

# INVESTIGATING TEACHER'S SENSE OF HUMOR IN INDONESIA

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## INVESTIGATING TEACHER'S SENSE OF HUMOR IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

This study investigates the use of humor in teaching English in an English course in Indonesia. It aimed to find out the kinds of humor employed by the teacher and to explore the students' perspectives toward it. This study employed a qualitative research design and focused on one English course in Makassar, Indonesia. One teacher and one class consisting of seven students were taken as respondents. Data collections relied on observation and interview. Five meetings of classroom interaction were observed and recorded. Seven students from the class were also interviewed deeply. The recordings were transcribed and analyzed based on the framework of Wanzer & Frymier (1999). Findings show that there are some kinds of humor that were employed by the teacher in teaching, namely related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor. New kinds of humor were also found namely unresponded humor and remind humor. Those kinds of humor were proved to give benefits in English language teaching process. The teacher who employed humor in teaching English made the students easy to get the knowledge. Teacher's humor reduced tension, made the students more comfortable in the teaching-learning process, created good interactions, led to more enthusiastic teaching-learning process, encouraged students' attendance, and reduced the number of students who felt sleepy in the class. Findings from this study provide significant input for teachers to create effective interaction between teachers and students in English language teaching in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** EFL teacher, teacher's sense of humor, the impact of humor, English course

### INTRODUCTION

Good interactions between teachers and students have been proven to be the biggest contribution of a positive environment (Banks, 2014; Luz, 2015). Somsai & Araprasert (2011) prove that communication strategies can assist students to cope with face-to-face oral communication problems. In addition, Aladdin's study (2012) found that communication strategies can be used to convey messages and therefore, can improve students' communication in the target language. Therefore, teachers and

students need to maintain good communication and interaction in the class. Communication and interaction between teachers and students are the most potential activity that provides the opportunity to create an exciting atmosphere in the classroom. Failure of communication in the class results in an unsuccessful process of teaching.

These issues are also found to influence the success of English language teaching. In some countries where English is taught as a foreign language, learning the English

<sup>2</sup> language is considered a daunting task for many students. It needs hard work and a great deal of effort on the part <sup>7</sup> of the students as well as on the educators. Students are more likely to learn if they are happy and amused than if they are feeling anxious and threatened (Martin, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to design fun learning during his interaction. In this case, interaction and fun communication can be created from the types of language used, the way to communicate, the use of facial expression, and many others.

One thing that has rarely been touched during this time but can help teachers to make excitement in the EFL classroom interaction is the use of humor. Martin (2007) reveals that humor is a creative teaching technique that places demands on the skill and art of educators. Humor as a teacher's communication strategy can be utilized to assist learning, to interest students to learn, and to create a relationship between teacher and students, and therefore, integrating humor into the language classroom is needed to establish a conducive environment in classroom learning (Bell, 2009; Abraham et al., 2014). Findings from these studies recommend teachers to create a pleasant condition in order that the students feel more comfortable and are willing to accept the subject. Humor is one <sup>28</sup> those strategies.

In Indonesia, the teaching of English as a foreign language still becomes one of the challenging processes. Studies in terms of the English language teaching in Indonesia still reveal that there are still plenty of issues which need urgent feedback and solution (Djiwandono, 2016; Subekti, 2018; <sup>13</sup> Iahmud, 2017, 2018). One of the solutions to improve the quality of English language teaching is to create more opportunities to learn English intensively. The teaching of English is not only required in the formal classes of the schools but also it can be conducted in informal institutions. The existence of

English courses then becomes an alternative choice for students to learn English. In the English course, mostly handled by private and informal institutions, students can also learn English and in fact, they study English more intensively. The students who have returned from schools can join an English course in their spare time, usually conducted in two or three meetings in a week.

The main roles of English courses as an alternative for learning English discussed above is also recognized by the English students in Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. There have been many English courses found in Makassar. The students in one English course may come from different levels of students and from different schools around Makassar. One of them is Makassar English Course (MEC). Based on the preliminary observation conducted by the researchers, the students who were taught by a quite serious teacher were not really enthusiastic in the classroom. A different case when the researchers entered another class whose teacher taught by adding a sense of humor.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding some evidence above, the researchers are interested <sup>22</sup> conducting a further investigation of the teacher's sense of humor in the class of English course. The purpose <sup>13</sup> of the present study is to explore the use of humor as a communication strategy in teaching English in an English course. The major research questions explored in this study were (1) what are the kinds of humor employed by the teacher in teaching English in English course? (<sup>19</sup> how are the students' perspectives toward the use of humor in the process of English language teaching at English course? Findings from this study could become a reference for English teachers in order to create a positive environment in their English classes which leads to effective classroom interaction.

