

Feedback and Literacy: Investigating the Mediating Role of Ambiguity in texting communication

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Abstract: Language literacy is essential for effective communication, especially in text-based interactions where nonverbal cues are absent. This study aims to explore the mediating role of feedback in clarifying ambiguity in text messages among students. While there is already research on feedback and language literacy, there is a gap regarding how feedback can specifically address ambiguity in digital communication. Using a descriptive survey method, data was collected from 30 students at Medan State University through a questionnaire distributed via WhatsApp. The analysis results show that syntactic ambiguity is the most prevalent type, followed by semantic and referential ambiguity. The findings showed that feedback strategies such as repetition, reformulation, and explicit clarification significantly improved understanding and reduced miscommunication. Students reported that these strategies helped clarify ambiguous messages and encouraged clearer interactions with the lecturer. In conclusion, effective feedback mechanisms are essential for improving communication clarity in text messages, especially in academic contexts. This study underscores the importance of developing feedback literacy among university students to effectively navigate ambiguity, thereby improving their language literacy and overall communication skills. Further research can extend these findings by exploring different contexts and demographics to generalize the results.

Keywords: ambiguity, feedback, literacy.

Abstrak: Literasi bahasa sangat penting untuk komunikasi yang efektif, terutama dalam interaksi berbasis teks yang tidak melibatkan isyarat nonverbal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran mediasi umpan balik dalam mengklarifikasi ambiguitas dalam pesan teks di kalangan mahasiswa. Meskipun sudah ada penelitian tentang umpan balik dan literasi bahasa, masih terdapat kesenjangan mengenai bagaimana umpan balik dapat secara khusus mengatasi ambiguitas dalam komunikasi digital. Dengan menggunakan metode survei deskriptif, data dikumpulkan dari 30 mahasiswa di Universitas Negeri Medan melalui kuesioner yang disebarluaskan melalui WhatsApp. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa ambiguitas sintaksis merupakan jenis yang paling umum, diikuti oleh ambiguitas semantik dan referensi. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi umpan balik seperti pengulangan, reformulasi, dan klarifikasi eksplisit secara signifikan meningkatkan pemahaman dan mengurangi miskomunikasi. Mahasiswa melaporkan bahwa strategi ini membantu mengklarifikasi pesan yang ambigu dan mendorong interaksi yang lebih jelas dengan dosen. Sebagai kesimpulan, mekanisme umpan balik yang efektif sangat penting untuk meningkatkan kejelasan komunikasi dalam pesan teks, terutama dalam konteks akademis. Penelitian ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya mengembangkan literasi umpan balik di kalangan mahasiswa untuk menavigasi ambiguitas secara efektif, sehingga meningkatkan literasi bahasa dan keterampilan komunikasi mereka secara keseluruhan. Penelitian lebih lanjut dapat memperluas temuan ini dengan mengeksplorasi konteks dan demografi yang berbeda untuk menggeneralisasi hasil.

Kata kunci: ambiguitas, umpan balik, literasi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language literacy forms the basis for effective communication but takes on unique challenges in text-based communication where nonverbal cues are absent. It involves the ability to understand, interpret, and convey meaning through language, facilitating clear and

meaningful interactions. Zanchi (2019) highlights that spoken literacy is cultivated through the dynamic exchange of conversations, where individuals, particularly children, develop listening, interpretation, and response skills, thereby enhancing their communication abilities. In spoken interactions, literacy extends beyond vocabulary and grammar to include the interpretation of nonverbal cues such as tone, gestures, and facial expressions, which enrich comprehension. Conversely, written literacy emphasizes textual clarity and the ability to derive meaning from context, grammar, and punctuation. In the digital era, where text messaging has become a dominant mode of communication, the importance of written literacy has grown significantly. Brown (2000) describes writing as a multi-step process that involves generating ideas, logically organizing them, employing discourse markers and rhetorical structures for coherence, revising for clarity, editing for grammatical accuracy, and producing a refined final product. Given the absence of nonverbal cues in text-based communication, the use of precise language and strong interpretive skills becomes even more critical. Feedback and ambiguity, integral aspects of communication, play a vital role in the development of language literacy. Feedback helps refine understanding and expression, while ambiguity encourages individuals to navigate multiple interpretations, promoting deeper engagement with both oral and written language forms.

