

## **Analysis of Difficulties in Understanding Ambiguous Meaning in Recount Text of the Tenth Grade Students of Senior High School 12 Palembang**

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**Abstract:** The title of this research “Analysis of Difficulties in Understanding Ambiguous Meaning in Recount Text of the Tenth Grade Students of Senior High School 12 Palembang.” The objective of this study to find out the problems in understanding ambiguous meaning in the recount text faced by the tenth-grade students of Senior High School 12 Palembang. Qualitative method was used in this study. 10 students in the tenth grade were chosen as the participants in this study. The result showed that the students were difficult in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text especially lexical ambiguity and the participants were not able to answer a lot of ambiguous meaning which means that the students’ knowledge of ambiguous meaning greatly needs to be increased to know kinds of ambiguous. There are four reasons why the students felt difficult in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text: ambiguous sentence has confusing meanings; ambiguous sentence is difficult because they had to analyze all parts of the sentence without any mistakes; ambiguous sentence is difficult because they had to analyze the deepest meaning from the sentence that showed an ambiguity; and ambiguous meaning is difficult because it has more than one meaning.

**Keywords:** *Analysis of students’ difficulties, ambiguous meaning, on recount text*

In English, there are many kinds of writing texts. One of the texts is recount text. Recount is a piece of text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they happened. Some students can make some mistakes. One of the mistakes is related to ambiguous meaning in recount text. Ambiguity belongs to the text that has two or more than one meaning in the sentences. Ambiguity (and ambiguous) comes from the Latin ambiguous. Ambiguity may be used to refer either to something (such as a word) which has multiple meanings, or to more general state of uncertainty.

Semantics, in the broadest sense, is the study of meaning. It is, however, more usual within linguistics to interpret the term narrowly, concern on the study of the aspects of meaning which are encoded in linguistic expressions and are independent of their use on particular speech community. In other words, Semantics is the study of meaning abstracted away from those aspects that are derived from the intensions of speakers, their psychological states and those the socio-cultural aspects of the context in which their utterances are made.

Some students were difficult in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text. Some examples of student difficulties are illustrated in the following examples:

*I saw her duck. He fed her duck food.*

The students were difficult to analyze whether the sentence is ambiguous or not. Referring to the problem, the writer conducted the research about the analysis of difficulties in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text of the tenth-grade students of Senior High School 12 Palembang. The focus of the study is in form of investigating difficulties in understanding ambiguous meaning commonly found in recount text faced by the tenth-grade students of Senior High School 12 Palembang in academic year 2019/2020.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concept of Ambiguous Meaning**

#### ***Definition of Semantic***

According to Wagiman (2008), semantic is the study of meaning in language. It is a fact that meaning is a part of language, but this definition has not been clearly delineated and given fair treatment in the study of language until very recently. In traditional linguistics, language is viewed as the vocabulary which is contained in literary works. In the study of language, language definitions are sometimes based on meaning, and sometimes on function. The semanticist Leech (1983) states that linguistic competence consists of a phonological representation, a syntactic representation, and a semantic representation for analysis the sentence. The word semantics itself denotes a range of ideas -- from the popular to the highly technical. It is often used in ordinary language for denoting a problem of understanding that comes down to word selection or connotation. Semantics as a field of study also has significant ties to various representational theories of meaning including truth theories of meaning, coherence theories of meaning, and correspondence theories of meaning. Each of these is related to the general philosophical study of reality and the representation of meaning.

### **Concept of Sentence**

Sentence is a group of words that expresses a statement, question, command, or wish. In other definition sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. In other words, sentence is constructed by some words that has a meaning.

#### ***Part of Sentence***

The parts of the sentence are a set of terms for describing how people construct sentences from smaller pieces. There is not a direct correspondence between the parts of the sentence and the parts of speech, for example: The subject of a sentence, could be a noun, a pronoun, or even an entire phrase or clause. Like the parts of speech, however, the parts of the sentence

form part of the basic vocabulary of grammar, and it is important that the writers take some time to learn and understand them. The parts of sentence are subject, object, and predicate. Subject is a noun or pronoun that does, causes, or receives the action of the verb. It has gender, number, and person. While object of a sentence receives the action of the verb. Then, predicate is the portion of the sentence containing the verb. A predicate says something about the subject of the sentence.

Therefore, it is concluded that subject, object, and predicate are important elements that must be mastered by the writers.

