A STUDY OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ARTICLES OF *LIFE & TIMES*

COLUMN IN THE *JAKARTA GLOBE* NEWSPAPER

RESEACH PAPER

Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Getting

Bachelor Degree of Education in English Department.

Written by:

<u>**IKHA MUFLIKHAH MAHARANI**</u>

A 320 080 201

SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION

MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA

2012

APPROVAL

A STUDY OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ARTICLES OF "LIFE & TIMES"
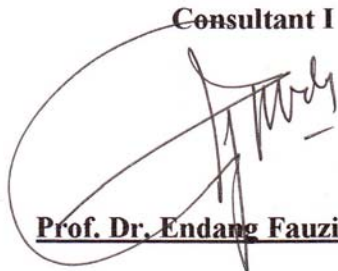## COLUMN IN THE *JAKARTA GLOBE* NEWSPAPER

Presented by:

IKHA MUFLIKHAH MAHARANI

A 320 080 201

Approved to be examined by Consultant:

Consultant I   Consultant II

Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M. Hum   **Dra. Dwi Haryanti, M. Hum.**

NIK.274   NIK. 477

ACCEPTANCE

A STUDY OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ARTICLES OF "LIFE & TIMES"

COLUMN IN THE *JAKARTA GLOBE* NEWSPAPER

Accepted by the Board of Examiners

School of Teacher Training and Education

Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta

On October   , 2012

The Board of Examiners:

1. **Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M. Hum**
   (Chair Person)   (........................)

2. **Dra. Dwi Haryanti, M. Hum.**
   (Member I)   (........................)

3. **Drs. Maryadi, M. A.**
   (Member II)   (........................)

Dean

Drs. Sofyan Anif, M. Si
NIK. 547

iii

A STUDY OF AMBIGUITY IN THE ARTICLES OF "LIFE & TIMES" COLUMN IN THE *JAKARTA GLOBE* NEWSPAPER

Ikha Muflikhah Maharani
A320080201
Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M. Hum.
Dra. Dwi Haryanti, M. Hum.
English Department, School of Teacher Training and Education
Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS)
E-mail: d_ranzt@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The research deals with the ambiguity which is reflected in the articles of Life & Times column in the Jakarta Globe newspaper. The aims of the research are (1) to describe what the types of ambiguity, (2) to describe the dominant ambiguity, and (3) to describe the reasons of the ambiguous sentences. The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. The data source of this research is headline news articles of Life & Times column in the Jakarta Globe newspaper in Desember 2011. The data collection technique is documentation. The technique of data analysis are having a list of ambiguous sentences, describing the types of ambiguity and describing the ways to disambiguate those sentences. The writer uses the theories of Kent Bach, Trask and Stockwell, and Kempson to analyze the types of ambiguity. The results of the study show that (1) the writer finds all the types of ambiguity namely: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity, (2) the dominant types of ambiguity is structural ambiguity, and (3) the two main sources of the reasons of ambiguous sentence are word order and word meaning. There are also the ways to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences, namely: paraphrasal and truth conditional selection. The frequency of each type of ambiguity are: (1) Structural ambiguity with 15 surface structure ambiguity or 37, 5 % and 13 deep structure ambiguity or 32, 5 %, and (2) Lexical ambiguity with 12 number of ambiguous sentences or 30 %.

Keywords: *Ambiguity, lexical, structural, paraphrasal, truth conditional*

A. Introduction

English learning must not be expensive. Newspaper is one of the sources to learn English cheaply. Newspaper belongs to mass media that can improve human's language skill, here, English. Newspaper reaches all of human's society class. Mass media plays an important role in human's life. Newspaper may contain information about what is happening in the world, city or local

community. But not all people can understand the meaning or the intention of those sentences. It may be confusing and appears more than one interpretation in someone's mind. That case is called ambiguous sentences. They must be careful choosing the interpretations, so they cannot come out of the context in that article. So the writer conducts the research about ambiguity in *Jakarta Globe* newspaper.

There are some previous studies related to this study. The first study of ambiguity has been carried out by Diana Kusumawati (2001). She has done her research entitled *The Study of Ambiguity in the Articles of Hello Magazine.* Her purposes of the study are to know whether the two types of ambiguity appear in the articles of *Hello* English magazine and to know which of the two types of ambiguity, structural ambiguity and lexical ambiguity, mostly appear in the articles of *Hello* English magazine. In data analyzing, she uses Andrew Radford and Diane D. Bomstein's theories to analyze the structural ambiguities and uses Jacob and Rosenbaums' theories to analyze the lexical ambiguity in *Hello* magazine.

