Humor Functions and Flouting of Conversational Maxims: A Case Study of Humor in Indonesian Academic Lectures

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ABSTRACT

This case study explored the unlikely phenomenon of the use of humor in an academic lectures. The previous studies in this area has shown that, though traditionally unlikely, humor is commonly used as a linguistic strategy in academic discourse. Therefore, this case study aims to contribute in the literature of Indonesian academic discourse by examining the creation and functions of humor in Indonesian academic lectures. Through descriptive qualitative method, this study analyzed five classroom lectures of English Literature major in Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. After the lectures were transcribed according to Jefferson's (2004) transcription convention, the question of creation of humor was answered based on Grice's (1975) conversational maxim theory. This analysis discovered that there was a slight inclination to create humor by flouting the Maxim of Quality in the data, which implies that the lecturers tend to rely on untruthfulness to create jokes. Afterward, the function is analyzed based on Nesi's (2012) theory of functions of humor in academic contexts, and it was found that the lecturers mostly used humor to build rapport with the students.

Keywords: *Academic context, Conversational maxims, Cooperative principles, Humor, Functions of humor, Pragmatics*

INTRODUCTION

This case study examined humor in academic lectures, namely five classroom lectures of English Literature major in Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Humor is a language play that requires some violations of pragmatic principles in its creation (Attardo & Raskin, 1991). Hence, its occurrence in an academic context, which traditionally demands cohesion, clarity, and avoidance of ambiguity (Skalicky, Berger, Crossley, & Mcnamara, 2016), is theoretically unexpected. Nonetheless, it is a prevalent phenomenon as proven by numerous linguistic studies of humor in academic context.

Humor: is a Joke Ever Just a Joke?

Humor, simply defined, is utterances which are intended by the speaker(s) to be amusing and are perceived to be amusing by at least some of the participants (Holmes, 2000). Instead of being simply amusing, humor may serve also various functions in conversations. Various studies of humor functions have discovered that humor may maintain solidarity and a sense of group belonging (Holmes, 2000), construct identities (Hoa, 2017), or hedge criticisms (Petraki & Ramayanti, 2018).

The Pragmatics of Humor: Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principles

Attardo (2003) argued that pragmatics is "the natural place to locate the linguistic side of the interdisciplinary study of humor". Pragmatics also goes beyond the lexical and grammatical aspects of a language (Holmes, 2013).

Many pragmatic studies of humor take Grice's theory of cooperative principles as a framework for humor analyses. The theory proposes that in conversations, both listeners and speakers assume that they are cooperating in the communication by adhering four conversational maxims. The following are the elaborations of the maxim as summarized by Paltridge (2007).

1. Maxim of Quantity: Be brief, and give the right amount of information; no more, no less.
2. Maxim of Quality: Say only what you believe to be true.

3. Maxim of Relevance: Ensure that your contribution to the interaction is relevant, and if not, the reason why should be stated.

4. Maxim of Manner: Be clear and precise, and avoid ambiguity.

These maxims, however, are not always observed in conversations; one of the reasons being an intentional attempt to create a humorous effect. A deliberate non-observance of conversational maxims is called a flouting (Jaufillaili, 2013), and it may be an attempt to invoke laughter. Hence, this theory can be taken as framework for humor analysis.

Despite the abundant application of this theory in previous studies of humor, most of the studies tend to merely point out what maxims are flouted in creating humor in humorous contexts (see Qiu, 2019; Ning et. al., 2019; Raharja & Rosyidha, 2019; Fauziah et. al., 2020). Meanwhile, in this study, Grice's (1975) CP provided illustration of how humor was created

in an academic context, and the analysis on the implicature of the flouting was further considered in analyzing the functions of humor, which is the second topic of research.

Humor in Academic Contexts

Schleppegrell (2004) argued that language in the context of schooling is quite different from the language in daily lives. Therefore, the use of humor that requires some violations of pragmatic principles (Attardo & Raskin, 1991) is theoretically unexpected in academic contexts. Then again, in reality, jokes can be found easily in various academic context. This is proven by how the relation between humor and academic context has been receiving expansive attention as a field of research (Reershemius, 2012).This attention is mostly focused on the functions of humor in academic contexts.

