

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Human beings are known as living creatures that are full of needs. The needs are usually classified into two major categories, they are basic and complementary needs. However, it is an innate tendency for them to always find ways to fulfil all their needs. Due to the fact that people are social beings, we need to communicate our needs with others in order to fulfil them. The only way we can share and communicate with others is through language.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, language is defined as 'manner of expressing oneself' (700). Language becomes a system for people to express their ideas, feelings, and etcetera. Language also facilitates what people need, which is to exchange ideas with others. Through language people communicate with one another, and they can socialise with others as well.

According to Crane, Yeager, and Whitman, "language in turn is often said to help make humans human" (10). In language, we learn a number of things such as the symbol system and how to refer to the past and the future. Language is also

used to communicate with others, so that it can help us to relate with others. Language becomes a basis for us to make personal and social relationships.

Language itself is divided into two basic forms, the oral form and the written form. Language in the oral form is used when people are talking. Normally people are able to use language in the oral form, since it has been initiated in their early age. Therefore, it has become their habit. There are some people who are not able to use language in the written form because it usually has to be learnt from a process of education, and not everyone has the opportunity to have it.

Sometimes there are words which are pronounced similarly. In other case, a word may have several meanings. Therefore, there is a chance for misunderstanding when the word is used in a sentence. These may cause us to have a different interpretation with the speaker's or even prevent us from understanding it, which are the factors that can cause humour. People usually call such instances jokes.

In Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language, a joke is defined as 'something said or done to provoke laughter or amusement, as a witticism, a short and amusing narrative, a prankish art, etc' (770). A joke is definitely part of language. Since a joke is delivered through language, people can analyse it based on certain theories on language. What is funny in a joke can be explained in some ways using Linguistics.

Sometimes I find some misunderstandings that occur while I am talking with my friends. We may laugh together seconds afterwards at the time we

understand one another, correcting the misinterpretation for things we have said. Yet, there are times when we have to think a bit longer to understand why such a misunderstanding can emerge. It is always interesting to wonder why this happens and to think about it, and then to explain it in a logical way. These are what draw my attention and encourage me to analyse jokes. I would like to know not only the general linguistic areas and the linguistic features that occur in the jokes, but also the way they makes jokes funny.

In analysing the jokes, I use the theories of the four branches of general linguistics. I use general linguistic areas since they deal with language properties independently from any other disciplines and they do not deal with linguistics for the purposes of application. Besides, they are the basic study of Linguistics. In order to know which area is likely to have more jokes, I use all four branches in general linguistics: phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics.

Finally, the source of data that I use is taken from the Internet. The data which I can gather from it is so unlimited that they vary from one-line jokes to the long ones, from recent jokes to the old ones, and they are written by different people, while the data from the other sources are limited.

Statement of the Problem

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

1. What linguistic feature makes each joke funny?
2. Which area of general linguistics is used in creating the humour?
3. How does the linguistic feature in the joke contribute to the humour?

Purpose of the Study

In this thesis I would like to show:

1. The linguistic feature that makes each joke funny.
2. The area of general linguistics which is used in the jokes.
3. The way the linguistic feature in the joke contributes to the humour.

Method of Research

First, I gather the jokes from the Internet. Then I read and classify the jokes into their categories, depending on the causes of the misunderstandings, whether the misunderstandings deal with phonology, morphology, syntax, or semantics. Next I analyse the data and finally I draw a conclusion based on the analysis.

Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, preceded by Acknowledgements, Table of Contents, and Abstract. Chapter I is Introduction, containing Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Method of Research, and Organisation of the Thesis. Chapter II is Theoretical Framework of General Linguistics used in analysing the jokes. Chapter III contains the analysis of the misunderstandings in the jokes. Chapter IV is the conclusion. It contains comments and opinions, as well as suggestions for further researches. At the end of this thesis is Bibliography, which lists the references and the source of the jokes that are used in this thesis.