

LEXICAL AMBIGUITY IN THE HEADLINES OF *THE JAKARTA POST* NEWSPAPER

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah menemukan kata multi tafsir, atau kata yang memiliki banyak arti, yang menyebabkan keambiguan pada tajuk Koran *The Jakarta Post*, dan menentukan kelompok atau jenis dari kata ambigu tersebut. Dalam Semantik, jenis kata dengan arti ambigu terbagi atas dua: polisemi dan homonimi (Ullmann 1962). Teori pendukung penelitian ini adalah teori Semantik dari Lyons (1995), Palmer (1981), dan Leech (1981). Di dalam penelitian ini, penulis mengambil 10 data dari 9 tajuk koran *The Jakarta Post* yang memiliki kata ambigu dengan multi tafsir. Pada tahap pengumpulan data, penulis menggunakan teknik simak bebas libat cakap dan teknik catat. Penulis mengambil data, kata-kata ambigu dari laman situs *the Jakarta Post*, kemudian dikumpulkan dalam sebuah catatan untuk memudahkan dalam menganalisis. Dalam tahap analisis data, penulis menggunakan teori Semantik, serta menggunakan kamus *Oxford Advanced Learners* untuk mengetahui makna-makna dari kata ambigu dan menentukan makna sebenarnya yang dapat menjelaskan kata ambigu tajuk utama tersebut. Setelah itu, penulis menganalisis jenis arti kata yang ambigu tersebut berdasarkan polisemi ataupun homonim. Dalam tahap penyajian hasil penelitian, penulis menggunakan metode formal dan informal. Setelah dianalisis, disimpulkan bahwa semua data, 10 kata-kata ambigu dari 9 tajuk koran, termasuk dalam kategori polisemi.

Kata kunci: *ambigu, polisemi, homonimi*

ABSTRACT

The purposes of this research are to find the ambiguous words that have many lexical meanings from the headline of *The Jakarta Post* newspaper, and to classify the forms of the ambiguous words. The lexical ambiguity is divided into two forms Ullmann (1962): polysemy and homonymy. Another semantics' theories used in this research are from Lyons (1995), Palmer (1981), and Leech (1981). In this research, the writer takes 10 data from 9 headlines of the newspaper that contain lexical ambiguity. In collecting the data, the writer uses note taking technique and non-participant observational technique. The writer took the data from the website of *The Jakarta Post*, then collected them in the note in order to make it easier in the analysis. In analyzing the data, the writer uses the semantic theories and *Oxford Advanced Learners* dictionary to find the lexical meanings of the ambiguous words. After that, the writer classifies the form of lexical ambiguity, whether it is polysemy or homonymy. In presenting the result of analysis, the writer uses formal and informal methods. The writer finds that all of the data, 10 ambiguous words from 9 headlines are categorized into the polysemy.

Key words: *ambiguity, polysemy, homonymy*

1. Introduction

This research observes ambiguity that appears in newspaper language, especially in the headline, especially lexical ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity arises when context is insufficient to determine the sense of a single word that has more than one lexical meanings based on dictionary. The writer tries to find the forms of lexical ambiguity, polysemy and homonymy, and the lexical meaning in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post*. The reason to choose the source of the data is that it is a daily newspaper in Indonesia written in English. It is an influential newspaper that is read by foreigners, as well as the Indonesians who understand English and.

2. Background of the Research

People communicate each other by using language as the tool of communication to deliver what they want or need to say. However, people should consider their saying and the way to deliver it without making ambiguous words. Meanwhile, nowadays, many facilities people used in their daily life to deliver their messages, for example newspaper. Newspaper, especially the daily newspaper, has a big contribution to people's life because it can delight people's life with the updated information and education. The news in newspaper is accurate based on the real condition. From this case, it makes the media always try to find many ways in delivering the successful news. It comes from how the journalists write the news, especially the effective headlines. The sentence of the headlines may be structurally good, but in other way, it can cause more than one interpretations, ambiguity, based on the way the language is used in the headline.

2.1. Identification of the Problem

In this research, the writer is going to answer the following questions:

1. What are the forms of lexical ambiguity found in the headlines of *The Jakarta Post* newspaper?
2. What are the lexical meanings of the ambiguous?

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Lexical Meaning

Meaning is the idea or concept of a thing. There are the different meanings between the noun "meaning" and the verb "to mean". Lyons (1995) states that the noun "meaning" and the verb "to mean" have many meanings interconnected and shaded into one another in various ways. Moreover, Lyons (1995) identifies meaning as "the ideas and concepts which can be transferred from the mind of the speaker to the mind of hearer by embodying them, as it were, in the forms of one language or another". In Semantics, there are seven types of

meaning (Leech 1981): conceptual meaning, connotative meaning, social meaning, affective meaning, reflected meaning, collocative meaning, and thematic meaning. Here, the lexical meaning is the meaning of the word based on the dictionary. Furthermore, the dictionary-word in semantics is called lexeme. The noun lexeme is related to the words 'lexical' and 'lexicon', as Lyons (1995) states that "a lexeme is a lexical unit: a unit of the lexicon".

2.2.2. Lexical Ambiguity

According to Leech (1981), "ambiguity is a property of sentences; it is self-evident to native speakers." In fact, an ambiguous sentence may be defined as a sentence which expresses more than one propositions. This reflects the difference between the levels of linguistic statement: sentences are syntactic-units, whereas propositions are semantic units. Ambiguity is a one of many relations between syntax and sense. Here is an example of ambiguity as stated by Leech (1981): *Hugo is drawing a cart*. In this sentence, it has two interpretations: "Hugo is drawing (a picture of) a cart" and "Hugo is drawing (=pulling) a cart". These two interpretations are not synonymous with each other and it can make ambiguities.

Furthermore, lexical ambiguity comes from the meaning of the words, not the structure. It is a string of words, for example the utterance, that may lead to more than one interpretations because one of the words has more than one lexical meaning. Hence, in analyzing the lexical ambiguity of newspaper headline, it is important to understand the two forms of lexical ambiguity, polysemy and homonymy, (Ullmann 1962). Polysemy refers to the situation where the words have the same spelling but different related meaning. Palmer (1981) also says, "polysemy as a case where the same words have two or more different, but conceptually related meanings or variants of the same meaning." There are five polysemy can arise (Ullmann:1962): shifts in application, specialization in a social milieu, figurative language, homonyms reinterpreted, and foreign influence. On the other way, homonymy, according to Leech (1981), is "roughly two or more words having the same pronunciation and/or spelling, but different in meaning". Homonymy is defined as a case where two or more words have the same phonological shape and pronunciation, but unrelated meanings. According to Ullmann (1962), "there are two ways in which it can arise, and the third of these is of very subsidiary importance: phonetic convergence, semantic divergence, and foreign influence".

Lyons (1995) also says "the difference between homonymy and polysemy is easier to explain in general terms than it is in terms of objective and operationally satisfactory

criteria”. The statement shows that the distinction between polysemy and homonymy is more complex than generally perceived. He gives two criteria to simplify the complexities of identifying polysemy from homonymy: the etymological criterion and the relatedness criterion. The etymological criterion supports the native speaker’s untutored intuitions about particular lexemes. For example, most native speakers of English would probably classify ‘bat’ as ‘furry mammal with membranous wings’ and as ‘implement for striking a ball in certain games’ as different lexemes. These two words are different in respect of their historical source, the ‘mammal’ ‘bat’ derives from a regional variant of Middle English ‘bakke’ and the ‘implement in striking ball’ ‘bat’ comes from Old English ‘batt’ meaning ‘club’.

2.3. Methodology

To conduct the research, the writer used methods and techniques proposed by Sudaryanto (1993). In collecting the data, the writer uses note taking technique and non-participant observational technique. Note taking technique is the technique of making a note of the whole data and followed by the process of classifying the data (Sudaryanto: 1993). Non-participant observational technique means that the writer does not take part in the data process but only as an observer (Sudaryanto: 1993). In this research, the writer searched the headlines of *The Jakarta Post* in the website www.thejakartapost.com and limited the data from the July to October in 2014 editions. After that, she selected 10 headlines from the “headline” forum that imply ambiguous words and took notes about the ambiguity based on their unrelated to the news’ content.

In analyzing the data, the writer used semantics perspective. Since the writer only focuses on the lexical ambiguity, she only tried to find and analyzed the lexical ambiguity found in the headlines. The data were analyzed by using distributional method. Distributional method is a method of analyzing the data based on the aspects of the language itself. This method is based on Haugen (in Sudaryanto 1993) who says that “The key factors in analyzing the data based on distributional method are by using the element of the language itself, such a word, syntactic function (subject, object, and predicate), and clause”. During analyzing the data, the writer described the lexical meaning by using Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary to help the writer know the lexical meaning of the ambiguous words. By using this dictionary, the writer will know the lexical meanings of the ambiguous word and chose one of the lexical meanings which is possibly related to the whole news. After finding the

possible lexical meaning, the writer classified the forms of the lexical ambiguities into polysemy or homonymy.

In presenting the result of analysis, the writer uses both formal method and informal method by Sudaryanto (1993:145). Formal method is the way in presenting the result of analysis by using table and symbols. Informal method is the way in presenting the result of analysis by using verbal language.

3. Review of Literature

The writer would like to review other studies on ambiguity, especially lexical ambiguity. First is a study done by Khamahani (2013). He discusses ambiguity in fifty English newspaper headlines of two newspapers written by the non-native and native journalists. He states that ambiguity is found in every aspect of language, but newspaper headlines are the most important source of examples of ambiguity. In his research, he deals with the structural (noun-verb) and lexical (polysemy) ambiguities found in the English headlines written by the native and non-native journalists. The main is to arrive at the ratio of lexical (polysemy) ambiguity and structural (noun/verb) ambiguity in newspaper headlines. He found that the headlines written by the native journalists are more ambiguous than those written by the non-native journalists.

Second is a research done by Eventhough Ndlovu and Sanelisiwe Sayi (2010). It focuses on the treatment of polysemy and homonymy in the general-purpose monolingual dictionaries with the special reference to *Isichazamazwi SesiNdebele*. It concludes how lexicographers should treat polysemy and homonymy in the monolingual general-purpose dictionaries. They stated that lexicographers must study them from the point of view, not only of “pure” semantics by analyzing the lexical meaning of isolated words but also of the cultural context of the language in question. A deeper understanding of the culture to which the language belongs will yield valuable results. A thorough knowledge of the language, especially as far as idiomatic usage is concerned, is also indispensable for a successful delimitation of polysemy and homonymy. It, however, compromises the dictionary’s value of being a guardian of the people’s culture and a trusted and respected repository of facts about a language and its culture.

Last is done by Jennifer Kaplan, Diane G. Fisher, and Neal T. Rogness (2010). The goals of this research are to use data to highlight the specific words and document barriers to student’s comprehension that are associated to the misunderstandings of those words and to

design and implement an intervention to investigate whether the explicit examination of the lexical ambiguity of certain words during instruction promotes deeper understanding of statistics and assesses the success of the intervention on student learning outcomes. In this research, they used two research designs, pilot study and validation sample. In conclusion, the intention is to identify and illustrate the common meanings for the target words that are expressed by students after taking Introduction to Statistic classes.

4. Analysis

The 9 headlines only contain the examples of 10 ambiguous words within the category of polysemy. None of them is homonymy. The ambiguity can be seen described in the following two examples,

(1) “*House* to Summon KPU and Bawaslu”

(Hans Nicholas Jong: Monday, August 18th, 2014)

In Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, there are many lexical meanings of the word *house* (noun). *house* can mean:

- a. A building for people to live in, usually for one family,
- b. All the people living in the house (household),
- c. A building used for a particular purpose (for example for holding meetings),
- d. Used in the name of office building,
- e. Parliament: a group of people who meet to discuss and make the laws of a country.

In this case, if the readers read this headline only, they commonly refer the common lexical meaning of the *house* to “a building for people to live in, usually for one family”. However, when the readers read the whole news and relate the information to the headline, the lexical meaning of *house* in the headline is actually “parliament (a group of people who meet to discuss and make the laws of a country)”. This whole news talks about the parliament (House of Representatives: a group of people in parliament) who gather to discuss and evaluate the General Election Commissions (KPU) and Intelligent of Regulatory Election’s (Bawaslu) performance in the presidential election. Because the single word may refer to various meanings, the word *house* can be categorized as polysemy, a form of lexical ambiguity.

(2) “RI Repairs *Ties*, Signs Pact on Intelligence with Australia”

(Ni Komang Erviani: Friday, August 29th, 2014)

In Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, there are many lexical meanings of the word *tie* (noun) like:

- a. Clothes: a long narrow piece of cloth worn around the neck, especially by men, with a knot in front,
- b. For fastening: a piece of string or wire used for fastening or tying something,
- c. Connection: a strong connection between people or organizations,
- d. Restriction: a thing that limits somebody's freedom of action.

In this headline, when the readers read the headline only, without reading the whole news, the readers might think at first that the meaning of this ambiguous word is "a long narrow piece of cloth worn around the neck, especially by men, with a knot in front". In that case, this news talks about RI (Republic of Indonesia) repairs a long narrow piece of cloth worn around neck which is the sign pact on Intelligence with Australia. However, as the readers read the whole news and relate the information to the headline, it can be concluded that the lexical meaning of the word *tie* is "a strong connection between people or organizations". It means RI repairs the strong connection between both countries (Australia and Indonesia) which is the sign pact on Intelligence with Australia. This word is also categorized in polysemy.

5. Conclusion

After analyzing the data, the writer finds 9 headlines with 10 ambiguous words categorized as polysemy. None of the ambiguous words in the headlines is categorized as homonymy because the words usually used in the newspaper, especially in the headlines, has the lexical meanings telling about the words that are still related to one another. By using Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the writer finds many possible lexical meanings of the ambiguous word and chooses the correct lexical meaning related to the whole news of the headline. To conclude all, to distinguish polysemy and homonymy in the text, in this case in the headline, it can be seen from the relation of the meanings. If the meanings of the word are related to one another, it is polysemy. In contrary, if the meanings of the word are not related to each other, it is homonymy. At last, the writer hopes this research will be continued by other researchers by analyzing this kind of ambiguity in more detail and from other kinds of ambiguity: grammatical ambiguity and phonological ambiguity. The writer hopes this research is useful in analyzing the ambiguous words that appear in headline and other texts.

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