Text messaging, while ubiquitous in modern communication, often lacks the contextual richness of face-to-face interactions, increasing the risk of ambiguity., both in personal and professional contexts. Text messaging, also known as “texting,” allows users to send brief written messages directly from one mobile device to another, or from a computer to a mobile device over the internet (Husain, 2019). Unlike older methods of communication, texting makes it possible for people to instantly share ideas, information, and feelings, helping them stay connected across distances and time zones. Whether for casual chats with friends or important business updates, texting is valued for its speed, ease, and accessibility, making it a major part of modern communication. However, the simplicity of texting also presents certain challenges that aren’t as common in face-to-face or voice-based communication. When people talk in person, they naturally use vocal tone, facial expressions, and body language to express feelings and clarify meanings. These nonverbal cues are critical because they help listeners not just hear the words but understand the emotions behind them. According to Husain (2019), texting relies almost entirely on written words and, at times, images, videos, or music through MMS (Multimedia Message Service), which allows for only limited emotional expression. Without physical and auditory cues, the intent behind a message can be unclear, leading to potential misunderstandings.

Ambiguity in text messages is more than just a small inconvenience; it can significantly affect relationships, influencing levels of trust, connection, and understanding. Ambiguity is a natural part of language, meaning that words or messages can often be interpreted in different ways (Ceccato, 2004). This highlights the importance of context in text interactions, as well as how easily misunderstandings can arise in digital communication.

To address this ambiguity, feedback is a crucial part of text-based interactions. Feedback involves responses, clarifications, and reactions that help people confirm their understanding and intentions. As Wisniewski (2020) explains, feedback is information shared by one person about another's understanding or performance. In face-to-face interactions, feedback occurs naturally through gestures like nodding, eye contact, or facial expressions. But in texting, feedback needs to be more direct. For example, if someone is unsure of a message's tone, they might ask follow-up questions or use clarifying statements to ensure mutual understanding. This feedback isn't just about sharing information; it's an active process where both the sender and receiver work together to create shared meaning. Feedback plays a crucial role in digital communication by demonstrating that the meaning of a message is not fixed but negotiated between the participants. Text messaging demands active participation to fill gaps in comprehension, with each individual contributing to a mutual understanding of the content. In the absence of feedback, misunderstandings can grow, potentially resulting in conflict or emotional distress. Feedback is described as a regulatory process where the outcomes of an action are used to adjust and enhance future actions (Ramani, 2019). This mechanism is particularly important in relationships that rely heavily on digital communication. For instance, in long-distance relationships where most interactions happen through text, the ability to give and interpret feedback effectively can be the key factor in maintaining a healthy relationship as opposed to one that becomes strained.

For previous research that is similar to this study, research on written corrective feedback (WCF) has evolved significantly, highlighting its role in second language acquisition and language education. Chong (2022) expands the discussion by introducing the concepts of "feedback literacy" and "feedback ecology." These frameworks emphasize shifting from feedback as isolated information to understanding it as a dynamic process influenced by learners' and teachers' engagement, contextual factors, and individual variables. This paradigm shift aligns with sociocultural and ecological systems theories. Chong proposes integrating qualitative methodologies, such as narrative inquiry, to explore learners' active engagement and the complex interactions within feedback environments.

Future research emphasizes a learner-centered approach, incorporating personal experiences, long-term engagement, and reflective practices.

