The Language Ambiguity in English Literature a 2024 Class at State University of Medan

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Abstract *:The topic of this research is language ambiguity that is often spoken by every student in English Literature A class of 2024 at Medan State University. This research aims to answer "what types of language ambiguity are often spoken by students in their communication on everyday classes?". This research applies Kent Bach's theory of language ambiguity to answer this question, this theory is relevant to help this research. The method used in this research is qualitative research and also observation to each suspect in daily life in the classroom. To clarify what kind of language ambiguity is often spoken in the daily life of English Literature A students class of 2024, the researcher provides some sentences that look and sound "ambiguous" that have been spoken by students in their daily life in class. The results of this study are expected to provide new insights into how language ambiguity is used, either consciously or unconsciously, in students' daily interactions.*

Keywords *: language ambiguity, communication, Kent Bach theory.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is one of the most extraordinary tools humans have created. It allows us to communicate with another, express feelings, and share ideas with one another. Language also mean as an innate and universal human property, a species-wide trait that develops as one matures in much the same manner as the organs of the body (Chomsky, n.d.). Through spoken and written words, we can build relationships, convey knowledge, and even preserve our history for future generations. However, language is not always so simple. Its complexity lies in its ability to carry multiple meanings, adapt to different contexts, and evolve over time. This makes it both powerful, difficult, and challenging to understand fully. Every language must be have philosophy in it and it was quite crucial because before inventing something, especially language, every expert already think further about it. Philosophy is a discipline or a branch of faculty that studies the nature and meaning of the universe and human life Science almost everything (animate and inanimate) centres around nature, humanity and life in abstract and concrete terms, philosophy as a discipline appears to permeate all aspects of human knowledge resulting in phrases such as philosophy of science, philosophy of history and philosophy of language. Indeed, philosophy is styled "the father of all disciplines".

The philosophy of language takes a closer look at how language works and why it's so crucial to human's life. It seeks to answer questions about the connection between words and their meanings, how we interpret language, and whether it truly represents the world around us. Philosophers of language in the world explore these questions to better understand the strengths and limitations of language as a tool for communication. Their work sheds light on how language shapes our thoughts and perceptions, and why misunderstandings or misinterpretations can happen. Now, the topic that contained in philosophy of language are actually a lot of topic one of the interesting topic is actually the ambiguity, especially in language

Ambiguity is one of the most fascinating aspects of language. It happens when a word, phrase, or sentence can be understood in more than one way. While this can lead to confusion, it also adds richness and depth to communication. Ambiguity shows that language is not a fixed system, it's flexible and creative, capable of holding multiple interpretations at once. This quality is especially important in literature, where writers often use ambiguity to invite readers to think deeply and uncover hidden meanings in their texts.

The connection in languages, philosophy, and ambiguity is how they influence each other. Language provides the foundation for communication, the philosophy of language helps us explore its nature, and ambiguity challenges us to deal with its complexities. Together, they reveal the strengths and weaknesses of language, showing us how it can both clarify and complicate our understanding of the world. This connection between these three makes studying language is an essential part of understanding human thought and interaction.

In literature, ambiguity is not just a flaw, it is a feature. Writers use ambiguity to create layers of meaning, leaving room for readers to interpret texts in different ways. This makes literature more engaging and thought-provoking, as readers must grapple with the uncertainties and nuances of language. However, ambiguity also gives a challenge, especially for students who are learning to analyse and interpret texts. It requires careful reading, critical thinking, and an awareness of context to uncover the writer's intent and the possible meanings behind their words.

By examining language, its philosophical aspects, and ambiguity together, we can understand how they shape communication and interpretation. Language is not just a means of conveying information, it's a reflection of human creativity and complexity. The interplay between its structure, meaning, and ambiguity offers endless opportunities for exploration, especially in literature. Through this study, we gain a deeper appreciation of the power of language and its ability to both connect and challenge us.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language

"Language" refers to a structured system of communication that allows humans to convey thoughts, ideas, emotions, and engage in social interaction. It is essential to human societies, enabling individuals to communicate complex ideas, express their feelings, and build relationships. A comprehensive definition of language includes multiple layers, from sounds to meaning, and the ways in which these components are used in social contexts. Broadly, language can be analysed in terms of its structure, its use in communication, and its role in social life.