## **RELATED LITERATURE**

There are various definitions<sup>1</sup> regarding humor in other perspectives. Martin and Lefcourt (1984) said that humor is “the frequency with which the individual smiles, laughs, and otherwise displays amusement in a variety of situations”. Although later, they stated that laughter and humor are not the same things. Anthropologist Robert R. Provine has spent years studying laughter and believes that laughter is not always connected to humor; rather, laughter is more often used as a mechanism for moving conversation (Provine, 2004).

Humor is presented in our everyday living in many different forms, like jokes, conversational humor, and unintentional humor. Many conversations between lovers, friends, coworkers, doctors in an amusing environment help to increase the interactional and communication between people (Martin, 2007). This is also<sup>5</sup> related to what Baldwin (2007) said that humor is a social tool that provides an effective way to reduce psychological distress, communicate a range of feelings and ideas, and increase relationship. Humor also processes social relationship when communicating negative information. In modern day, humor can be created through various media, which can be a movement of the body (e.g. mimes), in the form of images (e.g. caricatures), and comics (e.g. play on words).

Wanzer and Frymier (1999) have subdivided 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 of this study. Appropriate humor illuminates a sense of positive humor because it incorporates an attitude or perspective that reduces tension<sup>9</sup> in the classroom. Furthermore, appropriate humor is categorized into four types: topic related humor, humor unrelated to a topic, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor.

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.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

The researchers employed a qualitative research design which attempts to get an in-depth opinion from participants. A qualitative research does not relate to any statistical procedures but uses descriptive data (Mackey & Gass, 2015). This research was conducted in 2017 Makassar English course (MEC), located in Andi Mappanyukki Street, no 64, Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. The researchers collected data from February 10<sup>th</sup> 2017 until March 10<sup>th</sup> 2017. The participants of this research were one teacher recruited by means of convenience sampling. Beside this English teacher, his students in one class consisting of seven students were also treated as the subject of this research.

In collecting data, the researchers relied on observation and interview. The researchers chose to have a role as non-participant observer which means that the researchers did not actively participate in the activity being observed. The researchers tended to watch the participants without becoming involved (Creswell, 2014). The researchers recorded every single teacher's humor uses in the teaching process. There were five meetings of class at the course which were observed and recorded. Each class lasted for one and a half hour. These recordings were transcribed. Five long transcriptions were produced which were

then analyzed to investigate the kinds of humor employed by the teacher in the class.

In addition, there were seven students from the class who were interviewed. This interview was a semi-structured interview which was conducted to explore their perspectives regarding the use of humor by their teacher in the class. The researchers provided a list of questions which were developed during the interview sessions. The interview was conducted individually. It was also recorded and then transcribed.

In analyzing the data from the observation and interview, the researchers utilized interactive data analyses of qualitative research by Miles et al. (2014). Data that have been collected were condensed, displayed, and concluded. The first one is data condensation. This refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data that appear in the full corpus (body) of written-up field notes, interview transcripts, documents, and other empirical materials. After the data of this research were collected through observation and interview, the data were then selected based on the focus on this research to make it stronger. Some data were reduced. The selected data were then transcribed and transformed to write summaries, to code, to develop themes, to generate categories, and to write analytic

memos based on the supporting theories in the previous chapter.

The next concurrent flow of activity is data display. Miles et al (2014) stated that a display is an organized, compressed assembly of information that allows conclusion drawing and action. In this research, after selecting and reducing, the data were then displayed into some tables to be outlined and identified. After putting the data in the form of data display, the next step conducted by the researchers was to describe and interpret the data. The data display allowed the researchers to do interpretation and identification so that the conclusions and verifications of this research were drawn. Data from interviews were discussed, analyzed, and interpreted in the forms of conversation extracts. After that, the conclusion was drawn and verified. To strengthen the interpretation, the researchers applied the triangulation method by doing cross-check among the participants and elaborating more query.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Kinds of Humor Employed by the Teacher in Teaching English

The first important finding in this study is the kinds of humor employed by the teacher in teaching English. The occurrence of the humor in each meeting can be seen in the following table:

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 above shows that the teacher produced 71 utterances containing appropriate humor within five meetings of classroom interaction. The teacher employed 13 of the types of appropriate humor, namely related humor, unrelated humor, self-

disparaging humor, and unplanned humor. Related humor became the most frequently used humor among the four kinds of humor. It accounted for 32 utterances. Next is the unrelated humor which accounted for 18 utterances followed by unplanned humor (7 utterances). Self-disparaging humor also existed although only 2 utterances were found.

