

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Communication is very important for people since they cannot live alone and they need help from others. People communicate in order to share knowledge and experiences with others. According to John Lyons, communication is ‘the activity or process of expressing ideas, feelings, moods and attitudes or of giving people information’ (Lyons, 1977: 32). People communicate with each other in many ways, such as by talking, writing, moving their hands, and even by making faces. Without communication, people probably cannot survive because most of their activities depend on their cooperation with others.

In communicating with others, people use language which is ‘the system of communication in speech and writing that is used by people of a particular country’ or ‘the use by humans of a system of sounds and words to communicate’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary: 2000, 752). It is language that allows people to talk to each other and express their thoughts and ideas.

Language is an important element in communication. Language and communication are two things that cannot be separated. By using language, verbal or non-verbal, communication can be done easily.

People can be said to have good communication when they share the same message with the person whom they communicate with. In his book, Semantics 1, Lyons claims that in the process of communication, what the speaker communicates and the information received by the listener from the speaker are assumed to be identical. However, there is a situation when the participant of a conversation does not share the same message or information with the other participant. Therefore, misunderstanding or ‘a situation in which a comment, an instruction, etc. is not understood correctly’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary: 2000, 852) sometimes occurs between the participants of a conversation.

Under a fairly standard idealization of the process of communication, what the sender communicates (the information put into the signal, as it were, by the sender’s selection among possible alternatives) and the information derived from the signal by the receiver (which may be thought of as the receiver’s selection from the same set of alternatives) are assumed to be identical. But there are, in practice, frequent instance of misunderstanding; and we must allow for this theoretically. (Lyons, 1977: 33)

Apparently, joke writers find this situation interesting; as a result, they use misunderstanding as one of the elements that make their jokes funny. A joke is ‘a short series of words spoken or communicated with the intention of being laughed

at or found humorous by the listeners or readers' <<http://www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/jokes>>. Besides functioning as a common system of communication, language can also be used as an element in creating humor in jokes. Therefore, joke writers sometimes play with language in order to make their jokes funny. As it is mentioned before, another thing that makes jokes funny is the element of misunderstanding in jokes. Joke writers use language and the elements of language to make misunderstanding in jokes funny.

I am interested in discussing misunderstanding in jokes because it is one of the elements that make jokes funny and it can amuse the readers as well as making them laugh. In addition, I am also curious to know how joke writers use the elements of language in creating funny misunderstanding in jokes.

The reason why I choose to discuss misunderstanding in jokes rather than in novels or films is because it does not take time to read jokes for a joke is relatively short. Furthermore, jokes are funny so that reading jokes can relieve the tension after studying.

In the thesis, I will discuss misunderstanding in jokes by using four linguistic approaches based on semantics, syntax, phonology, and pragmatics. I choose to use semantics and pragmatics because both of them deal with the study of the meanings of words and sentences in context. A theory in syntax helps me recognize ambiguity in sentences, whereas phonology helps me analyze misunderstanding in jokes which is caused by phonological problems. These

linguistic approaches are closely related to the misunderstanding in the jokes which are discussed in the thesis.

Semantics covers five approaches: homonyms, homophones, lexical ambiguity, denotative and connotative meanings, and idiomatic expressions. Syntax will cover a theory related to structural ambiguity. Minimal pairs is the approach which is used in phonology. Pragmatics covers three approaches namely maxims of conversation, deixis and distance, and the theory of off and on record statements.

The purpose of doing the discussion by using the kinds of approaches is to reveal the misunderstanding in the jokes and its causes. Furthermore, these kinds of approaches can help the readers understand the jokes much better. Besides, they will add the readers' enjoyment in reading the jokes.

The data used in the discussion is collected from printed sources which provide jokes such as magazines, books of jokes and the Internet.

Statement of the Problem

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

1. What is the misunderstanding found in the jokes provided?
2. What are the causes of such misunderstanding?

Purpose of the Study

In this thesis I would like to show:

1. The misunderstanding found in the jokes provided.
2. The causes of such misunderstanding.

Method of Research

First, I read a series of jokes from different sources, such as books of jokes, magazines, and the Internet. Then I collect, select and classify the data based on semantic misunderstanding, syntactic misunderstanding, phonological misunderstanding, and pragmatic misunderstanding. After that, I search and gather some information which are related to the causes of the misunderstanding found in the jokes from some reference books and the Internet. Based on some books which deal with linguistic theories, I discuss the jokes by focusing on the causes that trigger the misunderstanding found in the jokes. Finally, I draw a conclusion based on the discussion.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis, which consists of four chapters, is preceded by the Preface, the Table of Contents, the List of Tree Diagrams, and the Abstract. Chapter I is the Introduction. It contains the Background of the Study, the Statement of the Problem, the Purpose of the Study, the Method of Research, and the Organization of the Thesis. Chapter II provides the Theoretical Framework. Chapter III contains

the Discussion on the Use of Misunderstanding in Creating Jokes. Chapter IV is the Conclusion, which contains my comments and my opinion about the misunderstanding found in the jokes. The thesis ends with the Appendix, which consists of the tables containing the data of the discussion.