

# Utilizing Humor among Teaching Colleagues and its effect on their happiness in Islamic Higher Education of Indonesia

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## Abstract

Humor is an essential part everyday communications and it is a fundamental facet of work relationships. Hence, humor becomes extremely significant, particularly for teaching colleagues in Indonesia during break after teaching. Humor can enhance communication, self-confidence and intimacy, reduce stress, release fatigue and tension, motivate to work and stimulate creativity. With humor, teaching colleagues can discuss how to enhance teaching skills and utilize good media in learning process. This study aimed to examine the utilization of humor among teaching colleagues in Islamic State Institute of Kendari as one of the Islamic higher educations in Indonesia. Descriptive qualitative method was utilized to analyze data in this research. Interviewing, observing, and documenting were conducted to collect data. The research results revealed that in creating humor, teaching colleagues often utilize linguistic aspects such as phonological aspects. Those phonological aspects are substitution, permutation, decreasing, and addition. Those tend to utilize adaptive humor style pioneered by Martin et al. (2003) which can elevate happiness among teaching colleagues. When they feel happy, their work performance either individually or in a group to complete certain works will be improved, as well as their work relationship, cooperation and collaboration. Finally, this research confirms that phonological aspect is one of language elements to create humor and could affect the happiness which leads the lecturers to have good interpersonal relation, cooperation and collaboration in undertaking certain jobs among teaching colleagues in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** Humor, teaching colleagues, Islamic Higher Education, Indonesia.

## Introduction

As social beings, humans often make joke, create humor and laugh (Savage et al, 2017). This is because people have unusual perception when it comes to humor. Humor is considered funny and makes the people happy in everyday life. The most obvious indicator of the happiness of humor is laughing (Tse, et al, 2010; Kurtz & Algoe, 2015) though not all laughing activity is the result of humor enjoyment (Rohmadi, 2010). Humor can make people laugh when it contains one or more of the following four elements, the shock, which results in embarrassment, mischief, and exaggeration problems. The four elements above can be accomplished through

words or language units deliberately created by the speaker but it is also supported with the context of the conversation.

Humor can be done by anyone and anywhere. The lecturers at Islamic College for example, also often create humor especially for those who have a good sense of humor. A good sense of humor was related to cheerfulness (Cann & Collette, 2014) and correlated with happiness (Liu, 2012). Humor in Islamic college is created for relaxation, releasing tension and feeling tired after teaching, improving communication and intimacy, and helping to stimulate creativity on the sidelines before or after teaching and writing. Not infrequently we find that a lecturer often get the idea to write also through humor. This is in line with the opinion of Shade (1996) who said that humor can stimulate creativity, reduce stress, and motivate to work and also become a means of game and relaxation (Morreall, 2009).

Creation of humor is also done everywhere, in the office, on the way to the classroom, in the department room, in the classroom, and sometimes also in the mosque. In creating humor, lecturers, especially at Islamic State Institute (IAIN) of Kendari deliberately exploit the language aspect. The linguistic aspect in question is a phonological aspect that utilizes letter sounds such as substitution, addition and subtraction. Utilization of the sound of this language is done solely to create an entertaining atmosphere and cause laughter of other lecturers. This is because humor basically rests on the concept of misalignment, disagreement, and liberation which can certainly be explained linguistically (Wijana, 2004).

Research on humor of lecturers to the students has been conducted massively. Humor was created with the aim of improving the quality of learning both for language learning (Holmes & Marra, 2002), and other lessons (Poirier & Wilhelm, 2014) both in Indonesia and in Vietnam (Petraiki & Nguyen, 2016) Iran (Salehi & Hesabi, 2014), and so on. Nevertheless, humor among teaching colleagues or peers is still very limited. There are many studies that discuss humor in a linguistic perspective (Wijana, 2004; Rohmadi, 2010; Hermintiyo, 2011) but are not focused on humor created by lecturers in Islamic colleges. Even if there has been already one similar study in Islamic institution context, the focus is only on pragmatic aspect of humor (Gunawan, 2017) and not concerning on phonological aspect and its relation to happiness.