To elaborate more on the examples of each humor produced by the teacher in each meeting, the researchers presented the findings in the following extracts:

### Related Humor

Related humor is a kind of humor in which the teacher incorporated a personal story that relates to the material. The examples are as follows:

#### Extract 1

*Teacher: Nah, compare atau comparison. Nah disini tingkatan artinya apa, tingkatan perbandingan. Kira kira apa biasa yang kamu bandingkan*

*"Nah, it is to compare or comparison. What is the meaning of it? That is a comparison level. What do you usually compare?"*

*Students: Panjang, cewek  
"Long, a girl"*

*Students: (Noisy)*

*Teacher: Sudah, misalkan rambutku lebih panjang dari pada rambutmu  
"Stop it. For example, my hair is longer than your hair"*

*Students: (laugh)*

The extract above indicates that one type of appropriate humor employed by the teacher in the classroom was a related humor. 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 the length of girls' hair. The teacher said, *"Sudah, misalkan rambutku lebih panjang dari pada rambutmu!" (Stop it. For example, my hair is longer than your hair).* The students laughed at the time. All of the students in the classroom were teenagers and they were sensitive to discuss the topic of *"hair"*. This funny atmosphere invited the students' laughter and could lead the students to pay attention to the material. Another example can be seen in the following example:

#### Extract 2

*Teacher: Bukan saya bilang nah, temammu ji. Kalau kita pakai "paling" berarti tidak adami lagi diatasnya toh. Istilahnya ter. Kalau singkatnya dipakai imbuhan -est dalam bahasa inggris. Contohnya apa tadi?*

*"It wasn't me. It was your friends. If we used most, it means nothing higher than that. In short, it used affix -est in English. What was the example of it?"*

*Students: (laugh)*

*Student: Terciduk [trapped]*

*Student: (laugh)*

*Teacher: Kayak terbesar [the biggest]*

*Student: (laugh)*

In extract 2 above, the teacher was explaining about the material of comparison sentences. The teacher explained that making a sentence of comparison by adding *-est* back of the word. The teacher also explained that adding *-est* means *ter-* in the Indonesian language. Then, the teacher asked about an example of comparison related to what the teacher mentioned before. One of the students said, *"Terciduk" (trapped)*. The students laughed at the time. The word *"Terciduk"* is very familiar in Indonesia

language nowadays showing that the person is being trapped caused by his or her own behavior. The teacher also gave another example of comparison by saying “*Kayak terbesar*” (*the biggest*). The students also laughed at the time because it made the students wondering about what “*the biggest one*” was meant by the teacher. The students who are mostly teenagers were very sensitive to talk about the topic. Like extract 1 previously, these utterances also indicate a related humor, in which the teacher explained something funny but still related to the material of the teaching.

### Unrelated Humor

Unrelated humor does not pertain to the information being covered, but it has a certain purpose in the classroom. The researchers presented the examples on extracts as follow:

- 17** **Extract 3**
- Students:** *Have to*
- Teacher:** *Dia harus tapi sifatnya tidak wajib*  
*“She has to know its features, but it is not an obligatory”*
- Students:** *Betul*  
*“Correct”*
- Teacher:** *Paham?*  
*“Do you understand?”*
- Students:** *Paham*  
*“Yes, understood”*
- Students:** *Kalau must dia wajib..hoaaamm*  
*“If must, it is obligatory (yawning)”*
- Teacher:** *Hmm, mengantukmi sede? Piko berak*  
*“Hmm, you are yawning there? just go to take a dump”*
- Students:** *(laugh)*
- Teacher:** *Okay, lanjut*  
*“Okay, continue”*
- Students:** *(laugh)*

The extract above indicates the use of unrelated humor by the teacher. The teacher released humor in the classroom which did not relate to the material been taught. In the extract above, the teacher still explained about comparison sentences. The teacher asked, “*do you understand?*”. One of the students repeated the explanation by saying “*kalau must dia wajib...hoaaamm*” (*if must, it is obligator*). The student yawned at the same time. Suddenly the teacher looked at the student and said “*Hmm, mengantukmi sede? Piko berak*” (*hmm, you are yawning there? just go to take a dump*). This utterance made the students laugh. The teacher made expressions which made the students laugh. However, that was not related 14 the topic being discussed. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

