

Using Humour in EFL Classroom Interaction: an Effective Way of Byrning Students' Interest in Learning English

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USING HUMOUR IN EFL CLASSROOM INTERACTION:

(An Effective Way of Burning Students' Interest in Learning English)

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Abstract

Teaching English at secondary school level is meant to enable students to grasp out communicative competences. To attain this purpose fruitfully, English teacher needs to consider the strategy how to encourage students to take a part in classroom interaction. One of strategy that can be played by English teacher is "humour" because it is like a battery—creating good circumstances in doing communication. This study approaches teacher-students interaction in EFL classroom from pragmatic perspective. This study explores the types and functions of humors supplied by the English teacher in classroom interaction at the tenth grade of Secondary School. The data were videotape documented from three distinct classrooms in 90 minutes English lesson. The data were analyzed based on the theory of Gay and Airasian (2000), Miles and Hubberman (1983) and Chelimsky (1989). The results of the study shows that (1) there are five types of humour used by English teacher in classroom interaction, namely (a) irony, (b) teasing, (c) banter, (d) language play and (e) jokes; and (2) the humours used by English teacher functions as (a) developing open and supportive communication climates, (b) enhancing positive interaction, (c) creating amusement, (d) lowering students' anxiety, and (e) fostering students to be courageous to take a part in classroom interaction.

Keywords: *Humours, EFL classroom interaction, Learning English*

INTRODUCTION

In the EFL classroom, teacher need to consider not only about how student comprehend materials, but also many aspects, such as classroom atmosphere, students condition, etc. These aspects will influence students' readiness in grasp out learning material. It means a good teacher should give attention to everything, he/she tries to be his/ her students' ears and eyes, he thinks as if she/he is student in order to find out why student are very quiet; are they bored? Are they anxious. In fact, many teachers are not care about it at all, they fail to manage their classes because they are not knowledgeable about their students. Besides, some teachers still used traditional strategies in teaching English in the classroom. Meanwhile, in this modern area everything becomes interesting for students more than studying in the classroom itself. So it is such a competition for a teacher how teacher can be an interesting thing for students too. It means, it is time for an English teacher to move on, find another strategy to get students interest in learning English. Humor is one of good strategies that can

be used by the English teacher. In this study, humour can be defined as teacher-initiated attempts to stimulate laughter and amusement in verbal classroom interaction. According to Norrick (2003), humour can be grouped into five, namely (1) irony, (2) teasing, (3) banter, (4) language play and (5) jokes.

Using humour in classroom has many benefits. Pham (2014) classifies the benefits of humour in education field in two categories—direct and indirect benefits. In direct way, humour can give advantages as (1) improved retention information, (2) better understanding of material, and (3) increase students' performance. Whereas, in indirect manner, humour can (1) intensify teacher closeness and reduce emotional gap between teachers and pupils, (2) lessen students' affective filters, (3) build a secure, more amenable classroom milieu and (4) guide to nobler ranking of teachers or learning.

Moreover, in the language classroom, according to Girdfanny (2004) humour is good to use because when the teacher employs it, the students will engage in lesson in order to not skip any of the fool or jokes. Besides, humor can unlock learners to recent concepts and boost their impetus, because they are more bidding to face the threat and think that any faults as a good chance to get lesson. Furthermore, Sujatha, Kannan and Tyagi (2012) states that humor can create low-anxiety learning in the classroom. It means with humor, students will feel fresh in the classroom, and less their anxiety. At the end their relationship becomes good and the teacher does need to force students to be active and give attention anymore.

In the research of classroom situation, many research results show that that teachers exploit humor as valuable resources of initiating affinity and building unlock, sympathetic interaction atmosphere" (Stuart and Rosenfeld, 1994). Correspondingly, humor is perceived constructively both in corresponding to the situation of the classroom and the teacher-student rapport. Humour bestows teachers with an occasion to develop irrefutable interaction in the instructional liaison between the teacher and the students (Spåre, 2008). One might believe humour as a simple device for producing enjoyment for a brief period of time, but in classrooms it can function as an enormous aim by making an encouraging learning situation and improving the social bond between the teacher and his/her pupils. When it is supplied properly, the benefits of humour in classrooms are thus beyond succinct enjoyment.