On the other hand, there is humor that focuses on the humor of lecturers but uses a quantitative approach such as those conducted by Tumkaya (2006) at Cukurova University of Turkey and Wu and Chan (2013) in China. Indeed, the previous studies indicate that the research on humor relating to happiness and work relationship is still rare to be discussed based on linguistics perspective. This is because most of them are conducted based on psychological perspective, such as Martin et al. (2003); Stieger, Formann, and Burger (2011); Liu (2012); Dyck & Holtzman (2013); Yue, et al. (2014); Ford, et al. (2014); Schermer, et al. (2015); Chefneux (2015); Hampes (2016); Ford, et al. (2017). This study aims to discuss the humor of lecturers in one of the Islamic higher educations in Indonesia based on linguistic perspective, especially in phonological aspect and its relation to happiness pioneered by humor theory of Martin et al. (2003).

### **Literature Review**

There are many definitions for humor. Ridwan (2014) says that humor is a taste or symptom that stimulates us to laugh or tend to laugh mentally. In the Oxford English dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989), humor is defined as "that quality of action, speech, or writing which excites amusement; funny habit, jocularly, facetiousness, comicality". Recently, there are two dimensions of humor, adaptive and maladaptive (Martin et al., 2003; Tse et al. 2010; Yue et al. 2014). Adaptive

humor refers to humors that are beneficial to psychological well-being. It includes affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor (Dyck & Holtzman, 2013; Hampes, 2016; Ford et al. 2017). Affiliative humor tends to tell jokes or engage in spontaneous humorous jokes in order to create enjoyment, lessen interpersonal strain and assist relationship. It could increase interpersonal cohesiveness as well. Self-enhancing humor means the tendency to find amusement from incongruities in life (Ford et al. 2014). However, maladaptive humor is harmful to well-being. It involves aggressive humor and self-defeating humor. Aggressive humor is humor for criticizing or manipulating others, such as belittling, disdain, ridicule and mockery (Chefneux, 2015). Self-defeating humor refers to the tendency to grovel to others and try to amuse them by making fun at their own weakness (Stieger et al. 2011).

To conclude, adaptive humor styles are positively correlated with happiness, while maladaptive humor styles are in negative association to happiness. Specifically, affiliative humor and self-enhancing humor are believed to be positively correlated to happiness elements. Meanwhile, aggressive and self-defeating humor is related to elements leading to lower happiness. Then, the happiness leads to have a quality of life. This theory then is combined with Crowley's theory on sound changes in a linguistic perspective. Crowleys' theory explains the phoneme changes of a word. The phonemic changes vary. There are addition, reduction, change, and permutation of letter. It means that the phoneme changes could change the meaning of one word to another or make a different word meaning with the previous meaning because of the different sounds. This change of sounds lead to creation of humor which in turn pleases those who listen to it which of course makes the laugh. For example, the phoneme /t/ changes in "Perawat" into phonemes /n/ in the word "Perawan". *Perawat* refers to the meaning of the person who takes care for the sick, while *Perawan* refers to a girl who has never had sexual intercourse with a man.

### **Research Method**

This study used descriptive qualitative method. The source of research data were lecturers of IAIN Kendari who often make funny and nauseous, both in front of personal author, as well as in front of meeting forum, lecturer training and workshop. The research data came from the funny verbal stories of oral professors when communicating with colleagues. The data were collected by using the method of recording technique, note-taking (Mahsun, 2005) and in-depth interview (Padgett, 2016). The recording technique is used because the funny stories delivered are often abrupt and sudden, carried wherever and whenever they are, while the note-taking technique is used to record all recorded conversations. In depth-interview was conducted to the lecturers who are productive in creating humor and have a good sense of humor. This was conducted to determine the effect of humor on happiness and cheerfulness which leads to the improvement of work relationships among lecturers. The collected data was further classified according to the phonological aspect, i.e. sound substitution, permutation, sound expression, and sound addition. Furthermore, the phonological theory in this linguistic perspective is related to Martin et al (2003) who proposed humor theory in a psychological perspective.