The second research has been finished by Luqman Al Hakim (2009). He conducted his study *A Study of the Ambiguity Found in English Test for Junior High School Students*. He focused on the types of ambiguity found in English exercise books for Junior High School students, the frequency of each type of ambiguity, and the way to disambiguate of the ambiguous sentences. To analyze his data, he collecting, classifying, and analyzing the data based on the types of ambiguity, the frequency of each type of ambiguity. Then he presented and discussed the ways to disambiguate of the sentences and made conclusion based on the data analysis. In his conclusion, the writer found the methods to disambiguate the ambiguous sentence, namely; paraphrase selection and truth conditional selection. Both of method expected to resolve the problem about ambiguous sentences in the English exercise books for Junior High School students.

The writer uses some related theories in this study. A word, phrase or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning (Craig, 1998: 198). It is

also a single sequence of words may be yield more than one interpretations because of different possible relations among deep or surface structure elements or simply because one of the words has more than one meaning (Altmann and Gerry, 2002: 140).

There are two types, namely: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity is the simplest type of ambiguity which merely from the existence of two different meanings for a single words (Trask and Stockwell, 2007: 14).

Structural ambiguity is the words that have the same meanings, but quite different structures can be assigned to the entire string of words, producing different meanings (Trask and Stockwell, 2007: 14).

Structural ambiguity is divided into two types, namely: surface structure ambiguity and deep structure ambiguity. Surface structure ambiguity occurs when the words of a sentence can be grouped or bracketed (unlabelled) in two different ways with each bracketing expression a different interpretation (Chapman, Foot, and Derks, 1996: 13). Meanwhile deep structure is the level at which an ambiguous sentence is given two (more than one) characterization if the interpretations of the sentence have different syntactic properties (Kempson, 1977: 180)

The writer simplifies the reasons of ambiguous sentence from Donald K. Messer and Sir William Empson into two reasons, namely: (1) Word order and (2) Word meaning. In word order, the position of words in sentence is the principal means of showing their relationship. People should together words that are related and separate words that are not related. In other hand, problem of word meaning occurs when one word or phrase is open to several possible interpretations.

It also available the way to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences, namely: paraphrasal and truth conditional. Paraphrasal comes from the word *paraphrase* which means expressing the same meaning with a different words. Paraphrasal Selection means choosing between less ambiguous paraphrases of the original sentence (Pool, 2007: 1).

In other hands, truth conditional selection is a way to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences by telling stories. Truth conditional selection tasks might be easier because they tell stories, and people are skilled at using stories to illustrate or contradict truth claims (Pool, 2007).

From the explanation above, the writer formulate the problem statements of this study, such as (1)What are the types of ambiguity reflected in the articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper?, (2)What is the dominant type of ambiguity found in the articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper?, and (3)What are the reasons of the ambiguous sentences?

So, the objectives of the study are (1)To describe what the types of ambiguity reflected in the articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper, (2)To show what the dominant type of ambiguity in the articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper, and (3)To describe the reasons of the ambiguous sentences

B. Research Method

The research method of this study is elaborated into five points, namely: type of the study, object of the study, data and data source, data collection technique and data analysis technique. (1) Type of the study, the writer uses descriptive qualitative method because the writer describes the types of ambiguity which appeared in the headline news articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper. (2) Object of the study is all of ambiguous sentences found in the headline news articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper in December 2011. (3) Data and data source, data of this study is ambiguous sentence in the headline news articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper in December 2011. Data source of this study is the 27 headline news articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper in December 2011. (4) Data collection technique, the writer uses documentation as the data collection technique. The steps are reading the headline news articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe*

newspaper, observing and selecting the ambiguous sentences and making a list of ambiguous sentences. (5) Data analysis technique, the procedures of analysing the data are having a list of ambiguous sentence in the headline news articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe* newspaper, describing the types of ambiguity and describing the ways to disambiguate those sentences.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

This part presents the research finding and the discussion of research finding. It will answer the problem statement of this study.

1. Research Finding

Research finding consist of the types of ambiguity, the frequency of each type of ambiguity and the reason of ambiguity.

a. Types of Ambiguity

They are two types of ambiguity, namely: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. Structural ambiguity itself is divided into deep structure ambiguity and surface structure ambiguity.