In addition, studies from several literatures indicates additional findings of the use of humor in teaching. Humor does not only reduce students' apprehension but also improve learning on a merely thinking level (Rhem, 1998). Furthermore, humour is also regarded as a teaching strategy for enhancing a good learning climate. It is essential for the teachers to build an encouraging situation for learning as they perform a desperate function in the classroom. When teachers inaugurate a good social environment, students' brainpowers are instigated and they will be enhanced more concentrating. Consequently, the teachers can employ humour in the classroom. They infrequently chuckle, beam, and make witticism in the classroom especially in adolescent schools. They even reprimand students and caution them to be more serious in their learning. The students are frightened to take participation, like asking questions, and thus they decline to communicate with teachers. They will be considered to feel worry in the classroom. In contrast, if teachers supply humour in his/her class, they can have better rapport with the pupils.

In addition, Humor can be a style of teachers' communication, where it can facilitate students to have better comprehension and improve or disturb students' endeavor to learn a foreign language. Furthermore, humour can also assist some students who are not confident to take

participation in the class. Once the students reduce their anxiety, their competence to speak in the target language will be improved better.

Concerning the points described in the previous explanation, this article aims to answer questions as follow:

1. What is sorts of humour supplied by English teacher in the classroom interaction?
2. To what extent does English teacher supplied humour in his classroom interaction?

METHODS

The present study used qualitative research with content analysis design. It describes kinds and functions of humors used by English teacher in the classroom interaction. This study was conducted in the tenth classes of Islamic senior high school. The data were 90-minute videotape documented from three classrooms of English lessons. The data were analyzed based on theory of Gay and Airasian (2000), Miles and Hubberman (1983) and Chelimsky (1989).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study results two main findings. They are types and functions of humour supplied by English teacher in his classroom interaction.

1. Types of Humor supplied by English teacher in the Classroom Interaction

Based on data analysis, it was found five types of humour used by teacher in EFL classroom, namely (1) irony, (2) teasing, (3) banter, (4) language play and (5) jokes. Each type of humor will be elaborated in the following description.

a. Irony

According to Audrieth (1998) irony is one of main components in humour. It means the irony is used to convey message which implicate non-literal meaning. The most frequent form of irony is the speaker use the utterance with the opposite meaning of what they mean, but the listener supposed the opposite meaning of the speaker's stated. In short, the humor here created by the teacher when the teacher says an untrue information or say the opposite of the fact to the students. The sample of this type of humour is shown by following excerpt :

Teacher : *Everybody still alive?*
Students : (Laugh)

In this excerpt, irony regarded as the utterance used to state the opposite meaning of what the speaker is saying. This irony can be obtained in the previous teacher-student interaction, when the teacher asked a question about his students' condition when entered the classroom. He said "*everybody is still alive?*" In fact, this statement brought irony as every students are there to learn, it was not same with what he has just said. Actually, the teacher knew that students there are alive not died. Consequently, students got laugh because of that question.

b. Teasing

Teasing is deliberate hassle together with playful off-record devices something pertinent to the object by teasing them (Norrick, 2009). So here, the teasing usually uses the word praise in teasing the students.

T : Are you ok Ade? De, your smile, wow. *At this one, ade's smile make us being melt.*

Consequently, the humor appeared when the teacher tried to praise student who was smiling at that time. Whereas, the student often gives smiles in the class while the teacher was teaching in the classroom. Here, the teacher teased the student by praising student's smile, where it made everyone who looked at him being melt. Based on the principle of humor, this utterance belongs to teasing humor. It caused a teasing that did by the teacher. In this utterance, there was also a hyperbole that the teacher said to student "*Ade's smile make us being melt*". His hyperbole meant that student's smile has something like magic that made everyone around him melted like some salts in the water. In short, Hyperbole and metaphor are two ways to flout maxim of quality. It means the humor of teasing here resulted from flouted the maxim quality.

c. Banter

Audrieth (1998) defines banter as natural humourous interaction between acquaintances to build and strengthen rapport through social-approval companionship approach.