The phonological change data is analyzed in order to decide what kind of humor used in the lecturers' humor that affects the joys and happiness of a humor-making person who can strengthen the fabric of communication and improve their work performance and relationships. The collected data was further classified according to the phonological aspect, i.e. sound substitution, permutation, sound expression, and sound addition. Furthermore, this theory was associated with humor theory of Martin et al (2003) who classify humor into two types. After that, the data was analyzed based on this humor theory to determine whether the lecturer's humor of IAIN Kendari affects the joyful and happiness among them which leads to the good inter-

personal relationship among fellow lecturers, good work performance, as well as cooperation and collaboration in undertaking certain jobs which are related to either academic or personal life.

### Results and Discussion

One of the language aspects used to create humor is the phonological aspect. Phonology is the study of sound. The use of certain sounds in a word can evoke a sense of humor. Verhaar (2004) says that sound is the smallest linguistic unit. Then, every sound unit that distinguishes the meaning is called a phoneme. For example, the phoneme /b/ and /p/ in the word *buas* and *puas* in Indonesian language has a different meaning. The first refers to the meaning of fierce, wild and vicious, while the latter refers to the meaning of feeling happy because the desire of his heart has been fulfilled. The existence of phoneme wealth in Indonesian language with various forms can be a source of creativity of humor discourse creation. From a number of observed data, various techniques for utilizing phonological aspects in lecturer humor discourse, such as sound substitution, sound permutation, sound expression, and sound addition.

#### Sound Substitution

Sound substitution is the replacement of one letter to another letter so as to distinguish meaning. Replacement of these letters is often used in humor discourse in order to create a word that has a different meaning and has the effect of humor and make others laugh. This can be seen in the following example.

**Table 1.** Data (1).

<b>Location : Language Lab</b>	
Context	: Talking about the problem of Arung Palakka cave in Buton. There is a special cave and is always visited by the tourists. Mahrudin's duty is to deliver his brother-in-law to the cave.
Azam	: My brother-in-law's eyes can see everything
Leah	: Really? I wonder how He can do that
Azam	: Yes, He can see everything. I mean He can see another world. He can see <i>Gantu</i> (ghost).
Leah	: <i>Gantu</i> means <i>hantu</i> (ghost). That's the way of Munanese speak...wkwkwkwk

**Table 2.** Data (2).

<b>Location : Lecturer's room</b>	
Context	: Talking about provincial MTQ at Bombana in 2014
Azam	: Who is the winner of MTQ in Bombana?
Weha	: I don't know
Azam	: Tamrin said that the first winner is Qadam
Weha	: Oh really?
Azam	: Yes, the second winner is Qodim, and the third winner is Qoramil. When I got married, I came to his house. The full name is La Ode Muhammad Qodam. Not La Ode Muhammad Qodim...wkwkwk

**Table 3.** Data (3).

<b>Location : Quality Assurance's Room</b>	
Context	: A conversation between Shaykh, Ira, and Iccang at ISHOMA (rest time). At that time, Hasdin opened the laptop and wanted to access the internet, but the signal is only 1 line or is not good. Hasdin also asked Ikhsan about internet passwords in the next language room.
Syaikh	: Sir, what is the paspor (passport) of UPB?

Iccang	:	What do you mean Sir? <i>Paspor</i> (passport) is handled by Immigration Office. Not in Campus
Syaikh	:	Wkwkw. Not <i>Paspor</i> (passport), but password.

