

**AMBIGUITY FOUND IN *CREATIVE ENGLISH* TEXTBOOK:
CONTENT ANALYSIS**



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**RIZA FATIMAH
A320 100 195**

**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
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UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURAKARTA
FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN

Jl. A Yani Tromol Pos 1- Pabelan, Kartasura Telp. (0271) 717417 Fax: 715448
Surakarta 57102

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Nama : Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M.Hum.

NIK : 274

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Nama : Riza Fatimah

NIM : A320100195

Program Studi : Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris

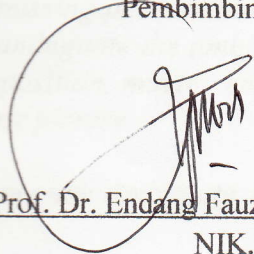
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Pembimbing I


Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M.Hum
NIK. 274

Pembimbing II


Dr. Dwi Haryanti, M.Hum
477

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Riza Fatimah

A320100195

Prof. Dr. Endang Fauziati, M.Hum.

Dr. Dwi Haryanti, M.Hum.

English Department, School of Teacher Training and Education

Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS)

E-mail: fatimah.riza@gmail.com

Phone number: 085643668564

ABSTRACT

This study deals with the ambiguity that is found in Creative English textbook. The aims of this research are (1) to describe the types of ambiguity, (2) to describe the frequency of each types of ambiguity, (3) to describe the dominant types of ambiguity, (4) to describe the causes of the ambiguous sentences, and (5) to describe the ways to disambiguate ambiguity. The type of this research is descriptive qualitative research. The data of this research are all ambiguous English words, phrases, or sentences which found in Creative English textbook. The data collection technique is documentation. The technique of data analysis is descriptive qualitative. The researcher uses the theories of Kreidler, Fauziati, Prideaux and Baker to analyze the types of ambiguity. The results of the research show that (1) the researcher finds all the types of ambiguity, there are: lexical ambiguity, referential ambiguity, surface structure ambiguity, and deep structure ambiguity; (2) the frequency of each type of ambiguity are lexical ambiguity consists of 34 ambiguous sentences (17, 44%), referential ambiguity consists of 140 ambiguous sentences (71, 79%), surface structure ambiguity consists of 17 ambiguous sentences (8, 72%), and deep structure ambiguity consists of 4 ambiguous sentences (2, 05%); (3) the dominant types of ambiguity is referential ambiguity; (4) the causes of ambiguity are without context, ambiguous word order, improper or missing punctuation, and faulty pronoun reference; and (5) the ways to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences are by using paraphrasing, adding preposition, moving sentence construction, adding additional context, and using picture.

Keywords: *Ambiguity, lexical, referential, structural, English textbook*

A. Background of the Study

Language is an inseparable thing for human to communicate with others. Understanding language is not easy, need an effort to understand it. Understanding written language is more difficult than oral language because it allowing the readers to make many interpretations. That is why learning English is very important for students to understand the content of books and gain a lot of knowledge.

Students may feel confuse about the meaning of the sentences in *Creative English* textbook, because occasionally has more than one interpretations in mind. This case is called ambiguous sentences. Students have to be careful when interpreting sentences. That is why the researcher interested to analyzes the ambiguity found in *Creative English* textbook.

Textbook is one of tool to gain more knowledge, but not all textbooks are good for learning. *Creative English* textbook is not suitable to use in the school because there are many ambiguous sentences that found in it.

There are some previous studies related to this research. The first researcher is Atik Pramitasih (UMS, 2012). Her research entitled “A Study on the Ambiguity Found in English Exercises of Vocational School Students Exercise Book”. Her aims of the study were; to describe the types of ambiguity, to describe the frequency of each types of ambiguity, to describe the dominant types of ambiguity, to describe the reasons of the ambiguous sentences. The type of her study was qualitative research. She used Hurford Heasley and James and Kreidler theory for lexical and syntactical ambiguity. She found two types of ambiguity; lexical and structural ambiguity and also the way to disambiguate ambiguity, there are paraphrasing, adding preposition of, moving sentence construction, adding additional context, using hyphen (-) and using pictures.

The second researcher is Maharani (UMS, 2012). Her research entitled “*A Study of Ambiguity in the Articles of Life & Times Column in the Jakarta Globe Newspaper*”. Her aims of the research are: to describe what the types of ambiguity, to describe the dominant ambiguity, and to describe the reasons of the ambiguous sentences. Her type of research was descriptive qualitative method. She found two types of ambiguity, namely: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. There are also two main source of ambiguity, namely: word meaning and word order. To eliminate the ambiguous sentences, she uses paraphrasal selection and truth conditional selection.

There are many reasons why the writer select and analyze the data source, because ; (1) textbook is one of the media that almost teachers and students use it for teaching or learning, and (2) the writer can find the example of ambiguity in *Creative English* textbook.

