

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Human beings are not created alone in this world. We have to relate with other people and for this purpose we need communication. Communication is important in our life because relationship is made through communication.

The means of communication is language. Language is ‘the system of sounds and words that is used by human to express their thoughts and feelings’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 662). From the meaning of language above we can see that sounds and words that are used in communication.

Sometimes a problem is caused by the fact that the word or the phrase used by the speaker has more than one meaning. In communication this fact leads us to make a mistake in interpreting the speaker’s utterance. Then this misinterpretation can make our communication irrelevant with the context because the meaning that the hearer catches is not the same as what the speaker actually means. From this miscommunication, we can find that the difference between the speaker’s meaning and the hearer’s meaning that occurs in communication may lead to something funny as the wrong interpretation that occurs makes us laugh. In other words, this is what we called as a joke.

A joke is ‘a thing said to cause amusement or laughter’ (Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary 641). People can make jokes intentionally and unintentionally. A person makes a joke intentionally because he or she wants to entertain others. Furthermore, we can also find that his or her utterance can be funny when we make a mistake in interpreting what the speaker means as he or she uses ambiguous expression.

In Linguistics, the problem that I mention above is termed Ambiguity. A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one possible meaning and it is not clear which one is intended in the expression. (members.aol)

The theory of Ambiguity belongs to Syntax, Semantics and Phonology. It belongs to Syntax when a word or a phrase in a sentence can be interpreted in more than one way. The parsing of the sentences usually can influence the meaning of the sentence (wikipedia). It belongs to Semantics when a word or a concept has an inherent meaning, which makes the meaning of the word or the concept itself unclear (wikipedia) ; furthermore, it belongs to Phonology when the words sound identical, but in fact they have different meaning (Everything2.com). That is why sometimes in communication we make a wrong interpretation and miscommunication happens.

I choose jokes as the sources of data for my research because the humorous effect in the joke is caused by ambiguous expressions. The ambiguous expressions that we find in the jokes can lead to misinterpretation. On top of that, many people like jokes for jokes can produce humour and make us laugh. A joke is also a kind of entertainment which is useful for us. We can even create our own jokes to entertain

others. It is refreshing when we hear jokes. By reading and understanding a joke, we can also decrease our tension, stress and sadness and therefore we can also minimize our burden.

In our daily life, a joke seems like a triviality because we think that there is nothing serious about a joke. However; if we learn about it further, we can see that it is not so simple as we think because in making as well as understanding a joke we need creativity. We also need to have high linguistic competence. In making a joke, one must be able to make use of some linguistic elements or features that can produce a humorous effect. Likewise, in understanding a joke, one must be able to identify and understand the linguistic element that creates the humorous effect in a joke. If we do not understand the linguistic features that are used to produce humour, we will not laugh and the essence of a joke becomes meaningless for us.

I find the data from the Internet and magazines because in my opinion the Internet and magazines provide various jokes from various writers. I am going to analyse jokes that contain ambiguous expression which can lead to misinterpretation. This misinterpretation occurs because the two different contexts that are found in communication in the joke can produce a humorous effect. I am going to analyse the funny element that occurs in each of the jokes by using the ambiguity theories in Linguistics, i.e. Syntactic Ambiguity, Semantic Ambiguity and Phonological Ambiguity.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

1. What ambiguous expression occurs in the joke creates misunderstanding?
2. What kind of ambiguity is it?
3. How does the misunderstanding produce a humorous effect on the reader?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In this thesis I would like to show:

1. the ambiguous expression in the joke that creates misunderstanding.
2. the kind of ambiguity the expression is.
3. how the misunderstanding produces a humorous effect on the reader.

1.4 Method of Research

I gather the jokes from the Internet and magazines as my primary sources. I read and select the data which contain misunderstandings that are caused by ambiguity. Finally, I analyze each data through the theory of Ambiguity in Syntax and Semantics and write the research report.

1.5 Organization of Thesis

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One is Introduction, which consists of Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study and Method of Research. Chapter Two is Theoretical Framework, which consists of the theories that I use to analyze the data. Chapter Three contains the analysis of the

jokes by using the theories of Ambiguity. Chapter Four contains the conclusion of my research, and the last is Bibliography which contains the sources of my data.