The researcher formulated the following research questions to address the study's objectives: What types of ambiguities commonly occur in text message communication? and How does feedback help clarify ambiguous messages? This study focuses specifically on students who have encountered ambiguous text messages from lecturers. The primary aim is to reduce misunderstandings and enhance the clarity of communication in text-based interactions. By leveraging feedback strategies, the study seeks to improve communication, particularly in academic settings where messages are often brief and time-sensitive. Effective feedback mechanisms can promote clearer communication and contribute to a more supportive learning environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Interpreting language in text messages is a complex process because meaning often shifts depending on context, tone, and the prior relationship between the sender and receiver. Rosengren (2000) emphasizes that communication involves "meaning creation," where messages are shaped by psychological, social, and cultural factors, which add layers of nuance to interpretation. In the setting of text messages, which typically lack visual and vocal cues, feedback becomes a crucial tool for clarifying ambiguity. Littlejohn (1992) argues that meaning is generated through interpretation, suggesting that people actively draw from personal context and prior exchanges to make sense of messages. Consequently, interpreting a text message is not only about the words used but also involves inferring intent and clarifying misunderstandings through feedback loops.

Ambiguity in text-based communication often arises due to the absence of vocal tone, facial expressions, and gestures that typically provide context in face-to-face interactions. Aldunate et al. (2018) highlight that in digital communication, this lack of non-verbal cues makes it harder to discern emotional nuances, resulting in increased reliance on textual indicators such as punctuation and emojis to infer intent. Emoticons, for example, serve as non-verbal cues that can either clarify or add to the ambiguity of a message depending on their congruence with the text's emotional tone. The study found that when emoticons contradict the textual content, participants tend to interpret messages as having a negative tone, suggesting that emoticons influence emotional perception but may not fully resolve ambiguities on their own.

In text-based communication, ambiguity is often a product of the language's inherent flexibility and economy, which can lead to multiple interpretations, as described by experts like Veronika Ehrich. Ehrich explains that ambiguity in language manifests due to factors like homonymy (where words have distinct meanings, like "bark" as in a tree versus a dog's sound) and polysemy (where a word has related meanings, such as "book" as an object or an action). These linguistic features, essential to natural language evolution, allow speakers to economize language use and minimize cognitive load during communication. However, they also introduce challenges in ensuring clear understanding, particularly in written forms where nonverbal cues are absent.

To address ambiguities in text, people often rely on contextual clues, yet modern text communication, like messaging, presents additional layers of complexity. Punctuation, emojis, and tone markers become essential tools to guide interpretation, but they can also introduce or intensify ambiguity. Generational and cultural variations play a significant role here as well. For example, younger generations may employ emojis with nuanced meanings that differ from their literal representations, while older users may interpret them more straightforwardly. Thus, an emoji like the "thumbs-up" might signal agreement, sarcasm, or even disengagement, depending on the context and the user's cultural or generational background. There is a growing interest in various linguistic typologies for development of new tools for automatic language analysis. Marina A. Yuzhannikova in 2015 give the types of the ambiguity:

1. Lexical Ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity occurs when a word or expression has more than one meaning. These experts observe that this kind of ambiguity is fundamental to natural languages since the words are naturally polysemy or homonymy. According to Marina A. Yuzhannikova, lexical ambiguity arises either from homonymy (where the meanings are completely unrelated, such as "bat" as a flying mammal and "bat" as a tool to play sports) or polysemy (when we have words with related meanings with some common derivation, like "head" of an organization vs. In both linguistics and computational linguistics this ambiguity is crucial because it will need context to disambiguate. However, as Yuzhannikova notes, the difficulty here is in telling apart polysemy (a diachronic systemic linguistic phenomenon) and lexical ambiguity (syntagmatic or contextual).

2. Syntactic Ambiguity

Syntactic ambiguity (also called structural ambiguity) is when the order in which words appear leaves room for more than one interpretation in a sentence. This ambiguity can occur at both surface and deep structural levels of syntax, Yuzhannikova notes. The word "flying" can either be a verb that means to operate airplanes (with the overall meaning of "Flying planes can be dangerous"), or an adjective that means of or in flight (the overall meaning being, "Planes in flight can be dangerous"). Dividing the syntactic ambiguity into two categories; spatial (positional) and inherent (essential), researchers have suggested these belong to two different areas of sentence phrasing, and grammatical rules at a more fundamental level. And ambiguity of this kind ideally needs to be resolved by a computational language model, who has to parse the sentence correctly into a syntactic structure.

