

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CHILDREN'S SENSE OF HUMOR

Children's sense of humor involves mental activity. The development of mental activity makes them appreciate and comprehend humor. As stated by Tomlinson-Keasy (1985:388), "The some thought processes have other effects, outside the logical domain. The operation of humor based on double meaning. The development of humor follows much the same course as cognitive development. It proceeds from the sheer joy of sensory motor expectancies, and on to humor, which depends upon an understanding of abstract conceptual meanings (Jersild, Telford, and Sawrey, 1975:317). When children go beyond the sheer joy of performing or anticipating the enactment of specific sensory motor processes through the stage where humor is largely the result of the recognition of perceptual discrepancies to the level where humor arises from the violation of rather abstract logical relationships, they have attained the adult level of humor (Shultz and Horribe, 1974).

2.1.1. PHASES OF CHILDREN'S SENSE OF HUMOR

Before children develop a sense of humor, smiling appears in the sleep of one-week old infant. On the age of 8 months, children's laughter as a respond to stimulus that consider not harmful. The first phases of children humor (birth to 2 year) relate to sensory motor system. According to Jersild ,Telford, and Sawrey

(1975:313), social response such as attending to the children, talking, smiling back, and picking up the children all serve as positive reinforcements which operate to increase smiling, particularly when they are contingent on the children's smiling.

Preschool children's humor tends to like stories based on experiences they find physically challenging. This phase relates to Piaget's cognitive development. As stated by Piaget (cited in Wadsworth, 1971:70), " Around 2 years of age children begin to use words as symbols in place of objects. They show their understanding and control of words. Children are delight in misnaming objects. Children's humor in concrete operational thought reflects their understanding of words and the double meanings in words. When children are able to appreciate relationships in size and space, he is able to laugh at incongruities, which he did not notice before. When he has attained command of language, he may find it humors when a younger child makes mistakes similar to his own mistakes at an earlier age, McGhee (cited in Jersild, Telford, and Sawrey 1975:316).

Around the time of puberty, humor becomes aggressive and sexual themes can produce laughter without the pretext of a joke being present. These aggressive and sexual jokes reflect the adolescent's own development concerns.

2.1.2. CONDITION OF HUMOR

There are conditions for humor related to the components of humor act. First, there are the human participants, the speaker and the hearer. The second is stimulus. Regarding stimulus as one of humor act's components, Leacock

circumstances that involve discomfiture or disaster of some odd incongruous kind, not connected with the ordinary run of things and not involving sufficient pain. Third, experiences of the speaker and the hearer are their familiarity with humor as a special mode of communication. The last is sociology of the participants in the humor act. It seems to be generally recognized that the scope and degree of mutual understanding in humor varies directly with the degree to which the participants share their social background (Raskin, 1985:16).

However, when the speaker tells a joke to the hearer, i.e., when the speaker deals with intended verbal humor, there are further conditions, which ensure that the joke is told exactly right. Fry (cited in Raskin, 1985:32) notes that when a joke is told it should not be too long, and it should not be too short. It should not be too trivial, and it should not be too hard to understand. Furthermore, Fry elaborates on that as well: "The joke must be understood as being a joke for it to be funny". The paralinguistic behavior of the speaker of the joke is also important. "Certain gesture, facial expression, etc, enhance the humor of a joke. Certain types of behavior decrease the humor" (ibid, 33).

2. 2. CHILDREN'S COMPREHENSION HUMOR

The ability of children in comprehending humor relates to their first language acquisition. Language acquisition is a process that occurs in children's brain when they get their first language (Chaer, 2003:60). There are two processes when children get their first language. They are competency and performance processes. Competency refers to one's underlying knowledge of a system, event,

or fact. It is the non-observable, idealized ability to do something, and perform something. In reference to language, competence is underlying knowledge of the system of a language – its rule of grammar, its vocabulary, and all pieces of a language and how those pieces fit together. According to Miller (cited in Brown, 1987:25), performance is the overtly observable and concrete manifestation or realization of competence. It is actual production (speaking, writing) or the comprehension (listening, reading) of linguistic events. In children language, ‘superiority’ of comprehension occurs over production. It means children understanding “more” than they actual produce. This phenomenon can be seen when they are asked to define word. They can define words that they do not know before from the situational context and it is because of their perceptual and conceptual skill.

