

## CHAPTER 3

### The Presentation and Analysis of the Data

In this part, the jokes are analysed one by one by the writer. Firstly, we can follow the procedures of data analyses in page 9. Then, the two-liner jokes will be analysed according to the semantic theories that can be applied to them. As the writer has mentioned above, there are three semantic theories which going to be applied to the jokes, namely lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity, and truth conditional semantic. There are thirty numbers of two-liner jokes which are going to be analysed, are thirty jokes. The findings of the analysis will be shown in a table.

#### 3.1 Analysis of the Two-Liner Joke

The writer analyses the data based on the semantic ambiguity theory proposed by Fromkin and Rodman, and Hurford and Heasley, and the truth conditional semantics theory proposed by Tarski.

##### Data 1

WAITRESS: Have I kept you waiting long?

CUSTOMER: No, but *did you know that there are 3,479 rose patterns on your wallpaper?*

In this joke, the customer's sentence sounds rather satirical. When he says that there are 3, 479 rose patterns on the restaurant's wallpaper, he means that he has spent all of his time of waiting by counting the rose patterns on the wallpaper. As the readers or the listeners of the joke we

know that 3,479 rose patterns are not a small number of patterns. Therefore, logically the customer needs much time to count all of the patterns. There is manipulation of truth conditional semantics in this joke, which is used by the customer in answering the waitress' question. The truth conditional semantics of this joke states that the customer actually has waited for a long time for the waitress. In other words, "The customer has waited for a long time is true if and only if the customer had much time to count the total number of the rose pattern on the wallpaper." The punch line, which lies on the last sentence, gives a surprising effect to the readers or listeners and this unexpected meaning trigger the hilarity in this joke.

#### **Data 2**

**Bill:** You owe me a dollar for that bottle of *honey*.

**Jill:** What *honey*?

**Bill:** Gosh I didn't know you cared.

In this joke, the word *honey* has two different meanings, those are:

1. sweet substance made by bees
2. (informal, especially in U.S.) used when talking to somebody one likes or loves

As it has been discuss before that ambiguity happens because of a word in a sentence contain more than one meaning. However, there is a related sense between the first and the second meaning of the word *honey*. Both

meanings contain the idea of something sweet, nice, and valuable. Thus, this ambiguity is caused by polysemy.

This joke describes that at first, Bill asks Jill about the money that she is owed for a bottle of *honey* and when Jill replies, “What *honey*?” Bill thought that Jill cares so much about him by calling him *honey*. In fact, there is a possibility that Bill just wants to trick Jill and for that reason Jill will call him honey. The intention of applying this lexical ambiguity is to determine the humour of the joke.

### Data 3

MAUD: Sometimes I get so depressed I want to drown myself.

CLAUDE: What stops you?

MAUD: *I can't swim.*

In this joke, Maud manipulates the truth condition of drowning. When he says that he wants to drown himself, he does not suppose take any consideration of his ability of swimming, for once again, his intention is to drown himself. The truth conditional semantics states, “Maud wants to drown himself is true if and only if he does not stop himself from doing it just because he cannot swim.” The fun of this joke is produced by the contradiction of Maud’s truth condition (his inability to swim and his wish to drown himself). This contradiction shows that there is a violation of the truth conditional semantics. The punch line of this joke is shown on the

last sentence as the climax of the humour in which the amusing part takes place.

#### Data 4

Ben: One Christmas Eve Santa Clause decided to give his reindeer a vacation. In their place, he got eight monkeys to pull the sleight.

The names of the monkeys were Do, Re, Fa, So, La, Ti, and Do.

Len: Hey what about *Mi*?

Ben: All right, you can pull the sleight, too.

In this joke, Ben may have intention to fool Len. At first, Ben leads Len and the readers to think about the missing *Mi*, which is a part of note in music (Do, Re, *Mi*, Fa, So, La, Ti, Do). The word *Mi* [mi:] happens to have the same sounds as the word *Me* [mi:], which is a personal pronoun; the person who is the speaker or writer. The same pronunciation is deliberately to make misinterpretation between the characters. Thus, the same or similar pronunciation of these words can be included as homophone and their different meanings cause lexical ambiguity. This deliberate pun creates a humorous-effect.