### Extract 4

- Teacher:** *Okay go on*
- Sasha:** *Zalsa’s eyebrow is longer than Cahya’s*
- Teacher:** *Semua subjek untuk Zalsa yah*  
*“All the subjects are for Zalsa”*
- Sasha:** *Tidak, Zalsa, Cahya, Zalsa, Cahya, Zalsa,*  
*“No, Zalsa, Cahya, Zalsa, Cahya, Zalsa”*
- Teacher:** *Okay sekarang coba Cahya? Cahya ilahi*  
*“Okay now let’s try Cahya, God’s light”*
- Students:** *Cahayaaaa (laugh)*

In the extract above, the teacher gave every student a chance to present their assignment in the classroom. Furthermore, the teacher called another student to continue the practicing process. However, the teacher’s utterance made the students laugh. The teacher said, “*Okay sekarang coba Cahya? Cahya ilahi*” (*Okay, now let’s try Cahya, God’s light*). The expression “*Cahya*

*ilahi*" (God's light) made the students laugh. The teacher was actually referring to one of the students named *Cahya* but the teacher used it in reference to "*Cahya Ilahi*" (God's light). Like extract 3 above, the utterance in this extract was also categorized as unrelated humor because it was not related to the topic being discussed in the class.

### Self-Disparaging Humor

Self-disparaging humor is employed by a teacher when he or she uses stories, jokes, or comments about himself/herself. This kind of humor was also found in the teaching process. The researchers presented the examples on extracts as follow:

#### Extract 5

Teacher: (laugh) gara-gara kalian tersebar hoax sampai kantor. Ndak tau siapa yang bilang itu.

"Because of you [students], the hoax was spreading to the office, I have no idea who said that"

Students: Baruki mau sebar undangan, Pak.

"You just want to spread the invitation, Sir".

Students: Undangan sunatan (laugh)  
"Feast invitation"

Teacher: **Kamu kira saya muallaf. Tau tidak dikelas lain, saya kemarin mau pergi shalat mereka bilang "Oh shalatki, Pak?"**

**"Do you think I have just converted to Islam? You know in another class, yesterday I went to take pray and the students asked, "do you pray, Sir?"**

students: (laugh) dipertanyakan  
"It was questioned"

The extract above indicates that the teacher 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 mereka bilang "Oh shalatki Pak?" (Do you think I have just converted to Islam? You know in another class, yesterday I went to take pray and the students asked, "do you pray, Sir?)).** This teacher's expression made the students spontaneously laugh. The word "**muallaf**" shows that someone had just converted from Christianity to Islam and therefore, praying was still questionable for them. In the students' perspective, their teacher was considered doubtful as a Muslim so they felt surprised when they heard that he, in fact, wanted to take pray. These expressions were categorized as a self-disparaging humor because the teacher talked to the students about his own experience, not actually related to the material of the teaching, but invited funny moments in the class. Another example can be seen in the following extract:

#### Extract 6

Teacher: Ada yang jawab selain itu?

"Are there any other answers?"

komang: Saya

"It is me"

Students: Have to sleep

Teacher: Dengar dulu, yang pakai "must" dan "have to" bisa saya jelaskan kondisinya

"Listen carefully, I can explain the condition for using "must" and "have to"

Students: Adami pacarnya Kiki

"Kiki had already got her boyfriend"

Teacher: **Eh kenapako memotong. Ya sudah, anggap saja iklan "Eh why did you interrupt, okay then, just consider it was just a commercial break"**

Students: (laugh)

The conversation above indicates the use of self-disparaging humor in the class. When



the teacher was giving a comment, one of the students interrupted his explanation. At the time he was explaining seriously about the difference between “*must*” and “*have to*”. One of the students suddenly said, “*Adami pacarnya Kiki*” (*Kiki had already got a boyfriend*). It was totally not related to the teaching materials. The teacher responded it and asked the students to consider it as a commercial break. He said, “*Eh kenapako memotong ya udah anggap saja iklan*” “*why did you interrupt, okay then, just consider it was just a commercial break*”. This teacher's utterance evoked students' laughter at the time. A commercial break was considered funny in terms of the teaching process since it was just like a television program which was always interrupted by a commercial break. Like extract 5 above, the utterance produced by the teacher, in this case, was also categorized as self-disparaging humor because he talked to his students about his experience. The teacher might have uncomfortable experience caused by commercial breaks in the television and he used it as humor in the class.

