CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In daily life, people always communicate with one another. One of the ways to communicate is by doing a conversation. They use language to communicate with one another and sometimes it is also reflected in almost everything that we do. Language will never be separated from human beings although there are various languages in this world.

Many people normally express their intention through language but sometimes people do not understand the message expressed so that this leads to a common misunderstanding caused by ambiguous statements. Ambiguity comes from a word or phrase or sentence which has more than one meaning. In other words, ambiguity has more than one possibility for interpretation. Sometimes people also use an ambiguous statement because they have their own purpose.

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Ambiguity in a word, phrase or sentence potentially creates confusion or uncertainty of meaning. We might get many examples in daily life.

For example:

> I came across this headline in the Wall Street Journal:
>
> "Republicans Grill IRS Chief Over Lost Emails"
>
> (Byrdseed, 2009, "Ambiguous Sentence, para. 1).

The example above can be interpreted in two ways due to the ambiguous meaning of the word *grill*. The first possible meaning is the Republicans ask a lot of questions to the chief about the lost emails (Hornby, 2005, p. 682), while the second possible meaning is the Republicans roast the chief because of the lost emails, which is most probably in its metaphorical meaning. This headline uses the word *grill* that has more than one meaning so that the word *grill* leads people to have misunderstanding, which then leads to humour.

In this thesis I would like to discuss the types of ambiguity based on Robert Lew's theory. Lew divides ambiguity into ten types, namely: 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. However, in this thesis I only focus on the four types of ambiguity. They are Lexical Ambiguity, Lexicalization of a Larger Unit (Lexico-Syntactic), Deictic Reference Ambiguity, and Pragmatic Ambiguity.

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I also relate this theory to another theory, namely Incongruity Resolution Theory. This theory is advanced independently by Jones (1970), Shultz (1972) and Suls (1972). However, the model of Incongruity Resolution is created by Suls. Humour happens because the audience's expectation is different from what actually happens. The incongruity will be resolved by either retrieving the information from the joke or from the hearer's knowledge (Suls, 1972, p. 42). Humour depends on resolvable incongruity. If the incongruity is removed from a joke or it is not resovable, the result would not be funny (McGhee, 1972, p. 77).

The title of my thesis is "Ambiguity in Building Humour in Religion Jokes". Many of the ambiguity types are included in Semantics, which is the study of meaning. However, the type of Pragmatic Ambiguity belongs to Pragmatics, which is the study of speaker meaning. Lew's theory of Ambiguity and Suls's theory of Incongruity Resolution are the most relevant theories to use in my analysis. These theories are needed in order to give a clear explanation of the humour in the conversation. These theories are also important to reveal the humour within the joke itself and it will make people understand why the joke is considered funny.

I choose jokes from laughfactory.com and jokes4us.com because the websites contain a lot of jokes and they can be classified into several categories. From these websites, I choose religion jokes as my focus because it is interesting to find out how humour can be resulted in a text with such a serious topic as religion. I would like to analyze it deeply to know how the humour works in religion jokes.

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The analysis of ambiguity types and Incongruity Resolution that leads to humour in religion jokes from laughfactory.com and jokes4us.com websites hopefully will make people more aware that in daily life, many people are likely to create ambiguity from their conversation because of several reasons. Besides, this analysis may make the readers more critical in producing and perceiving a good conversation to others so that it will decrease the possibility of misunderstanding. I also hope people who read my analysis, including me, can be more open and familiar with many kinds of jokes from around the world.

Word count: 719

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In this thesis I would like to analyze the following problems:

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

2. What is the type of ambiguity?

3. How does the Incongruity Resolution theory help explain the humour?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Based on the statement of the problem above, I would like to accomplish these purposes:

1. To find out the ambiguous words or phrases found in the jokes.

2. To classify the types of ambiguity occuring in the jokes.

3. To explain the humour with the help of the Incongruity Resolution theory.

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1.4 Method of Research

The first step is I choose the specific topic that I want to analyze and study the theories that I am going to use to support my analysis. The second step is I try to find the relevant data from the Internet. The next step is I analyze the jokes using Robert Lew's theory of the ambiguity types and Incongruity Resolution theory. Finally, I write the research report.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One consists of the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the Theoretical Framework, elaborating the theories used to analyze the data. Chapter Three presents the analysis of the types of ambiguity in the jokes. Chapter Four contains the conclusion. The last is Bibliography and Appendix.