1) Lexical Ambiguity

a) He argued in *court* that he was not fishing in Australian waters… (C1, *Fishermen face troubled waters*)

The sentence above belongs to lexical ambiguity because the word *court* in that sentence contained two interpretations, there are: place where legal cases are heard and space surrounded by walls but without roof. The context of this sentence does not focus the word *court* to be place where legal cases are heard or space surrounded by walls but with no roof. So both interpretations of the word *court* are true to be applied in this sentence above.

b) This *can* take between 30 seconds and about four minutes, after which the shutter is replaced (*Peering Trough Pinhole Cameras*)

The sentence above is ambiguous located in the word *can*. That word has two interpretations, they are: can is a strong form of

modals or contents of such a container. The context of the sentence does not direct the interpretations of the word *can* to be a strong form or modals or contents of such a container. So both interpretations of the word *can* are able to be used in this sentence.

c) Structural Ambiguity

(1) Surface Structure Ambiguity

(a) The ballet academy started by Nanny Lubis in 1956 continues under her daughter's eye (*Dance school dreams on*)

The sentence above is a surface structure ambiguity because the ambiguous sentence has two interpretations. There are: (a) the ballet academy started by Nanny Lubis in 1956 continues under her daughter's eye which is blind and (b) under her daughter's control, Nanny's ballet academy is continued.

(b) We rarely take the yams and corn to take the market to sell (C1, *Broken promises breed discontent*)

The sentence above is said by an Indonesian citizen who is a father of seven. This sentence is ambiguous on its surface level. It is surface structure ambiguity in the structural ambiguity due to it has two different interpretations as follows: (a) That man only takes the yams to be eaten while the corn is sold in the market and (b) That man always takes the yams and the corn to be sold in the market.

(2) Deep Structure Ambiguity

(a) Is your mom single? (*Meet TV's hottest couple*)

This interrogative sentence is given by a man to his friend as a joke. It is ambiguous and it belongs to deep structure ambiguity of the structural ambiguity. It is caused this sentence has two deep structures. There are: (a) Your mom is a single parent and (b) Your mom does not have a husband.

(b) I have been coordinating all the one-on-one sponsorships for this orphanage and several others in the system for the past three years (*To Bali, with love*)

The sentence above is deep structure ambiguity because it has two different deep structures. These are: (a) I have been coordinating the one-on-one sponsorship to be sponsored this orphanage and several orphanages for the past three and (b) I have been coordinating the one-on-one sponsorship and several others sponsorship for this orphanage for the past three years.

b. Frequency of Each Type of Ambiguity

Each types of ambiguity have a different frequency. In this part, the writer wants to show that the total number of finding the ambiguous sentences. The total number of lexical ambiguity is about 12 ambiguous sentences or 30 %. Meanwhile the total number of structural ambiguity is 28 ambiguous sentences with 15 surface structure ambiguous sentences or 37, 5 % and 13 deep structure ambiguous sentences or 32, 5 %. The dominant type of ambiguity is structural ambiguity.

c. The Reasons of the Ambiguous Sentences

The writer simplifies the main sources of ambiguity into two, namely: word meaning and word order.

1) Word Meaning

a) He argued in *court* that he was not fishing in Australian waters… (C1, *Fishermen face troubled waters*)

This sentence is ambiguous in the word meaning of the word *court*. This sentence may be eliminated by paraphrasal selection as follows: (1) He argued in court behind his house that he was not fishing in Australian waters, and (2) He argued in the court hall that he was not fishing in Australian waters. From the paraphrase, it is clear that in (a) court is such a wide open space without roof and (b) court to be place which legal cases are heard.