### **Unplanned Humor**

In this type of humor, the teacher did not intend to be funny, but the students found his/her utterances to be humorous. The researchers presented the examples on extracts as follow:

#### **Extract 7**

*Teacher: I must study hard, perhatikan berarti ada kemungkinan nilai sebelumnya anjlok makanya dia mensugesti dirinya dengan kata “must”, tapi “must” juga terkadang bisa dipakai untuk kondisi tertentu  
“I must study hard, listen, so there may be a condition where his prior score dropped, so he suggested himself with the word*

*“must”, but “must” sometimes can be used for certain condition”*

*Student: Mas, Mas? Siapa yah?  
“Mas, Mas? Who is it?”*

*Students: Dajjal*

*Students: (laugh)*

*Student: Pak, kalau ada Dajjal bagaimana itu rupanya?  
“Sir, if Dajjal exists, how does he look like?”*

*Teacher: Apa lagi itu kamu bilang?  
“What did you say again?”*

*Students: (laugh)*

In the extract above, the teacher was explaining the material about the use of modal auxiliary “*Must*”. The students made a joke about modal auxiliary. The laughed when one of the students pronounced the modal auxiliary “*Must*” like the word “*Mas*” as an address term for older brother in the Javanese language. Some students also said “*Dajjal*”, which invited laughter from all of the students. The word “*Dajjal*” was considered frightening since that refers to the human creature that will appear at the end of the world and remark the coming of the Hereafter. Mentioning the word in such class condition made the students laugh. However, the teacher did not hear what the students said previously. So the teacher asked the students to reply to the student's utterance by saying, “*Apa lagi itu kamu bilang?*” (*What did you say again?*). The teacher did not intend to make the students laugh by his utterance. He only asked him to reply to his utterance. Yet all of the students were laughing since their teacher showed his response cynically toward the students' unrelated questions. This utterance is categorized as unplanned humor because he did not intend to be funny. Only did the students perceive it as being humorous. Extract 8 below is also another example of unplanned humor:

### Extract 8

*Teacher: Perhatikan sini, perhatikan sini, ini tidak bisa dipisah. Itu adalah common expression lah. Dia selalu beriringan. "Take all the pills" bukan maksudnya ambil semua itu obat tapi*

*"Attention here, attention here, this is not easy to be separated. That was just a common expression. It was always in sequence. "Take all the pills" does not mean to drink all the drugs"*

*Students: Sediakan apapun itu obat  
"Prepare whatever the drugs are"*

*Teacher: Minum obat  
"Drink the drug"*

*Students: (laugh)*

The teacher was explaining the material in front of the class. After explaining materials, the teacher asked about the meaning of taking pills in the Indonesian language. One of the students already answered that question but he mentioned in a wrong way since his translation was too rigid. Then the teacher told the correct answer by saying "*minum obat*" (*drink the drug*). Actually, the teacher just explained it in a usual way. It was just a surprise that his utterance made all of the students in the class laughed. The teacher did not actually intend to be funny. Like extract 7, the utterance in this extract 8 is categorized as unplanned humor because the teacher did not intend to be funny but the students laughed at it.

### Unresponded Humor

Unresponded humor can be identified when the teacher gives a story, joke or humor to the students. It was intended to be funny by the teacher but the students did not

respond to it. The students did not even laugh. The examples are as follows:

### Extract 9

*Teacher: Okay sebentar kita bicara yang indikatornya perintah, obligation. Nah disini itu kategori suggestion. Okay. Apa itu suggestion?*

*"Okay, later we talk about the indicator of an order, an obligation. Here it is suggestion category. Okay. What is meant by suggestion?"*

*Students: Sugesti*

*Teacher: Iya, saran atau advice. Nasehat saran apa lagi.pappauang (laugh)*

*"Right, it is an advice, what is the other word for it? Pappauang [Bugis word: Suggestion] (laugh)"*

*[Students kept silent]*

In extract 9 above, the teacher was explaining one of the materials in teaching. That was about the rules in making a suggestion in English. The teacher was asking the terms related to the word "suggestion" in English. HE said, "*Iya, saran atau advice. Nasehat saran apa lagi.pappauang*" "*Right, it is an advice, what is the other word for it? Pappauang [Bugis word: Suggestion]*". He uttered that sentence by laughing. He also mentioned one word, "*pappauang*", which was derived from Bugis language, one of the traditional languages in Makassar. The word "*pappauang*" also has similar meaning to the term "suggestion" in English. By mentioning that term in a different language, he actually intended to be funny. However, the students did not give any response. The students did not even laugh. In fact, they just kept silent. The researchers categorized this kind of humor as unresponded humor because the teacher failed to give humor to the students.

No students responded to the teacher's expressions which were intended to invite laughter. Another example can be seen in extract 10 below:

- 23 **Extract 10**
- Students:** *Hey dipanggil sama Mr. Fandi*  
*"Hey, you are called by Mr. Fandi"*
- Students:** *Kenapai*  
*"What is the matter with him?"*
- Students:** *Sana mako*  
*"Just go there"*
- Teacher:** *Sinimi saya mau kasi uang*  
*(laugh) ndak mau uang (laugh)*  
*"Come over here, I want to give you money, (laugh) don't you want money (laugh)"*
- Students:** *Kesana maki mauki nakasi undangan Mr. Fandi*  
*"Just go there. Mr. Fandi will give us his invitation [perhaps wedding invitation]"*
- Teacher:** *Sinimi mumpung full dompetku, cepatmi (laugh)*  
*"Come over here, get closer, as my wallet is still full (laugh)"*
- teacher:** *Siapa namata*  
*"What is your name?"*
- Students:** *Ayla Andhya*
- Teacher:** *Ayla Daihatsu Toyota? (laugh)*
- Students:** *Bukan, mobil itu Pak*  
*"No, it [referring to Ayla] is the car's name, Sir)*

The extract above shows that the teacher was calling a student by saying "*Sinimi saya mau kasi uang (laugh) ndak mau uang (laugh)*" (*come over here, I want to give you money, don't you want money*). At the time, he uttered that sentence by laughing. However, the students did not laugh at it. The students seemed very serious. Another student only gave comments by saying, "*Kesana maki mauki nakasi undangan Mr. Fandi*" (*just go there. Mr. Fandi will give us*

*her invitation*). The teacher then replied by laughing again and saying "*Sinimi mumpung full dompetku, cepatmi*" (*come over here, get closer, as my wallet is still full*). Those utterances were intended to be funny by the teacher, but unfortunately, there was no feedback from the students. No students laughed at it. When one of the students came forward, the teacher asked back to the student's identity by saying "*siapa namata*" (*what is your name?*). The students answered seriously by saying "*Ayla Andhya*". Then the teacher commented on her name by laughing again and saying, "*Ayla Daihatsu Toyota?*". The student's name was "*Ayla*", which was also the brand name of the favorite city car in Indonesia "*Daihatsu Toyota*". Unfortunately, the students were still not laughing. In fact, one of them commented seriously, "*Bukan, mobil itu, Pak*" (*No, it [referring to Ayla] is the car's name, Sir*). It can be seen that all of the students answered seriously without smiling and laughing. Like the situation in extract 9 above, the teacher in this extract also tried to make humor to the students. However, the students did not laugh at all of their teacher's expressions. This is categorized as unresponded humor.

### Remind Humor

Remind humor was employed by the teacher to remind the students about their inappropriate behaviors in the class. The teacher corrected those inappropriate behaviors by joking. If this type of humor is successfully released, there was usually a change in students' behavior or even attitude. The researchers presented the examples of extracts as follows:

### Extract 11

**Teacher:** *Jadi apa gunanya, apa yang membedakan penggunaan "write up" sama "write down" kalau maknanya sama? Okay disini*

ketika memakai konsep "phrasal verb" there is an emphasis, ada penekanan disitu terhadap kata kerjanya

"So what is its function, what makes the difference between the use of "write up" and "write down" if they have the same meaning? Okay, when the phrasal verb is used, there is an emphasis on the type of the verb"

Students: (noisy)

Teacher: **Oi oi oi jangan mi dulu goccangi arisanmu, sebentarpi**

**"Hi all, don't lot the arisan [saving pot]. Do it later"**

Students: (laugh)

In the extract above, it shows that the teacher was explaining material seriously about the function of the phrasal verb "write up" and "write down". However, the situation in the class at the time was very noisy. The students did not pay attention to the serious explanation of the teacher. Looking at that condition, the teacher was trying to remind the students by saying something funny "Oi oi oi jangan mi dulu goccangi arisanmu, sebentarpi" (Hi all, don't lot the arisan [saving pot]. Do it later). This utterance made the entire students in the class laugh because they actually did not make an arisan (saving pot). The word "arisan" pronounced by the teacher invited a funny response from the students because that word is actually a kind of saving organization which is very popular in the Indonesian community, especially in Makassar. Usually, the members of the "arisan" are women who tend to be very talkative and noisy. When the teacher used that word in reference to the noisy class, the students laughed. The students were not supposed to be noisy like the "arisan" since they all came to study English. The teacher employed humor to stop the students from

being noisy. Because of that humor, the students' behavior in the class changed. They stopped being noisy and later they paid attention to the materials of teaching. Another example of a remind humor can be seen in the following extract:

#### Extract 12

Students: Am is are

Students: Was were

Teacher: **Okay perhatikan sini**

**"Okay pay attention here"**

Students: Ini, Pak

"This one, Sir"

Students: (Noisy and whispering to each other)

Teacher: **Hey besar dudu suara bisik-bisikmu**

**"Hey your whispering is too loud"**

Students: (laugh)

Extract 12 above indicates that the teacher was explaining the material seriously about the functions of auxiliaries. However, the situation in the class at the time was so noisy. In fact, he already said, "Ok perhatikan sini" (ok pay attention here). But, again the class was still noisy and in fact, some of the students were whispering to each other. The teacher then made a decision to remind the students by admonishing his statement "Hey besar dudu suara bisik-bisikmu" (Hey your whispering is too loud). Instead of making the students silent, this utterance made all of the students laugh. Whispering is usually uttered in a low voice. But, the teacher said that their whispering was too loud. The meaning contradicted and therefore, it created humor in the class. Like extract 11 previously, this humor was categorized as a remind humor since its main purpose was to remind the students for their inappropriate behavior in the class. Because of that humor, the students' behavior in the

class also changed and later they paid attention to the materials of teaching.

### **Students' Perspectives on the Use of Humor in Teaching English**

The results of the interview show the students' perspectives of using humor by the teacher in teaching English. Seven students were interviewed and their answers can be seen below:

*My teacher is smart; he was very relaxed in instructing the lesson, so we were relaxed as well while asking or discussing. So naturally, we understood the material more easily and quicker. So much knowledge we could get (Respondent 1)*

*My teacher is a good person, funny, for instance, while teaching he was relaxed in delivering the lesson, not too much. He made his students be relaxed as well (Respondent 2)*

*Actually, I and my friend were students who do not like the serious matter. This teacher knows that condition. So he sometimes gives as a breaking story, but sometimes we also made a joke of it, sometimes it took too long and we were laughing since other friends add another story (Respondent 3)*

*It was quite close. The way he teaches is enjoyable. Also, he is not such a killer teacher. He made no frightening condition in the class and also, as I said he was a good friend to talk with, no awkwardness, relaxed yet serious, sometimes he tell us anything, such a good nature (Respondent 4)*

*In my opinion, the way my teacher teaches was very remarkable if humor was inserted. Although we were very tired and just came back from schools, we could learn well (Respondent 5)*

*Yes, although it does not relate to the lesson, we are not bored. The class is fun. I like to come to the course, so much fun in it (Respondent 6)*

*We are not sleepy in the classroom since we keep laughing. Therefore it reduced the feeling of sleepy because of the pleasant classroom situation (Respondent 7)*

All of the respondents above state that they were more interested in the lesson and easy to understand the lesson if their teacher employed humor in the classroom. If the teacher employed humor in the class, he was easy to ask and discuss with the teacher and therefore, they could get more knowledge and would understand the material easily and clearly. He was enjoying the teaching and learning process if the teacher employed humor in the classroom. He was also feeling more comfortable in teaching learning process if her teacher was a humorist. The students could enjoy the class and enhance the student's enthusiasm.

It was also indicated that if the teacher employed humor in the teaching process, the students could interact well with their teacher. The teacher who always teaches in a serious manner and tends to be frightening was referred to as a killer teacher. The teacher's humor in the classroom could make communication more flexible between students and teacher. This condition led to a positive classroom environment. In addition, they felt more enthusiastic in the teaching-learning process which employed humor. The way the teacher teaches in the English course

which employed humor made them more relaxed. Learning English is quite difficult for them. However, when the teacher teaches it with humor, they can be more excited and learn English well. Teachers' humor reduces their boredom and therefore, they will not be sleepy in the class.

## **DISCUSSION**

The first important finding from this study is about the kinds of humor employed by the teacher. The findings above show that humor was used as a communication strategy in the class. Based on table 1 above, the teacher employed all of the types of humor, namely related humor, unrelated humor, self-disparaging humor, and unplanned humor. However, the teacher mostly employed humor which was still related to materials. The main focus of teaching is to gain a clear understanding of the material. Therefore, even the teacher employed humor, the topic of the humor should still be related to the material. This related humor can be seen in extract 1-2. This finding is in line with Wanzer & Frymier (1999) who state that jokes, stories, college stereotypes, role-playing, or creative language are related to the topic being covered in the classroom. Teachers can incorporate a personal story that relates to the material, which will gain attention from the students.

Unrelated humor emerges in extract 3-4. In this finding, the teacher uttered unrelated humor. Wanzer & Frymier (1999) identify the same examples of related humor but is not related to the material in the class. Unrelated humor does not pertain to any information being covered, but it does have a purpose in the classroom. The teacher tried to say something to be funny that made the students laugh. The utterance produced by the teacher was only to create the atmosphere classroom and then the students could enjoy the classroom. Thus, unrelated humor assists

students by allowing them to relax and get away from the monotony of lectures.