Teacher : *Hanif, its just for people who 17 years old and up*
Student : (Smile)
Students : (Laugh)

Here the student has a short body as a student in his levels. The humor implies when the teacher talks about something in the classroom. Suddenly, the students laugh because of the teacher's said. Because of the student has short and small body, the teacher said "*Hanif, its just for people who 17 years old and up*". Spontaneously all of students laugh more. This example is related to banter. The researcher judged this one as the banter, because banter is synonymous with raillery. Here the teacher actually judges his students, but because they have a good relationship, it feels like just a humor for a fun. Besides, the humor here conducted by flouting maxim quality, where the teacher say something not true, where the student is 17 years old, it means he is also have a change to listen to the story that given by the teacher at that time.

d. Language Play

According to Belz (2002), Language play refers to sensible reiteration or adjustment of linguistic expressions morphologically (like a lexeme) or syntactically. In addition, Lilja (2010) claims that language play occurred when the speaker uses some targeted language features to make humourous situation.

Teacher : Ade, Alfi look at my white board, I will ask you letter to bring this white board home, *then copy this white board to copy center*

The humor of Language plays here obtained when the teacher asked the student to stop writing what the teacher explained. The teacher stated that after the

teacher explained the materials, everyone can bring the white board home or maybe copy the whiteboard, to photocopy center. The impact, this utterance made student laugh when hearing that statement. In this utterance, there was also a hyperbole that the teacher said to the students. The hyperbole meant to bring the white board to photocopy center. It was impossible, how people could copy the white board that has hard body and bid size. In short, Hyperbole and metaphor are two ways to flout maxim of quality. It means the humor of language here resulted from flouted the maxim quality.

e. Jokes

Jokes is major or superordinate terms that include different sorts of homours presented in this study. In the data, there are some jokes that can be found, as follows:

- T : what you eat ?
- S : same with Asri ?
- T : *what, satei ?*

The teacher utterance here brought the Jokes of humor. Actually, there is no a strong parameter for this humor type, but here the researcher stated everything that humors that out from the irony, banter, teasing and playing words is related to jokes. In addition, this humor made the teacher flouted the maxim of relation as well because what the teacher said is not relevant to the actual condition. In conclusion, joke here resulted from flouting maxim of relation.

2. The Functions of humors used by the English teacher in the EFL classroom interaction

Humor not only has an entertainment function, but also has many social functions. The main role of conversational humour is the speaker directly know the effects of humorous parts in his or her discourse. The following section will discuss the functions of humor employed by the English teacher in his interaction in the classroom.

a. Developing open, supportive communication climates.

Using humor in the classroom is good way to open communication in the classroom. As stated by Stuart and Rosenfeld (1994), humour can be an effective means to build relationship and enhance unlock and caring interaction environment. So, here when a teacher began a communication with humor in the classroom, it will make the students happy to follow the class. The impact, they will wait the teacher to teach in their class again.

In addition, teacher who opens the communication in the classroom with humor will love by students. No matter what, students are value for teacher. They will try to compare between this teacher and other teachers. Shortly, students like to choose teacher who humorous in the classroom. When teacher has been loved by students, teacher can drive the class as what they want. In addition, humors also can makes the situation in the classroom being fresh, when the situation in the classroom was fresh, it make the students feel enjoy stay in the class. For example, it can be seen in the excerpt of the data below:

- Teacher : *Everybody still alive?*
- Students : (Laugh)

The excerpt above the proof that humor can developing open, supportive communication climates. The situation here every student looked so tired, bored and did not want to do some kinds of activities. Looked at this situation the teacher asked student like the excerpt above. So, it made the students laughed and the feel something fun through the teacher's question. The impact, students who get tired and bored before became fresh and have a lot spirits to continue the lesson.

b. Enhancing positive interaction

It is a commonly known fact that humorous people are often viewed to be more joyful and more fashionable. Moreover, smile is the squattest gap between two persons, so when humor works, it will enhance positive interaction. As stated by Spare (2008) humour supply teachers with an occasion to improve qualified communication in the instructional teacher-students relationship.