3. Semantic Ambiguity

Semantic ambiguity, while it is similar to lexical ambiguity, differs in that it relates specifically to sentence level meaning. As Yuzhannikova explains, this occurs when the different meanings of individual sentence elements can yield varied readings of that same sentence. For example, "I saw her duck" can mean I saw the birds belonging to a woman or it can also mean I saw a woman bend down. Even this popular subdivision between lexical ambiguity and semantic ambiguity may not be helpful, as many examples of lexically ambiguous words rely on either context or an inherent instinct regarding the semantic meaning of a choice to resolve them. This kind of ambiguity is very natural in the language semantics which makes such types of communication system difficult as mentioned in typology.

4. Pragmatic Ambiguity

Pragmatic ambiguity is not just about the structural and semantic properties of linguistic forms, it also concerns why a speaker has uttered a statement in the first place and what they intended to convey in that context. This kind of vagueness is often intentional, Yuzhannikova points out, eliciting humor or irony (including rhetorical effect). As an example, if the question is "Can you pass the salt?" It might be an actual question about whether they can pass the salt, or a well-mannered ask for someone to pass the salt. Pragmatic ambiguity also includes pragmatic intentional vs. unintentional and pragmatic explicit vs. implicit forms, representing the active process between speaker and listener interaction styles. Pragmatic ambiguity is one of the most context dependent types and as the expert indicated, it is resolved based on extralinguistic cues.

5. Phonetic Ambiguity

Phonetic ambiguity- Meaning when words or phrases sound alike, creating confusion especially in spoken communication. Yuzhannikova highlights its significance in phonology and speech recognition. A phonological example is the phrase "night rate" pragmatically confused to mean "nitrate". This kind of ambiguity is common in multilingual spaces and creates a problem for STT technologies.

6. Referential Ambiguity

Referential ambiguity emerges when it is unclear what a pronoun or descriptor refers to within a sentence or discourse. According to Yuzhannikova, this kind of ambiguity is typically related to either anaphora (where something is being referenced later) or cataphora (where the reference comes earlier). A well known example is John told Bill that he was leaving, where he can refer to either John or Bill. Reference Resolution and Anaphora Resolution: Resolving referential ambiguities usually need more knowledge about how the discourse is coherent, what each of the speaker's intention is, which represents an important challenge in pragmatics/discourse.

Carless and Boud (2018) discuss the intricate relationship between feedback literacy and communication strategies, emphasizing that literacy in feedback processes is vital for effective learning and development. They highlight the centrality of students' ability to interpret, make sense of, and act upon feedback within a social constructivist framework, where co-construction of knowledge plays a pivotal role. This theoretical foundation aligns with the study of ambiguity in texting communication, as decoding ambiguous textual feedback requires a well-developed feedback literacy to interpret underlying meanings and intentions. Furthermore, their emphasis on dialogic feedback suggests that literacy in textual exchanges can mediate understanding and reduce miscommunication, thus supporting productive learning outcomes. The connection between literacy, feedback processes, and ambiguity provides a rich theoretical underpinning for exploring these dynamics in texting communication (Carless & Boud, 2018).

Communication theorist Wiener (1961) describes feedback as integral to communication, allowing participants to "adjust and remain purposeful." This adjustment is particularly relevant in text messaging, where feedback enables participants to resolve potential misunderstandings that might arise from brevity or lack of context. Feedback, in this light, acts as a mechanism to confirm or realign interpretations, leading to a more accurate exchange of meaning. Thus, as feedback helps mitigate ambiguities, it

transforms the nature of digital communication into a more reciprocal process, reinforcing shared understanding.

In text-based exchanges, feedback often needs to be timely and specific to bridge gaps in understanding. For example, Lavigne and Good (2015) delivers that positive feedback provided soon after task completion reinforces learning effectively, while constructive or corrective feedback given with a delay allows students to process and understand their mistakes more clearly. However, in virtual classrooms or asynchronous text communication, the teacher's tone and clarity in feedback become especially crucial, as text lacks the nonverbal cues that would typically aid in conveying encouragement or empathy. Additionally, according to Claudia Oprescu, alternating roles as sender and receiver, both teacher and student gain from mutual understanding, and feedback becomes a formative experience that can reduce ambiguity, build confidence, and support long-term educational objectives. This nuanced, multi-layered approach to feedback in text-based communication is especially effective in resolving misunderstandings and guiding students toward academic success.