In addition to the above two kinds of humor, it was found that the teacher used stories, jokes, or comments about himself/herself. These, in fact, invite laughter and create relax situation in the class. This kind of humor is known as a self-disparaging humor appearing in extract 5-6. The utterance produced by the teacher is self-disparaging humor because he talked to his students about his own experience, not actually related to the teaching material, but made the students laugh. It is corresponding with Hellman (2007) who states that it is important to let students enjoy their moment when incorporating humor by themselves. In fact, the use of this self-disparaging humor was found to enhance motivation in students to process the information (Wanzer et al., 2010).

The study also depicts the fact that the teacher sometimes did not intend to be funny, but the students found his/her behavior to be humorous. The teacher said or did something that was not intended to be funny, but the student perceived it to be funny and humorous. This humor is categorized as unplanned humor appearing in extract 7-8. This is also suitable with the classification of humor by Frymier et al. (2008), which said that unplanned humor was categorized when the teacher did not intend to make the students.

Besides the findings of the four kinds of humor proposed by Wanzer & Frymier (1999), the researchers identified new kinds of humor. It was found that the teacher sometimes gave a story, joke or humor to the students. It was intended to be funny but the student did not respond to it. Thus, the students did not laugh. This type of humor can be seen in extract 9-10. This humor was categorized by the researchers as unresponded humor because the teacher failed to give humor to the students.

Although the teacher intended to make humor, none of the students responded and laughed. None of the students laughed at the teacher's expressions which were actually initiated to be funny by the teacher. In addition, there were utterances that have a purpose to remind the students that their inappropriate behavior should not be done. The teacher told about that to the student in a funny way and of course, made others laugh. The researchers categorized this type as a remind humor, which can be seen clearly in extract 11-12. This kind of humor was also categorized as a new type of humor in addition to the unresponded humor. Both of them are not included in the kinds of humor proposed by Wanzer & Frymier (1999).

The second important finding of this study is about the students' perspectives about the use of humor in teaching English in the class. Based on the interview with the seven students who are the member of one class observed in this study, humor has a significant impact on the success of English language teaching, especially in the English course. According to the students, the teacher who employed humor made them easy to get the knowledge and reduce their tension during the English language teaching process. Their teacher's sense of humor also made them more comfortable in the teaching-learning process. Teacher's humor created good interactions among them and therefore it created a more enthusiastic teaching-learning process. It also encouraged students' attendance and reduced the number of students who felt sleepy in the class.

Overall, it can be seen that this study other studies mentioned above support the use of humor as one important strategy to communicate in the class (Martin, 2007; Bell, 2009; Abraham et al., 2014). Other studies also reveal that appropriate humor has the potential to humanize, illustrate, defuse, encourage, reduce anxiety, and keep people thinking (Torok et al., 2004). Humor increases

students' concentration and interest since it combats boredom and helps them cope with learning difficult materials (Askildon, 2005). Hellman (2007), moreover, states that it is important to use humor at a specific time in the classroom by establishing rapport and credibility with their students. Mahdiloo and Izadpanah (2017) in their research also confirm that humor can facilitate the learning to be more creative. All of these findings show that teacher's humor provides various benefits for EFL students' learning, and therefore, it can be employed as a teaching strategy in order to reach effective classroom interaction.

## CONCLUSION

It has been revealed in this study that humor is one of the most preferred teachers' communication strategy in the language classroom. This research has also made a fruitful attempt to categorize teachers' humor based on Wanzer & Frymier (1999) classification of humor. It is therefore suggested for teachers to be able to incorporate those types of humor when teaching in order to enhance the students' learning process.

These findings contribute significantly to the literature of humor as a communication strategy. It also supports the previous findings on the study of classroom interaction, in which humor can become a good strategy of communication by teachers and students in the class. In addition, findings from this study illuminate the crucial functions of English course as an alternative place to improve students' English proficiency. The English language teaching practitioners can choose English course as a good place for increasing the students' English proficiency. Since English in Indonesia is taught as a foreign language, better strategy to teach English (e.g. humor) as well a good place to learn (e.g. English course) need to be taken into consideration.

However, this research strictly focused merely on the utterances of teachers without scrutinizing their perspectives regarding humor. Perspectives of using humor that had been investigated in this research were still limited to the students' perspectives. Further research, therefore, about teachers' perspectives of using humor as a communication strategy in the class was deeply recommended. Teachers' perspectives about the use of humor need also to be investigated as a comparison to what the students had perceived in this study.

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