A research by Nesi (2015) has thoroughly examined the functions of humor in academic contexts. She examined the functions of humor based on the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus, and

found that humor may serve four functions in academic lectures, which can be identified based on a several characteristics. The following are the functions of humor according to Nesi (2012):

1. Maintain social order

There is hierarchical social order in classroom contexts (Reershemius, 2012), and some jokes may serve to maintain it. These jokes tend to be in the form of a disguised criticism toward the students, or a tease their own error.

2. Build rapport

As the basic function of humor (Holmes, 2000), building rapport is also common reason for lecturers to create jokes. These jokes may tease of the students, make fun of the lecturers' selves, and make fun of someone outside the context. They may also be identified as registers and wordplays.

3. Release tension/anxiety

Tension happens in classrooms, especially when a taboo subject is being discussed, or when lecturers erred. Some jokes may serve to release these tensions, hence they can

be identified when they occur in 'tense' situations.

4. Model Academic/ Professional Identity

Jokes can construct one's identity (Hoa, 2017). In classroom lectures, the 'identities' that lecturers construct are typically professional and academic identities. Jokes can be used for this purpose when they mention the lecturer's academic identity, target other lecturers, or used to discuss taboo subjects.

Other studies of humor in academic context have linked their connection to the notion of academic culture (Reershemius, 2012; Wang, 2014). Reershemius (2012) compared humor in German academic context and British academic context and found that even though humor is both used in German and British settings, they function differently; lecturers in German settings use humor to maintain the hierarchy of academic context, while British lecturers use humor to lessen the hierarchy. A study by Wang (2014) also examined jokes in British lectures and Chinese students' perception of it and found that Chinese students sometimes fail

to understand the jokes delivered by British lecturers, which further prevent them from understanding the material of the lecture itself. These studies have confirmed the culture-varied nature of both humor and academic discourse. Therefore, the lack of studies in Indonesian academic discourse can be considered a crucial gap that this study aims to contribute in.

METHODOLOGY

Data

The data for this case study are five classroom recordings collected from the classes of the English Literature major of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. Two of these classes are online classes while the rest are offline classes. These are exemplary data, which according to Yin (2003), could "reflect strong, positive examples of the phenomenon of interest" (13). The selection of lectures was based on the researcher's local knowledge of typical lectures (see Fenno, 1986).

Research Design

This study used a descriptive qualitative design because according to Yin (2003), it is suitable for a theory-driven case study.

Initially, the instances of humor were identified through the students' laughter which is deemed as the pragmatic marker of humor occurrence (Attardo, 2003). The identified instances of humor were further transcribed according to conversation analysis transcription proposed by Jefferson (2004).

To answer the first research question, the transcription was put into a table to be categorized based on the flouted maxim in each joke according to Grice's (1975) conversational maxims theory. The surrounding contexts and the implicatures of these jokes were also analyzed. For the second research question, the transcription was put into another table to identify the function of each joke according to Nesi's (2012) theory of functions of humor in academic contexts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Humorous Flouting of Conversational Maxims

This study has found that all conversational maxims were flouted to create humor in the five recorded lectures. The most flouted maxim is the Maxim of Quality, while the least is the Maxim of Manner.

Table 1. The frequency of each maxim's flouting

Maxim	Flouting
Quality	38 (43.02%)
Relation	35 (40.69%)
Quantity	32 (37.21%)
Manner	31 (36.05%)
Total Jokes	86

The table above shows the number and percentage of each maxim's flouting by each lecturer. Almost half of all the jokes (43.02%) were created by flouting the Maxim of Quality, making it the most flouted maxim in the lectures. However, this number only differs slightly with the least flouted maxim, the Maxim of Manner, which was flouted in 36.05%

of the jokes. As further proven by the percentages of flouting of the other two maxims, the Maxim of Quantity (37.21%) and Relation (40.69%), the differences in the number of flouting of each maxim are minimal and the numbers are nearly even. This implies that the observed lecturers did not distinctively prefer to flout one maxim over the others as a strategy of creating humor. The following are discussions of each maxim's flouting.

