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Analysis of Ambiguity in International News Headlines

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Abstrak

Memahami ambiguitas adalah salah satu hal yang akan berguna. Ambiguitas tidaklah sama dengan 'ketidakjelasan.' Ketidakjelasan berarti sesuatu yang tidak memiliki interpretasi, sedangkan ambiguitas memiliki interpretasi lain. Dengan memahami ambiguitas, anda bisa memikirkan sebuah masalah dengan perspektif baru dan menjelaskan pemikiran tersebut kepada yang lainnya. Penelitian ini berisi tentang ambiguitas yang ditemukan pada judul berita di laman *British Broadcasting Corporation* atau *BBC*. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan ambiguitas makna dan menentukan jenis makna ambiguitas yang terkandung dalam headline berita, termasuk ambiguitas struktural atau ambiguitas leksikal. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah kualitatif. Sampel dalam penelitian ini adalah 10 judul ambigu yang mengandung ambiguitas, baik ambiguitas struktural/gramatikal dan ambiguitas leksikal. Peneliti menyimpulkan masih ada headline berita yang mungkin membingungkan pembaca karena bisa memiliki dua interpretasi. Jadi, penelitian ini menampilkan penjelasan tentang bagaimana dan mengapa ada 2 interpretasi dalam headline berita. Dan kedua interpretasi tersebut dapat termasuk dalam ambiguitas struktural maupun ambiguitas leksikal.

Keywords: *ambiguitas, judul berita, ambiguitas struktural, leksikal ambiguita*

Abstract

Understanding ambiguity is one thing that will be useful. Ambiguity is not the same as 'vagueness'. Vagueness means that things have no interpretation, while ambiguity has other reasonable interpretations. By understanding ambiguity, you can learn to think about a problem from a new perspective and explain that thought to others. This study contains the ambiguity found in the headline of news on the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC news television service site. This study aims to find meaning ambiguity and determine the type of ambiguity of meaning contained in news headlines, including structural ambiguity or lexical ambiguity. The method used in this research is qualitative. The sample in this study is 10 ambiguous headlines that contain ambiguity, it is either structural/grammatical ambiguity and lexical ambiguity. The researchers conclude there are still news headlines that might confuse the readers because they can have two interpretations. So, this study displays the explanation of how and why there can be 2 interpretations in the news headlines. And the two interpretations can be included in structural ambiguity or lexical ambiguity.

Keywords: *ambiguity, headline news, structural ambiguity, lexical ambiguity*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a system of sound signs produced by human speech tools that are used to think and express human thoughts which are composed of a set of elements that are arranged regularly. Without realizing it, languages have adapted to the human brain to be understandable and learnable by people (Christiansen and Chater 2016). According to Vera Kempe and Patricia J Brooks (2016) when

compared to the communication systems of other species, human languages appear to have many severities. These include patterned duality, symbolic signs, large vocabularies, grammatical norms, and propositional structure. All of which allows for limitless creativity in the generation of communicative signals whose meaning exceeds now and then. And so, the sound of a language is systematized from the smallest into a

larger pattern sorted into syllables, words, sentences, and discourses to ease human learning languages.

Language has meaning, both spoken and written language, known as semantics. Semantics has to do with the literal meaning of words and the meaning of the way they are combined. According to Nordquist (2017), a semantic is a set of words that have a connection in meaning. Semantics also has many terms such as a word study, lexical study, study of meaning, and semantic system. Nordquist also states that "the words in a semantic field share a common semantic property. Most often, fields are defined by subject matter, such as body parts, landforms, diseases, colors, foods, or kinship relations" (p.1) The essence of written language in some ways can make the reader confused in determining the true meaning because it has a different meaning or has two meanings. In semantics, this is called "ambiguity".

Ambiguity is the meaning of a word that has more than one meaning (from the adjective ambiguous, which is uncertain). Richard Nordquist (2019) states that ambiguity occurs when a sentence has two or more possible meanings. According to Nordquist, an ambiguous passage is called a fallacy (An error in reasoning that invalidates an argument.) It means the same form but can imply more than one way. Ambiguity is widely found in the meaning in newspapers, advertising novels, and news videos which can confuse readers and even misinterpret the information in it, so readers need to know how to interpret ambiguous sentences so that they can help determine the true meaning of the sentence.

According to Hurford & Heasley in Nordquist (2019), there are two types of ambiguity, that is structural ambiguity and lexical ambiguity. Structural ambiguity means that a passage has two or more possible meanings in a single sentence. For example from the sentence "The chicken is ready to eat." The meaning of that sentence is either the chicken wants to eat its meal,

or it can mean that the chicken is cooked and ready to be served. Then the other type of ambiguity is lexical ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity means there is a possibility that a word will have two or more meanings. For example, the word "bank" in the sentence "The fisherman went to the bank." It could mean that a bank is a place to save money, or it means land adjacent to a river or sloping down to it.

In this case, the writer wants to analyze the ambiguity in the International News Headlines on the British television news service, BBC. The problem of ambiguity often occurs and is easily understood not only by researchers or experts who study it but also by ordinary people. News is a report about an event or events that are new (actual) or have occurred, reports on current facts, can attract attention, are considered important, and/or extraordinary. Dissemination of news can be done with various supporting media, such as posters, banners, billboards, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines. While the headline is the big title of a work, be it advertisements, news, articles, or others, which is located at the top, and is the first thing the reader sees. The title serves to attract readers to read the contents of the advertisement, news, or article to the end. As stated by Bell (1991) headlines are "part of news rhetoric whose function is to attract the reader." (p.189). In this study, researchers collected 10 news headlines that contain ambiguity, whether it is structural or lexical ambiguity. The ten news headlines were obtained from various news categories, such as climate, arts & entertainment, health, technology, and so on, which focused on the latest news or popular news in 2022 with a length of January to June.

The previous article related to these studies, written by Julie Puspitasari and Ni Luh Sutjiati Beratha (2019), discusses the ambiguity in the article that is contained in The Jakarta Post daily newspaper. They analyze the lexical and structural ambiguity in the sentence, then explain it in a tree diagram and also in the 'two

meanings' method. Their article mentioned that if a single word has two meanings, it is called lexical ambiguity. While, if the phrase, clause, or sentence has more than one interpretation, it is called structural ambiguity. In their article, they focused on finding the sentence or words that contain lexical and structural ambiguity in The Jakarta Post news article, while in the writer's article they focused on the headline on the International News channel, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news. The difference between Julie Puspitasari's article and the writer's article is in the data source that has been analyzed.

And there is another previous article that discusses the same studies, written by Sitanggang Ramot T.B (2016), he discusses the ambiguity in Emily Dickinson's Poems. He used Katz's theory to analyze the ambiguity in the poems. The goal of this article is to find the most ambiguous type in Emily Dickinson's Poems, the types are phonetic ambiguity, lexical ambiguity, structural ambiguity, and referential ambiguity. The data was collected in the form of a table and it included the percentage of occurrence of ambiguity of each type. In this article, he uses the data source from poems while in the writer's article in the headlines news, this is the first difference of each article. And second is the types of ambiguity that have been analyzed. If the previous used Katz's theory that has 4 types of ambiguity, the writer just analyzed 2 types of ambiguity.

The article was written by K. E. Prasetyawan, I. P. N. W. Myartawan, and G. A. P. Suprianti (2018) has discussed the ambiguity in the online recipes appearing in 2017. They found 20 recipes that have ambiguous structures and are divided into three types. The lexical ambiguity, the referential ambiguity, and the structural ambiguity. In their article, they discuss the three ambiguous structures found in online recipes, and the results of their research are presented in table form as well as percentage comparisons. The difference

between this article and the writer's article is the use of the object. If the previous article uses online receipts, the writer uses online headline news. The data is also different because the writer uses the list and explanation not the table and percent comparison.

Compared to the previous studies that have been mentioned before, this study will focus more on news headlines in 2022 using the latest theory, which is the theory from Norquist (2019). Reconciling the previous studies that analyzed ambiguity in The Jakarta Post daily newspaper, this research will focus more on the headlines of the news uploaded from various categories. The relationship between our research and previous research is the analysis of structural ambiguity and also lexical ambiguity using different theories.

This study collected 10 news headlines from the BBC that have ambiguity. Five headlines contain grammatical ambiguity and the remaining five headlines contain lexical ambiguity. This study aims to prove that even in the news headlines there is still ambiguity found and to help the readers determine the true meaning of the news headline. To analyze the ambiguity, the researchers use theory according to Hurford & Heasley in Nordquist (2019), which divides the ambiguity into two, structural ambiguity and lexical ambiguity.

METHODOLOGY

This research type is included as qualitative research using a documentation method because this paper collects the data by searching the headlines on the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC website on the internet and sorting out the headlines that contain ambiguity, whether it is structural ambiguity or lexical ambiguity. And the data collected in this paper will be in qualitative data, following the grouped words and phrases to the category's conclusion.

