CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is an important aspect which cannot be separated from human's life. Language is used daily by people to interact with one another, express their feelings and thoughts, and communicate their ideas. Without language, people will have no means to create a meaningful relation with others. However, sometimes misunderstandings happen because of the use of language; people often fail to understand what others want to communicate due to different factors, one of which is ambiguity.

Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (Hornby, 2010) defines ambiguity as "a word or statement that can be understood in more than one way" (p. 43). Ambiguous expressions can occur in a word, a phrase or a sentence because they have more than one meaning or interpretation. It can happen because the speaker or writer does not state the meaning explicitly and clearly. As a result, the hearer or reader interprets the meaning based on their own knowledge that may be different from the speaker's or the writer's actual intention; consequently, misunderstanding

in spoken or written language is likely to happen because of that. Understanding written language is more difficult than understanding spoken language because when the reader does not understand the writer's intention, he or she cannot ask it directly what the actual meaning is to the writer.

Jokes is one means of communication which is often found in our daily lives. Jokes are usually creatively crafted, utilizing language use to make people laugh. Just like other types of communication, understanding written jokes is often proven more difficult to understand compared to the spoken ones. It is because in written jokes, there are stories that consist of different types of ambiguity.

While spoken jokes can be found in daily lives among friends or families, written jokes are mostly found in books and the Internet like in the following websites: *www.jokes.skem9.co.uk,* *www.unijokes.com, www.justriddlesandmore.com, www.laffgaff.com* and *www.ahajokes.com*.

From the websites I mentioned above, I chose nine jokes as the data of my thesis. The jokes that I chose fall in the category of medical jokes, which are jokes relating to doctors and medical practice. Relating to the topic of my thesis, ambiguity, I found that a lot of medical jokes consist of different types of ambiguity which become the punchline of the jokes and create the funny elements in the joke.

To analyse my data, I use Charles W. Kreidler's theory, Robert Lew's theory about types of ambiguity and McGhee and Goldstein's theory about Incongruity-Resolution Theory. Kreidler (1998) divides ambiguity into three types: lexical ambiguity, which is an ambiguity that occurs because of the different word meanings; syntactic ambiguity, which is an ambiguity that occurs because of the syntax of the sentence such as unclear use of personal pronoun, ellipsis, etc; and

referential ambiguity, which is an ambiguity that occurs because of the unclear reference.

Meanwhile, Lew (1996) divides ambiguity into ten types: lexical ambiguity, lexicalization of a larger unit (lexico-syntactic), syntactic ambiguity, phonological ambiguity, orthographic ambiguity, deictic reference ambiguity, specific versus non-specific interpretation ambiguity, pragmatic ambiguity, type of modality, and textual cohesion. I decide to use two different theories about types of ambiguity because the two theories complement each other; in other words, there are some types of ambiguity mentioned in Kreidler's theory but not in Lew's, and vice versa.

Another theory that I use is Incongruity-Resolution theory. This theory basically explains how the incongruity can trap readers and then make the readers laugh. The theory starts when the story goes well until the readers meet an incongruity in a joke and make some predictions about the ending of the story. The ending can be like the readers' prediction and results in no surprise or laughter or, the ending may not be as predicted, which leads the readers to find a rule that makes sense as the ending of the joke. When the rule is found, laughter will occur; on the other hand, when the rule is not found, puzzlement will occur.

In doing this analysis, I hope that people may become more aware of the fact that the source of the funny elements in medical jokes is originated from its ambiguity. It is important that readers of jokes understand that a simple change in word meaning, referential meaning, and grammatical structure can create humor. For people who like making jokes, ambiguity is important because it contributes to create incongruity that can cause laughter.

(727 words)

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The problems that I would like to analyse are:

1. What words or phrases in the jokes are ambiguous?

2. What types of ambiguity are they?

3. How does the incongruity help explain the humour of the jokes?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this thesis is to answer the problems above, such as:

1. To identify the words or the phrases that make the jokes ambiguous.

2. To identify the types of ambiguity that is found in the jokes.

3. To explain how incongruity helps to explain the humour of the jokes.

1.4 Method of Research

Firstly, I look for the theory of ambiguity and Incongruity-Resolution Theory by getting some books about the theories. Next, I decide this topic to be analysed in my thesis. After that, I search and collect the data from several different websites on the Internet. I select the data and analyse it by using the theory of types of ambiguity and Incongruity-Resolution Theory. Lastly, I write the research report.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is Introduction, consisting of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is Theoretical Framework that explains the approach for analysing the data. Chapter Three is the analysis of

the data and its results. The last part is Chapter Four, which is the conclusion, showing the findings and the writer's suggestions. The thesis ends with Bibliography and Appendix.