

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Jocular register must have its characteristics and differences from other forms of language. Joke is simply described as the specific type of humorous text (Attardo,2000:61). It apparently seems to have no difference from other forms of language but what makes it different is that it is able to build some comic effects such as laughter, smile, happiness and release. It cannot be denied that those effects are possibly created by non-lingual aspects such as expression and gesture but it is also important to bear in mind that language and its elements are so powerful that they can amuse and release the listeners.

Joke seems to be a favorite form of language. It is delighted not only to be uttered but also to be heard by people. It is also affected by the natural factor of human as language user which has sense of humor, pleasure, anger and other kinds of feeling (Oktavianus and Revita:2012). What possibly makes a joke liked by hearers is its funniness along with the surprise effect which is expected to appear at the end of the joke. It is the one which is short and conveys light idea to appear in conversation or documentary. A successful joke will end with surprise and laughter of the hearers. Meanwhile, the flat or failed joke will get none of those results. It seemingly proves that joke is a form of humorous language which needs a deep thought to construct. Fry (in Raskin:1944) mentioned that a joke may be defined as an item of humor reduced to a single point or particle. This definition is then supported by Raskin (1944:28) who stated that joke is a self-

contained humorous thought. It can be generalized that joke conveys thought and funniness constructed in single or multiple sentences.

Just like other forms of language used by speakers, there are also various purposes of people making a joke. In general, joke is made to amuse the hearers and invite their laughter. Other than that, joke can also be intended to mock certain people. The former purpose must be able to invite laughter of the hearer while the latter might end up with two possibilities. When a joke is directed to some hearers on the purpose of mocking one of them, it must be annoying for the object of the mockery but it is possibly amusing for the rest of the hearers. What the writer wants to say is that people are different in responding the joke they hear. This is of course affected by some factors. The factors influencing some people find a joke funny or unfunny will be explained deeply later in this thesis but the condition that every joke has to deal with is that people tend to find things funny differently. The idea about various responses to humor was acknowledged by Raskin that some people are characterized as having the sense of humor while others lack it (1944:2). General factors such as social and cultural background must have role in generating the sense of humor. This is why, in some occasion a joke is funny for a group of people and it is not for other groups.

Since joking is a part of human daily communication, it can be found in any form of language and in any media of communication. Joke can be found in the conversation between women and men or between teacher and students. It can be read in magazines, newspapers, advertisements and posters. Even in England, joke is printed in a chocolate wrap and called penguin joke. Because of the

development of technology, joke is now can be also seen and heard at once in the form of movie, television series, commercial break, and situational comedy. One form of media that the writer bears in mind to be an interesting form to find jokes is situational comedy.

There are actually many researchers have done the researches about joke and humor from various perspective. It obviously proves that any kind of humor, whether it is joke, wit, wisecrack or anecdotes are interesting to explore. This research is too, derives from the writer's interest in lingual phenomenon hidden behind the laughter in one of famous American situational comedies, *How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM)*.

The term situational comedy or better known as sit-com describes a short narrative series comedy, generally between twenty four and thirty minutes long, with regular characters and setting (Kutnik and Neale:1990). Besides its short and frequent broadcasting, situational comedy is also prototyped by its narration and the stable situation. *How I Met Your Mother* is an American romantic comedy which is very famous and has billions fans around the world. It is proven by the total numbers of season and episode it has until the finale which successfully reached 9 seasons and 208 episodes. The first episode of HIMYM was aired on September 19th 2005 and its last episode was officially aired on March 31st 2014. It can be assumed that this situational comedy has something different that makes it lasted for nine years.

Regardless many famous actors and actresses casted in HIMYM, which possibly becomes one of attractive factors in this situational comedy, the writer

expects to focus on the verbal humor that the characters tell. Verbal humor in this research is defined as any text which is capable of creating a humorous effect or in another term is the joke-carrying text (Raskin: 1985). In perspective of linguistic, however, linguistic features must be the main focus of the any field of linguistic research. When the researcher did a little pre-research observation by watching the series of HIMYM, she found both single joke and multiple jokes uttered by the characters which are legitimately unique to be observed. The following humorous text is what the researcher meant by the statement before:

Ted : So, what do you do?

Robin : I'm a reporter for Metro News One. Well, kind of reporter. I do those dumb

little fluff pieces at the end of the news. You know, like, um...monkey who can play the ukulele. I'm hoping to get some bigger stories soon.

Ted : Bigger, like, uh...gorilla with an upright bass? Sorry. You're really pretty.

The above example is one of humorous lines found in the dialogue between two characters. It is signed by the laughter sound appears right when the line is finished by the character. The first objectives of any humor research is to find the linguistic humorous aspect of a joke. In the example above, the last line, which called punch line conveys some words related to the previous lines, the set up. The words *gorilla* and *upright bass* appear as the response to the words *bigger*, *monkey* and *ukulele*. Besides, the very last line also pragmatically signs that there is pragmatic meaning that the speaker really wants to mean it through his utterance. This linguistic play is believed to be strategy of joke that will be observed deeply in another chapter.

In this study, the researcher recognizes it is necessary to find the humorous aspects conveyed in that multiple jokes in any perspectives of linguistic such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic aspect. Since HIMYM is a situational comedy which the script had been thought, arranged and discussed to accomplish laughter from the watchers, it is assumed that the sentence construction of the script invest the funniness to the show.

When one single sentence or multiple sentences are constructed on purpose to create funniness, it can be said that there is a certain strategy applied. It must be noted that there are some strategies of joke that makes one type of joke is different from others but they still convey humor inside the text. Consider this another example of joke found in HIMYM which is in different form of joke from the former example.

Marshall: Why don't Canadians get birthday wishes? Because they're too afraid to
blow out the candles.

That semantic construction of the joke above is a legitimate problem to solve in this research. Yet, it cannot be denied that contextual aspects too determine whether the text is humorous or flat. The second example is a sociocultural-issued joke that will get two different responses. For the Canadians, that joke could be possibly unfunny because it is regarded sarcastic. On the other hand, that joke will be amusing for the Non-Canadians for some ethnocentric reasons. By this sociocultural-issued example of joke, the researcher is also interested in finding the sociopragmatic functions of the joke. In other words, through the jokes shared by the speaker, there must be sociopragmatic purposes that he or she means.

Realizing that all linguistic aspects are necessary to generate the humorous aspect of a text, the researcher is triggered to conduct a research titled '*Joke Strategies in American Situational Comedy How I Met Your Mother*'. Needless to say, this research is expected to be able to seek any linguistic features related to joke and considerably different from any other humor research from other field of science.

1.2 Scope and Limitation of the Research

There have been a lot of researches about joke and humor conducted by linguistic experts. They all had different focus and limitation of joke phenomena which they wanted to find out. This research also focuses on certain matters and occurrence of joke phenomenon. It is only the verbal joke or humor that will be examined in this research. In contrast, other non-verbal jokes will not be engaged as an issue to examine.

This research is focused on finding three aspects; the strategy of joke, the pragmatic meanings of joke and the pragmatic functions of joke. These three aspects are considered essential for humor research which any language research is suggested to observe at least its form, meaning and function. For the first category, all linguistic strategy and patterns such as phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic are analyzed. It is following the theory of joke strategies proposed by Evan Esar (1961) in which all linguistic aspects of joke is compiled. The second category, is about finding the pragmatic meanings of the joke used by the characters. The theory used to discuss the pragmatic meaning is about the function of illocutionary act by John R. Searle (1976). The last category,

analyzing the pragmatic function of the jocular utterance. The pragmatic functions of joke will refer to the theory formulated by Jennifer Hay (1999).

Since this research derives from linguistic perspective, the main focus is to seek any linguistic aspects inside the joke. Any possible linguistic aspects of the joke such as: phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspect, which support the examination of the joke become the main object of the research. On the other hand, all non-linguistic aspects that probably will be found along this research will be regarded as supporting aspects.

1.3 Identification of the Problem

Regarding the importance of doing a research about joke in the perspective of linguistic, the researcher formulated three following research questions:

1. What joke strategy are used by the characters in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*?
2. What are the pragmatic meanings of the joke used by the characters in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*?
3. What are the pragmatic functions of the jocular utterances used by the characters in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*?

1.4 Objective of the Research

This research is generally aimed at observing the joke phenomena appear in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*. In specific, it is aimed at identifying and describing:

1. The joke strategies used by the characters in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*.

2. The pragmatic meanings of the joke used by the characters in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*.
3. The pragmatic functions of the jocular utterances used by the characters in American situational comedy *How I Met Your Mother*?

1.5 Significance of the Research

Any linguistic research is significant to some extent and so is this research.

This research is significant to:

1. Help the linguistic students who are studying about humor, especially English humor, to seek the linguistic patterns generating humorous and jocular effect in English humor.
2. Provide informations about the function of humor in communication.
3. Support the bilingual students who are studying English, its society and culture.
4. Contribute to all English learnersto understand English humor.

1.6 Operational Definition

The terms used in this research are those related to humor which had been formulated by the previous linguistic expert. To keep the similar perspective of the readers of this research, the writer listed the operational terms as follows.

Joke is one of humor genres which is commonly considered the prototypical form of verbal humor, produced orally in conversation or published in collection (Dyner:2009) which has short duration (Raskin:1985) and comprises two units; set up and punch line (Attardo:2000).

Strategy is the term is which people can be seen to be doing something before doing or in order to do something (Brown and Levinson:1987).

Situational comedy is a short narrative series comedy, generally between twenty four and thirty minutes long, with regular characters and setting (Neale and Kutnik:1990).

Pragmatic meaning is meaning which is communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener or a reader (Yule:1996)