The commons Components of Language:

a. Phonology: Phonology studies the sounds of a language. This includes the phonemes, or smallest units of sound, and how these sounds interact within a language to form words and phrases. The rules governing these sounds help differentiate languages from one another. For example, the sounds "p" and "b" are distinct in English, but in some languages, they may not be.

b. Morphology: Morphology deals with the internal structure of words. It examines how words are formed from morphemes, which are the smallest meaningful units of language. For example, the word "unhappiness" consists of three morphemes: "un-" (prefix), "happy" (root), and "-ness" (suffix). Understanding how morphemes combine to form words helps us understand the relationship between form and meaning.

c. Syntax: Syntax is concerned with how words are arranged in sentences to convey meaning. Every language has a unique set of syntactic rules, which dictate the proper order of words to form grammatically correct and meaningful sentences. For instance, in English, the basic sentence structure follows a subject-verb-object pattern, such as in "She reads a book," whereas other languages like Japanese may follow a subject-object-verb structure.

d. Semantics: Semantics involves the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. It looks at how language conveys meaning both at the level of individual words and at the level of entire utterances. For example, the word "bank" can refer to a financial institution or the side of a river, depending on context. Semantics is concerned with understanding how context, word choice, and sentence structure combine to produce specific meanings.

e. Pragmatics: Pragmatics focuses on the use of language in context and examines how people use language in social interactions. This includes how speakers convey indirect

meanings, infer intentions, and use language appropriately based on social norms. For example, when someone says, "Could you pass the salt?" the pragmatic meaning is a request, not just a question about ability

In addition to its structural components, there are several influential theories that define and explain the nature of language. Noam Chomsky's Generative Grammar: One of the most important figures in modern linguistics, (Chomsky N. , 1965) argued that language is an innate, biological feature of humans. He proposed the theory of generative grammar, which suggests that there is a universal structure underlying all languages. According to Chomsky, humans are born with an inherent ability to learn language, and the deep structures of language are shared across cultures. Chomsky's work revolutionized the field of linguistics by shifting the focus from language as a behaviour shaped by external stimuli to an internal cognitive process governed by universal principles.

Ferdinand de Saussure's Structuralism: In his Course in General Linguistics (1916), Saussure proposed that language is a system of signs, each sign composed of a signifier (the sound or written form) and a signified (the concept it represents). He argued that meaning arises from the relationships between signs in the system, rather than from any inherent connection between words and the world they represent. This structuralist view emphasizes the social nature of language, suggesting that meaning is produced through convention and shared understanding among speakers. (Saussure, 1916).

Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis: The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis posits that the language a person speaks influences their thoughts and worldview. This idea suggests that linguistic structures shape the way individuals perceive and categorize the world. For instance, some languages have multiple words for colours or spatial directions, which may lead speakers of those languages to perceive these aspects of reality differently.

Social and Cultural Aspects of Language:

Language is actually not just a neutral tool for communication; it is deeply embedded in culture and society. Language reflects and reinforces social norms, values, and power dynamics. The study of sociolinguistics explores how language varies across different social groups, regions, and contexts. For example, people may use different dialects, accents, or registers of language depending on their social sta

Language also plays a critical role in identity formation. It is a key marker of group membership, with people often associating particular languages or dialects with certain cultural or ethnic identities. The language you speak can signal not only where you're from but also who you are, what you value, and how you interact with the world around you.

Modern Applications and Research:

Contemporary linguistic research continues to explore the various facets of language, using both theoretical approaches and applied methodologies. Linguists study endangered languages, work on improving language teaching, and develop technologies like natural language processing (NLP) that allow machines to understand human language. Additionally, sociolinguists, psycholinguists, and applied linguists study how language affects social behaviour, cognition, and communication in real-world contexts.