Jagdish Kaur's (2017) theory provides an excellent foundation to explain how feedback can help clarify ambiguity. According to Kaur, feedback-driven strategies like repetition, reformulation, and parenthetical remarks play a crucial role in reducing ambiguity in communication. These strategies are vital in ensuring that the message is understood as intended, especially when the initial communication may have been unclear or misinterpreted.

a) Repetition and Reformulation

Repetition and reformulation are key techniques used to address ambiguous parts of a message. Repeating or rephrasing unclear statements allows the sender to provide additional context or restructure their communication to enhance clarity. Feedback from the recipient, such as requests for clarification or comments on confusion, often prompts the sender to reformulate their statements. This iterative process ensures that meaning is conveyed more accurately, mitigating the risks of misunderstanding.

b) Parenthetical Remarks

Parenthetical remarks, which are additional pieces of information such as examples, descriptions, or definitions, are another important strategy in reducing ambiguity. These remarks help explain or specify the ambiguous part of a message, offering further clarification. Feedback mechanisms frequently trigger these

elaborations, with the sender responding to the recipient's feedback by providing more detailed or contextually rich information. This process helps both parties reach a shared understanding, essential for effective communication.

c) Explicitness to Preempt Misunderstandings

Feedback also encourages increased explicitness in communication. When a recipient signals confusion, the sender may provide additional information or restructure their message to ensure clarity. This shift towards greater explicitness preempts potential misunderstandings, particularly when dealing with ambiguous or vague messages. By becoming more explicit, the sender addresses the areas of the message that may have caused uncertainty, fostering clearer communication.

d) Clarity Enhancing Practices in Ambiguity-Driven Scenarios

Feedback allows communicators to adapt dynamically in situations where ambiguity arises. Signals of misunderstanding, such as follow-up questions or pauses, prompt the sender to provide clarification. This adaptive process ensures that the communicative goals are met, even in the face of linguistic or contextual variability. As such, feedback is an essential tool in maintaining the flow of conversation and ensuring mutual understanding in ambiguous scenarios.

3. METHODOLOGY

To answer the problems in this research, the approach is descriptive using the survey method. In this case, to answer the existing problems, data or information is collected using a questionnaire instrument through the use of a telephone / smartphone with online media software in the form of WhatsApp. Descriptive research is widely recognized for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of phenomena by observing and describing the behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes of respondents. According to Creswell (2014), descriptive research is effective in answering "what" and "how" questions, making it suitable for exploring types of ambiguity and the role of feedback in communication. Surveys are appropriate tools for gathering information directly from respondents. As suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2009), surveys are particularly effective for studies that aim to generalize insights from a specific group of people. The questionnaire in this study is in the form of a series of questions that are arranged systematically for respondents to fill in. In the context of social science research, WhatsApp has been utilized as a tool for conducting surveys and interviews, as it allows for easy distribution of questionnaires and enhances participation in geographically dispersed populations (Archibald et al., 2019). The

data or information collected from the questionnaire is then used to get an overview of the views of students of Medan State University in the form of The first section contains questions about respondents' experiences related to types of ambiguity in text message communication. The second section focuses on how feedback helps clarify ambiguous messages.

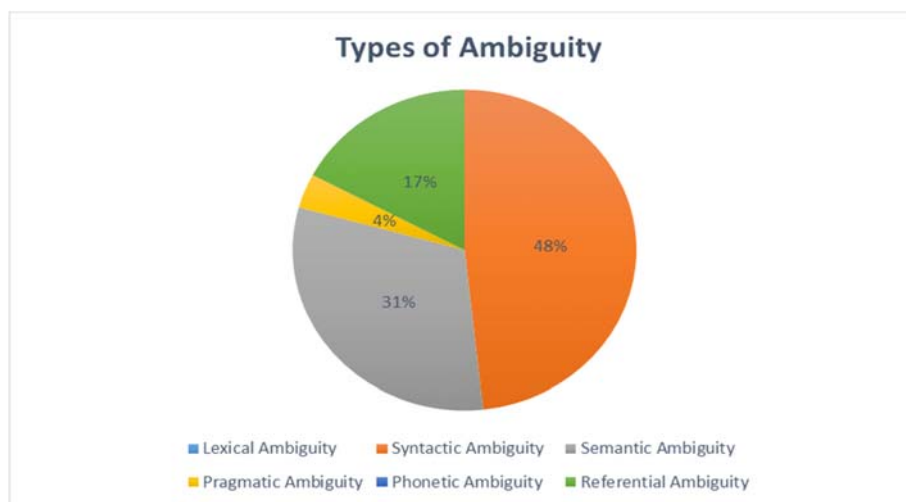
The questionnaire instrument used was in the form of open and closed questions totaling four questions. The questions in the questionnaire included