#### Data 5

BARBER: Your hair needs cutting *badly*.

CUSTOMER: No, it needs cutting nicely. You cut it badly last time.

The word *badly* is misapprehended by the customer. The customer thinks that the word *badly* means the antonym of the word *nicely*. In fact, the barber means that the customer's hair seriously needs to be cut. This misunderstanding is caused by the ambiguity of the word *badly*, for it can be understood as 'unsatisfactory' which is the antonym of the word *nicely* or 'seriously' which the barber really means. These two different meanings are called as lexical ambiguity, which involve the role of homonym. This ambiguity seems to be matters of mere coincidence. As a result, the fun of this joke is raised by the application of the lexical ambiguity.

#### Data 6

Dana: I think I can put this wallpaper *on* my self

Lana: Well, go ahead, but I think it would look better on the wall

The sentence *I can put this wallpaper on my self* in this joke creates different interpretation between Dana and Lana, for it can be interpreted as:

1. *I can put this wallpaper on by my self*
2. *I can put this wallpaper on me*

The ambiguity of the sentence *I can put this wallpaper on my self* is caused by the structural ambiguity because its words relate to each other in different ways. In presenting this structural ambiguity we can use square brackets diagram and as a result:

a. I can [put this wallpaper on] my self

b. I can put this wallpaper [on my self]

The first diagram indicates that the subject *I* can put the wallpaper on (the wall) by himself, and the second indicates that the subject *I* can put the wallpaper on himself (on his body). This application is intended to cause the hilarity in the joke.

#### Data 7

STAN: Yesterday I climbed a ladder, fell 30 feet and survived without a scratch.

FRAN: How did you manage that?

STAN: *It was in the swimming pool.*

At first, Fran has no idea how Stan can manage to fall 30 feet and survive without a scratch. The truth is Stan can survive without a scratch because he falls in the swimming pool which is of course full of water. This truth condition of how Stan can manage to fall 30 feet without a scratch becomes the punch line of this joke for it is true that people can manage to fall 30 feet and survive without a scratch in a swimming pool. Therefore, the truth conditional semantics states: "Stan fall 30 feet and survive without a scratch is true if and only if he falls in the swimming pool." The application of this truth conditional semantics has a role in delivering the humour.

**Data 8**

Sherlock Holmes: Why are you taking art classes, Watson?

Dr. Watson: So I can *draw* my own conclusions Holmes.

Based on its context, the word *draw* which relates to *taking art class* is meant as ‘make (a picture) with a pen, pencil, etc.’ In fact, relating to Dr. Watson’s answer the word *draw* is intended as ‘make or obtain by studying, reasoning’. On other words, the readers can see that the word *draw* in this joke can be interpreted into two different meanings. According Sherlock Holmes’ sentence we know that Dr. Watson is taking art class. Thus, the readers can conclude that what is meant by taking art class is involving something to do with the activity of making (a picture) by using pencil or pen. But the surprising thing is Dr. Watson takes art class because he wants to draw his own conclusion which of course indicates the meaning of making or obtaining by studying, reasoning. The ambiguity of the word *draw* becomes the key of the punch line in the joke. For there is not any related sense between the two meanings of the word *draw*, therefore, the ambiguity is caused by homonym. In other words, this joke use deliberate pun or play on words to compose it funniness.

**Data 9**

Salesman: Guess what, I got two *orders* today!

Boss: Congratulations! What were they?

Salesman: “Get out!” and “Stay out!”

The word *orders* in this joke is lexically ambiguous. At first, the boss and the readers may think that the word *orders* refers to 'request to supply goods.' However, at the last line of the joke we find out that we have taken the wrong meaning of it. The unexpected thing is that it was meant as 'command' of "Get out!" and "Stay out!" This kind of ambiguity is influenced by homonym for there is not any related sense between the first meaning 'request to supply goods' and the second meaning 'commands'. This application has an important role in forming the humour.

#### Data 10

Waiter: What can I get you, sir?

Customer: How about a nice lobster *tail*?

Waiter: Very well, sir (He takes out a book and reads)

"Once upon a time there was a little lobster..."