The researcher uses some related theories in this study. Kreidler (1998:298) states, “Ambiguity is the condition whereby any linguistic form has two or more interpretations”. Prideux and Baker states “two basic types of ambiguity have been discussed by linguists: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity” (1976: 1).

Kreidler states “when homonyms can occur in the same position in utterances, the result is lexical ambiguity, as in, for example, “I was on my way to the bank.” Of course, the ambiguity is not likely to be sustained in a longer discourse. A following utterance, for example, is likely to carry information about depositing or withdrawing money, on the other hand, or, on the other hand, fishing or boating” (2002: 55).

Referential ambiguity occurs when the context does not make clear whether a referring expression is being used specifically or not; when the interpretation of a referring expression can be collective or distributed; and when it is not clear to which of two or more referring expressions an anaphoric item is linked Kreidler (2002: 153). Kinds of referential ambiguity according to Kreidler (2002: 151-152) are: 1) an

indefinite referring expression may be specific or not, 2) anaphora is unclear because a personal pronoun, *he*, *she*, *it* or *they*, can be linked to either of two referring expressions, 3) the pronoun *you* is used generically or specifically, and 4) a noun phrase with *every* can have distributed reference or collected reference.

According to Kreidler (1998:169), structural ambiguity may be in the surface structure of a sentence: words can cluster together in different possible constructions. Structural ambiguity may also be in the deep structure: one sequence of words may have more than one interpretation, generally because the rules of sentence construction allow ellipsis, the deletion of what is 'understood.' Structural ambiguity is divided into two types, namely: surface structure ambiguity and deep structure ambiguity. Surface structure ambiguity refers to those sentences in which the surface string can be bracketed in two distinct ways, one for each of the meanings (Prideaux and Baker, 1976: 2). Kinds of surface structure ambiguity according to Kreidler (1998: 169-170) are: 1) constructions containing the coordinators *and* and *or*, 2) a coordinate head with one modifier, 3) a head with a coordinate modifier, 4) a head with an inner modifier and an outer modifier, 5) a complement and modifier or two complements, and 6) certain function.

Structural ambiguity may also be in the deep structure: one sequence of words may have more than one interpretation, generally because the rules of sentence construction allow ellipsis, the deletion of what is 'understood' (Kreidler, 1998:169). Kreidler (1998: 170) divided kinds of deep-structure ambiguity into three types. There are; 1) gerund+ object or participle modifying a noun, 2) adjective+ infinitive, tied to subject or to complement and 3) ellipsis in comparative constructions.

The researcher simplifies the causes of ambiguity from some linguists; without context (Reed), ambiguous word order (Mohunen and

Portunen), improper or missing punctuation (Lamb), and faulty pronoun reference (Hasnain).

Some linguists proposed different ways to disambiguate ambiguity, namely; paraphrasing (Hurford, Heasley and Smith), adding preposition (Bhaskara), moving sentence construction (Schlenker), adding additional context (Reed), and using picture (Barnard).

Limitation of the Study is to analyze the lexical and structural ambiguity found in *Creative English* textbook. **Problem Statements of the Study** are; What are the types of ambiguity found in *Creative English* textbook? What is the frequency of each types of ambiguity? What type of ambiguity that dominantly appears? What are the causes of the ambiguous sentences? and How do the ways to disambiguate ambiguity? **Objectives of this Study** are to describe the types of ambiguity, to describe the frequency of each types of ambiguity, to describe the dominant types of ambiguity, to describe the causes of the ambiguous sentences, and to describe the ways to disambiguate ambiguity.

B. Research Methodology

The type of this study is qualitative research. The object of this research is finding and analyzing all English words, phrases, or sentences which contain ambiguity in *Creative English* textbook. The ambiguous sentences on this study attain 195 ambiguous sentences. The source of data of this research was *Creative English* textbook published in Jakarta by Erlangga publisher in 2006. The data of this research are collected using documentation method. The technique of the data analysis is using descriptive qualitative.

C. Research Finding and Discussion

The researcher found 195 ambiguous sentences in *Creative English* textbook. There are 34 lexical ambiguities, 140 referential ambiguities, 17 surface structure ambiguities, and 4 deep structure ambiguities.

1. The Types of Ambiguity

The types of ambiguity which found are lexical ambiguity, referential ambiguity, surface structure ambiguity, and deep structure ambiguity.

a. Lexical Ambiguity

There are two types of lexical ambiguity, namely; homonyms and polysemes. There are 34 sentences containing lexical ambiguity in the textbook.

1) Homonymy

There are 29 sentences which including in homonyms which found in *Creative English* textbook, such as; In densely populated cities, noise pollution can be a *grave* health problem. (*Creative English*: 37). The ambiguity exists because the word *grave* may have two different meanings in that sentence. The meanings are: (1) Serious, and (2) hole in the ground for a dead body.