1. When you receive an ambiguous text, how do you typically respond? Do you ever ask for clarification?"
2. Have you ever encountered ambiguous text messages in your lectures?
3. Have you ever asked for clarification after receiving a text message? If so, how did that change your understanding?"
4. How did you or your friend give feedback

The questions used a Guttman scale, which is a scale that wants a firm yes and no answer, while in open-ended questions, respondents were asked to give reasons why they chose that answer.

The subjects in this study were students from the first semester to the seventh semester of Medan State University from several study programs such as Biology Education, Indonesian Language Education, German Education, English Education, Accounting and English Literature. the participants were chosen on the grounds that they were easy to reach colleagues so as to facilitate data collection. The number of respondents was 30 people. The questionnaire distribution was carried out in a span of three days by obtaining data from 30 respondents. The media used in order to collect research data is through online chat forums such as WhatsApp. The sampling technique used purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of samples with certain considerations, namely UNIMED students. The consideration is students from semester 1 to semester VII students with an age range of 18 years to 21 years who are carrying out online and offline learning which requires indirect communication. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique used is descriptive thematic analysis. The combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions in your questionnaire aligns with the recommendations of De Vaus (2014), who states that such a design provides both quantitative and qualitative insights, enabling a richer understanding of the research problem.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION



| Ambiguity Type | Occurrences |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Syntactic Ambiguity | 14 |
| Semantic Ambiguity | 9 |
| Referential Ambiguity | 5 |
| Pragmatic Ambiguity | 1 |

It can be seen from the diagram above the percentage of 6 types of ambiguity, from a total of 30 data collected, there are 29 people who get ambiguous text. After the data is analyzed, the researcher gets the results of which types of ambiguity occur most often, with the first order being Syntactic ambiguity which amounts to 14 followed by semantic ambiguity which amounts to 9, referential ambiguity which amounts to 5, and pragmatic ambiguity which amounts to 1.

The majority of students most often encounter syntactic ambiguity, such as the answers from the respondents below:

· F: Pernah. Biasanya sering terjadi karena miscom gitu, kayak mungkin penulisan kata terbalik, atau saya yg pemilihan katanya salah, atau saya yg tidak yakin dengan pemahaman saya terhadap pesan tersebut, alhasil jadi terasa ambigu dan bingung untuk membalasnya.

· S: pernah saya miskomunikasi dengan dosen mengenai rps mata kuliah dikarenakan ada kesalahan saya saat penulisan mata kuliah di grup matkul wa.

Respondents said that the reason they encountered ambiguity was because of the incorrect way of writing words or the incorrect placement of words, this is included in Structural Ambiguity which causes Different interpretations based on sentence structure.

The next type encountered is semantic ambiguity, here are the answers from several respondents:

- I: Pernah ketika saya menjawab pesan dosen dari chat dan saya kurang sopan sehingga ditegur oleh dosen dan diingatkan dari chat agar selanjutnya jangan diulangi lagi
- K: Pernah, ketika berkata "kalau bisa ya di ubah", saya pikir kalimat beliau merujuk pada bentuk 'saran' tetapi maksud beliau ternyata tidak, pada akhirnya saya memang disuruh 'wajib mengubah nya'. Kenapa saya anggap ambigü.. karena kalimat "kalau bisa" tidak menjelaskan seberapa urgent tindakan harus diambil.

Respondents found it ambiguous because they experienced a lack of understanding of the context at the time of sending the message, as well as the lecturer who sent the message to them. Due to phrases that have several meanings depending on the context, miscommunication occurs.

The next type is referential ambiguity, which some respondents encountered, and here are some of their answers:

- KA: Pernah, saat saya masih maba dan masih belum terbiasa dan belum tahu format untuk cht dosen saya saat itu sepertinya saya tidak menggunakan kata beliau sebaliknya saya gunakan kata "dia" ketika berbicara dengan dosen lain sehingga dosen lain tsb menegur saya.
- W: Pernah, aku ngechat nanya tentang nilai ujian yg belum keluar, lupa menyebutkan nama beliau. Pernah juga ada salah paham antara kami dan dosen, karena jadwal, al hasil beliau bingung, kami mahasiswa nya pun bingung.

This ambiguity occurs because students do not provide clarity about pronoun phrases or explanations about referring to whom, which causes lecturers to misunderstand.

Then the last type that students encounter is pragmatic ambiguity. Here are the answers from the respondents:

- S: pernah, memberikan tugas atau jawaban dengan kalimat yang sangat ambigü, seperti menanyakan masuk kelas online atau offline, beliau hanya menjawab "ya" saja.

The statement about the lecturer who answered "yes" when asked whether he attended online or offline classes is included in pragmatic ambiguity because the meaning of the answer depends on an unclear context. This happens when a statement has more than one interpretation that depends on the situation or the shared understanding between the speaker and the listener. In this case, the answer "yes" does not clarify whether it means online or offline classes.

4.2 . The Role of Feedback in Clarifying Meaning

Drawing from Jagdish Kaur's (2017) theory, feedback plays a crucial role in clarifying ambiguous messages and reducing misunderstandings. Kaur suggests that in settings where ambiguity is prevalent, speakers employ a range of feedback-driven strategies to enhance clarity and ensure mutual understanding. This feedback mechanism can take various forms such as repetition, reformulation, the use of parenthetical remarks, and direct clarification requests. In the context of text messaging between students and lecturers, these strategies prove essential for overcoming the inherent limitations of written communication, where tone, body language, and context can be easily lost. The data collected from student responses offers valuable insight into how feedback can successfully address and resolve ambiguities in such interactions.

One of the most common strategies identified in the responses is **repetition and reformulation**, as highlighted in Kaur's work. Repetition allows individuals to rephrase or emphasize key parts of their message, ensuring the recipient fully understands the intended meaning. For instance, **F** mentions reconfirming the lecturer's message by first sending a draft for correction. **D** and **FA** describe instances where they, along with peers, engaged in discussions or rephrased the message for clarity before responding. These actions align with Kaur's concept of feedback-driven reformulation, where misunderstandings are mitigated by the speaker's effort to restate or emphasize critical details. This process not only reduces ambiguity but also provides a deeper sense of confidence in the response, ensuring that all parties are on the same page.

Furthermore, feedback often takes the form of **clarifying questions**, a strategy also observed in the data and central to Kaur's theory. When confronted with ambiguous messages, recipients may ask specific questions to clarify the meaning. **J** and **SU** both describe instances where they directly sought clarification from their lecturers to ensure accurate interpretation. This questioning technique is particularly effective in addressing **referential ambiguity**, where the recipient may not fully grasp the intended reference, as evidenced in **W** case, where confusion about the exam schedule led her to seek a clearer understanding. Kaur emphasizes that such clarification requests help to eliminate uncertainties and ensure that both parties are aligned in their understanding, a vital process in environments where precision in communication is crucial.

The role of **parenthetical remarks and additional information** as a form of feedback is also an essential part of Kaur's theory. In cases where the original message remains unclear, providing further elaboration through examples, definitions, or explanations can significantly aid comprehension. This approach was evident in **G** experience, where he consulted peers to gain a clearer understanding of an ambiguous message. Similarly, **R** mentions seeking clarification when faced with unclear abbreviations, a common issue in digital communication. By offering additional details or reformulating the message, the sender can remove the ambiguity that could otherwise lead to confusion or misinterpretation.