In the classroom, the most important thing is the interaction between teacher and students should in good condition. To create this condition, the teacher can create humor by teasing the students, or maybe mocking the students and so forth. As a proof, it can be seen the excerpt of the data bellows :

Teacher : *Nyokan selalu senyum, samo jo si Ade
sell the smile, jual senyum selalu. Don't sell your
smile because we are the man we are the boy. Sell
your smile to all the girls.*

This excerpt was a proof that humor can enhance positive interaction between teacher and students. This excerpt happened when the teacher saw a student who smile. The teacher took this turn to create a humor with the student. Actually this student was a person that not confident with himself, because he has a short body then others. In order to rebuild the student confident, the teacher created humor with this students. At the end, the student felt that this teacher care on him, love him and he respect the teacher more.

c. Creating enjoyment for a brief period of time

English is one the difficult subject to learn by students in Indonesia. So, the teacher should motivate students how they can learn English and doing interaction with English in the classroom. Aboudan (2009) stated that using humor encourages communication between students and teachers, and the classroom environment becomes freer and more open. So here, He obtained that learners' communication enhanced and they were more willing to learn the foreign language. In short, beside the humor make the students enjoy to follow the class, in fact humor also can motivate student to learn language. Here, there were some data that proof by using humor it can creating enjoyment for a brief period of time, as follows :

Student : Excuse me mister?
Teacher : What ??
Student : Ingin masuk mister
Teacher : *In my language, not in your language ya! In my language*

The excerpt above happened when some students were late entering the class. The students tried to get permission from the teacher. As a fact, when every student

were late entering the class, the students would wait outside of the class until the teacher obeyed the student join the class. Actually, here the teacher tried to mocking the students. It was such a punishment for all of students who were late to join the class, by asking them to speak English in getting permission. Looked the student who came late reaction, it made another students laughed, and they felt fun looked their friends.

d. Lowering student's anxiety

English one of the scary subjects for some students to learn. The impact, when in the English class, some students are afraid to talk, they feel anxiety follow the class. So here the teacher needs to find a way to make the students do not afraid to learn English. So here, humor can lower student's anxiety. As stated by Sujatha, Kannan and Tyagi (2012) humor can create low-anxiety learning in the classroom. To make it clear, it can be seen as follows:

Teacher : Don't be sluggish
Student : No, sir
Teacher : *If you are sluggish you are not good and you are not beautiful !*

This excerpt happened when the students finished their break time. Usually after the break time, every students lost much spirits to continue the class. It caused they felt that playing with friends outside of the classroom more enjoyable than studying in the classroom. In other sides, they felt sluggish also caused the effect of the anxiety to join the class. Looked this condition, the teacher teased the students in order to get back the students spirit. Here, the teasing from the teacher works well. The impact, the students thought that their teacher so care on their situation, and the felt something funny through the teachers teasing. So, it was clear enough that, humor can low students anxiety.

e. Fostering students to be courageous in the classroom interaction.

English is a foreign language that is difficult to be learned by students. Consequently, they will feel shy to speak in English, because in their mind "*shy to do some mistakes*". So here, as a teacher, he needs a tool to foster the student to be courageous enough to get involved in classroom interaction. Through humour, teacher can encourage the students to practice English. Here, the researcher found some data that humor can lessen students' shyness to talk in the classroom. It can be seen as follows:

Teacher : what you eat ?
Student : same with Asri ?
Teacher : *what, satei ?*

The excerpt shows us that utterances above happened when the teacher did such simple conversation before starting the lesson at that time. Here the teacher asked about student's breakfast. In this exchange the teacher chose a student to respond the question. When the teacher asked what the students ate in the breakfast, spontaneously the student answer it by saying same with her friends before. It looked the students afraid to talk in English, she was afraid of making some mistakes, so she just answered the teacher like what her friend did. Looking this condition, the teacher created a humor to make the students get involved in the

interaction. So that, finally, the student changed her answer by saying “fried chicken”.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis, it can be concluded that there are five types of humor used by English teachers, namely (1) irony, (2) teasing, (3) banter, (4) language play and (5) jokes. The most frequent humor used by the English teacher is banter and the least one is irony. In addition, there are five functions of humor used by the English teacher. These are as follows: (1) developing open, supportive communication climates, (2) enhancing positive interaction, (3) creating enjoyment for a brief period of time, (4) lessening students' anxiety and (5) fostering students to be courageous in the classroom interaction.

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