2) Polysemes

There are 5 sentences that belong to polysemes, for example; her *homework* should be finished by today. (*Creative English*: 45). The noun *homework*, for instance, seems to have related meanings when we say mathematic *homework*, biology *homework*, and history *homework*.

b. Referential Ambiguity

There are 140 sentences that belong to referential ambiguity that found in the textbook. There are four types of referential ambiguity as follow:

1) An Indefinite Referring Expression May be Specific or Not

The *shop* has been closed by Lena and Sally. (*Creative English*: 45). Here *shop* may refer to a specific *shop* or some

shop, any *shop*. The ambiguity disappears if we add, on the one hand, *but they couldn't finish it* or, on the other hand, *but they couldn't finish one*.

2) Anaphora is Unclear Because A Personal Pronoun, *he*, *she*, *it* or *they*, Can be Linked to Either of Two Referring Expressions

He does *his* work carefully. (*Creative English*: 33). The sentence contains unclear anaphora. ('He does his own work carefully' or 'he does other man's work carefully').

3) The Pronoun *you* is Used Generically or Specifically

Do *you* like music? (*Creative English*: 44). The pronoun *you* are ambiguous. (Is *you* the addressee or is this sentence a general platitude?)

4) A Noun Phrase with *every* Can Have Distributed Reference or Collected Reference

Everyone is fantastic! (*Creative English*: 81). The sentence has more than reference. (All persons are fantastic or each person who is fantastic?)

c. Surface Structure Ambiguity

There are 17 sentences that include on surface structure ambiguity from the textbook.

1) Constructions containing the coordinators *and* and *or*.

Yesterday, *Jessie*, *my friend* and *I* were on our way to school. (*Creative English*: 1). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ([*Jessie*, *my friend*] [*and I*], [*Jessie*, *my friend and I*]).told me]).

2) A Coordinate Head with One Modifier

The servant *feeds the cat* and *washes the floor* every other day. (*Creative English*: 45). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. (The servant [*feeds the cat* and

washes the floor], [the servant feeds the cat] and [washes the floor]).

3) A Head with A Coordinate Modifier

One way to minimize the cost is by *exchanging books with friends*. (*Creative English*: 63). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ([by exchanging] [books with friends], [by exchanging books] [with friends]).

4) A Head with An Inner Modifier and An Outer Modifier

Fast food restaurants offer ready-cooked food, which can be eaten on the spot or taken away. (*Creative English* textbook: 47). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ([Fast] [food restaurants], [fast food] [restaurants]).

5) A Complement and Modifier or Two Complements

The students recycled the *old paper in the laboratory*. (*Creative English*: 32). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ([recycled the old paper] [in the laboratory], [recycled] [the old paper in the laboratory])

6) Certain Function Words

The old woman *spoke to them on the road*. (*Creative English*: 2). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ([The old woman spoke to them] [on the road], [the old woman spoke] [to them on the road]).

d. Deep Structure Ambiguity

There are 4 sentences that include on deep structure ambiguity from the textbook.

1) Gerund + Object or Participle Modifying A Noun

Declaring someone is not guilty. (*Creative English*: 22). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ('Declaring someone is not guilty' or 'someone declaring is not guilty').

2) Adjective + Infinitive, Tied to Subject or to Complement

It's *ridiculous to suggest* that I'm millionaire. (*Creative English* textbook: 16). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ('ridiculous for me that I'm millionaire' or 'ridiculous for others that I'm millionaire').

3) Ellipsis in Comparative Constructions

The boss liked you *more than* he likes me. (*Creative English*: 59). The sentence is ambiguous because has more than one constructions. ('boss liked you more than boss likes me' or 'boss liked you more than someone likes me').

2. The Frequency and the Dominant Type of Ambiguity

The researcher found 195 sentences which are ambiguous. The researcher found 34 lexical ambiguity (17, 44%), 140 referential ambiguity (71, 79%), 17 surface structure ambiguity (8, 72%), and 4 deep structure ambiguity (2, 05%). The type of ambiguity which dominantly appears is referential ambiguity, because the total sentences of referential ambiguities are 140 sentences (71, 79%).