It is clear that *court* here is a place which legal cases are heard. Hence, it better says *he argued in <u>the court hall</u> that he was not fishing in Australian waters.*

b) Is your mom single? (*Meet TV's hottest couple*)

This ambiguous sentence above is caused by the word meaning. This ambiguous sentence really needs to look at the context of the sentence to make it unambiguous. It may be eliminated by truth conditional selection, as follow: (1) Is your mom single parent?, and (2) Doesn't your mom have a husband?. From the paraphrase, the writer wants to show that in (a) by adding parent after the word *single* means that "your mom" is a single parent and (b) in the reality, mother has been married before born a child but in this context of joke, the speaker asked whether "your mom" has a husband or not. Based on the context of the sentence, it is clear that the meaning of the sentence above cab be revealed in *doesn't your mom have a husband?*

2) Word Order

a) So as time progressed, we had an increasing number of girls sponsored (*To Bali, with love*)

This sentence belongs to ambiguous sentence because of it is word order. It can be grouped in the syntactic error. This sentence may be solved by truth conditional selection, as follow: (1) We had an increasing number of orphanage girls to be sponsored, and (2) We had an increasing number of rich girls sponsored. From the paraphrase, it is clear that in (a) the orphanage girls is sponsored and (b) rich girls are the sponsor. Those paraphrases give more emphasis "what the girls did". Looking at the context of the text, the most suitable meaning of the sentence above is in (a) the orphanage girls are sponsored by "we". So it is better to say *we had an increasing number of orphanage girls to be sponsored.*

b) We rarely take the yams and corn to take the market to sell (C1, *Broken promises breed discontent*)

This sentence is ambiguous because of its word order. It is a syntactic error of sentence. This sentence may be solved by truth conditional selection, as follow: (1) We only take the baby yams to be eaten while the ripe corn is sold in the market, and (2) We always take the yams and the corn to be sold in the market. From the paraphrase, it is clear that in (a) the yams are eaten by "we" and the corn which is ripe is sold to the market and (b) "we" sold both yams and corn to the market and ate from the money "we" have got. Taking a look of the context of the sentence, the writer takes (b) to be applied in the sentence. This sentence is better said as *we always take the yams and the corn to be sold in the market.*

2. Discussion

This current study result has some differences and similarities from the previous studies. The writer uses the lexical ambiguity and the structural ambiguity from theory of Kent Bach that is similar with Diana's study (2001) that uses two types. Diana uses the theory of Diana D. Boemstein's theory, Andrew Radford's theory and Jacob and Rosebaum's theories to analyze the lexical ambiguity and the structural ambiguity meanwhile the writer uses Trask and Stockwell' theory and Kempson's theory to analyze those two types of ambiguity. Although those two studies use the different theories of ambiguity, those studies have a same result on finding. Diana and the writer find that the structural ambiguity appears much more than the lexical ambiguity.

The result of this research is comparable with Diana's work (2001). The dominant of ambiguity is structural ambiguity although Diana does not divide the structural ambiguity like the writer does. She finds 20 ambiguous sentences with 16 structural ambiguous sentences or 80 % and 4 lexical ambiguous sentences or 20 %. The result of this research is also

inversely proportional to the previous study, Susan Kristianty's work (2006). The dominant ambiguity in her research is lexical ambiguity because the object of her study is *Cleo Magazine* advertisement. This advertisement arranged in a simple sentence which may lexical ambiguity to be in that sentence. Susan uses 15 advertisements in her research. She finds 10 lexical ambiguity sentences and 5 structural ambiguity sentences. The frequency of lexical ambiguity in her research is 66, 67 % meanwhile the frequency of structural ambiguity is 33, 33 %.

The writer uses paraphrasal selection and truth conditional selection to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences. From the five previous studies, only one has a similarity with this current study. That is Luqman Hakim's study (2009). But Luqman disambiguates more lexical ambiguous sentences than structural ambiguous sentences. Almost of all the previous studies use tree diagram method as their way to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences such as Diana Kusumawati (2001), Oey Devhita (2003), and Susan Kristianty (2006) meanwhile Erwin Nugroho (2007) does not use anything ways to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences. He is only interested with what the potentially caused of structural ambiguity is, what the element of Phrase Structure Rules is and what grammar point is.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

Based on the previous part, the writer finds two types of ambiguity, namely: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. The structural ambiguity is divided into two types. they are surface structure ambiguity and deep structure ambiguity. The writer finds all the types of ambiguity although in a different frequency. The writer finds 40 ambiguous sentences. The total number of lexical ambiguity is about 12 ambiguous sentences or 30 %. Meanwhile the total number of structural ambiguity is 28 ambiguous sentences with 15 surface structure ambiguous sentences or 37, 5 % and 13 deep structure ambiguous sentences or 32, 5 %. The dominant type of

ambiguity is structural ambiguity. There are also two main sources of ambiguity, namely: word meaning and word order. To eliminate the ambiguous sentences, the writer uses paraphrasal selection and truth conditional selection.