**Table 4.** Data (4).

<b>Location</b>	:	<b>Language Lab</b>
Context	:	Conversation between Tia and Ajam on Arabic vocabulary
Tia	:	Mom, what is Seat in Arabic?
Ajam	:	<i>Kursi</i>
Ajam	:	What is if plural?
Tia	:	<i>Karasi</i>
Ajam	:	<i>Garasi</i> (garage)...wkwkwk

**Table 5.** Data (5).

<b>Location</b>	:	<b>Research Institute and Community Service's room (LPPM)</b>
Context	:	A lecturer is presenting his research proposal in front of the reviewer
Ambar	:	The learning management will use <i>animasi</i> (animation) later
Ali	:	<i>Ali mazi?</i>
Ambar	:	Not Sir, <i>animasi</i> (animation)...
Ali	:	I thought <i>Alimazi</i> ...wkwkwk

**Table 6.** Data (6).

<b>Location</b>	:	<b>Language Lab</b>
Context	:	Discussion between the resource-learning of learning workshop evaluation under the theme "character-based evaluation", Dr. Kadir with other participants
Kadir	:	In performing character-based evaluation, there are several skill assessment techniques
Peserta	:	What is it?
Kadir	:	<i>Tes Pilihan Janda</i> (The widow's choice test)
Peserta	:	<i>Pilihan Ganda</i> (Multiple Choice), Sir. Not <i>Pilihan Janda</i> (The widow's choice test)... wkwkwk

**Table 7.** Data (7).

<b>Location</b>	:	<b>Language Lab</b>
Context	:	Discussion on National MTQ 2014
Azam	:	Where is the souvenir from MTQ? I think I ordered a Malay girl.
Syeikh	:	I just take a picture of it. But yesterday also we visited <i>Tanjung Penang</i>
Azam	:	If in my village, it is said <i>Tanjung Pening</i>

The sound substitution that triggers the emergence of laughter of the opponent is in the data (1–7). In the data (1), the phoneme /h/ in *hantu* is converted to phoneme /g/ so it becomes ghost. *Gantu* is a spirit that cannot be seen by ordinary people in general. What makes it funny is when he says that his brother-in-law can see spiritual creature and the creature is called a *gantu*. In fact, if he only said *hantu*, then it cannot trigger the cuteness.

In the data (2) Azam told Weha that the first winner of Qiraah competition on MTQ at the provincial level is Qodam, while Qodam is a student. Furthermore, something

unexpected suddenly appeared. He said that the second Qiraah champion is Qodim and his third winner is Qoramil. The cuteness is growing when he spoils his full name of La Ode Muhammad Qadam to La Ode Muhammad Qodim. Qodim, Koramil and La Ode Muhammad Qodim are said to be funny because at first Azam only mentioned the names of the students and then mentioned the name of an army organization of Qodim District and the sub-district level called Koramil. The substitution of phoneme /a/ in the word *qodam* becomes phoneme /i/ in *qodim* word making the meaning of the word changed. The first word means the name of the person and the second word means the name of the institution. Then, the word *qoramil* gets phoneme substitution /d/ becomes phoneme /r/ and is added with phoneme /i/ and /l/ at the end of the word.

Data (3) explains that the sound substitution element exists in the phoneme /w/ in the *password* word being phoneme /p/ in *paspor*. The phoneme differences in these two words lead to a new meaning. The word *password* refers to pass code while *passport* refers to the ID or license to be used overseas. The sound substitution in the data (4) is found in the phoneme /k/ in the word *karasi* into phoneme /g/ in the word *garasi*. The word *karasi* means seat, while *garasi* means space or empty space for cars or motorcycles. The same situation is found of data (5). In the data (5), it is found substitution phoneme /n/ and /s/ in the word *animasi* becomes phoneme /l/ and /z/ on Ali Mazi. In the data (6), the phoneme /g/ in *pilihan ganda* becomes phoneme /j/ in *pilihan janda*. In data (7) found phoneme /i/ substitution on Tanjung Pinang word becomes phoneme /i/ in Tanjung Pening word. Tanjung Pinang means the name of the port in Riau Islands declared to be Tanjung Pening as it enters the harbor must be jostled which make the head dizzy.

### **Sound Permutation**

The permutation of sound is the transfer of one sound to another so as to create a new meaning. Based on the search data found, permutations not only occur at the level of the phoneme but also on the level of clause. The definition of permutations at the clause level is the subject's permutation to the predicate place and vice versa. Predicate moved its position into a subject. Consider the following data.

**Table 8.** Data (8).

<b>Location</b>	<b>: Research Institute and Community Service's room</b>
Context	: A conversation after break time
Weha	: Sir, where are you from?
Sura	: I'm from Mandar, Pak. From Mandra. Si Doel's friend,

Data (8) explains that the phoneme /a/ in the middle position is moved to an end position so that the word *Mandar* which means the name of one of the largest ethnic groups in Southeast Sulawesi turns into the name of a Si Doel Anak Betawi movie player, *Mandra*.

### **Sound Decreasing**

Sound deletion is the removal of certain phonemes in a word that leads to a new meaning. This is intentionally done to trigger the emergence of laughter opponent said. The sound can be seen in the following example.

**Table 9.** Data (9).

<b>Location</b>	<b>: The Senate Room</b>
Context	: The exposure of quality scriptwriting material at open journal workshop by Mr. Ali
Ali	: If I am not urged by Mr. Laring, my historical review of God cannot

be finished. The writing was so because I was in a state of distress. The 400-page book should be read and resourced in less than a week. I am very grateful to Pak Laring. Later I will give a gift to Mr. Laring.

- Wija : It means we use *kepepet* (rush) method, Sir  
 Ali : Just do not remove the letter T...wkwkwkwk

Sound voiding on the data (9) is found in the word *kepepet*. The phoneme /t/ in the word *kepepet* is lost so it becomes *kepepe*. The imprinting of this phoneme certainly brings a different meaning. If the word *kepepet* means urgent, while *Kepepe* in the language of Kendari known as the vital organs of women. Because it refers to the female organ suddenly this arises laughter from fellow college professors. This is because they never thought that this word would be spoofed.

**The Addition of Sound**

What is meant by the addition of sound is the addition of certain phonemes to a word to form a new word that has a different meaning. This can be seen as the following data.

**Table 10.** Data (10).

<b>Location</b>	<b>: Quality Assurance’s Room</b>
Context	: Conversation between Hasdin, Ira, and Ikhsan when ISHOMA regarding the upgrade of status from STAIN to IAIN
Syeikh	: There’s no information about STAIN’s status?
Iccang	: Nothing Yet
Ira	: <i>Appanna gare’ mancaji nya’nyeng.</i> (Bugis Language) “When it will be changed into IAIN”
Iccang	: <i>Nyonyang kapang</i> (Bugis Language) “No IAIN, but it will be meatball”

Data (10) describes the form of the addition of sound. The addition of sound to data (10) is found in the acronym STAIN. The context of his discussion refers to a lecturer's question about the change of status from STAIN to IAIN. This is because the discourse of change over this status has long been submitted, but there is also no clear information. Therefore, Ira started the conversation in a humorous tone and using Bugis language. *Appanna mancaji nya’nyeng*. The use of this *nya’nyeng* word that began to stir the laughter which then continued with the word *nyo’nyang*. *Nyo’nyang* word is a formation of a new word meaning meatball. The context of this conversation occurs when there is no status change from STAIN to IAIN.

Based on the above data, it can be implied that the humor of IAIN lecturers was partially categorized as affiliative humor. This is because the humor content and flow tend to entertain, decrease the interpersonal relationship tense, and maintain good relationship among others. For instance, the sound change in *gantū* to be *hantu* on data (1), *Qodam* to be *Qodim* (2) *paspor* to be *password* (3), *garasi* to be *karasi* (4), *animasi* to be *Alimazi* (5), *tes pilihan ganda* to be *tes pilihan janda* (6), *Tanjung Penang* to be *tanjung pening* (7), *Mandar* to be *Mandra* (8). Meanwhile, the word *kepepet* to be *kepepe* (10) which is basically categorized as aggressive humor make the women same as in rush condition, and *nya’nyeng* becomes *nyo’nyang* on data (11) is also aggressive humor which implies that it mocked the institution as like meatball which is easily made, meanwhile the status changing of an institution takes quite for ages. These data were supported by in-depth interview with an informant; one of lecturers at IAIN Kendari who pointed out:

*"Humor can strengthen communication and brotherhood between fellow lecturers, but it will depend on the context and content of humor. If the content of humor contains elements of ethnics, offensive things, or demeaning others or a group of people, then the communication will not work as expected which tend to damage the interpersonal relationships as well as work relationship. Even if the content is just for fun, then people will feel happy and joy. As a result, their brotherhood is getting closer, the interpersonal communication is good, work performance is good, and even they can cooperate well in one team to do certain jobs. In addition to the content, the context must also be well taken care of. "*

In line with, Mayasari; a senior lecture of psychology major spelled out that:

*"Humor is undeniably good for the lecturers because it can restrain and refresh our minds after teaching and writing tense during work. As long as the humor is positive which can lead to happiness among lecturers which of course leading to the good working relationship among others. It also affects the interpersonal relationship of the humor-making. As a result, work performance becomes better and good cooperation and collaboration is shaped well."*

Based on an aforementioned data, it can be said that humor is created solely to reduce the pressure of work and fatigue after teaching, improve the quality of friendship, refreshing, brainstorming and entertaining. It certainly started from the language guide. This is certainly in line with the humor conducted by Wijana (2004), Rahmadi (2010) and Hermintiyo (2011). They say that a sound game that can create humor can make us refreshing and entertaining. It's just that this research focuses on what forms of humor are created through language games and does not come to the discovery of humor can make people happy and happy. This study proves that a sense of humor can make people happy to improve interpersonal relationships and produce a better working relationship. In addition, work performance, collaboration and collaboration in completing the campus tasks become more increased.

This study is certainly different from previous studies that discuss humor and pleasure quantitatively in the perspective of psychology, such as research conducted by Martin et al. (2003); Stieger, Formann, and Burger (2011); Liu (2012); Dyck & Holtzman (2013); Yue et al. (2014); Ford et al. (2014); Schermer et al. (2015); Chefneux, (2015); Hampes (2016); and Ford et al. (2017). All of the research focuses on the relationship of humor with happiness and the relationship of humor to the working relationship. The research they build on happiness and humor has a positive relationship, especially the humor that is associative and self-enhancing. On the other hand, humor that is being damaged, insulting, and condescending like aggressive humor and humor of self-defeating has a negative relationship with happiness. Their study did not discuss humor in a linguistic perspective as a basic basis in analyzing humor in this study.

This study differs also from the research of Humor in Turkey (Tumkaya, 2007) and in China on the lecturers there. Tumkaya's research is mostly conducted quantitatively using the humor scale, namely Maslach Burnout Inventory, Humor Styles Questionnaire, Coping Humor Scale (Tumkaya, 2007). It means whether funny or not a conversation is measured using a certain scale and not game-based language. In China, lecturers or teachers use less humor to reduce the pressure of work and fatigue after teaching (Wu & Chan, 2013). Less use of humor in question is the frequency of use of humor they tend to be low. This is because they consider that humor can reduce the dignity of Chinese culture that remains a good way of

interacting. Then, they assume that the lecturer is a wise person so that can be an example of the students. These expectations make them reduce the frequency of use of humor between fellow lecturers and lecturers to the students. Finally, this research confirms that the sound game was created to create the effect of humor and that humor also effect on happiness and work relationship among colleagues teaching in Islamic college, especially at IAIN Kendari.

### Conclusion

Humor is something that cannot be separated in human life, particularly for a lecturer in the academic world filled with business. Creation of humor is the easiest thing to do and the most applicable way is in the phonological level, namely sound substitution, sound permutation, sound expression, and the addition of sound. Those tend to utilize affiliative humor style which can elevate happiness among teaching colleagues. The sound changing can certainly make those who are in humorous situation feel happy and their interpersonal relationships will be good so the working relationship gets better both personal and office matters, writing collaboration can also be increased.

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