Homophone has an important role in producing the humour. In this joke, the word *tail* [t eɪl] has the same pronunciation but different in meaning with the word *tale* [t eɪl]. That is why, when the customer requests for a nice lobster *tail*, the waiter gets the wrong meaning and starts to read a *tale* about the lobster. The word *tail* means 'the moveable part at the end of the body of a bird, an animal or a fish, while the word *tale* means 'a story, often one that is simple to read or understand'. The same sound of these words can be called as lexical ambiguity, although

they do not perform the same spelling. To sum up, this joke is composed by the application of lexical ambiguity and deliberate pun of the words *tail* and *tale*. It has been mentioned before that the two words which sound the same but has two different meanings can create ambiguity in a sentence and this kind of ambiguity is called as lexical ambiguity.

#### Data 11

Mother: How was your first day at school?

Tommy: Okay, but the teacher didn't give me a *present*.

Mother: Why would she give you a *present*?

Tommy: Because she said, "Tom, sit there for the *present*."

The joke above applies the lexical ambiguity theory by using the manipulation of the word *present*. At first, the readers and the listeners may think that Tommy is talking about a gift that he does not get from his teacher, but at the end of the joke the readers are surprised by the other meaning of the word *present*. We find out that the word *present* in this joke does not mean as 'a thing that given to somebody as a gift' but it is meant as 'a particular time; at the time being or now'. The word present in this joke not only conveys the same spelling [p r e s e n t], but also the same pronunciation [preznt], however, it has more than one meaning, which allow the application of lexical ambiguity. The *present* that Tommy thought was different with what the teacher meant. Thus, same as the readers, Tommy gets the wrong idea of the word *present*. For Tommy

thought that his teacher is going to give him *present*, which means 'gift.'

In fact, the teacher means the word *present* as 'at the time being or now'.

The application of the lexical ambiguity determines the fun of this joke.

#### **Data 12**

NIT: I put five dollars in the *change* machine.

WIT: What, happened?

NIT: Would you believe it, I'm still me.

The lexical ambiguity of the word *change* in this joke creates humorous effect for it can mean as:

1. act of changing; become or make different
2. receive (money) in exchange for money of smaller value or pocket change

At the first line, the readers get an idea that what NIT means by putting five dollars in the *change* machine is related to the action of receiving (money) in exchange for money of smaller value. At the end of the joke, the readers find out that NIT had a thought that if she put money in the *change* machine, she would become someone else or there will be some changing in her appearances. NIT's last sentence becomes the climax of the joke, which has intentionally surprise the readers and turns out to be hilarious.

**Data 13**

DIT: My new boy friend lights up every time he sees me.

DOT: Sounds like a perfect *match*.

In this joke, DOT is teasing DIT by saying *Sounds like a perfect match*, for the word *match* can mean either 'a couple/ person equal with somebody' or 'a lighter/ a short piece of wood with a head that burns when rubbed against a rough surface'. The word *match* can have its first meaning when we relate it to DIT's words about boy friend, which means that DIT and her boy friend are a perfect couple. However, it can also convey its second meaning when we relate it to DIT's word 'lights up...' which means that DIT's boy friend is like a *match*. The double meanings happen because of the lexical ambiguity which is caused by homonym and functioned as the humour.

**Data 14**

DOCTOR: Take one of these pills once a day for the rest of your life. PATIENT: But there's only seven pills in this bottle.

DOCTOR: *I know.*

The surprising thing in this joke is the doctor only gives the patient seven pills on the bottle while he says that the patient has to take the pills once a day for the rest of his life. This can be meant that the patient life chance is only seven days left, which is stressed by the last sentence '*I*

*know*'. Therefore, the truth conditional semantics should be: "The life expectancy of the patient is only seven days left is true if and only if the doctor advises him to take the seven pills in the bottle once a day for the rest of his life." This joke applies the theory of truth conditional semantics to build its humour.

#### **Data 15**

**DAD: I'm sorry you flunked your math test. How far were you from the right answer?**

**TAD: Three seats!**

The truth conditional semantics of this joke states: "Tad is cheating on the math test is true if and only if he is sitting three seats away from the right answer." Since this joke is quite short the readers can directly see the point of the joke that Tad flunks his math test because he is sitting three seats away from the one who has the right answer for the test. When Tad's father asked how far he was from the right answers, actually his father just wants to know how far did Tad understand the answer of the questions of his math test. However, Tad's answers is quite surprising for it seems that Tad does not understand the questions of his math test at all, that is why, he cheats and flunk the test. Tad's unexpected answer becomes the punch line of this joke and able to create the hilarity.

**Data 16**

Jenny: Knock – knock!

Lenny: Who’s there?

Jenny: *Tumor*

Lenny: *Two more* weeks to summer vacation

The ‘Knock-knock’ jokes are frequently heard in American jokes. Most of this joke is emphasize the funniness on word play. The climax of this kind of joke states on the last sentence and always makes use of homophone or the same or similar sounds of different words and meanings. As in this joke, the funniness is produced by the word *Tumor* [t u : mæ(r)], which is homophone to the word *two more* [t u : mæ(r)]. These two words yield two different meanings. The word *Tumor* means ‘an abnormal mass of new tissue growing or on part of the body, while *two more* means ‘two additional number’. It is necessary to stress that the fun of this joke does not convey through misinterpretation of the double meanings of the joke. In this kind of joke the hilarity is produced through the clever remark. Although the changing of the word *Tumor* to *two more* is nonsensical but it is intended to create the humorous effect.

**Data 17**

“Can you help me?” said the woman to the supervisor of the animal shelter. “*I’m looking for a stray cat with one eye.*”

“Wouldn’t you stand a better chance of finding him if you used both eyes?” suggested the supervisor.

The structural ambiguity of the sentence *I’m looking for a stray cat with one eye* causes the sense of humour in this joke. The supervisor of the animal shelter interprets the woman’s sentence differently. The woman means that *she is looking for a stray cat that has one eye*, while the supervisor thought that *the woman is looking for a stray cat by only using one of her eyes*. To make it clearer we can put the sentence in the diagram:

1. I’m looking for [a stray cat with one eye]
2. [I’m looking for a stray cat] with one eye

The first diagram shows that the subject of the sentence is looking for a stray cat that has one eye, while the second diagram shows that subject of the sentence is looking for a stray cat by using one of her eye.

This structural ambiguity holds the key of the humour. At first, the readers may not think about the double meanings of the sentence *I’m looking for a stray cat with one eye*, however, at the end of the joke the readers find out that the sentence is ambiguous.

#### **Data 18**

“Bet I can lift an elephant with six fingers.”

“Prove it.”

“Show me an elephant with six fingers and I’ll be glad to lift it.”

In this joke, the sentence *Bet I can lift an elephant with six fingers* is structurally ambiguous, as it is shown on the square brackets diagram:

1. [I can lift an elephant] with six fingers
2. I can lift [an elephant with six fingers]

The second speaker misinterprets the first speaker's sentence or the first speaker perhaps intentionally wants to play trick to the second speaker. The second speaker thinks that the first speaker is talking none sense about his ability *lifting an elephant by using his six fingers*. The idea of lifting an elephant by using six fingers is quite impossible for an ordinary man so he asks the first speaker to prove his words. The unexpected thing is the first speaker explains that his words are meant that *he can lift an elephant that has six fingers*. Therefore, he asks the second speaker to show him elephants that has six fingers. The application of the structural ambiguity in this joke is intended to cause confusion and to make a hilarious joke.

#### **Data 19**

TEACHER: It took close to one hundred years to build one pyramid.

CLOWN: *Must be the same contractor who's renovating our house.*

In this joke the class "clown" directly wants to disturb the class by commenting on the teacher's explanation. Here, the class "clown" violates

the use of truth conditional semantics in order to trigger laughter. The truth condition will be “It take close to one hundred years to renovate the class “clown” house is true if and only if the contractors are also the ones who builds the pyramid.” The application of truth conditional semantics in this joke is meant to cause the wittiness.

#### Data 20

TEACHER: Sean, what is another name for a bunch of *bees*?

SEAN: A good report.

In this joke, Sean misinterprets the word *bees*. His wrong interpretation is caused by the homophone of the words *bees* [bi:z], which means ‘insects with for wings that can sting’ and *B’s* [bi:z], which means ‘lots of the word B’, which also can mean lots of B marks. The second meaning suitable with what Sean means by saying “A good report” for a good report may have many B letter to indicate that a student is clever.

#### Data 21

“Guess what we learned in school today, Mom,” said Stanley as he burst through the front door. “*We learned how to make babies.*”

“And how do you make babies?” said Stanley’s mother

“It’s easy,” replied Stanley. “First, you change the y in baby to i, and then you add es.”

The sentence *we learned to make babies* can be interpreted as *we learned to make babies (making babies by doing sexual intercourse)* or *we*

*learned to make (to write) the word babies.* This double meaning can be included as one of structural ambiguity for its ambiguous meanings are influenced by the whole sentence. This application has an important role in creating a humorous effect by causing misinterpretation on the readers' mind. The punch line of this joke is performed on the last sentence, which becomes the climax of this joke.

#### **Data 22**

FLO: Hey, did you hear *the cops are looking for a man with a hearing aid?*

JOE: Why don't they use police dogs?

Flo's sentence is structurally ambiguous for it can mean either as *The cops are looking for a man by using a hearing aid* or *The cops are looking for a man who is wearing a hearing aid.* As it is shown on the square brackets diagram:

1. [The cops are looking for a man] with a hearing aid
2. The cops are looking for [a man with a hearing aid]

In this joke, Joe thinks that *The cops are looking for a man by using a hearing aid* therefore, he asked why the police did not use police dogs instead of a hearing aid. As a conclusion, the fun of this joke is produced by the application of structural ambiguity.

**Data 23**

**MATH TEACHER:** If I had 20 marbles in my right pocket, 20 marbles in my left pocket, 30 marbles in my right hip pocket, and 30 marbles in my left hip pocket, what would I have?

**MATH CLOWN:** *Very heavy pants.*

This joke applies truth conditional semantics to compose its funniness. The math clown tries to make a joke of the math teacher's question. However, as the readers, we cannot ignore that there is a sense of truth on the math clown's answer that states in the sentence "The teacher will have a very heavy pants is true if and only if he has 20 marbles in his right pocket, 20 marbles in his left pocket, 30 marbles in his right hip pocket, and 30 marbles in his left hip pocket." The math teacher is actually asking about the enumerator or the total number of the marbles but this joke would not be funny if the math teacher's question was answered correctly. In other words, the use of an irrelevant answer in this joke is very important for it has the main role in the making the humour.

**Data 24**

**HARRY:** My uncle's with the FBI.

**LARRY:** Is that so?

**HARRY:** *Yes, they picked him up trying to leave the country.*

When Harry said that his uncle was with the FBI, Larry thought that Harry's uncle is one of the FBI agents. But the truth is Harry's uncle is with the FBI because he is a criminal. Thus, the FBI caught him when he was trying to leave the country. The truth conditional semantics states: "Harry's uncle is with the FBI is true if and only if he is a criminal" This truth conditional semantics can be applied to the joke in order to create the humorous effect.

#### **Data 25**

**SON:** Mom, did Dad leave for work without his glasses?

**MOM:** Yes, how did you guess?

**SON:** *The garage door's missing.*

The truth conditional semantics of this joke states "Dad leave for work without his glasses is true if and only if the garage's door is missing." In this joke, it seems that the father needs to use glasses to help his sight. It goes by saying, when the garage's door is missing it means that the father has crashed it for he could not see it. At first, the readers may find difficulties in understanding the joke for they have to try to figure out the correlation of the first and the last sentences. But the application of the truth conditional semantics theory has allowed the readers to understand the joke easily.

**Data 26**

DAD: Son, did I ever tell you the story about my *forebears*?

SON: No, but I heard the one about the three bears.

The joke above makes use homophone of the words *forebears* and *four bears*. The word *forebears* [fɔːbeə(r)] has the same sound as *four bears* [fɔː(r)beə(r)] although it conveys different meaning. When the father says *forebears* he means that he wants to tell a story about his ancestors, while the son thought that he is talking about four bears. Thus, he says that he has heard about the story of three bears. The use of homophone in this joke is causing lexical ambiguity, which holds the main role in the creation of the humour.

**Data 27**

TEENSY: Sometimes I can't *stand* you.

WEENSY: You don't sit so well with me, either.

This joke makes use the lexical ambiguity of the word *stand*, because it can be understood as 'to endure somebody or something' or 'to get onto one's feet', which is the antonym of the word *sit*. These two meanings are homonym, which means they do not have any related sense. In this joke, Teensy means that he cannot bear being with Weensy, however, Weensy thought that Teensy couldn't sit and stand well with her. Thus, the word *stand* in Teensy's sentence is the one, which has antonym

with the word *sit*. This misunderstanding able to produce the humorous effect of the joke.

**Data 28**

SHE: Lonnie has it first. Phil has it last. Girls have it once. Boys never have it.

HE: I give up.

SHE: The letter "L"

The fun of this joke is created by truth conditional semantics of the riddle. Consequently, the truth conditional semantics should be "Lonnie has it first. Phil has it last. Girls have it once. Boys never have it is true if and only if the answer of the riddle is the letter 'L'." As the readers, we may find it is confusing to figure out what SHE is meant by her sentence for there are no clues whether she is asking question or just giving a statement. Nevertheless, when we get to the second sentence or HE's sentence, we automatically find out that SHE is asking some sort of question to HE. Thus, we can conclude that SHE's question is a kind of riddle.

**Data 29**

FRIP: When my father was in Africa, *he chased elephants on horseback.*

FRAP: Gee, I didn't know elephants could ride horses.

Frip's sentence is structurally ambiguous. This ambiguity is applied to trigger laughter. Frip's sentence can be interpreted as:

1. [He chased elephants] on horseback
2. He chased [elephants on horseback]

The first diagram states a meaning that Frip's father is chasing elephants by riding on horseback and the second diagram states Frip's father is chasing elephants that ride on a horseback. These double meanings allow Frip to catch the wrong meaning of Frip's sentence. Thus, the joke becomes hilarious.

### **Data 30**

TEACHER: Stop acting like an idiot!

SEYMOUR: Who's acting?

This joke applies truth conditional semantics to create the humour. When the teacher orders Seymour to stop acting like an idiot, Seymour explains the truth condition that he is not acting at all, in other words, he is an idiot. The truth conditional semantics will be "Seymour is not acting as an idiot is true if and only if he is an idiot."

### **3.1. Data Findings**

The writer takes thirty jokes, which apply lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity, or truth conditional semantics. After analysing the data the writer finds out that the application of lexical ambiguity in American two-liner jokes is greater than structural ambiguity and truth

conditional semantics. In the application of the lexical ambiguity, which is influenced by polysemy, homonym, and homophone, the writer discovers that homonym has the greatest application and polysemy has the fewest. To sum up, from the thirty jokes there is only one application of polysemy, seven applications of homonyms, and five applications of homophones. Thus, the total number of the application of lexical ambiguity theory is thirteen applications.

The writer also finds that the application of the structural ambiguity theory is fewer compared to lexical ambiguity and truth conditional semantics theories.

The American two-liner jokes apply seven structural ambiguity theory and ten truth conditional semantics theory. As a conclusion, the writer finds out that these semantic theories: lexical and structural ambiguity and truth conditional semantics hold an important role in creating the hilarious or the fun in the jokes. They are in one way or another cannot be separated from the creation of joke. The ambiguity theories: lexical and structural ambiguity, are applied to cause the misunderstanding, therefore, when the readers reach the punch line of the joke they will get the unexpected meaning. The truth conditional semantics is applied to create the surprising truth condition of the characters in the joke.

After analyzing the data the writer makes the tabulation of the analysis and put the result of her analyses into a table.

### 3.2.1. Table of the Application of the Semantic Theories in American Two-Liner Joke

Number of Jokes	Lexical Ambiguity			Structural Ambiguity	Truth Conditional Semantic
	Polysemy	Homonym	Homophone		
Data 1					√
Data 2	√				
Data 3					√
Data 4			√		
Data 5		√			
Data 6				√	
Data 7					√
Data 8		√			
Data 9		√			
Data 10			√		
Data 11		√			
Data 12		√			
Data 13		√			
Data 14					√
Data 15					√
Data 16			√		
Data 17				√	
Data 18				√	
Data 19					√
Data 20			√		
Data 21				√	
Data 22				√	
Data 23					√
Data 24					√
Data 25					√
Data 26			√		
Data 27		√			
Data 28					√
Data 29				√	
Data 30				√	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>

CHAPTER  
CONCLUSION

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