Lastly, Kaur's theory underscores the importance of **apology and explanation** as vital feedback mechanisms in addressing semantic ambiguity. When misunderstandings arise, students often take the initiative to apologize for any confusion and explain the context or reason behind their actions or words. This strategy not only clears up misunderstandings but also fosters a more empathetic and cooperative communication environment. **SU**, for instance, apologized for the miscommunication regarding the course name, explaining the cause of the error, while **FI** expressed understanding and patience after being scolded for a perceived rude message. These acts of humility and clarification ensure that both parties understand each other's intentions and foster better interpersonal relationships moving forward.

The findings from this study highlight not only the prevalence of ambiguity in student-lecturer communication but also the pivotal role of literacy, particularly in navigating and resolving such ambiguities. In this context, literacy transcends its traditional definition of reading and writing skills, encompassing broader competencies such as pragmatic literacy, digital literacy, and interpersonal literacy. These multifaceted dimensions of literacy are critical for effectively interpreting, responding to, and clarifying ambiguous messages in a digital academic environment.

Literacy, as conceptualized by Street's (1984) theory of literacy as a social practice, underscores that literacy is inherently contextual and shaped by the interactions and cultural practices in which it is embedded. In the digital age, literacy includes not only the ability to decode written text but also the capacity to interpret contextual cues, understand implied meanings, and navigate digital platforms. Ambiguity in communication, as revealed in this study, often arises from gaps in these dimensions of literacy. For instance, syntactic ambiguity, the most commonly encountered form, stems from difficulties in structuring sentences clearly. This points to a gap in grammatical literacy, a component of traditional

literacy skills that ensures precise and effective communication. Moreover, the instances of semantic ambiguity encountered by respondents reflect challenges in pragmatic literacy—the ability to interpret meaning within specific contexts and to discern the intent behind messages. For example, phrases like "kalau bisa" ("if possible") reveal how the lack of clarity about urgency or intent can lead to miscommunication. This aligns with Kaur's (2017) theory, which highlights the role of feedback mechanisms in bridging these gaps by allowing individuals to clarify and negotiate meaning.

Feedback mechanisms, including repetition, reformulation, and clarifying questions, as outlined by Kaur (2017), play a pivotal role in resolving ambiguity and ensuring shared understanding in text-based communication. These mechanisms—repetition, reformulation, clarifying questions, and elaboration—are themselves manifestations of literacy practices. According to Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory of learning, literacy is developed through interaction and social negotiation. When students employ feedback strategies, such as rephrasing a message or requesting clarification, they engage in a collaborative process that strengthens their communicative literacy. For example, the use of clarifying questions to address referential ambiguity reflects students' ability to recognize gaps in understanding and actively seek alignment. This aligns with Gee's (2008) notion of situated literacy, which emphasizes the importance of context and interaction in shaping how individuals interpret and use language. Similarly, the role of repetition and reformulation in resolving syntactic and semantic ambiguities highlights the iterative nature of literacy as a skill that evolves through practice and feedback.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGESTION

By connecting the findings to theories of literacy and feedback, this study underscores the interconnectedness of communicative literacy and the resolution of ambiguity. Street's theory of literacy as a social practice, Gee's concept of situated literacy, and Kaur's feedback mechanisms collectively highlights the dynamic and contextual nature of literacy in academic communication. To mitigate the effects of ambiguity, it is essential to cultivate these literacy skills through practice, interaction, and feedback-driven strategies, ultimately fostering clearer and more effective communication in digital and academic contexts.

By understanding these relationships, researchers and educators can better adapt communication strategies to diverse contexts, promoting effective dialogue and reducing misunderstandings in both written and spoken interactions. Future research could further

explore feedback in different communication contexts, such as workplace settings, online customer service interactions, and casual personal conversations, to determine if feedback strategies vary depending on the context. Additionally, investigating how different demographics (e.g., age, culture, or technological proficiency) respond to feedback in digital communication could provide more tailored approaches to enhancing communication across diverse groups. Understanding these nuances can contribute to improving digital literacy and more effective communication practices in an increasingly digital world.

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