This paper used 10 headlines from the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC as the object. The headlines that are used as data are the latest headlines in 2022 on the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC channel. The data of this paper are words and phrases that contain structural or lexical ambiguity. With this, the writer will analyze 10 headlines that contain ambiguity and then amplify the data with a non-numeric explanation.

While analyzing the data, the writer used some techniques that apply to a qualitative method. Firstly, all the headlines that contain ambiguity were grouped into structural and lexical ambiguity. Secondly, the writer will analyze the structural ambiguity in a headline by using two interpretations or two meanings as a result of the structure stated by Rodman and Fromkin (1983:172). Thirdly, the writer will analyze the lexical ambiguity in a headline if there contains a word that has an ambiguous meaning or if it has two meanings in a word stated by Rodman and Fromkin (1983:169).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Because the data were gathered by collecting data and looking for headlines on the international website, namely the British Broadcasting Corporation or BBC, this type of qualitative research analyzes ambiguity in international news headlines with the documentation method. The ambiguity in 10 news headlines has been classified into two categories: grammatical ambiguity, also known as structural ambiguity, and lexical ambiguity. Grammatical or structural ambiguity is a situation where a sentence has more than one meaning because of the structure of the sentence or word order. Lexical ambiguity, on the other hand, is the complete opposite of grammatical or structural ambiguity, which is the general presence of two or more ambiguous meanings or phrases that are not always influenced by the context of their use.

The following is an illustration of a table featuring confusing headlines, the table has been explained the type of ambiguity so that it is easy to discern between grammatical or structural ambiguity:

Grammatical Ambiguity

NO	The Headline	Date of the news
1.	War in Ukraine: Musicians perform emotional concert in Kharkiv metro station	March 26, 2022
2.	Undercover footage reveals evidence of animal abuse on farm	February 15, 2022
3.	Guinness World Records: School achieves world record with plastic bottles	March 25, 2022
4.	Boy, 15, stabbed to death and mother hurt in Manchester	June 10, 2022
5.	Ukraine war: False TikTok videos draw millions of views	April 25, 2022

Grammatical/Structural Ambiguity in BBC News Headline

On the BBC news channel, we found several headlines that have grammatical/structural ambiguity. The headlines we collect are from the news editions from February 15 2022, until June 11, 2022. Headlines that contain grammatical ambiguity are sentences that have 2 or more meaning interpretations, and one form of utterance that has more than one meaning due to differences in grammatical interpretation.

In this section, we will explain the results of the headlines found in the previous table. The data collected is taken from the BBC news edition from February 2022 to June 2022 which contains grammatical ambiguity. The following is an explanation of the table data above.

1. War in Ukraine: Musicians perform emotional concert in Kharkiv metro station (March 26, 2022)

From the headline above, there are two interpretations of the meaning. The first meaning is that the concerts held by the musicians are emotional. The word 'emotional' plays as an adjective and gives an explanation for the following noun, which is 'concert'.

While the second meaning of the headline is the musicians feel emotional when they perform their concert. In this second meaning, the word 'emotional' functions as an adjective that explains the subject of the sentence, that is 'musicians'. This meaning will occur if we as readers read the sentence with a pause after the word emotional. If you pause after the word 'emotional', the adjective will describe the subject, not the object.

2. Undercover footage reveals evidence of animal abuse on farm (February 15, 2022)

The headline above has two meanings of interpretation. The first meaning is undercover footage reveals evidence on the farm. It means that the "reveals" activities here were done on farms. So, the phrase "on farm" functions as a prepositional phrase that gives a place for the noun phrase "Undercover footage reveals evidence of animal abuse".

Meanwhile, the second meaning of the headline is that undercover footage is revealing evidence about animal abuse that occurs on the farm. This means that the phrase "on farm" provides information on the word "abuse." So, the phrase "on farm" functions as a prepositional phrase that is providing information on the noun phrase "animal abuse"

3. Guinness World Records: School achieves world record with plastic bottles (March 25, 2022)

The news headline above has two meanings. The first meaning of the headline is that the school received a world record with a nomination in the plastic bottles category. So, in this first meaning, the phrase "plastic bottle" functions as a noun phrase that explains the main word. The main word for the first meaning is "world record"

While the second meaning of the headline is that the school received a world award in the form of plastic bottles. The purpose of this meaning is the school that receives the award in the form of plastic bottles. So, the phrase "plastic bottles" in this second meaning functions as a noun phrase but it explains the subject (school) and verb (achieves) in the sentence.

