

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

As human beings are social creatures, they need to have a conversation or communication with one another so that they will not feel lonely. Having friends, acquaintances or somebody who is close to us, is an absolute necessity for us as human beings. People need others to ask for some help or just to share their feelings. In order to have verbal communication, we have to master a particular language. There are a great number of languages in the world and we must definitely master at least one language. According to The Oxford Companion to the English Language, language is “a human system communication which uses structured vocal sounds and can be embodied in other media such as writing, print, and physical sign.” (571). Through language people can communicate with one another and they can also socialize with others. Without language, we cannot have a conversation with others.

We sometimes find a sentence construction that can make us confused or curious, or sometimes we can make those kinds of confusing or unusual sentences ourselves. Riddle is “a statement or question that is intentionally worded in a puzzling or misleading way” (870), according to The Oxford Companion to the English Language. Riddle is one form of a game, “games can be played with the sense, sounds, construction, or order of words,” (1125). A word can have more than one meaning. If a word with more than one meaning is applied in a sentence, then a sentence becomes interesting. It is also possible that maybe the arrangement of phrases in the sentence makes the hearer confused about the meaning.

In my thesis, I am going to analyze riddles using semantics and syntax. The reason why I choose to analyze riddles through Semantics and Syntax is because I am personally interested in the study of Semantics and Syntax and I also like reading riddles. And when I read the riddles, I had noticed that there are a lot of riddles that contain ambiguity. I come across riddles containing these linguistics elements. Sometimes I find riddles which cause ambiguity and it causes me to have a response of surprise when I see the answer of the riddle because the answer does not always seem to be directly related at first. The topic of my thesis is analysis of ambiguities in riddles.

As my thesis is also concerned with ambiguity, I also use the theory of ambiguity to support my thesis. Based on Oxford Companion to the English Language, ambiguity is “actual or potential uncertainty of meaning, especially if a word, phrase, or sentence can be understood in two ways” (32-33). Generally, the definition of ambiguity is words or sentences that actually or potentially create

confusion or uncertainty of meaning, or in other words, words or sentences that can be interpreted in more than just one way. By using these theories, I believe I can analyze the riddles competently. I take the data from the Internet, while I take the theory of ambiguity also from the Internet.

I am interested in finding out and analyzing riddles using Semantics and Syntax theories in my thesis. “Semantics may be defined as the study of meaning.” (Crane, Yeager and Whitman 129). “Syntax is the way word is put together in form phrase or sentences.” (Crane, Yeager and Whitman 102). In Syntax we study how words are arranged to form a phrase, a clause or a sentence.

I have read the other thesis with the same topic but I take from different data. I decided to choose this topic because I think that riddles are quite fun to guess the answers of them. People will wonder why the answer is such a way. Analyzing ambiguity in riddles is important because there are many riddles which contain ambiguity, and it proves that ambiguity is one necessary element in riddles.

The reason why I choose riddles as my source of the data is because most riddles contain ambiguity and I am interested to find out the answers, and because communication is necessary. I get riddles from the Internet because it provides unlimited data of riddles. After searching for the data, I will take a note or highlight the riddles that contain the areas of linguistic study.

(705 words)

Statement of the Problem

By analyzing ambiguity in riddles, I pose the following problems:

1. What word or statement makes the riddles ambiguous?
2. What kind of ambiguity occurs?
3. Why is the riddle ambiguous?

Purpose of the Study

Having posed the problems above, I make a study which is intended:

1. To show what word or statement makes the riddles ambiguous.
2. To show what kind of ambiguity occurs.
3. To show why the riddle ambiguous.

Method of Research

I gathered riddles which contained ambiguity from the Internet. Then, I read and classified the riddles into some categories, depending on the causes of the ambiguity, based on ambiguity of semantics or syntax. Afterwards, I analyzed the data and I made a conclusion based on the analysis.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters, preceded by the Preface, Table of Contents, and Abstract. Chapter One is the Introduction, containing the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two is the Theoretical Framework used in analyzing the riddles. Chapter Three contains the analysis of ambiguity in the

riddles. And Chapter Four contains the conclusion of the analysis. At the end of my thesis, there is Bibliography.