1. The Maxim of Quality

The slightly higher tendency of flouting the Maxim of Quality means that the lecturers tend to rely on untruthfulness to create a joke, which according to (Dynel, 2017), enables them to disguise the intentions of the joke. This is in line with the findings of a study of humor in Indonesian stand-up comedy, where the flouting of the Maxim of Quality is also found to be the most frequent (Rosyidha & Raharja, 2019). This might imply that Indonesian humor in general is mostly created by flouting the Maxim of Quality.

In the data, the Maxim of Quality was flouted in the form of

untruthful statements and sarcastic comments. In giving untruthful statements for humorous effects, the lecturers often said something they lacked evidence for or even knew to be untrue. This finding is consistent with the findings of Nesi's (2012) study, which indicates that lecturers in British academic context also criticize students for coming late by humorously implying that they did something wrong. This type of disguised criticism is commonly found as findings of studies of humor in academic contexts (see Reershemius, 2012; Wang, 2014).

On the other hand, sarcastic comments are only common in studies of humorous non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims in comedic or daily contexts (see Ning, Caixia, & Yuan, 2018; Qiu, 2019; Rosyidha & Raharja, 2019); it is hardly discussed in studies of humor in academic contexts.

The following is an excerpt of a sarcastic joke by Lecturer 1.

[3.1]

1 Lec: Kamu teu boga:: (0.5) teu boga
2   ieu. (0.3) teu boga
3   LAPTOP?
4 Std1: >W'll< I thou:ght it was
5   handwritten.
6 Lec: No::↑ I didn't say that. (0.5) I
7   didn't specifically said that↓
8   yah↑ (1.0) tapi ieu teh salahna
9   teu di:: (0.5) Maenya ieu dinomeran nya
10 Stds: ((laugh[ter))
11 Lec : (0.4) maenya di sisina.

Translation

1 Lec : You don't have a laptop?
2 Std1: Well, I thought it was
3   handwritten
4 Lec : No, I didn't say that. I didn't
5   specifically said that. But the
6   problem is, you cannot give
7   these page numbers, can you?
8 Stds : (laughter)

The lecturer gave a sarcastic comment toward a student who submitted a handwritten assignment by asking if handwritten texts can be page numbered. This flouting's implicature is a criticism towards the

student for not having her assignment printed.

The use of sarcastic comments as an uncommon finding of humor in academic contexts might lead to the generalization that lecturers in Indonesia use more "daily" types of humor than lecturers in other countries do.

2. The Maxim of Relation

As the second most flouted maxim, this study has found that lecturers' way of flouting the maxim vary in three ways; treating examples as present situations, giving unrelated answers, saying a wrong causality, and abruptly changing the topic. The lecturers' treating examples as present situations as a flouting the Maxim of Relation is a rather peculiar finding from this study. To illustrate further, the following is an excerpt of such joke by Lecturer 2.

[3.2]

1 Lec : we began to download the
2   facebook pages of <the eighty
3   three students> (1.5) ya. (0.5)
4   download <u>eighty three</u>

5   <u>students</u>. (1.0)
6   <u>howeve::r↑</u>, eleven students
7   either did not have Facebook
8   accounts or <u>BLOCKED US</u> (.)
9   from <accessing their
10   accounts.> (0.5) nih bilang sok
11   bu:, ya bu:, boleh? BOL↑E::H
12   ↓semuanya bilang boleh.
13 Stds : ((laughter))
14 Lec : pas saya ituin >↑↑ngga bias
15   in ieu budak teh ih<
16 Stds : =((laughter))
17 Lec : ongkoh cenah ↑bole:h:

Translation

1 Lec : we began to download the
2   facebook pages of <the eighty
3   three students> (1.5) ya. (0.5)
4   download eighty three
5   students. (1.0) howeve::r↑,
6   eleven students either did not
7   have Facebook accounts or
8   BLOCKED US. Saying yes
9   Ma'am, you may,
10   everyone said yes.
11 Stds : (laughter)
12 Lec : When I tried to, I can't, why
13   this kid is—
14 Stds : (laughter)
15 Lec : I was told I may open them.

When presenting a research about Facebook usage, the lecturer abruptly connected the participants of the research she was presenting to the students in the classroom. She mimicked the student's way of answering '*ya, Bu...*' (Line 5) and saying 'when I tried to…' (Line 7) as if the lecturer was the one doing this research. The implicature of this joke was that the lecturers understood that the students in the classroom probably had social media accounts and did not want lecturers to access them. This implicature was not necessarily a criticism, but simply a statement that the lecturers understood the students' 'world'.

This manner of flouting is rather intriguing because other than how it is rarely discussed by other studies of humor using Grice's (1975) conversational maxims theory (see see Mahmood, 2017; Ning, Caixia, & Yuan, 2018; Qiu, 2019; Fauziah, Yuliasri, & Rukmini, 2020), by relating the example to the students in the classroom, was the lecturer flouting the Maxim of Relation, or observing it? Theoretically, the lecturer was not adhering to the

maxim, but rather exploiting it, which is the reason it invoked the students' laughter. According to Dynel (2017), in flouting a conversational maxim, one could simply not apply a maxim, or apply it in a peculiar way.

The lecturers also flouted the Maxim of Quality by giving unrelated answers to a question. Although this is a typical flouting in studies of humor based on Grice's (1975) theory, some lecturers in the present study gave unrelated answer to questions that they ask themselves, which The following is an instance of such joke by Lecturer 2.

[3.3]

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1  Std1 : So the data can be from
2          newspaper, for example?
3  Lec  : =no problem. (0.6) TAPI
           kalo
4          begitu harus dari AWA↑L
5          dikataKA↑N. (0.5)
6          meng↑apa harus dikatakan
7          coba↓ (2.0) ↓mengapa?
8          (3.0) ((mimicking the
9          students)) ↓#>kamu sih
10         nanya ((anonymous)), jadi
11         weh ditanya<::# (.)
12         ((laughter))
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13 Stds : ((laughter))

Translation

1 Std1: So the data can be from
2   newspaper, for example?
3 Lec : No problem. But if it is, then
4   it has to be stated from the
5   beginning. Why does it have
6   to be stated? Why?
7 Lec : (mimicking the students)
8   why do you have to ask that,
9   now we are asked this
10   question.
11 Stds: (laughter)

In the excerpt above, the lecturer mimicked students blaming their friend, Std1, for asking a question, which caused the lecturer to ask the other students a question. The implicature of this flouting is that the students hated being asked questions.

A joke in which the lecturer answered his own question by mimicking the students which, again, has not been discussed in earlier studies of humor in academic contexts (see Reershemius, 2012; Nesi, 2012; Wang, 2014). This implies that the observed lecturers often went to

unpredictable extents in creating jokes.

Other than those irregular findings of manners of flouting, this study have also identified ways of flouting the Maxim of Manner that are similar to findings of earlier literature, namely wrong causality and abrupt change of topic (see see Mahmood, 2017; Panić-Kavgić, 2017; Ning, Caixia, & Yuan, 2018; Qiu, 2019; Fauziah, Yuliasri, & Rukmini, 2020).

3. The Maxim of Quantity

In the recorded lectures, this maxim was flouted in the form of extensive examples, unnecessary comments, and repetition of words. The finding of extensive examples aligns with the findings from earlier study of Indonesian stand-up comedies (Rahaja & Rosyidha, 2019), possibly because, the humorous effect of extensive examples can also easily be created in a one-way communication. Unnecessary comments are also evidently a common way of creating humorous effects in academic contexts, because they have been found by earlier studies (see Wang,

2014; Reershemius, 2012; Nesi, 2012), although they are not the question of those studies.

However, repetition of words is an uncommon finding because earlier studies of neither the non-observance of conversational maxims (see Mahmood, 2017; Qiu, 2019; Fauziah, Yuliasri, & Rukmini, 2020), nor humor in academic contexts (see Nesi; 2012; Reershemius, 2012; Wang; 2014) discussed it. This type of joke occurred multiple times in the data, one of which is the following joke by Lecturer 4.