### ***Sentence Meaning***

According to Devitt and Stereny (1999) in Wagiman (2008), “Human beings apply the principle of referent and structure to understand the conceptual meaning of a sentence.” The principle of referent refers to the conceptual meaning of the words which are embodied in the sentence, while the principle of structure the organization or combination of the words to form a sentence by means of structural rules. In the sentence “The knife is sharp,” two words have conceptual meaning, knife and sharp. The conceptual meaning of knife is inanimate, a tool, made of metal, having a blade, to cut things. The conceptual meaning of sharp is with a fine cutting edge, state, relative. Based of statement above, we know that sentence meaning depends on conceptual meaning and the conceptual meaning is influenced by word meaning. In the word meaning, sense is the meaning of words, without any relation to the world outside of language. In sentence meaning, sense is the meaning of a sentence, without any relation to the world outside of language which is called context. Sense relation is the relation of meaning of sentences, particularly the basic statements. The kinds of sense relation are Paraphrase or Synonymy, Entailment, Presupposition, Contradiction, Tautology, Inconsistency, Anomaly, and Ambiguity.

There are two kinds of sense relation which often have difficulties by the readers to understanding the sentences. They are ambiguity and anomaly sentence. A string with exactly one interpretation is unambiguous, one with no interpretation is anomalous, and one with multiple interpretations is ambiguous. It is concluded that ambiguity is one of the kinds of sense relation that has more than one meaning.

### ***Ambiguous Meaning***

It may seem as though little need to be said about ambiguity in that it is a clear cut-phenomenon which both words and sentences can have more than one meaning (Kempson, 1977:123). Moreover, Cann (1993:8) states that a sentence is said to be ambiguous whenever

it can be associated with two or more different meanings. Both Cann and Kempson agree that ambiguous words, phrases or sentences have more than one interpretation. To figure out the exact meaning or the message conveyed in the ambiguous words or sentences, it demands the specific context. The first sort of ambiguity occurs where an expression is associated with two or more unrelated meaning.

A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning. Obviously, this definition does not say what meanings are or what it is for an expression to have one (or more than one). For a particular language, this information is provided by a grammar, which systematically pairs forms with meanings, ambiguous forms with more than one meaning. 1) There are factors which cause phrase or sentence be ambiguous. Ambiguity occurred because there is a difference of grammatical interpretation. This case commonly happens in written language. For example, “The new History book.” There is more than one meaning of that phrase:

- (1) The History book is new,
- (2) The book talks about new History.

May the ambiguity be because of word “new” which is in construction, it can explain “History book”, and also only “History”. In addition to grammatical interpretation, ambiguity can also occur because of Homonym, and the context of the phrase or sentence is unclear, for example: “John went to the bank yesterday.” There are more than one meaning:

- (1) John went to the edge of the river yesterday,
- (2) John went to the place to save or take his money.

According to the discussion above, we know that the ambiguity can occur in written language which caused by grammatical interpretation. However, ambiguity can also occur in spoken language, although intonation is correct. In this case, ambiguity occurs because there is wrong in constructing the word in phrase or sentence. On the other words, ambiguity not only occurs in written language but also in spoken language.

Empson (1949) differentiates 7 types of ambiguity which divides them in 3 kinds; there are Phonetic Ambiguity, Lexical Ambiguity, and Grammatical Ambiguity.

Phonetic Ambiguity occurred by mingle with language sounds utterance. Sometimes, because the sentence utterance so fast, people who hear that to be doubt about the purpose of the sentence which utterance. That’s all about hesitancy in sound of language. Sometimes because of the hesitation in sound of language, someone determines the meaning that unsuitable with the purpose of the speaker. As we can see in the following example:

(1) a near and an ear

(2) fifteen and fifty.

Based on the explanation above, to avoid the negative effect of this type, someone has to ask about the words which he heard. By asking the ambiguous meaning after listening it, the meaning will be clarified. For more example:

(1) She, see, and sea;

(2) Shell, and cell.

Based on the words above, someone can get a false meaning and become ambiguity.

In Lexical Ambiguity, each word can have more than one meaning. A word can have different meaning because of different place where is the word used. Ambiguity of this type can be divided into 2 (two) aspects. The first aspect is the same as Polysemy. Palmer (1976) says “it is also the case that the same word may have a set of different meanings”. Simpson (1981: 179) says, “A word which has two (or more) related meanings”, whereas Zgusta (1971) says, “All the possible senses the possible senses the word has”. Therefore, it causes the hesitation in meaning of the sentence. The listener or reader is confused to interpret them.

