

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Language is one of the most important aspects in building communication. Without language, both the verbal and non verbal language, people will not be able to communicate well. However, as an utterance conveyed by a speaker may be interpreted as many more than one meaning by a hearer, even with the existence of language, misinterpretation may happen. A good communication, of course, needs to be supported by the use of appropriate language in one circumstance with the intention of conveying the correct information or messages to the other participants, so as to avoid misinterpretation.

The subject of misunderstanding is interesting to discuss because it is something that commonly happens, regardless of time, place and participants of the conversation. In addition, it gives me such a big curiosity to find out some factors affecting misunderstanding and the various emotional effects on the participants appearing in a certain conversation.

One of the factors that cause misinterpretation in human communication is the different interpretation of Speech Act labels. One utterance which is labeled a

question by a speaker may be interpreted differently by a hearer. For instance, he may interpret it as an insult. As a result, this misinterpretation may cause him or her to feel offended.

In this thesis, I would like to discuss misunderstanding caused by different interpretations of Speech Act labels in the comic series ‘Tintin’ entitled Tintin and Alph- Art, The Shooting Star, The Castafiore Emerald, Red Rackham’s Treasure, Destination Moon, Explores on the Moon, and King Ottokar’s Sceptre. I also use ‘Asterix’ comic series as my data source entitled Asterix The Gaul, Asterix in Britain, Asterix in Spain, Asterix the Gladiator, Asterix and the Big Fight, Asterix and the Roman Agent, Asterix and the Laurel Wreath, Asterix and the Chieftain’s Shield, Obelix and co, and Asterix and the Banquet.

I choose comic series as the data source because I notice that it is popular not only with children, but also with adults. Besides, a comic series contains many pictures which are interesting to see, so that people may enjoy following the story without feeling bored. In my opinion, a comic series is also easy to understand because it usually reveals a simple plot of story. Moreover, reading comic books has been one of my hobbies since I was in the elementary school.

‘Tintin’ is one of the most famous comic series in the world. It was first printed in 1930. The characters are well-known, especially Tintin, the intelligent detective, and his clever dog named Snowy. There are some of Tintin’s friends who are also famous and have their own unique characteristics: Captain Haddock and the twin siblings, Detective Thomson and Thompson, who are always loyal to accompany Tintin in solving the problems.

‘Asterix’ is a fictional character, created in 1959 as the hero of a French comic series. He lives around 50 BC in a fictional village in northwest Armorica, which is a region of ancient Gaul mostly identical to modern Brittany. This village is celebrated amongst the Gauls as the only part of that country not yet conquered by Julius Caesar and his Roman legions.

The Gaullish village is famous for its magic potion which gives superhuman strength made by a druid named Getafix. The main characters of this story are very unique such as, Asterix, who is very clever, and his close friend Obelix, a menhir (big rock) delivery man, who is not too bright. He is a big man with superhuman strength because he falls into the cauldron of magic potion when he is a baby, and it gives a permanent effect. However, there are some other characters who also create the funny events in this story, such as Vitalstatistix, as the chief of Gaullish village; Impedimenta, as Vitalstatistix’s wife; Unhygenix as the fishmonger; Cacofonix as the bard; and Dogmatix as Obelix’s dog.

Both ‘Tintin’ and ‘Asterix’ have a very good story. The story is a combination of a thriller, adventure and comedy which usually takes place in many countries. In those comic series, I can find a lot of amusingly funny scenes and they are often caused by some elements of misunderstanding in the characters’ interactions.

In this analysis, there are two linguistic areas that I use as the approaches. The first area is Pragmatics. In this area, I apply the Speech Act Theory on Taxonomy by John Searle. Searle presents a rational taxonomy of types of speech acts and he explores the relation between the meaning of sentences and the contexts of their utterances.

The second linguistic area is Sociolinguistics. The theory applied in this area is Erving Goffman's theory of the notion of face, which is closely connected to face saving and face threatening acts. Erving Goffman is a well-known sociologist who provides a description of how language is positioned in particular circumstances of social life, and how it reflects, and adds meaning and structure in those circumstances. (Schiffrin, 1994: 97) By applying the theory of the notion of face, we may discover that misunderstanding will cause the different emotional reaction of face saving and face threatening acts between the participants. Goffman considers emotions and feelings such as embarrassment, shame, pride, and he makes these an integral part of his analysis of social face. <<http://uregina.ca/~gingrich/n25f99.htm>>

Statement of the Problem

In this thesis, I would like to discuss the following problems:

1. Which Speech Act labels are misinterpreted in the conversation in 'Tintin' and 'Asterix' comic series?
2. How are the Speech Act labels misinterpreted?
3. What is the effect of each misinterpretation in the conversation on the participants?

Purpose of the Study

In this thesis, I would like to show:

1. The Speech Act labels which are misinterpreted in the conversation in 'Tintin' and 'Asterix' comic series.

2. How the Speech Act labels are misinterpreted.
3. The effect of each misinterpretation in the conversation on the participants.

Method of Research

In gathering and processing the data for my analysis, I first read some episodes of 'Tintin' and 'Asterix' comic series entitled Tintin and Alph- Art, The Shooting Star, The Castafiore Emerald, Red Rackham's Treasure, Destination Moon, Explores on the Moon, King Ottokar's Sceptre, Asterix The Gaul, Asterix in Britain, Asterix in Spain, Asterix the Gladiator, Asterix and the Big Fight, Asterix and the Roman Agent, Asterix and the Laurel Wreath, Asterix and the Chieftain's Shield, Obelix and co, and Asterix and the Banquet as the primary texts.

Second, I collect, select and classify the data, which are in the form of sentences or phrases as the utterances of the conversations in those comic series which cause misinterpretation. Third, I analyze the data by focusing on the misinterpretations which have been caused by the different interpretations of Speech Act labels, and by observing the effects of those misinterpretations on the participants. Finally, I write a report of my research.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is the Introduction, which contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter provides the linguistic approaches used to analyze the misinterpretation of

the conversations. The third chapter contains the discussion on the misunderstanding caused by different interpretations of Speech Act labels and the reaction of the participants in the comic ‘Tintin’ and ‘Asterix’ entitled Tintin and Alph- Art, The Shooting Star, The Castafiore Emerald, Red Rackham’s Treasure, Destination Moon, Explores on the Moon, King Ottokar’s Sceptre , Asterix The Gaul, Asterix in Britain, Asterix in Spain, Asterix the Gladiator, Asterix and the Big Fight, Asterix and the Roman Agent, Asterix and the Laurel Wreath, Asterix and the Chieftain’s Shield, Obelix and co, and Asterix and the Banquet. Finally, the last chapter, the Conclusion, contains my personal comments and opinion based on my findings in this analysis. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendices.