

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON THE USE OF HUMOR IN ENGLISH TEACHING PROCESS

Muthi'ah

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar
muthiah.rahim@uin-alauddin.ac.id

Syamsul Arif galib

Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar
syamsularif.galib@uin-alauddin.ac.id

ABSTRACT. This study examines the use of humor in the teaching process of the English Education Department as perceived by the students. Three main points are discussed in this study: (1) the kinds of lecturers that the students mostly expect to keep them engaged with English tasks in classroom environment, (2) the students' perception on the use of humor as learning motivator, and (3) the students' perception on the Lecturers' Teaching Characters. The participants of the research were the students of the English Education Department at UIN Alauddin Makassar. This research is descriptive. The data were collected using a survey and depth interviews with the students. The results show that the most preferable lecturers are the ones who can make the class/course interesting. Also, while 96% of the students think that using humor in the classroom is important as a learning motivator, the researchers found that lecturers in the English Education Department rarely use humor in the teaching process.

Keywords: perception, humor, English teaching process

A. INTRODUCTION

To this day, teaching has become a complex skill. Not only must the teachers competent in understanding subjects and transferring knowledge, but they also need to build an interpersonal relationship with the students to create a positive and effective learning environment. Various teaching methods, strategies, or techniques have been introduced and practiced by teachers in any level of education as a way of engaging positive interaction with students. Another way to build a positive interaction between teachers and students in the classroom is by using humor in the teaching process.

According to Martin (2007), in his book "*Introduction to the Psychology of Humor*", humor is all about the way people tell jokes, relate personal anecdotes, or make witty comments that can create pleasant feelings and cause other people to smile or laugh. On the other hand, Ruch (as cited in Bakar & Kumar, 2019) suggests that humor is an ability to make people laugh by being aware of what others find funny. It can be inferred that humor is something that can be learned and practiced by anyone, including teachers.

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, some teachers agree that humor can actually bring a positive atmosphere in the teaching process, especially in the classroom. The process

of transferring knowledge can be effective if the teacher and students can work well together to achieve the learning goals. The process of learning should be comfortable, fun, and interesting. Involving humor can help to gain students' attention and motivation to engage in learning activities.

However, in fact, a lot of teachers take their lessons very seriously. They might use various teaching techniques or strategies, but they also may not be aware of the uncomfortable situation created in the classroom. Most of the time, they stand in front of the students with a very serious look on their face, without smiling and reluctant to deliver some jokes at the beginning of the lessons. The teachers may not realize that the situation makes students uncomfortable and decrease their motivation in the learning process.

Therefore, it is necessary to do more research about humor in teaching English as a foreign language. This study does not intend to discriminate teachers who are born without a sense of humor. This study aims primarily at addressing student personal interest in humorous lecturers in the English Education Department of UIN Alauddin Makassar. The specific objectives of the study are: (1) to investigate kind of lecturers the students expect most to keep them engaged with English learning in classroom environment, (2) to investigate the students' perception on the lecturers' teaching characters at English Education Department of UIN Alauddin, and (3) to reveal the students' perceptions on humorous lecturers.

B. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A standard definition of humor is actually hard to define. It can be seen from the statement of Peter Medves (2008), "it appears that grabbing the essence of humor is a daunting task, and I am afraid I can't come up with a better definition than those quoted above. So, I give up, accepting Wendy Cope's remark: If anyone needs me to define "funny" or "humorous", they have my sympathy". Therefore, experts can define their own definition of humor based on the way they understand humor.

In reviewing the history of humor, the author begins by looking at the etymology of humor. The "humor" derives from the Latin word *umor*, which means liquid or fluid (Wooten, 1996). In some modern dictionaries like Longman Dictionary (2008) Humor defined as the ability to understand and enjoy what is funny and make people laugh, or the quality of causing amusement. In another dictionary, Cambridge (2008), humor is defined as the ability to be amused by something seen, heard, or thought about. Sometimes causing you to smile or laugh, or the quality in something that causes such amusement.

Some scholars have different perceptions of the connection between humor and laugh. M.P. Mulder and A. Nijholt (2000) said that "Many researchers connect laughter to humor and use these two terms in the same context." However, humor and laughter are closely related but certainly not the same. Laughter can be the result of humor, but not every humorous situation will invoke laughter, as well as humans' laugh without the perception of humor. For that reason, LaFollette and Niall Shanks (1993) concluded that humor is context-dependent. It depends, among other things, on the listener's beliefs.

Some research and studies have been conducted regarding the use of humor in the teaching process and how it affects the students. Torok et al. (2004) conducted research on the use of humor in a college classroom. The researchers examined how students perceived professors' uses of various types of humor during class and they also correlated the way professors incorporated humor into their class lectures with their perceived competence and effectiveness. Also, they investigated whether students felt their learning experience improved when their teachers used humor. The results show that students perceived that professors often used humor in classrooms. The professors mostly share funny stories, funny comments, jokes, professional humor, and jokes. When the students were asked if they felt positively toward the humor, 73 percent of the students felt positive and 59 percent of them agreed that humor can promote a sense of community. Moreover, 80 percent of the students admit that they learn a concept better when the professors use humor in the classroom.

Another research was conducted by Prof. Hidayet Tuncay in 2007 on the title *Welcome to HELL: Humor in English Language Learning*. This study was a survey research that stresses the importance of humor as a means of enhancing student motivation to learn English. The respondents of this research come from various schools and one university, including three private high schools and a naval high school in Turkey. After finishing his research, Hidayet concluded that Using jokes, however, may bring some advantages to the classroom as well as the teachers' teaching performance. Furthermore, Hidayet added some points that may be considered as outcomes of implementing the use of jokes. He stated that Humor or joke may break the ice during the teaching process, reduces TTT and increases STT, contribute to a positive learning environment, and also bring a new insight to a teacher's teaching performance.

In addition, Yusi (2016) conducted a research on the analysis of teachers' kinds of humor and the positive outcomes of the teacher's humor. The result of the study showed that first, there were two kinds of humor used in a classroom; appropriate and inappropriate. These two kinds of humor

consist of funny comments and jokes as appropriate. While inappropriate were irony and ethnic humor. Second, the most frequent humor used by the teacher in the classroom was irony. Third, the teachers' humor gives positive outcomes to the learning process for students. It makes the relation between teachers and students be more tied.

C. METHOD

The population of this study was the students of the English Education Department of UIN Alauddin Makassar. The number of students in such department in the academic year of 2019 - 2020 is 583 students which comprised of four year-intakes: (1) intake 2016 registered 341 students or 58.49 percent of the total number of students, (2) intake 2017 registered 84 students or 14.41 percent of the total number of students, (3) intake 2018 registered 72 students or 12.35 percent of the total number of students, and (4) intake 2019 registered 86 students or 14.75 percent of the total number of students. Since the number of the total student population in the English Education Department of UIN Alauddin Makassar was more than 100 but less than 1000, the researcher selected a 30 percent sample proportionally from the total population. However, there was a sample reduction as for intake 2017 was on leave for Teaching Practice Program in some districts and schools in South Sulawesi. Therefore, the total sample taken for this study was 150 students.

This research is descriptive and employs survey design in collecting the data. Some types of instruments were employed in the study, namely: (1) the Preference Order Rating Scale; (2) the Lecturer Graphic Portrayal Scale; and (3) the Attitudinal Questionnaire. All the instruments have to pass a test of normal distribution, homogeneity, reliability and discrimination level to avoid bias. The data obtained from all the instruments are analyzed and interpreted using descriptive statistics and particularly using the Likert Scale and percentage to see the students' perception of humorous lecture.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The most expected lecturers that keep students engaged with English tasks in classroom environment

The table below indicates that in the ten choices of effective English lecturers opted by 150 Students, most of the students choose the teacher who can *Make his course interesting* as an effective teacher for them. It is perceivable because an interesting course creates an interesting situation for

the learning process. *Humorous* itself is in the fourth place opted by 11 students or 7.09 percent of all students.

Table 1. Rank Order Preference

Effective Teachers	Student	%	Rank Order
A good personality	13	8.66	3
Close to students	9	6	6
Explain clearly	9	6	7
Honest	1	0.66	10
Humorous	11	7.33	4
Make all the students participate	10	6.66	5
Make his course interesting	75	50	1
Responsible	5	3.33	8
Speak good English	2	1.33	9
Use interesting methods	15	10	2

Based on the data, most of the students (50%) think that the main characteristics that must be possessed by a teacher is to be able to *make his/her course interesting*. For some students, the teacher who can make an interesting teaching process is more important than other teachers who have another character like, close to students, explain clearly, even speak good English.

Making the course interesting is a significant thing in the teaching process. Many people stated that to be a good teacher, you have to know how to create an interesting situation while you teach. According to Brain (1998), Good teachers make the class interesting and relevant to the students. The same thing was claimed by Joe (2007), he stated that one of the basics of teaching is to conduct lessons that interest your students. Moreover, an interesting teaching process prevents a boring situation. It will be very useful because when students get bored, they will not remember much of the lesson and tend to disrupt the lesson.