[3.4]

1 Lec : Dengan terkait dengan tadi
2   psikografis (1.0) er:: apa yang
3   kita beli::. (.) er (.) ya kan
4   terkait dengan gaya hidup ya?
5   (0.6) apa yang kita lihat, apa
6   yang kita baca (.) itu akan (.)
7   dengan gratisnya:: (.) secara
8   sukarela kita bagikan ke
9   mereka, gitu. (2.0) makanya
10   wajar (.) kita buka apa pun↑
11   (0.5) iklannya disesuaikan
12   dengan gaya hidup kita. (1.0)
13   Jadi ((anonymous)) yang suka
14   judi misalnya er. (.) menurut
15   (.) menurut internet itu
16   MENURUT INTERNET gitu
17   yah ini mah.
18 Std1:=((laughter))

Translation

1 Lec : In relation to psychographs,
2   er, what we bought is related to
3   our lifestyle, right? What we
4   see, what we read. That will,
5   with no charge whatsoever, be
6   voluntarily shared by us to
7   them, you see. So it makes
8   sense how whenever we open
9   anything, the ads will be
10   adjusted to our lifestyle. So
11   (anonymous) who likes to,
12   er, gamble for example
13   according to the internet,
14   according to the internet, that
15   is.
16 Std1: (laughter)

The lecturer flouted the Maxim of Quantity by repeating the phrase 'according to the internet' (Grice, 1975), which created the implicature that it is *not* only according to the internet, but it might be true as well; in other words, the student *was* a gambler. Another

uncommon manner of flouting the conversational maxims proves that the observed lecturers have a relatively exceptional creativity in creating jokes.

4. The Maxim of Manner

The Maxim of Manner is the least flouted maxim, even though its number is not too drastically low compared to the previous maxims. In the data, the maxim was flouted in the form of words in other languages, strange manners of saying words, and ambiguous comments.

As an exceptional finding of the present study, some of the observed lecturers created humorous effects by saying words or phrases in the Sundanese language. To illustrate further, the following is an instance of such flouting by Lecturer 1.

[3.5]

1 Lec : Previous studies itu:: (.)
2   maksud saya adalah↑ (.) you
3   don't have to (0.3) you don't
4   have to have a separate
5   section, <u>previous studies</u>

6   >engga, engga, engga.<
         (1.0)
7   si previous studies nya itu
         di::
8   (.) apa itu istilahnya↑
9 Std1: di:leburkan.
10 Lec : $dileburk(hh)an.$
11 Stds : ((laughter))
12 Lec : di:: kieu kieu↑ ((laughter))
13 Stds : ((laughter))

Translation

1 Lec : For previous studies… What
2   I meant was you don't have to
3   have   a   separate   section,
         (titled)
4   Previous Studies, no, no, no.
5   the previous studies are…
6   what do you call it?
7 Std1: Merged[1]
8 Lec : Merged (short laughter)
9 Stds : (laughter)
10 Lec : Like this[2] (laughter)
11 Stds : (laughter)

In the excerpt above, when the lecturer was looking for the right word to describe what the students were supposed to do with their previous studies, one student

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[1] Writer's translation for *dileburkan*

[2] Writer's translation for *dikieu-kieu*

suggested an Indonesian word *'dileburkan'* which is derived from the word *'lebur'*. According to the Great Dictionary of Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), the official dictionary for the Indonesian language, the word *'lebur'* is supposed to refer to the melting down processes of metal (Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia, n.d.). The incongruity of this word in the context probably cause the lecturer to find it funny (Raskin, 1984), and later made a further joke about it by saying Sundanese words *'dikieu-kieu'*. The Sundanese word *'kieu'* means 'this', and the lecturer was most likely gesturing a movement when saying it. The use of Sundanese words here is a flouting of the Maxim of Manner, and the implicature was that the students' choice of words was strange.

Another humorous incongruity of language use that can be considered as a flouting of the Maxim of Manner found in the observed lectures is a strange way of saying a word, as in the case for Lecturer 4 as follows.

[3.6]

1 Lec : As usual, we're gonna

2   have qui::z::. yea↑:::::::y:::

3 Stds : ((laughter))

In the excerpt above, the lecturer was announcing a quiz and added a very long exclamation 'yeay' afterward. This can be considered a flouting of the Maxim of Manner because it has a certain ambiguity (Grice, 1975). As for the implicature, this joke implied that the 'yeay' was not exactly an expression of happiness since they were about to do a quiz.

The last manner of flouting the maxim of manner found in the present study is ambiguous comments, which is a typical finding in earlier studies (see Ning, Caixia, & Yuan, 2018; Qiu, 2019). This might be because most of those studies tend to merely point out the non-observance, and ambiguous comments have been conveniently categorized by Grice (1975) as the flouting of the Maxim of Manner.

