to the material by using humor to attract students’ interest to learn English.

Datum 3

Teacher : “Yogi said to Ratih, my sweety honey, if I have much money I will buy you a diamond”

Students : “cieeeeeee....” he... he... he... (laugh together)

The name Yogi and Ratih are students' names involving in the classroom that was used as the example. The teachers used these names to make the students laugh to imagine the example given. After the students heard the romantic words "my sweet honey", the students laughed and cheered "cieeee" in the classroom. It was the way of the teacher to increase enjoyment in classroom atmosphere beside to make the students understand of the topic.

Situation 4. The teacher explained teaching material about feeling embracement at the time. The humorous words were used to make the students understand. The teacher used the name of the students, Ica and Tofit, in classroom. Of course, it appealed the students to listen teacher's explanation and make them laughed.

Datum 4

Teacher: "si Ica dan Tofit pergi ke kafe yang lagi hits dikota Padang, karambia kafe, and then si Tofit ternyata tidak membawa dompet. Kata si Tofit," oh... I feel ashamed" betapa malunya saya, kata si Tofit

Students: ha... ha... ha...(laughing together)

The students laughed to hear "Karambia Kafe" as the name of café that sound funny for them. "Karambia" was usually used to tell something rude in some condition, and it can be as the name of fruit in some other. In this context, "Karambia" is suitable words for both condition. That is why the students laughed to hear that. In other side, it also helped the students in understanding the lesson, because the humor used were relevant to the material in teaching English.

Situation 5: When the teacher expressed humor to responds the student who come from the other class that standing behind the window of the class observed. The student behind the window called the student in the class who learnt with the teacher by saying that the student he called was ugly. But the teacher warned him by saying "sesama hancur", it means that the students is ugly too:

Datum 5

*Student : "dia jelek miss"(behind the window)
(he is ugly... miss)*

*Teacher : "kalau sesama itu jangan seperti itu.
(don't say it to the similar one).
Saya tanya sama teman you, (I ask your friends)
is he handsome boy"?*

Students :Nooooooooo.... (in the classroom)

*Student : "jelek dia lagi miss, (he is more ugly than me... miss)
face broken miss" (behind the window)*

Teacher : " kalau sesama hancur itu jangan kayak, gitu"

if you are similarly broken, don't say it
 Students : hahaha...huuuu(laugh together)

Although the humor was not relevant to the material in learning, it makes the students happy and enjoy in classroom. It was needed for the students who were tired during classroom activities. They laugh together and noisy situation appeared for a while. However, after that, the students can be focus to teacher's explanation again. This situation is related to the role of humor in classroom that can increase enjoyment in learning for students and making a more comfortable classroom atmosphere (Stroud, 2013, p. 74).

Based on the results of the study, there are four functions of using humor in classroom interactions. First, the teacher used humor to show her power in making classroom enjoyable and calm. As Tapley (2006) mentioned that only people who have power can enjoy a sense of humor for positive character trait. Thus, the activity in the classroom can be interested and teaching and learning process run well. Second, humor used by teacher to make good relationship between teacher and students, and teaching and learning process was run well and enjoyable without the anger of teacher.

According to Garner (as cited in Akbari, 2020), in innovative language teaching and communicative language teaching teacher should create a positive and stress-free atmosphere in their instruction. Third, teacher used humor to make the students understand of the topic. The humor used were relevant to the material in teaching English. Fourth, using humor in classroom can increase enjoyment in learning for students and making a more comfortable classroom atmosphere. The use of humor is very helpful to create the classroom environment more comfort and conducive to study (Akbari, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Humor is essential in classroom interaction. From the data displayed in this article, it can be seen that humor help the students to be comfortable, enjoyed, and motivated in teaching learning process. Humor made them happy and enthusiastic. If the teacher did not use humor in classroom, the classroom become static and students feel bored. After the teacher give the example of the material in learning with humor statement, all of the students changed to be more antusias and excited to learn. It is better for teachers to have the sense of humor in teaching. By humorous words, teachers can make a good classroom atmosphere.

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