4. Boy, 15, stabbed to death and mother hurt in Manchester (June 10, 2022)

The headline has a double meaning. The first meaning is there is a boy who got stabbed and died while the mother got hurt in Manchester. So, in the headline, there are two clauses separated by the conjunction "and". The first clause tells that a boy was stabbed to death, and the other clause tells that there was a mother who got hurt and she was in Manchester. In this headline, the phrase "in Manchester" functions as a prepositional phrase that belongs to the second clause and it describes the subject "mother"

While the second meaning is there is a case where the boy got stabbed and at the same time the mother got hurt and both of them were in Manchester. So, in the second meaning, there is only one clause, and the phrase "in Manchester" functions as a prepositional phrase that gives information to the main sentence, that is "Boy, 15, stabbed to death and mother hurt"

5. Ukraine war: False TikTok videos draw millions of views (April 25, 2022)

From the headline, two meanings have different meanings. The first meaning is that there are false TikTok videos that get

millions of views. So, in this meaning the word "False" functions as an adjective that explains the noun phrase "TikTok videos" This meaning is created when the reader pauses after the word "videos"

Then, the second meaning of the headline is that information about TikTok videos drawing millions of views is false information. Unlike the first meaning, the word "false" in the second meaning functions as an adverb.

Lexical Ambiguity

NO	The Headline	Date of The News
1.	War in Ukraine: Vladimir Putin cannot remain in power - Biden	26 March 2022
2.	The long fight to prosecute our father for rape	28 March 2022
3.	Ukraine: Putin will search for a way to save face	16 March 2022
4.	Lucy Letby: Nurse accused of baby murders cleared of one charge	10 June 2022
5.	Ranil Wickremesinghe: Sri Lanka's new prime minister faces uphill battle	12 may 2022

Lexical Ambiguity in BBC News Headline

We have found several headlines that have lexical ambiguity in the March 26 to May 12, 2022 editions.

In this section, we will explain the results of the headlines that we have presented in the table.

1. War in Ukraine: Vladimir Putin cannot remain in power - Biden

From the headline, there are two meanings.

In the first sense, the word "power" in the headline "War in Ukraine: Vladimir Putin cannot remain in power - Biden" can be interpreted as ruling in the war in Ukraine. Meanwhile, in the second sense, "power" can be interpreted if Vladimir Putin is not powerful in the war in Ukraine according to Biden.

2. The long fight to prosecute our father for rape

In the title above "fight" is a word that has an ambiguous meaning. In the first sense, "fight" can be interpreted as the father's struggle for justice. While the second meaning, "fight" can be interpreted if a fight occurring when the father is doing his struggle.

3. Ukraine: Putin will search for a way to save face

From the headline above, there is the word ambiguity, namely "face". The first meaning can be interpreted as reputation, so the title has meaning if Putin saved his reputation. While the second meaning means that if Putin saved his face, it might be because his face was injured.

4. Lucy Letby: Nurse accused of baby murders cleared of one charge.

The headline also has ambiguity in the word "charge". In the first sense, "charge" here is defined as an indictment or accusation. While the second meaning of the word "charge" in the headline is defined as charged, or a nurse accused of murder can be released on bail.

5. Rani Wickremesinghe: Sri Lanka's new prime minister faces uphill battle

First meaning, in the first meaning, "uphill" becomes an ambiguous word and can be meaningful if the battle takes place on an uphill road. In the second meaning, "uphill" can be interpreted if the battle has not found a bright spot and is getting hotter or will reach its peak

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis that has been conducted by the researchers, it can be concluded that the news headlines which seem fine, are having two interpretations

for some people. The interpretation can happen because of the way the reader reads that emphasizes a word or because the reader stops for a moment in a different part. Another reason is because of the readers' knowledge and vocabulary of the readers which allows them to interpret one word with different terms.

Based on the conclusion, the researcher implied that structural ambiguity occurs when the reader places the function word/phrase in a different word. A sentence will be formed if there is

a noun phrase and a verb phrase or additional prepositional phrases can be added as well. Readers often associate these types of phrases with different functions, resulting in 2 interpretations in a single sentence. While for lexical ambiguity, the researcher concludes that the knowledge of readers is different so that they can understand a word with different meanings. This is supported if the meaning of a word will make sense in the sentence even though the word has a different meaning.

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