5. The Flouting of Multiple Maxims

This case study also explored an issue that is mostly left behind in earlier literature; the flouting of

multiple maxims (see Wang, 2014; Raharja & Rosyidha, 2019; Qiu, 2019; Ning, Caixia, & Yuan, 2018). However, it has been established that a joke can be created by flouting multiple maxims (Attardo, 2017), and the present study numerous occurrence of it.

Some jokes found are even created by flouting as much as three maxims at once. The following is an example of the flouting of three maxims by Lecturer 5.

[3.7]

1 Std1 : dari pengalaman saya juga tiap
2   saya buka er:: web dulu kalo
3   baca baca artikel↑ (0.5)
4   banyaknya iklan judi, tapi (1.0)
5   Kan gara-gara:: belakangan ini
6   saya saya suka buka:: tokped
7   kaya tokopedia gitu.
8 Lec : astaghfirullah ((anonymous))
9 Stds : ((laughter))
10 Std1: =Jadi hapenya the engga
11   maksudnya ada apanya:
12   gitu.
13 Lec: Ah. Kamu sok judi nyak?

14 Std1: ((missing what the lecturer
15   said)) nah kaya gitu tapi (.)
16   belakangan ini saya suka buka
17   kaya (.) tokopedia:: lazada::
18   yang kaya gitu (2.0) jadi iklan
19   iklan yang di::
20 Lec :=iyah, tapi yang underground,
21   gituh?
22 Stds : ((laughter))

Translation

1 Std1: From my experience, every
2   time I open a website in the
3   past when I read articles, I get
4   a lot of gambling ads. But
5   because lately I often open
6   Tokopedia and the like,
7 Lec : *Astaghfirullah,* (anonymous)
8 Std : So my phone was—no, I
9   meant there was something
10 Lec : Ah. You like to gamble, don't
11   you?
12 Std1: (missing what the lecturer
13   said) Nah, just like that but
14   lately I like to open Tokopedia,
15   Lazada, and the like, so the
16   ads—
17 Lec : Yes, but the underground
18   ones, you mean?

19 Stds : (laughter)

In the example above, the lecturer flouted three maxims simultaneously. First, he flouted the Maxim of Manner by ambiguously saying '*astaghfirullah*', implying that the student did something wrong. Although the utterance was not followed by any laughter, it was the start of the joke, where the lecturer implied that the students like to gamble by opening an 'underground' website. This implicature is achieved by the ambiguity of the term 'underground', which is a flouting of the Maxim of Manner. Simultaneously, it is also a flouting of the Maxim of Relation because it is an abrupt and unrelated comment to what the student was saying. Lastly, it is also the flouting of the Maxim of Quality because the lecturer had no evidence that the student was actually gambling and liked to open 'underground' website. Therefore, this joke was created by flouting the Maxim of Manner, Relation, and Quality at the same time.

The possible reasons for the lack of discussions of the non-observance of multiple maxims could be either the researchers did not find any, or simply because it was left out of the discussions. As stated earlier, studies employing the conversational maxims theory to observe humor tend to simply categorize what maxims are flouted and how often they are flouted, which is possibly why non-observance of multiple maxims are left out of discussions.

In general, regarding the humorous flouting of conversational maxims, this study has found that in the Indonesian academic context, humor is created in a more various ways compared to other cultures. The nearly balanced number of flouting of each maxims implies that the lecturers do not distinctively choose one strategy of creating jokes over the others. Further, the finding that there are manners of humorous floutings that have not been discussed in most earlier literature further proves that the lecturers use more diverse strategies of invoking laughter, in comparison to lecturers of other academic contexts.

The Functions of Humor

The present study has found that all four functions of humor proposed by Nesi (2012) were identified in the observed lectures. In the lectures, humor serves to build rapport, maintain social order, release tension, and model academic/professional identity. It is also notable that most of the jokes served multiple functions. The following is a table presenting the frequency of humor that serves each function.

Table 2 The function of humor by each lecturer

	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	Total Jokes
Total Jokes	29	21	8	16	12	86
BR	18	21	8	13	12	72
MSO	22	4	5	9	7	47
MA/PI	6	4	4	2	1	17
RT	8	2	0	3	1	14

Notes:

BR: Build rapport

MSO: Maintain social order

MAPI: Model academic/professional identity

RT: Release tension

Almost all jokes, 72 of 86, serve to build rapport (BR) in the lectures. This number is immensely higher than the number of jokes that serve the next most identified function, which is maintaining social order (MSO), that is, 47 of 86 jokes. This number is also remarkably higher than the next function, to model academic/ professional identity (MA/PI), which is identified only 17 times in the data. The least identified function is to release tension (RT), which only occurred 14 times in the data. The following are further discussions of each humor functions.

1. Humor to Build Rapport

The present study found that the frequency of jokes aimed to build rapport is extremely high in comparison to other functions. There are few characteristics considered to be the marker of the jokes that serve this function in the analysis, and one of which is the presence of a shared script (Raskin, 1984; Nesi, 2012). A shared script is a shared knowledge between the person who tells the joke and their listener, which shows that their relationship is to an extent a positive one (Raskin, 1984).

An interesting way of sharing script was done by Lecturer 4 who sang along with a student in an online class.

[3.8]

((During a long pause))

1 Std1 : ((singing)) what can I say::
2   except (1.0)
3 Lec   : ((continue singing)) you're
4   wel↑::come. (1.0)
5 Stds : =((laughter))

Translation

1 Std1: (singing) what can I say
2   except (1.0)
3 Lec : (continue singing) you're
4   welcome!
5 Stds : (laughter)

By singing along with the student, Lecturer 5 was showing that she knew the song. The lecturer showed that she understood the student's 'world': in other words, the song became a shared script (Raskin, 1984). Therefore, this joke serves to build rapport between the lecturer and the students.

Other than sharing scripts, jokes that build rapport may also target the students' selves. Previously, Nesi (2012) mentioned that jokes targeting the students' misbehavior function to maintain social order. However, based on the analysis of this study, it is concluded that a distinction has to be made between jokes targeting the students' misbehavior and those targeting the students' selves. This is because although the latter is not discussed in Nesi's (2012) study, nor several other previous studies of humor in academic contexts, it is numerously found in the present study. The following is an example of such jokes by Lecturer 5.

[3.9]

1 Lec : ((anonymous)) kaya mau::
2   tinju.
3 Stds : ((laughter))

Translation

1 Lec : (anonymous) looks like
2   you're about to do a boxing
3   match
4 Stds: (laughter)

The implicature of the joke above includes no criticism; instead, the lecturer merely commented about the student's appearance. Therefore, this joke has nothing that identifies it as a joke that serves to maintain social order. Hence, by teasing the student's self, and not his/her misbehavior, the lecturer's joke signals only friendliness. It can be concluded from this study that if a lecturer teases a student without targeting their misbehavior, the joke simply serves to build rapport because, as Partington (2006) argued, teasing may imply bonds that may not really exist.

The jokes that build rapport also occurred in the data in the form of a tease of someone or something outside the context or the lecturer's self, which completely align with Nesi's (2012) findings.

2. Humor to Maintain Social Order

Jokes that function to maintain social order is the second most observed function of humor in the present study. As discussed earlier, Nesi (2012) mentioned that one of the most easily identified characteristics of jokes that serve to maintain social order is the use of students' misbehavior as the target of the joke. This is reflected in the following jokes by Lecturer 3.

[3.10]

1 Lec : Bikin shape nya sendiri ya

2   (0.5) jangan kemudian desain

3   canva anda ambil.

4 Stds : ((laughter))

Translation

1 Lec : Make your own shapes okay,

2   don't take designs from

3   Canva.

4 Stds : (laughter)

The joke above is a warning for the students about what not to do in their upcoming assignments, and implies that the mistakes in assignments have been done before. By criticizing the student, this joke is in line with Nesi's (2012) characterization of jokes that maintain social order.

This study has also identified numerous jokes that help lecturers recover from their error, which are

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also argued as jokes that maintain social order (Nesi, 2012). This type of joke, however, also serve the function of releasing tension, which will be discussed later in this paper.

3. Humor to Model Academic/ Professional Identity

The number of jokes that serve to model academic/professional identity identified in the data is drastically low in comparison to the previous two functions. As Nesi (2012) explained, the jokes serving this function typically mention the lecturer's degree or job, target other lecturer's capability or professionalism, or cover a taboo subject related to the material discussed in the classroom. Although the present study did identify numerous instances of jokes with the first two characteristics, there was no finding of jokes regarding a taboo subject. There were, however, jokes about the subject of the lectures. The following is an example from Lecturer 1.

[3.11]

1 Lec : uh:: (.) uh:: in this context
2   you have to use corpora. (2.0)

3   so:: not NOT a printed novel,
4   >not a printed novel.< (0.5)
5   er:: that was (.) that was what
6   we DID.
7 (1.0)
8 Lec : and that wa::s I said di::
       yang
9   itu:: apa↑ er:: corpus yang::
10   paling::rudimentary yang
11   paling::   primitif
12 Stds : ((laughter))
13 Lec : itu mah ya↑

Translation

1 Lec : Uh…uh… in this context
2   you have to use corpora. So
3   not, NOT a printed novel, not
4   a printed novel, er… that
    was,
5   that was what we DID.
6 (1.0)
7 Lec : And that was… I said in that
8   one… what, er… the most
9   rudimentary, the most
10   primitive corpus
11 Stds : (laughter)
12 Lec : That one was, right?

Although the joke above was not about a taboo subject, it was about the topic of lectures which also

implied the lecturer's academic capability. Nesi (2012) argued the jokes about taboo subjects as a model of academic identity because it shows the lecturer's ability to even discuss taboo subjects as part of their professionalism. Hence, the ability of joking about a classroom subject, arguably, also implies professional and academic model of identity

4. Humor to Release Tension

Tension in classrooms may occur after lecturers criticize their students or after they made an error. To release that tension, lecturers may try to make jokes (Nesi, 2012). There were very few 'tense situations' identified in the data, but in all of them, lecturers always create jokes. Hence, the findings of the present study regarding this function align with Nesi's (2012) characterization.

However, regarding jokes that occurred after the tension when a lecturer made an error, there is a distinction that can be made from Nesi's (2012) finding, as illustrated in the joke below.

[3.12]

1 Std1: minggu depan (1.5) jum'at

2   minggu depan, Ma'am?

3 Lec : Ya (2.0) Masa (.) tahun depan

4 Stds : ((laughter))

5 (1.0)

6 Lec : eh libur gitu ya? EH SORRY

7   SORRY (1.0) saya ngga liat

8   kalender di sini.

9 Stds : ((laughter))

10 Lec : lupa hari, lupa waktu. (0.5)

11   maaf ya::

Translation

1 Std1: Next week, next Friday,

2   Ma'am?

3 Lec : Yes. What do you think, next

4   year?

5 Stds : (laughter)

6 Lec : Wait, is it holiday? Oh,

7   sorry, sorry, I didn't see the

8   calendar here.

9 Stds: (laughter)

10 Lec : Forgot the day, forgot the

11   time. I'm so sorry.

The joke above showed a clear apologetic tone, as the lecturer said "sorry" multiple times and tried to explain her error. Meanwhile in

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Nesi's (2012) findings, the lecturer tend to simply get over their error by making a joke. Therefore, concerning the previously discussed function, it is questionable whether [4.27] served to maintain social order as what Nesi (2012) claimed to be another function of jokes that come after lecturers' error. Nonetheless, both jokes similarly released the tension caused by the lecturer's error.

In general, the analysis of the second research question has discovered that the functions of humor in the observed lectures align with Nesi's (2012) theory. All functions of humor proposed by Nesi (2012) were identified in the data even though the characteristics of the humor vary in certain ways. The extremely high occurrence of jokes that build rapport in comparison to other functions implies that the observed lecturers in this case study distinctively prefer to reduce classroom hierarchy as opposed to maintaining it.

CONCLUSION

This case study has found that in the five recorded classroom lectures from

the English Literature major of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, humor slightly tend to be created by flouting the Maxim of Quality and it often functioned to build rapport between students and lecturers. In conclusion, even though there is no apparent preference in choosing a maxim to flout in creating humor, there is an evident tendency of choosing what the humor is for, which is to build a positive relationship with the students. These conclusions could be a reference for people participating in academic contexts, especially that of Indonesian universities, regarding how to use humor in the context.

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