What about humor itself? Although it was just opted by 7% of the students, it does not mean that humor is not important. The research states that humor is one of the essential elements for creating an interesting teaching process, because humor may bring laughter in the classroom. Some teachers confessed that they use humor to make the lecture interesting and entertaining and hopefully this

will encourage genuine learning in the sense that learning is not forced upon a student but a student genuinely wants to learn because the student finds learning enjoyable

2. The Students' Perception of Humor in Teaching as Learning Motivator

According to questionnaire that was distributed to the students, the data shows that the students think that humor is important as a learning motivator in the teaching process.

Table 2. Students' Perception of Humor in Teaching

Interval Score	Frequency	%	Category
10-18	-	0	Hampers Learning
19-27	6	4	Not Important
28-36	75	50	Slightly Important
37-45	69	46	Quite Important
46-54	-	0	Considerably Important

In relation to the data of student's perception of humor in the teaching process as a learning motivator, the analysis of the questionnaire shows that 4% of students opted that humor is not important in the teaching process. However, there are 50% of the students choosing humor as slightly important and 46% choosing humor to be quite important.

Based on the data, it can be concluded that many students in the English Department thought that humor is important to be used in the teaching process because it can increase students' motivation. Even though they have different opinions about the value of importance. There are 50% of the students claiming that humor in teaching is slightly important, and 46% of them think that humor in teaching is quite important.

The students who choose humor as *slightly important* think that humor only gives a little bit effect in the learning process. They realize that humor may increase their interest in learning the language. They also think that humor makes them more approachable in class, and create a more conducive learning environment, but those effects are not very significant to increase student motivation.

In contrast, the students who consider humor to be *quite important* in the teaching process admit that the use of humor can give a significant effect on the students' motivation. The use of humor in

the class can boost the students' interest in learning the language. Medyes (2003) has released that one of the main justifications for using humor is because humor enhances motivation

3. The Students' Perception of the Lecturers' Teaching Characters

a. *Lecturer rating scale of using humor (jokes, witticisms, humorous facial expressions, funny stories, etc.) during each class session*

Table 3

Lecturer Rating Scale of Using Humor	Student	%	Rank Order
No Humor (0)	2	1.33	5
Rarely (1-3)	50	33.33	2
Occasionally (4-7)	70	46.66	1
Often (8-11)	20	13.33	3
Frequently (12-more)	3	2	4

The data in the table indicates that most of the students are in the same statements that teachers are occasionally using humor during the class session. The other students think humor is rarely used by teachers and only 13.33% of the students who claim that lecturers are often using humor in the classroom.

b. *Lecturer rating scale of using actual words and/or other elements of a humorous example in the foreign language (i.e. a joke, pun, comic strip, funny story, etc.) to illustrate grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or any other particularity of the language during a typical class.*

Tabel 4

Lecturer Rating Scale of Using Humor	Student	%	Rank Order
No Humor (0)	5	3.33	4
Rarely (1-3)	65	43.33	1
Occasionally (4-7)	61	40.66	2
Often (8-11)	16	10.66	3

Frequently (12-more)	3	2	5
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The table indicates that the frequency of teachers using humor in illustrating grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or any other particularity of the language during a typical class are *Rarely* and tend to be *Occasionally*.

c. Lecturer rating scale of using humor to communicate in the foreign language that is learned during each class

Tabel 5

Lecturer Rating Scale of Using Humor	Student	%	Rank Order
No Humor (0)	7	4.51	4
Rarely (1-3)	78	50.32	1
Occasionally (4-7)	53	34.19	2
Often (8-11)	15	9.67	3
Frequently (12-more)	2	1.29	5

Table 5 above shows the frequency of the teacher in using humor to communicate in the foreign language that is learned during each class. The data in the table indicate that most of the students agree that teachers are *rarely* using humor in the teaching process. Three tables before have indicated about the likeness of lecturers' teaching characters at the English Education Department of UIN Alauddin Makassar as perceived by the students.

Based on the tables above, although the students of the English department agree that using humor in education is important, the researchers found that lecturers in the English Department *rarely* use humor in the teaching process. It has probably happened because some of the lecturers still consider that humors do not give a significant effect on the teaching process. As a matter of fact, humor has been integrated into the teaching process. It is not only used in English language teaching, but also in any other teaching process.

E. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, the researchers come to the following conclusions: (1) in order to keep the students of English Department engaged with English teaching process in classroom environment, the lecturers have to be able to make the course and the teaching process interesting, (2) 96 % of the students in English Education Department think that humor is important as a learning motivator, and (3) the use of humor by lecturers of English Department in English teaching process is only *occasional* and tends to be *rare*.

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