Second, there are words that have the same sound but different in meaning. This is Homonymy. Lyons (1995) says “homonyms are two different words which are written identically and sound identical”. Furthermore, Verhaar (2010) divides homonym into several types. The first is homonym which occurs inter-sentence, for example, “Flying planes can be dangerous.” It can mean weather to fly planes can be dangerous or planes that are air bone can be dangerous. The second one is homonym which occurs inter-phrase, for example, “The love of God” and “God’s love.” The last one is homonym which occurs inter-word, for example, *Read* as verb base and *Read* in past participle.

### **Concept of Recount Text**

#### ***Definition of Recount Text***

In the context of communication, sometimes we want to tell other people about something so activities we did in the past, such as leisure activities, seminars and others. In the context of written language, the information can be packaged in a recount text. Recount is a piece of text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they happened. The purpose of a recount text is to give the audience a description of what happened and when it happened. Recount text is a text that telling the reader about one story, action or activity. Its goal is to entertain or inform the reader. Generic structure of recount text consists of orientation which introduces the participants, place and time, event(s) which describes series

of event that happened in the past, and reorientation which states personal comment of the writer.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

There are many research methods that can be applied in researching into ambiguity in recount text, either quantitative or qualitative. It depends on the purpose of the research. In this research, the writer decided to choose qualitative method to know how writing ability of the students in recount text, especially ambiguity in recount text.

In conducting the research, the writer chose some tenth-grade students of Senior High School 12 Palembang in academic year 2019/2020 as the participants to know the students writing recount text performance. Besides, the writer also interviewed the teacher to get the data related about students' ambiguity. To get the data the writer used some instruments. The instruments are as follow:

Observation is an activity in which the research takes field notes on the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. Here researcher used non participant observation in which the researcher did not directly interact with the participant. The thing that was observed in this research was the students' difficulties in ambiguous meaning in recount text.

Interview used in qualitative research is opened interview. It is used to know casual relationship among aspect of the research. It means that the participants can answer the questions using their own words freely. In interview, the researcher conducted face to face interviews with participants, interviewed participants by telephone, or engaged in focus group with six to eight interviewees in each group. In this case, the researcher interviewed the students to gain the data about understanding ambiguous meaning in the recount text.

Documentation was used to get data about the organization structure of the tenth-grade students of Senior High School 12 Palembang in academic year 2019/2020. The data were the organization structure, school profile, the name of teachers and students.

The important part in research study was analyzing data, because the result became a conclusion from all of the research. The analysis of data has some functions including: to make the raw data meaningful, to test null hypothesis, to get the significant result, to describe inferences or make generalization, and to calculate parameters.

## **RESEARCH FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

Referring to the interview result, the researcher found out the student's difficulties in ambiguous meaning in recount text. There are four reasons why the students felt difficult in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text. They said that:

- a) ambiguous sentence has confusing meanings;
- b) ambiguous sentence is difficult because they had to analyze all parts of the sentence without any mistakes;
- c) ambiguous sentence is difficult because they had to analyze the deepest meaning from the sentence that showed an ambiguity;
- d) ambiguous meaning is difficult because it has more than one meaning.

The data analysis described that most students felt very difficult in understanding ambiguous sentences in recount text. From the interview result, the average percentage of students' difficulties in understanding ambiguous sentences in recount text started in the question 1 up to question number 5 is 76%. Even though all of the students were able to find out ambiguous meaning, most of them did not explain which the ambiguity in word or phrases of the sentences were. The students didn't know the meaning deeply.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the result of the data analysis, there are two conclusions can be drawn. The first, the students were very difficult in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text especially lexical ambiguity. The second, 10 students, as the participants, were not able to answer a lot of ambiguous meaning which means that the students' knowledge of ambiguous meaning greatly needs to be increased to know kinds of ambiguous meaning, and can explain ambiguous meaning in the sentences especially in recount text.

There are four reasons why the students felt difficult in understanding ambiguous meaning in recount text. They said that ambiguous sentence has confusing meanings; ambiguous sentence is difficult because they had to analyze all parts of the sentence without any mistakes; ambiguous sentence is difficult because they had to analyze the deepest meaning from the sentence that showed an ambiguity; and ambiguous meaning is difficult because it has more than one meaning.

After conducting this research, we could know the difficulties faced by students in understanding ambiguous meaning. It can be said that students need to improve their understanding about kind of ambiguous meaning and the causes of the ambiguity. In addition,

students must also have strong will to learn not only inside but also outside class, because learning new language cannot be done only in class environment.

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