

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

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### 1.1 Background of the Study

Nobody is perfect. This might be one of the reasons why human is called social creature. They do need others to keep survived on earth. Then, how they could interact each other? One simple answer is by using language. Language helps people to express needs, thought, feeling, and ideas.

There are many languages around the world that can be used by people. People, who belong to the same group, may understand the language used in their community. The problem arises when other people try to communicate with them. Each of them might fail to comprehend the utterances. Then, the most important thing to learn, without neglecting the other aspects, is the language itself. The other aspects that must also be considered too are the culture, the social behavior, the psychological behavior, the history, etc.

In some cases, language can deliberately be manipulated to create funniness. People, who learn a foreign language, will get difficulty to find the funniness in its jokes or humor though they have mastered the grammar. The reason is that they must know what is the hidden meaning from the literal meaning of the words or sentences. This is the cover of semantic theory. Here, Kempson (1977: 2) asserts that all languages depend on words and sentences and each word or sentence conventionally has one meaning. Raskin (1985: 32) defines joking as, “the ability to find similarity between dissimilar

things – that is hidden similarities”. Then, there is another hidden meaning that might create funniness.

The difficulty to understand jokes even for students, who learn about language, has brought the writer to analyze some jokes using semantics. Previously, Olivia Onggowidjaja (2001) had ever done a different study on jokes. She used speech acts theory to analyze the utterances, which produced by the participants in the jokes in Reader’s Digest. Lyons (1995: 4-5) in his book, *Linguistic Semantics*, says that language utterances have a very wide range of meaning or interpretation and the investigation of meaning may not concern only with one theory but with so many theories. Regarding to what he has stated, the writer intends to analyze some jokes in Reader’s Digest using the domain of the semantics theory or is often called as semantic phenomena.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

The research problems in this study are:

1. What is the funny part of the jokes?
2. What semantic phenomena can explain the funniness of the jokes?
3. Which is the most semantic phenomena can explain the funniness of the jokes?

### **1.3 Objectives of the Problem**

In line with the problem statement above, the objectives of this study are:

1. to find out the funny part of the jokes.
2. to find out the semantic phenomena, which can explain the funniness of the jokes.
3. to find out the most semantic phenomena, which can explain the funniness of the jokes.

### **1.4 Theoretical Framework**

Since this study analyzes jokes using semantic phenomena, the theories used are the theory of jokes or humor and some theories of semantic phenomena. The theory of semantic phenomena is offering an explanation of the meaning that is hidden in jokes. There are three semantic phenomena that would be discussed. There are the theory of ambiguity semantics including metaphor, the theory of truth-conditional semantics and the theory of false logic. The ambiguity semantics is a theory which explaining ambiguous meaning that happens in jokes. Truth-conditional semantics is more focusing on the truth-value of a sentence, which is often violated to obtain funniness. False logic is a false belief because of illogical reasoning that occurred in jokes

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The writer hopes that the result of this study is able to give some contribution mainly to the English teaching to avoid boredom during the lesson. Moreover, it is hoped to improve the readers' ability to comprehend jokes in particular and the English language in general, such as the culture understanding, the vocabulary and the knowledge to the native speaker's country.

### **1.6 Scope and Limitation**

Since the space and time were limited, the writer concentrated only on the jokes. The jokes used here were taken from Reader's Digest. Reader's Digest is published in 48 editions in 19 languages around the world, but in Indonesia, there are mostly found 3 editions. They are Indonesia, Asia, and America edition. The Indonesia edition is in the Indonesian language, while Asia and America editions are in English. This reason has brought the writer, who is majoring in English, to particularly choose two Asia editions and two America editions, which were published on January 2004 and February 2004.

### **1.7 Definition of the Key Terms**

In order to have the same perception and to avoid misunderstanding, the writer presents the clarification of some key terms used in this study.

### 1. Joke or humor

Joke or humor is any stimulation that evokes amusement and experienced as being funny (Wilson, 1979: 2). It is a kind of outlook, a peculiar point of view, which has great therapeutic power to release tension (Mindness, as quoted in Raskin, 1985: 7)

### 2. Semantics

Semantics is the study of meaning, which concerns with word meaning, sentence meaning and utterance meaning (the meaning of a sentence in a context). It is essential for the study of communication (Palmer, 1976: ix).

### 3. Semantic Phenomena

Semantic phenomena is a theory that explicates the concept of meaning within the framework in natural language (Katz, 1972: 4). It means that we investigate what is involved in recognizing relations of meaning between sentences, and in recognizing which sentences are meaningful and which are not (Palmer, 1976: 8).

### 4. Ambiguity Semantics

Ambiguity Semantics is a theory, which explains about doubtful meaning concerning on term, which has some possible senses (Breadsley, 1976: 47). Semantic Ambiguity is a word or sentence, which expresses more than one meaning, but it can be understandable through the sentence that contains and follows it (Crystal, 1997: 17).

#### 5. Truth-Conditional Semantics

Truth-Conditional Semantics is a formula, which determine the truth-value of a sentence whether it is meaningful or not (Lyons, 1995: 131).

#### 6. False logic

False logic is false belief, where something known or believed to be true is violated by making another conclusion or argument that is illogical (Salmon, 1984: 46). This mistakes in making conclusion or argument are arising through inattention to some important aspect of the nature of causal relationships (Salmon, 1984: 115).

#### 7. Reader's Digest

This magazine is founded in 1922 by Lila and DeWitt Wallace. Reader's Digest is widely known and respected for its editorial creativity and direct marketing expertise. It is published in 48 editions and 19 languages and reaches almost 100 million readers around the world each month. It is also published in Braille, on cassette and in a large edition for Easier Reading (Onggowidjaja, 2001: 9)

### **1.8 Organization of the Study**

This study consists of five chapters. The first chapter, introduction, includes the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the objectives of the problem, theoretical framework, significance of the study, scope and limitation, definition of the key terms, and the organization of the study.

In chapter two, the writer describes the theory that is used for the study. In chapter three, the writer presents the research method, which is essential to accomplish the study. Chapter four is devoted most in analyzing the data and the finding. Chapter five, the last chapter, consists of the conclusion and suggestions, which come arise from the study.