2.2.1. COMPREHENDING THROUGH PERCEPTUAL SKILL

Eve Clark (cited in Wood, 1981:134), one of primary researchers who studies the development of meaning, explains that the children acquire the meanings of words in the feature by feature fashion, where at first, children learn to observe each feature that connect to words, such as size, shape, and texture. And the increasing of children’s vocabulary contents come not only from learning new words, but also learning new meanings from old words. It means they must learn to perceive relationships between new and old information. Children, for example, at first use the phrase “Panjang Tangan” (Ind, “long hand”) refers to

hand, which is long, later; they discover that the phrase refers to a person who likes to steal.

Children perception skill relates to sensory information and to how it is interpreted or combined. Bee believes that (1992:172) the basic skills of the perception are in place of seeing, hearing, smelling, and testing. By mastering those skills, they can perceive the information from their environment. Children learn to attend, identify, and describe the object. The similar process occurs when children perceive something as a humor or not. It depends on the large extent up on the meaning they associate with it. This meaning may be derived from their knowledge of what is culturally accepted as a sound of the joke. Children can enjoy humor whenever they can organize their perception by activating the source to become more meaningful to them.

2.2.2. COMPREHENDING THROUGH CONCEPTUAL SKILL

Concepts are complex relationships, which are continuously changing with experience and with the accumulation of new knowledge (Hurlock, 1978:357). She elaborates that concept may relate to objects, people, and qualities. Concepts are not always verbalized. A child may, for example, have a clear and accurate concept of what "generosity" but they don't know how to describe it.

For the most part, early concept relates to common experiences in daily life. As Jerold Kats explains (Foss and Hakes, 1978:51), a concept is a theoretical entity involves human's knowledge about the world. This entity relates both to other concepts and to certain actions that can be carried by individuals who poses

the concepts when children have more complete and accurate concepts of an object or a condition of a situation. Most of these early concepts are partially or totally inaccurate. By the time children reach adolescence, they have built up a large store of concepts. In addition, they have added new meanings to old concepts and corrected many inaccuracies in previously learned concepts.

Some concepts help children to develop other concepts. For example, at first, children learn to perceive a humor relates to physical incongruity, which is funny, later on, this concept changes when they getting older. Older children will join with others in laughing at anything when they found incongruity verbally. They enjoy puns, riddles, and jokes event relates to double meaning because of their greater understanding of words.

2.3. AMBIGUITY

A word or sentence is ambiguous when it has more than one sense. A sentence is ambiguous if it has two paraphrases, which are not paraphrases of each other. According to Hurford (1983), ambiguity can occur grammatically and lexically. Ullmann (1972, cited in Pateda, 2001:202) asserts that ambiguity can occur at three classes; lexically, grammatically, and phonetically.

2.3.1. LEXICAL AMBIGUITY

Lexical ambiguity is a condition in which a given lexical item has more than one semantic interpretation or in condition of polysemy. For example,
A: Order! Order in the court!

B: Ham and cheese on rye, please, Your Honor.

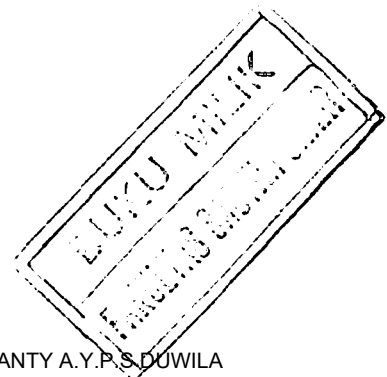
In the joke above, "Order" is initially interpreted as "a request for quiet" but later is interpreted as "a request for food."

2.3.2. GRAMMATICAL AMBIGUITY

A condition in which a given phrase has more than one interpretation. Ullman (cited in Pateda, 2001:203) called it *equivocal phrasing*, in which the word of a phrase can be grouped in two different ways with each expressing a different semantic interpretation. For example, the phrase "man eating shark" is initially interpreted as "a man who is eating shark" but later "a shark who eats man"

2.3.3. PHONOLOGICAL AMBIGUITY

Phonological ambiguity occurs when a given phonological sequence can be interpreted in more than one-way. This can result from either confusion about the boundaries between words (e.g., "hand some" versus "handsome") or in the condition of homophony in which two historically distinct words happen similar pronunciation (e.g., "been" versus "bean").



CHAPTER III
PRESENTATION AND
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA