

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Language is central in our lives. Everyone, regardless of their status, uses language every day to communicate (Evans, 2014, p. 5). Not only as a means of communication, language also serves several functions. First, the interactional function which “has to do with how human use language to interact with each other” (Yule, 1996, p. 6). Second, the transactional function which “has to do with how human use their linguistic abilities to communicate knowledge, skills, and information” (Yule, 1996, p. 6).

Another function of language is the ludic function, in which language is used for enjoyment or fun. According to Crystal (1999), “the rules of ludic language are different from those which govern other uses of language” (p. 2). When applying the function, a person can use the language in the form of language play, that is by “bending or breaking of the form of language” (Crystal,

1998, p. 1). Furthermore, language play manipulates the linguistic forms like words, phrases, sentences, and sounds, in such a way that they are not normally used in daily conversation (Crystal, 1999, p. 1). An example of language play is the word *catfrontation* uttered in a conversation of a couple who see several cats meeting in the street (Crystal, 1999, p. 1). The word *catfrontation* does not exist in the dictionary; it is created by blending of the word *cat* and *confrontation*. The word *confrontation* means “a hostile or argumentative situation or meeting between opposing parties” (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.). Therefore, it can be concluded that the word *catfrontation* means the meeting between opposing cats. From this example, we can see how the couple play with words.

Language play can be found in many areas of life, both in personal and professional areas. As Crystal (1999) said “... ludic language exists in hundreds of different genres, and adds enjoyment to our daily lives in many routine-ways” (p. 2). Besides in daily conversation, language play forms can also be used professionally by advertisers, comedians, comic writers, authors, and movie script writers.

In this thesis, I am interested in analysing the language play in *Friends* television series. This television series contains a lot of language play. *Friends* is an American television series aired on the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network from 1994 to 2004. It was created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman and awarded six Emmy Awards, including outstanding comedy series (Nirala, n.d.).

The series is about a group of six young adults who are either roommates or neighbours in New York City's Greenwich Village. Many scenes in the series take place in apartment rooms as they visit one another. The friends consist of three men and three women, whose varied personalities and shortcomings make the comedy strong (Nirala, n.d.). The characters are Monica Geller (Courtney Cox), Ross Geller (David Schwimmer), Rachel Green (Jennifer Aniston), Phoebe Buffay (Lisa Kudrow), Joey Tribbiani (Matt LeBlanc), and Chandler Bing (Matthew Perry). Throughout the series, the friends live together and apart as some of them are either married or dating (Nirala, n.d.).

The characters use many language play forms in their dialogues in the series. They create words, phrases or even mention sentences which often break or bend the rules of language. I choose this topic of language play and *Friends* television series because I like the series and it is also a popular American comedy series which uses language as one of the sources of humour. Since the script writer of the series is very creative, the language play used in *Friends* television series is really appealing to me because without it, the series would be common and not special. Aside from the jokes, the language play is also the reason for making the audience laugh.

When humour is provoked through the language use, there is a tool that can help to explain how the humour works, that is the incongruity resolution theory. The theory explains that humour happens when the perceiver meets an incongruity. Then he/she is also motivated to resolve the incongruity either by retrieval of information in the joke or from his/her own information (Suls, 1972, p. 42).

Through this thesis, I am sure that people will gain more knowledge about another function of language, which is to entertain. I would also like to make people understand what language play is and appreciate the creativity of the people who are able to make use of it because creating new words, phrases, and sentences to entertain people is not easy.

## **1.2 Statements of the Problem**

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

1. What is the type of language play that is used in *Friends* television series?
2. How does the use of language play lead to humour?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

In this thesis I would like to show:

1. the type of language play that is used in *Friends* television series.
2. how the use of language play leads to humour.

## **1.4 Methods of Research**

First I searched the theory of language play and studied it. Next, I watched the series and collected the data of language play in *Friends* television series. Then I applied the theory of language play to analyse the data. Afterwards, I wrote the research report.

## **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One is Introduction. It consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Methods of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is Theoretical Framework, which describes the theories used to discuss language play. Chapter Three is the discussion on the language play in *Friends* television series. Chapter Four is Conclusion, which provides my personal comments and opinion of my findings. At the end of the thesis, Bibliography and Appendices are provided respectively.