

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Humor is an element of interactions that has a funny and playful characteristic in order to make a conversation less tense and create a positive attitude towards certain messages (Morreall, 1991; Greatbatch & Clark, 2002; Romero & Cruthirds, 2006). In conversation, humorous utterances have special symbolic forms that are not similar with any other forms of language because joke has more meanings and aims beyond its function as an entertainment (Rahmi, 2017; Attardo, 2000). Humor is a part of a social event that frequently intertwines rhetorical message in order to create laughter. It involves some people or a community with a purpose to deliver messages through a joke. Clarke (2008) and Savkaničová (2013) explain “Humour is social rather than an individual phenomenon. The social aspect of humor is supported by the notion that people usually laugh in the company of other people and certain jokes can only be appreciated in groups”

There are two main functions of a joke, unification, and division. (Meyer, 2000; Kuipers, 2008; Rochmawati, 2017). In unification, humor is intentionally employed as a facility to build and strengthen communication within the verbal conversation of a speaker and audiences. A speaker looks for effects and results of making a joke or insert humorous messages. In contrast, humor has a division function, if it serves to give some evidences regarding the speaker’s power and

status with audiences. Humor is commonly used by a speaker to identify audiences' credibility in order to enlighten stiffness and inflexibility in producing utterances (Ibid). In addition, humor is used to share good feelings with audiences and to improve various ways of conveying a message by suggesting comical and humorous sides (Meyer, 2000). Putri (2017) adds that nowadays, a joke is beneficial to create a positive feeling for the speaker and audiences in order to maintain a conversation.

Regarding verbal conversation and rhetorical features in daily communication, there have been some studies on joke and humor related to linguistic features (Kotthoff 1996; Norrick 1993, 2001, 2004; Katayama, 2009). Some of the studies employed qualitative research by using movies as the instruments (Kalliomäki, 2005; Katayama, 2009; Paakinen, 2010; Martin, 2013; Xu, 2016; Puspita, 2017). Puspita (2017) investigates jokes in comedy movies using cooperative principle theories proposed by Grice. The findings of the study suggest that there had been many violations of maxims in producing jokes. She finds that the characters in a movie entitled "*Accepted*" mostly flout maxim of quality in two forms (jokes and spontaneous conversational humor). The characters prefer to use irony in order to flout the maxim. The violations are proven by the attitude of the speakers who often use exaggerating utterances. Kalliomäki (2005) adds a different finding with the same theory of Grice. The characters of the movie entitled "*Blackadder*" violate maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation and maxim of manner. Since linguistics features have a wide aspect, some other studies employ implicature theory, maxims,

deixis, and politeness principle to analyze jokes (Wangsomchok, 2016; Li, 2016; Widiana, 2014).

In observing humor expressions in conversations, Wangsomchok (2016) applies qualitative method and uses five situation comedies as the sampling. Some linguistic strategies such as speech act, cooperative principles or maxims and implicature are used as the theories. She finds six categories of humor related to speech act: boasting, expressing condescension, threatening, blaming, teasing and satire. Different from Wangsomchok (2016), Widiana (2014) studies implicatures occurs in jokes. She uses illustrations and words taken from broadcast messages as the object of analysis. The implicatures that occur in jokes are classified into some categories: gender, cultural base, and social phenomena. Hay (2000) does a study to find functions of humor based on different gender. She applies a combined theory about humor functions by Martineau (1972); Ziv (1984); Pogrebin and Poole (1988); Collinson (1988); Ervin-Tripp and Lampert (1992).

Different from Hay (2000), Putri (2017) applies speech act theory by Austen and humor theory by Hay (1995) to find types of humor that occur in *Bigbang Theory* sitcom. She also adds Lynch's theory (2002) about the uses of humor. Three uses of humor used in *Bigbang Theory* are expressing superiority, relieving tension, and interpreting incongruity. Some of the studies employ joke strategies in public speaking and *stand up comedy* TV show (Xu, 2016; Syauqillah, 2016). People sometimes use joke in making compliments. Sari (2009) finds a joke is a new type of making a compliment, even though there is only a minority of Indonesians use it.

This study is considered significant as there are not many studies focusing on the joke strategies proposed by Esar (1961). The writer used an American situational comedy differently from any other writers that used various data such as broadcast messages, movies and advertisements (Widiana, 2014; Ulum, 2015; Li, 2016).

## **1.2 Field of the Study**

The field of this study is related to Linguistics.

## **1.3 Scope of the Study**

This study focused on a situational comedy entitled Friends that was first broadcasted in 1994. The writer employed a theory that was related to joke strategies as proposed by Evan Esar and limited the study by focusing on verbal humor that was used by the characters in the comedy series.

## **1.4 Problems Formulation**

This study aimed to address the following questions:

1. What types of joke strategies are employed in a comedy series “Friends”?
2. What is the most frequently used strategy in a comedy series “Friends”?

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The aims of this study are:

1. To identify joke strategies employed in a comedy series “Friends”
2. To find out the most frequently used strategy in a comedy series “Friends”

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study provides information regarding to the type of joke strategies that are useable to create laughter. This study is considered significant for people who have interests in analysing jokes. The strategies of making jokes may facilitate joke analyser in enriching their study in future researches.

## 1.7 Definition of Terms

### 1. Joke

“A thing that someone says to cause amusement or laughter, especially a story with a funny punchline.” (Simpson & Weiner, 2018)

### 2. Joke Strategies

“Strategies that needs a deep mind to construct a successful joke and they are used to amuse the hearers, invite their laughter and mock other people.” (Rahmi, 2017)

### 3. Situational Comedy

Sitcom is a program that was famous in radio but now is broadcasted on television. Questia (1998) mentioned that situational comedy is a twenty-minutes entertainment program that has characters and some different settings and it is produced for television series enthusiasts.