Philosophy of Language

The Philosophy of Language is a branch of philosophical inquiry that examines the nature, origins, and functions of language. It explores how linguistic expressions convey meaning, how language interacts with thought and reality, and the structures underpinning communication. This field addresses central issues such as meaning, reference, truth, and interpretation. Specifically, it considers questions like how words and sentences relate to objects, concepts, and states of affairs in the world, and how linguistic meaning is determined by factors such as speaker intention, context, and societal conventions.

One of the core debates in the philosophy of language revolves around the relationship between meaning and also the use. The semantic approach, associated with philosophers like Frege, Russell, and early Wittgenstein, emphasizes the formal relationship between language and the world, focusing on the conditions under which statements are true or false. In contrast, the pragmatic approach, advanced by later thinkers such as Austin, Grice, and later Wittgenstein, highlights the role of context, speaker intention, and the practical functions of language in shaping meaning. Pragmatics extends the analysis beyond literal meanings to include implied meanings, conversational implicatures, and performative utterances. (Stalmaszczyk, 2021)

Another key focus on philosophy of language is the theories of reference, which explore how linguistic expressions particularly proper names, definite descriptions, and pronouns—connect to the entities they denote. The debate between descriptivist theories (which argue that meaning is tied to a set of descriptions associated with a term) and causal-historical theories (which emphasize the role of causal chains and social usage in reference) has been a significant area of philosophical discourse.

Additionally, the philosophy of language intersects with the epistemology and metaphysics, addressing questions about the nature of meaning itself and the limits of linguistic representation. Some philosophers argue that language shapes our understanding of reality and

imposes conceptual frameworks that influence how we perceive the world. This view leads to discussions about the linguistic relativity hypothesis (or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis), which suggests that the structure of a language can affect its speakers' cognition and worldview.

Ambiguity of Language

Language ambiguity is actually refers to the inherent multiplicity of interpretations that a single linguistic expression can evoke, stemming from lexical, syntactic, or semantic factors. This is the part of the philosophy of language. Ambiguity is a fundamental feature of natural language, reflecting both the complexity of human communication and the cognitive mechanisms underlying linguistic processing. It occurs when a word, phrase, or sentence has more than one possible meaning, often dependent on contextual factors, speaker intention, and shared knowledge between interlocutors.

There are some types of Language Ambiguity:

1) Lexical Ambiguity: This arises when a single word has multiple meanings. For example, the word bank can refer to a financial institution or the side of a river. The disambiguation of such words typically relies on contextual cues and background knowledge (Gundel, 1993) .

2) Syntactic Ambiguity: This occurs when a sentence can be parsed in more than one way due to its grammatical structure. A classic example is The old man the boat, where the phrase can be interpreted differently depending on how one assigns roles within the sentence. Syntactic ambiguity highlights the flexibility and potential pitfalls of grammatical constructs, underscoring the role of syntax in meaning construction (al., 2021).

3) Semantic Ambiguity: This type involves ambiguity at the level of meaning relationships and roles within sentences. For the words example, She saw the man with binoculars can imply either that the woman used binoculars to see the man or that the man had binoculars. Semantic ambiguity illustrates how meaning is constructed through the interplay of linguistic elements and context (Wasow, 2005)

Ambiguity is not merely a linguistic artifact but plays a significant role in cognitive efficiency and communicative adaptability. From a cognitive perspective, ambiguity reflects the brain's ability to process and resolve multiple interpretations rapidly. Research suggests that human language processing mechanisms are optimized for efficiency, often favouring shorter, more frequent forms that can be reused in different contexts. This reuse, however, introduces ambiguity, which listeners disambiguate using contextual and pragmatic information

From an information-theoretic standpoint, ambiguity allows for a more economical and flexible use of language. By assigning multiple meanings to shorter or simpler forms, languages can reduce cognitive and memory load. The context-driven resolution of ambiguity is viewed as a feature that enhances communicative efficiency, rather than a defect or hindrance.

Ambiguity also has significant communicative functions. In natural discourse, it can serve rhetorical and strategic purposes, such as humour, irony, and diplomacy. Intentional ambiguity can allow speakers to convey multiple layers of meaning, adapt to diverse audiences, or maintain plausible deniability. However, it also poses challenges, especially in legal, technical, and computational contexts where precision is paramount. Thus, understanding ambiguity is critical in fields such as natural language processing (NLP), artificial intelligence, and legal interpretation.

Ambiguity theories have been developed by several experts from various fields such as linguistics, philosophy of language, and psychology. Here are some of the main theories about ambiguity cited by researchers along with their origins:

Ambiguity in Philosophy of Language:

Sense and Reference theory

Frege distinguishes between sense and reference in language. According to him, ambiguity occurs when a word or phrase has a different sense but refers to the same object, or vice versa. (Frege, 1892)

Ambiguity in Linguistics:

Transformational-Generative Grammar theory

Chomsky explains structural ambiguity, which is when a sentence has more than one syntactic structure. (Chomsky N. , 1957)

 Ambiguity in Pragmatics:

Bach introduced the concept of implicature, which is additional meaning that is not stated directly but is assumed through context. Ambiguity arises when the context is not clear enough to help the listener complete the meaning of a language. (Bach, 1994)

For this research, the researchers use the ambiguity theory Kent Bach, a philosopher of language and pragmatics expert, he has discussed linguistic ambiguity in various contexts, especially in the theories of pragmatics and semantics. Some of the important concepts he presents related to linguistic ambiguity include:

Lexical Ambiguity

Ambiguity that occurs when a word has more than one meaning. For example, the word "bank" can refer to a financial institution or a riverbank. Bach emphasizes that context and communicative intent determine which meaning is relevant.

Syntactic Ambiguity (Structural)

Relates to sentence structures that can be interpreted in more than one way. For example, the sentence "The man saw the boy with a telescope" can mean either the man used a telescope or the boy had a telescope. According to Bach, pragmatics plays a major role in explaining how listeners resolve this ambiguity.

Pragmatic Ambiguity

Ambiguity related to communicative intention or implicature in a given context. This occurs when a statement can have different implicit meanings.

Referential Ambiguity

Occurs when a reference in a sentence can refer to more than one entity. For example, in the sentence "She didn't come because she was sick," there is ambiguity as to who is sick.

Ambiguity Resolution

Kent Bach also highlights the importance of the process of interpretation in communication. He states that listeners or readers use pragmatic knowledge and context to resolve ambiguities in conversation.

Bach relates this to the concepts of implicature and presupposition in pragmatics. Understanding the social and cultural context is essential here.

This theory will used by the researchers to identify any ambiguity that the students ever said in daily class.

Communication

Communication is a process of sharing information, thoughts, or ideas between people. It includes sending messages through usually speech, writing, gestures, or digital platforms, like social media. For communication to work, there must be a clear sender, a message, and a receiver who can interpret it. This process helps us connect, understand each other, and solve problems.

Good communication isn't just about speaking clearly, it's about ensuring the message can be understood. Things like cultural differences or unclear language can create misunderstandings, such as ambiguity. Being aware of these challenges can help improve communication. Sometimes, communications problems can cause difficulties. These include

distractions, personal biases, or unclear messages. Overcoming these problems takes patience and effort, like choosing the right words or being open to any suggestion like feedback from people.

Effective communication is essential in human life. It improves relationships, makes learning easier, and improves teamwork. By practicing clear communication, people can build strong connections and work better with others.

Classroom Situation and Students

In English Literature Class A, the use of ambiguous language by some students often become a challenge that affects group discussions. This ambiguity arises when students use expressions or words with multiple meanings, unclear intent, or difficulty in interpretation within the context being discussed. For instance, when analysing a literary work, some students tend to use overly general terms or metaphorical phrases that confuse others, making it hard to grasp their points of view clearly. This can lead to complicated discussions without concrete conclusions, hindering the class's productivity.

This issue is particularly significant as the study of literature relies heavily on precise communication to ensure a proper understanding of texts and critical ideas. When ambiguity happens, it can obscure interpretations and make discussion confusing, making the overall learning experience quite uncomfortable. By raising students' awareness of the importance of linguistics clarity, English Literature Class A can become a class where ideas are fully understood and not causing any confusion. This will not only improve the quality of learning but also help students develop better communication skills, which are crucial in their academic lives.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aims to see the types of language ambiguity that often appear in students' daily conversations, especially those that occur in the English Literature A 2024 class. Ambiguity here means words or sentences that can have more than one meaning, which can sometimes confuse people who hear them. This study aims to explore the types of language ambiguity mentioned by the students.

To achieve that goal, the researcher used a qualitative method by means of direct observation, because this method can provide a deeper understanding of how students communicate in class. By observing their communication in a genuine or natural situation, the researcher can more easily capture the phenomenon of ambiguity that appears. This research

will focus on conversations that occur daily in class. The researcher will observe words or sentences that are often used by students that contain ambiguity, whether it is intentional or not. The selection of data for this observation is not based on specific criteria, but rather on the habits of students who often speak ambiguous sentences in their conversations.

Observations are conducted non-participatively, so researchers only observe and record conversations that occur without intervening. The researcher will record the types of conversations that occur, ambiguous words or sentences, and situations when ambiguity arises, then analyse them. In this way, it is hoped that this study can provide a clearer picture of how students communicate and how language ambiguity can affect their conversations in class.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the question to this article, the researchers find some language ambiguity in class after some secret observation

Table 1. Observation

Initial	Sentence in Indonesian	Sentence in English (translated)
NF	"Sepatumu"	"your shoes"
YL	"sudah tapi belum"	"finished but not yet"
SL	"Masikah kalian ingat yang semalam itu?"	"do you guys still remember that one on yesterday?"
SK	"Jadi, tugas yang di kumpul sekarang yang itu kan?"	"so, the task that we will submit is that one right?"

According to NF, she shout "your shoes" to someone else, this sentence consider as an ambiguity because people might think that she gives a statement, question, or she is thinking differently from someone who heard her shout. According to Kent Bach, this type of sentence is consider as a lexical ambiguity, because "your shoes" in here has a lot of meaning, like what happened to the shoes, is the shoes broken, is it a good shoes, or even is it a bad shoes according to the speaker (NF).

According to YL, she ever said to one of the researchers a statement "finished but not yet" this sentence is consider as an ambiguity because people who heard that sentence literally don't know and understand the meaning of what the speaker just said. According to Kent Bach theory, this sentence is consider as a syntactic ambiguity because the sentence "finished but not yet" can be interpreted in more than one way. "finished but not yet" here can mean it has been completed but not tidied up, it has been half finished but not the other half, and so on. Because of the ambiguous syntactic structure, therefore we can conclude, "finished not yet" is more suitable for the theory of syntactic ambiguity

According to SL, she ever said to her friend in her circle "do you guys still remember that one?" according to the researchers, this sentence is consider as an ambiguity because people or even her own friend must be don't understand about what SL said. According to researchers, this sentence is included in referential ambiguity, because it refers to more than one entity, the word "on yesterday" refers to where? Is it an event? A person? Or a conversation like that. So, to make it easier to hear the meaning of this ambiguous sentence, we relate the context a little, so maybe the SL meaning of the sentence is like "do you still remember the collision incident in Medan Tembung last night?", the sentence "collision in Medan Tembung" has clarified the incident that last night there was a collision in Tembung.

According to SK, she ever said to the entire class "so, the task that we will submit is that one right?". This sentence is consider as an ambiguity because the entire class and also the researchers who did the observation nowadays might don't understand what is actually "that one" that the suspect just said. According to Kent Bach theory, this sentence is consider as a lexical ambiguity theory because the word "that one" in this sentence has more than one meaning. It could be that the word "that one" refers to a language study assignment, literature study, or general reading comprehension assignment. Because the word "that one" has many meanings, the researchers think it fits more with the lexical ambiguity theory.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

As a conclusion, the researchers conclude that people might be ever said an ambiguity in their daily life, especially the freshman in English Literature A class Batch 24. In this research, the researchers suspect 4 people to be observed secretly and the researchers find out what type of ambiguity that they said in daily class life. There are Lexical Ambiguity, Syntactic Ambiguity, and the last Referential Ambiguity.

The researchers also want to give some suggestions especially for the readers, to think before you talking to the other people, so there's no ambiguity between the speaker and the listener that makes every one feel knowing and understanding each other, talk carefully especially to the older people.

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