

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

In this stressful world, people need something to entertain them. There are a lot of ways to reduce the stress. We can do anything that we like, and one of the ways is reading something that can entertain us; for example, we can read magazines, jokes, novels, newspapers, riddles, etc.

“A riddle is a type of question which describes something in a difficult and confusing way, and which has a clever or amusing answer, often asked as a game. Riddles generally involve pun and require careful thinking for the solutions or answers” (<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/define.asp?key=67885&dict=CALD> ).

“The function of a riddle is to entertain people because a riddle can also function as a game. The riddle game is a guessing game which is funny and involves skills. The player of the game should take turns in asking the riddles, and the player who cannot answer the riddles will lose in the

game. It is not easy to create riddles; many people have difficulty in creating riddles because it involves some linguistics aspects” ([http://www.geocities.com/d\\_champions\\_hall/ezine/article2.htm](http://www.geocities.com/d_champions_hall/ezine/article2.htm)).

The topic of my thesis is *Linguistic Aspects found in Riddles*. Since people have language perception which enables them to analyse and identify words or sentences with certain meanings, I choose this topic to make people realize the existence of linguistic aspects in riddles. Linguistic aspects can help the readers to analyze and to identify words which have a certain meaning in riddles; as a result, the readers will understand the riddles more.

In understanding riddles we need language perception. An accomplishment of our perceptual system is based on figure/ground segregation. Figure/ground segregation is the basic theory in understanding riddles.



“What lies behind our inability to see both the vase and faces at the same time is a phenomenon called figure/ground segregation” (Ungerer and

Schmid: 157). According to Ungerer and Schmid, the picture above confirms the perceptual prominence of the picture. The factor in making the choice of the figure is up to the observer because it is the matter of personal taste (p.157). If the observer can easily switch between the two ways of looking at the picture than they will find the amusing thing in the picture (Ungerer and Schmid: 156).

This topic belongs to Semantics, Pragmatics and Phonology. “Semantics is the study of the linguistic meaning of morphemes, words, phrases, and sentences” (Fromkin and Rodman: 158). According to them, there are two subfields of Semantics: Lexical Semantics (Word Meaning) and Sentential Semantics (p.158). “Pragmatics is the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener” (Yule: 3). “Phonology is the study of the sound system of human languages” (Fromkin and Rodman: 253/303). In writing this thesis, I relate the data to the language perception which is the part of language processes. Language perception will help the reader to get the idea and to understand the meaning of the riddles.

The specific theories I use in semantics are homophones, homographs, and syntactic ambiguity. The specific theories I use in Pragmatics are reference and background knowledge. The specific theory I use in Phonology is juncture.

I choose Semantics, Pragmatics, and Phonology as the theories of my thesis because those theories play a dominant role in creating riddles. Therefore, I think those linguistic fields are important theories in riddles. The words or phrases in riddles which contain Semantics, Pragmatics and Phonology are used to trick the listener's ears and make the riddles become unique and funny.

In analyzing the data I choose homophone, homograph, syntactic ambiguity, juncture, reference, and background knowledge as the specific theories. Through those theories the readers can see the whole content of the riddles; thus the readers will be able to understand the meaning of the riddles. The readers will know that different words can have same pronunciation, while the same word can have a different pronunciation and meaning. We will know that sentences and phrases can be interpreted in more than one meaning. Through those theories we will understand about the relationship between one sound and the sounds that immediately precede and follow it and we will also know that someone or something can be referred to a certain meaning. We are able to find the amusing answer to the riddles if we understand those theories.

I choose to analyse riddles because usually we do not realize that in creating riddles sometimes we use some linguistic aspects which make the riddles unique and funny. In reading riddles, not all people are aware

that they find not only funny things but also some linguistic aspects from Semantics, Pragmatics, and Phonology.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The problems that I am going to analyze in my research are:

1. Which words / phrases in the riddles undergo linguistic processes?
2. What are the linguistic aspects that occur in the phrases and words in the riddles?
3. How do these aspects make the riddles unique and funny?

## **1.3 Purpose of the Study**

In this thesis I would like:

1. To show the words / phrases in the riddles that undergo linguistic processes.
2. To know the linguistic aspects that occur in the phrases and words in the riddles
3. To know how the linguistic aspects make the riddles unique and funny.

#### **1.4 Methods of Research**

In doing this research I follow some steps: First of all, I search for some riddles in the Internet, and then I classify them based on the linguistic processes. After that, I analyze the data by using the theory of Semantics, Pragmatics, and Phonology. Finally, I write a research report.

#### **1.5 Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter I, the Introduction, contains Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter II contains the theoretical framework of my analysis. Chapter III contains the analysis of the data. The Conclusion is put in Chapter IV, which contains my opinion about the findings. At the end of the thesis there are Bibliography and Appendices.