2. Implication to Language Teaching

This research enriches the student knowledge about ambiguity. Through the notion of ambiguity, student can understand easily whether the sentence is ambiguous or not. It can occur in their exercise books. From the types of ambiguity, the student can differentiate the types of ambiguity. And from the reasons of the ambiguous sentences, the student has to be instructed to make a sentence which is unambiguous by many different ways. From the several benefits there, the teacher can immerse the students to consider the multiplural realities when they read, assess the students' background on reading, make clear the authentic context of their reading and to give clearer understanding how ambiguity is not a huge problem.

3. Suggestion

a. To the future researchers

This research is restricted in the types of ambiguity and the ways to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences. The future researchers can complete it by look at in details of ambiguity. They also can use the other object of the study such as the manuscript of movie, novel, the manuscript of drama and etc. It will be more useful to widening the knowledge before. The writer has a big desire that the other researcher may be in their next research would enrich the knowledge about ambiguity.

b. To the writer of the article

The writer conducts the research focused in the ambiguous sentences found in the articles of *Life & Times* column in the *Jakarta Globe newspaper.* The writer finds 40 ambiguous sentences. It is not a few numbers. The writer thinks that the writer of the articles may be less careful when they write those articles. The writer hopes that the writers of

the article especially newspaper have to be more careful when they write the article. They have to explore the material deeply. The material should analyze first before it is conducted an article.

c. To the editor of the article

The writer of article is impossible working by himself. The writer of article is helped by the editor who proofs the reading before it is printed to be an article. For that reason, the editor of the newspaper has also to be more exact of proofing the article. The writers and the editors should have a great collaboration. They have to coordinate well what they have to do to conduct better their articles. It has to be done to prevent the ambiguous sentences appeared in the articles more.

d. To the language teacher

From this study, the language teacher gets a clearer knowledge about ambiguity. On that ground, the language teacher should be able to explain more about ambiguity. The language teacher can use this study as his references to teach in the classroom. This study shows that ambiguous sentence occurs not only in the exercise book or book related only the language learning. The language teacher can also instruct his student to make unambiguous sentences by looking at the theory of this study. So the student does not arrange the ambiguous sentences more.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Al Hakim, Luqman.2005. *A Study on the Ambiguity Found In English Test For Junior High School Students*. Surakarta: Uneviersitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. Skripsi.

Caron, Jean. 1992. *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. Great Britain: Harvester Wheatsheaf.

Cowles, H. Wind. 2011. *Psycholinguistics 101*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

Dardjowidjojo, Soenjono. 2005. *Psikolinguistik: Pengantar Pemahaman Bahasa Manusia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.

Fauziati, Endang. 2004. *An Introduction to Psycholinguistics*. Surakarta: Muhammadiyah University Press.

Gleason, Jean Barko. 1998. *Psycholinguistics Second Edition*. United States of America: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Yale, George. 2006. *The Study of Language Third Edition.* New York: Cambridge University Press

REFFERENCES

Berthelin, J. B.. 2005. *Strucutural Ambiguity in Context.* (http://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/docs/00/03/71/15/HTML/ambiguity.html). Accessed on June 25th, 2012.

Cabello, Ruben C.. *Tolerance of Ambiguity and Its Implications for Reading.* (www.hltmag.co.uk/oct11/mart04.rtf). Accessed on October 14th, 2012.

Eisinger, Robert M.. 2011. *Teaching Ambiguity.* (http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2011/02/21/eisinger_on_teaching_ambiguity_to_college_students). Accesed on October 14th, 2012.

Pool, Jonathan. 2007. *Paraphrasal and Truth-Conditional Disambiguation of Quantification: Which Works Better? A Pilot Experiment.* (http://utilika.org). Accessed on June 25th, 2012.

Quiroga-Clare, Cecilia. *Language Ambiguity: A Curse and a Blessing.* (http://www.seasite.niu.edu/trans/articles/Language%20Ambiguity.htm). Accessed on October 14th, 2012

Rowland, Gordon. 2003. A Little Ambiguity Can Go a Long Way. *Ambiguity, Cognition, Learning, Teaching, and Design.* (http://www.learndev.org/ambiguity.html). Accessed on October 14th, 2012.

Vaux, Robert. 2012. *Seven Types of Ambiguity.* (http://www.ehow.com/list_6403850 seven-types-ambiguity.html). Accessed on November 02nd, 2012.