3. The Causes of the Ambiguous Sentence

Some reasons cause linguistics form may have more than one interpretation. All human languages are ambiguous because of several causes.

a. Without Context (Reed Concept)

Reed on his book clarified that ambiguity is statements with more than one meaning that, without context, may be interpreted inaccurately (2005: 189). The example is: '*She cannot bear children*'. First interpretation tells us that she cannot pregnant, but second interpretation means that she cannot tolerate children.

b. Ambiguous Word Order (Mohunen and Portunen Concept)

Mohunen and Portunen (2012: 3) states "In both of the linguistic issues (structural ambiguity and lexical ambiguity), the possible ambiguity is primarily caused by word order". '*It has*

proven that people are more likely to get sick when they are too busy or worried'. The word *sick* means 'ill' or 'unpleasant'. The ambiguous sentence above will be interpreted into two interpretations: 1) It has proven that people are more likely to get ill when they are too busy or worried and 2) It has proven that people are more likely to get unpleasant when they are too busy or worried.

c. Improper or Missing Punctuation (Lamb Concept)

Missing punctuation leads to much ambiguity. 'She was killed by *someone with a knife*'. (*Creative English*: 75) The missing of punctuation makes the sentence above ambiguous. The reader will confuse on the real meaning whether it is 'someone killed her using a knife' or 'she was killed by someone who brings a knife.' The missing punctuation of the sentence above is round brackets '()'. The unambiguous sentences are as follows. 'She was killed by someone (with a knife)' or 'she was killed by (someone with a knife)'.

d. Faulty Pronoun Reference (Hasnain Concept)

Faulty pronoun reference makes the sentence becomes ambiguous. For example: "Tommy stared at Roger when *he* was on his way home". (*Creative English*: 2) The pronoun 'he' makes us to ask 'who is 'he'?' The question is whether he is Tommy or Roger who was on his way home. The ambiguous sentence above is interpreted into: 'Tommy stared at Roger when he (Tommy) was on his way home' or 'Tommy stared at Roger when he (Roger) was on his way home.' This sentence includes on referential ambiguity especially anaphora.

4. The Way to Disambiguate The Sentences

a. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing will help to decide the meaning should be taking based on the constructions which possibility aims to. For

example: “*Almost everyone eats bread daily, especially for breakfast.*” (Creative English: 27). The researcher paraphrases the sentence as follow; Almost all persons take food like bun every day, exactly for eat in the morning.

b. Adding Preposition (Bhaskara Concept)

Adding preposition will clarify the meaning into the truly meaning, for example “*Don’t forget your swimming trunk!*” (Creative English: 25). The researcher adds preposition “for” in the sentence become: Don’t forget for your swimming trunk!

c. Moving Sentence Construction (Schlenker Concept)

The researcher makes moving sentence construction in some data which ambiguous such as: She was killed by *someone with a knife*. (Creative English: 75). The construction replaced into: ‘By using a knife, someone killed her’ or ‘she was killed by someone using a knife’.

d. Adding Additional Context (Reed Concept)

The researcher makes adding additional context in several sentences as follow; “*The course will be finished by July.*” (Creative English: 46). The construction replaced into “The English course will be finished by July in this month.”

e. Using Picture (Barnard Concept)

Barnard (2005: 1) was mentioned that image can help as the word sense disambiguation since the words re spelt the same. For example: *Pour the oil into the frying pan.* (Creative English: 36). The reader will not understand the word *oil* in this sentence. *Oil* in this sentence is unclear to refer what kinds of oil are. The way to disambiguate this sentence is by using picture.



(a) *Pour the oil into the frying pan.*
(Oil refers to the cooking oil)



(b) *Pour the oil into the frying pan.*
(Oil refers to the lubricant oil)

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

1. Conclusion

The researcher finds four kinds of ambiguity that found by the researcher in *Creative English* textbook, namely: lexical ambiguity, referential ambiguity, surface structure ambiguity, and deep structure ambiguity. There are 195 ambiguous sentences, that is: 34 lexical ambiguity (17, 44%), 140 referential ambiguity (71, 79%), 17 surface structure ambiguity (8, 72%), and 4deep structure ambiguity (2, 05%). There are many causes that make the sentence become ambiguous, namely: without context, ambiguous word order, improper or missing punctuation, and faulty pronoun reference. The researcher found several ways to disambiguate the ambiguous sentences, which are by using paraphrasing, adding preposition, moving sentence construction, adding additional context, and using picture.

2. Suggestion

This study is limited on the types of ambiguity, the causes and the way to disambiguate ambiguity, so the researcher hopes for the other researcher who are willing to conduct a research paper

same with his topic, can complete it by understanding more ambiguity in details. They can use the other object of the study. May it happen that this research can be used as the reference. The researcher also hopes that the next researcher would enrich the knowledge on ambiguity.

From this research, the teachers who used *Creative English* textbook should give the clear interpretation to the students, so they will not confuse in understanding the sentence. The teachers can use the way to disambiguate ambiguity by paraphrasing, adding preposition, moving sentence construction, adding additional context, and using picture.

Based on the result of this study, the writers of *Creative English* textbook still applied a lot of ambiguity. The researcher found 195 ambiguous sentences from the analysis of ambiguity in *Creative English* textbook. The writers of *Creative English* textbook should be more thorough in making sentences. They have to prohibit the emergence of ambiguous sentences in *Creative English* textbook more.

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