

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodology of the research to answer the research questions of this study. It encompasses the object of the study, research questions, research methodology, research procedure, and data source.

3.1 Object of the Study

This study attempts to analyze the linguistic ambiguity in situational comedy and to uncover how the context of situation impacts the process of ambiguity emergence. The object used is a situational comedy in TV-series entitled *How I Met Your Mother* season eight (the latter as *HIMYM*), written by Craig Thomas and Carter Bays. The sitcom is chosen because of how the funniness of the sitcom relies on the application of the verbal humor indicating the use of ambiguity as one of the features. Furthermore, *HIMYM* also provides a space for analyzing the context which enables to create ambiguity. *HIMYM* tells the love-life story of Ted and his four best friends in Manhattan until he met his true love, ‘the mother’—as Ted always referred to. The study focuses on seven selected episodes: *Spiltville*, *Twelve Horny Woman*, *The Romeward Bound*, *The Bro Mitzvah*, *The Fortress* and *Weekend at Barney’s*. The episodes are selected based on the highest prevalence of ambiguity. Therefore, it is in line with the discussion of the study, which focuses on uncovering the utilization of humorous ambiguity and examining the role of the context of situation in ambiguity utilization.

3.2 Research Questions

In regards to the purpose of the study, the research questions are designed as follows:

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*?

3.3 Research Methodology

The study is conducted by utilizing qualitative approach since the data were in the form of excerpts which are collected from the scripts of *How I Met Your Mother*. Qualitative is an approach which relies on the views of participants; asks broad and general questions; collects data consisting large number of words (text); describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective manner (Charles et al, 2010, p. 46). Supporting that, Hancock (2002) states that qualitative method may direct the results of the study into the concept or theory development. Therefore, the data in this study are analyzed by developing the concept and theories which is explicated in a theoretical framework. According to Airasian et al (2006), qualitative research is:

‘a type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely words (or text) from participants; describe and analyze these words themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner.’ (p.46)

Furthermore, the data are analyzed by employing grounded theory as an approach to qualitative design. According to Lawrence et al (2013, p. 32), the grounded theory involves coding the assignment of themes and concepts to a selected unit. Moreover, Charles et al (2010, p. 61) states that grounded theory involves the process of connecting the categories where in the final process the results enable to portray general explanation of the theory. It is in line with one of the purposes of the study which attempts to identify and categorize the types of ambiguity, which represent *How I Met Your Mother* season eight scripts based on the concept of linguistic ambiguity.

In addition, Michelle (2001, p. 1155) proposes that the process of data coding, which labels data based on distinct quality in order to presuppose categories for data analysis—by grounding theory, passing through three levels: First, the data

are examined line by line; Second, the data are compared which further lead to the process of categorization or cluster; Third, the data are elaborated to the concept and theory development.

As the study applies grounded theory as an approach for analyzing the data, the data are analyzed by referring to the three levels of data coding so the results of the analysis are able to represent types of ambiguity employed in situated comedy.

This study also applies descriptive qualitative method in identifying the context of situation which stimulates the emergence of ambiguity in seven episodes *How I Met Your Mother* season eight.

3.4 Research Procedure

In regards to the research questions, the research procedure of each of them is separated in order to answer those questions. The separation is also based on the different way of the related theory to be employed.

First research question expects the study to describe the types of ambiguity employed in the selected sitcom. To answer the first research question, several steps are conducted to fulfill three levels of analysis of grounded theory in the study. Firstly, the data are selected by watching all the episodes of *How I Met Your Mother* season eight in order to select seven episodes which have more ambiguity prevalence than other episodes. After the episodes are selected, the study matches the scripts with the seven selected episodes in order to avoid differences between the visual version of *HIMYM* and the scripts. Secondly, the data are identified by closely reading the scripts to find the excerpts which are considered as ambiguity. Thirdly, after the process of identification, the data are classified and categorized into types of ambiguity by comparing the findings with Stephen Ullmann's ambiguity framework (2014). The results are interpreted deeper based on their ambiguity type. Fourthly, the data are calculated to count the frequency to know ambiguity subcategory which is the most frequently used.

Second research question aims to describe the tendency of ambiguity emergence based on how, where, what, when, who, and why the utterance is

contextually performed. The tendency is judged by the assistant of SPEAKING Dell Hyme’s theory as the guideline. Therefore, descriptive qualitative is applied to satisfy the aim of the question. Firstly, the context of situation of each ambiguity observed is analyzed based on Dell Hyme’s SPEAKING framework. Secondly, the results are elaborated in order to bridge the correlation between ambiguity and context. Finally, a conclusion of the study is made based on the findings observed from both two research questions.

3.5 Data Source

The source of the data in this study was gathered from the *How I Met Your Mother* season eight in a form of scripts and video. The scripts were retrieved from the site *Springfield! Springfield!* (www.springfieldspringfield.co.uk). *Springfield* is a website which provides the scripts from TV series and movie. All movie scripts published are intended for educational purposes only. Meanwhile, the video is used to gain full picture capturing context and situation taking place in the series.

3.6 Data Presentation

The presentation of the data is provided to fulfill the goal of the research. Data presentation is designed in the form of table and excerpts. Table is formulated based on the frequency of ambiguity in the utterances observed along the episodes. Meanwhile, excerpts of dialogue are further taken into the analysis after they are judged ambiguous.

There are two types of table presented due to research questions which possess different theory applied, namely ambiguity and context of situation. The example of the data presented in a table is shown in table 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1 Example of table of ambiguity frequency

No	Type of Ambiguity	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lexical Ambiguity	50	80.64%
2	Structural Ambiguity	1	1.49%

3	Phonological Ambiguity	11	17.74%
Total		62	100%

The following example is the data presentation of context of situation analysis:

- (1) Ted : Yeah, take him to a nice restaurant. Preferably a dessert place. That way, you won't have to sit through a whole meal before you get to
- Barney : Splitsville
- Ted : Exactly
- Barney : No, *Splitsville*. It's a dessert place right around the corner. It's sort of the place to end a relationship.

(Episode *Splitsville*)

Table 3.2 Example of Context of Situation Analysis

Scene and Setting	At the bar; the place that they usually gather. They are hanging out and talking about the way to break Nick off.
Participants	Ted and Barney play role as speaker and hearer
Ends: Purpose, Goal and Outcome	to inform Robin about a suitable place for breaking up
Act sequences	In the form of informing. Ted suggests Robin about the suitable way for breaking up and Barney completes Ted's sentence by suggesting a perfect place for end the relationship.
Key	Delivered in serious tone
Instrumentalities	Verbal channel
Norm of Interaction	In the norm of talking between friends. Friends usually give advice or suggest each other
Genre	Verbal humor

Ghea Raema Bella Ardhya, 2015

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

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