This study aims at investigating twisting linguistic ambiguity in written verbal humor in Reader’s Digest. The general research problem is the nature of twisting linguistic ambiguity in the written verbal humor in Reader’s Digest, while the specific research problems are (1) the factors that create linguistic ambiguity, (2) the locations of ambiguity, and (3) the structural levels of twisting linguistic ambiguity.

The research design of this study is descriptive qualitative and the source of data of this study are the jokes taken from eleven editions of Asian Reader’s Digest, that is March, April, May, July, August, September, October, November, December 2004 editions and January and February 2005 editions. There were three major steps for analyzing the data, they were: (1) data reduction, (2) data display, and (3) conclusion drawing.

The results show that 13 factors create linguistic ambiguity in the humor in Reader’s Digest. These factors are (1) the same pronunciation, (2) the pauses in reading and the same pronunciation, (3) the manipulation of the elements of the word structure, (4) the reference of a substitute word, (5) the combination of words, (6) the intentional shift of referent, (7) the different meanings of a word, (8) the different meanings of a phrase, (9) the different meanings of a phrase and a word, (10) the different meanings of an abbreviation, (11) the different meanings of a clause, (12) the different meanings of a sentence, and (13) the speaker’s intended meaning.

The results also find locations of ambiguity in the one-line jokes, two line jokes, and short text jokes. 3 locations of ambiguity are found in the one-line joke, that is at the beginning of a joke, at the end of a joke, and along a sentence. Then, ambiguity can lie either in the build-up or in the punch line of a short text joke.

Finally, it is shown from the results that the linguistic ambiguity in the humor in Reader’s Digest can belong to 5 structural levels of twisting linguistic ambiguity. They are twisting phonological ambiguity, twisting morphological ambiguity, twisting lexical ambiguity, twisting syntactic ambiguity, and twisting pragmatic ambiguity. In addition, other findings, which consist of nonlinguistics humor, psycholinguistics humor, accidental and intentional humor, are also found in this research.

The nature of twisting linguistic ambiguity in the written verbal humor in Reader’s Digest is dominated by twisting lexical ambiguity (44 %). This is followed by twisting syntactic ambiguity (28 %) and then twisting phonological ambiguity (18 %). Finally, twisting morphological and pragmatic ambiguity are in the last place which each has 2 % from the overall data.

This can be seen that twisting lexical ambiguity, which manipulates the different meanings of a word, has the biggest occurrence in the humor in Reader’s Digest. It is because almost all words have a big opportunity to produce ambiguity since a word can have more than one meaning.

Twisting linguistic ambiguity in written verbal humor in Reader's Digest / Liska Novianti Paramitaswari

Author : Liska Novianti Paramitaswari