

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an introductory section of the study. It encompasses background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study, research methodology and clarification of terms.

1.1 Background

Ambiguity creates multiple intentions and then results in multiple interpretations. Sometimes, people employ ambiguity unconsciously when they communicate. However, the ambiguity is not merely applied accidentally in the process of communication. Most of the phenomena are intentionally created for many reasons. Kapadia (2013) mentions several reasons of using ambiguity which two of them are to create confusing situations and to provide learning materials. Cairns and Fernandez (2011) state that employing ambiguity can lead to entertaining result in certain cases, such as advertising. It is supported by another study that ambiguous interpretations are designed to engender diverse interpretation between varied audience segments (Atkin, Roznowski, & SW). The aims of employing ambiguity in context will shape the way they reveal. As Paul and Vezina (1997) finds that ambiguity in advertising has been addressed in various ways, but mostly indirectly.

There are similar studies analyzing the ambiguity in several contexts. The first is the study by Journet (2010) titled *The Resource of Ambiguity: Context, Narrative, and Metaphor in Richard Dawkins's the Selfish Gene*. In this study, the writer analyzed the ambiguity usage in biological discourse which is one of Dawkins's works, *The Selfish Gene*. Journet focused on how ambiguity could create links between different theoretical conceptions of the gene and support the construction of arguments for novel scientific. Furthermore, this study, which applied Burke's dramatic Pentax in its analysis process, also analyzed the resource of ambiguity that could construct the comprehension of the theory. Another study is conducted by Buscaldi, Reyes and Rosso (2009) which focused on the effect of ambiguity to humor recognition. The study, titled *An Analysis of the Impact of Ambiguity on*

Automatic Humor Recognition, utilized Italian texts as the main data and applied experimental approach to see how humor can be characterized by ambiguity.

This study will focus on the comedy in the verbal form of situational jokes. *How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM)* is one of well-known situated-comedy TV series which has been firstly published in 2005. Craig Thomas and Carter Bays, the creator of *HIMYM*, successfully made *HIMYM* survive until the ninth season and drew attention from many viewers. This comedy TV receives many positive feedbacks from the audiences. The story is about the daily life story of a group of five in Manhattan, where the core story is centered on Ted Mosby's story of finding the perfect woman to become his wife. The story of *HIMYM* is also supported by its eccentric and unique humor, which most of it is constructed from verbal jokes. There is no doubt that ambiguity is counted as one of the factors that creates humor, in all of media contexts. According to Attardo (1994), ambiguity is a part of verbal humor, especially the employment of polysemy and lexical ambiguity which become the center of linguistic humor. Lew (1997) also states that linguistic ambiguity is a crucial element of jokes.

This study attempts to identify the type of ambiguity found in seven episodes of *How I Met Your Mother* comedy TV series and the context of the situation that support the utilization of ambiguity in constructing humor. The study is limited in identifying the ambiguity and classifying it based on theory by Ullmann's (2014) and investigating what contexts that support ambiguity based on Hymes's (1974) context of situation theory.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the main purpose that is underlined in the introduction section, following are the questions coherently for the purpose of the study:

1. What types of ambiguity are emerged in *How I Met Your Mother*?
2. What are contexts of situation that lead to ambiguity in *How I Met Your Mother*?

1.3 Aims of the study

In regards to the research questions, there are several purposes that are set in order to make the study directional as follows:

1. To identify and classify the types of ambiguity which emerge in *How I Met Your Mother*.
2. To discover context of situation which lead to the use of ambiguity of the selected TV series.

1.4 Scope of the study

This study investigates the ambiguity found in the TV series *How I Met Your Mother* and how the context plays its role to construct the ambiguity. The analysis is restricted by the emergence of the ambiguity in the dialogue presented by the related object of the study. Furthermore, Ullmann's theory of ambiguity is applied as the framework of the study. Therefore, the classification process is based on three types of ambiguity; lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity and phonological ambiguity. In regard to the second research question, this study also analyzes the effect of context to the construction of the ambiguity in humor area.

1.5 Significance of the study

This study is expected to enrich the data for further research in linguistic, especially in terms of ambiguity. Specifically, this study is also expected to contribute to the development of linguistic theory and provides the knowledge about ambiguity construction in sitcom.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

- **Ambiguity**

Ambiguity can be defined as any case exploiting linguistic devices potentially understood in two or more ways or conveying at least two incompatible interpretations (Hai Ha, 2012). In this study, ambiguity will

be referred as the ambiguity phenomena which are found in the linguistic verbal humor employed in situated comedy *How I Met Your Mother*.

- **Humor**

The functions of humor are facilitating communication in specific contexts and conveying verbally aggressive messages (Bonaiuto et al 2003: 184; see also Fox 1990 and Graham et al 1992 as cited in Fukushima, 2006). The study refers to the specific type of humor that contains ambiguity within.

- **Situated Comedy**

It is also called sitcom. It is considered as TV shows genre which involved humorous aspect packed in life story of recurrent characters (Ross, 2008), The study uses sitcom as the context of study, whether to investigate ambiguity in humor mode.

- **Context of Situation**

An environment that supports the situation which research tool used to analyze the context of situation by examining the smaller units of speech. SPEAKING is an abbreviation of Situation, Participants, Ends, Acts, Key, Instrumentality, Norms and Genres (Winston, 2012). In this study, context of situation help relating the cause and effect of ambiguity utilization to construct the humor in *How I Met Your Mother* TV series.

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter I reviews the background of the study, the aims of the study, the research questions, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, the research methodology, the subject of the study, the data analysis, and the organization of the paper. Chapter II contains the theoretical framework and the previous study applied in the same field to support the research. Chapter III provides the description of research methodology along with the step-

and-procedure descriptions in conducting the research. Chapter IV presents the data presentations, the results of the study and the discussions of the findings. The last chapter, chapter V, concludes all findings and discussions in the previous chapter. This chapter also covers suggestion for further study in the same field.

Ghea Raema Bella Ardhya, 2015

THE ANALYSIS OF AMBIGUITY IN TV SERIES ENTITLED HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER

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