THE AMBIGUITY OF ENGLISH ADVERTISEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This is a qualitative research on applied linguistic which is conducted to find applied semantic theory about ambiguity, a condition where an utterance has two or more interpretations. The writers uses Kreidler's theory which classifies ambiguities into three kinds; lexical, referential, and syntactic which is devided into two types; surface structure and deep structure. The discussion includes kinds of ambiguity that are found and their interpretations. The data sources is English advertisement and the data is English advertisement utterances in banners, posters, and billboards. The writers collects the datas by taking in a picture, sellecting, and presenting. The next is analysis and conclusion. There are 33 datas that are found, they are twelve banners, eleven posters, and ten billboards. From banners, there are three lexical, no referential, six surface structure, and three deep structure ambiguities. From posters, there is no lexical, one referential, four surface structure, and six deep structure ambiguities. From billboards, there are two lexical, two referential, four surface structure, and two deep structure ambiguities. Generally, the ambiguities are dominated by surface and deep structure ambiguity.

Keywords: Ambiguity, Banner, Poster, Billboard

INTRODUCTION

In semantic, there discussion in it which is also important to know and understand,that is ambiguity. Sometimes, language is not easy enough to understand. It is ambiguous for the readers or listeners. According (2008:59),Adisutrisno proposition is ambiguous when there are two interpretations of meaning. It is a condition when a proposition has interpretations of meaning. two

Ambiguity can happen in two forms; spoken and written.

According Stageberg to (1964:111), understanding spoken language is easier than understanding written language. Based Stageberg, spoken language is easier to understand than written one. In spoken language, listener can ask directly to the speaker to clarify something that is ambiguous, but it is not in written language. That is why, ambiguity in written is more difficult understand. Based to on the

explanation, the writer is interested to make an analysis about ambiguity in written language.

To conduct it, the writer advertisement chooses English utterance in banner, poster, and billboard as the object. Advertisement is an important sign to understand, because it shows the products description, or at least the workshop type, and people always read and need to understand it before they decide to have a transaction with the shop, but when it consists English utterance and it is ambiguous, the advertisement can be understood into more than one interpretations. People can catch what the advertisement shows differently than what the advertisers mean.

That is why, an analysis about ambiguity in English advertisements will have a certain important role in society to help them understanding the interpretations, so they will be more careful in understanding the advertisement having before transaction.In this study the writer want to know about the kinds of ambiguityand the interpretations of advertisementin English banners. posters, and billboards.

THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

Semantics is the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences. In semantic analysis, there is always an attempt to focus on what the words conventionally mean, rather than on what an individual speaker might want them to mean on a particular occasion. This approach

is concerned with objective or general meaning and avoids trying to account for subjective or local meaning. Doing semantics is attempting to spell out what it is we all know when we behave as if we share knowledge of the meaning of a word, a phrase, or a sentence in a language (Yule, 2010:112).

Yule says that semantic is the study about meaning. Further, he explains that semantic is more concern on what the words, phrases, or sentences mean, rather than the speakers' one with their utterance. Semantic has more concentration to the object, not subject. So, the activity is objective, not subjective. Having semantic make us explore our knowledge to reach certain meaning of the word, phrases, or sentence that we find.

Each utterance has meaning. As we know, meaning is the main part of utterance or statement. Without meaning, something that we speak or write will be useless. So, meaning is the most important substance in an utterance statement. Actually, there are some utterances or statements that have a little confused meaning. It means, it has double meaning or more. The utterances or statements are ambiguous. And semantic discusses it in the special topic, it is ambiguity.

Ambiguity

Ambiguity is the condition whereby any linguistic form has two or more interpretations (Kreidler, 2002:298). According to Kreidler,

ambiguity occurs when a linguistic form can be interpreted into two or more meanings. So, when we find a statement and we understand the meaning by our thinking, but in another hand there is another one who understand it in another different way from us, the statement can be an ambiguous one.

Ambiguity happened in many languages, not only English. As what Lyon (1979:396) states that it (ambiguity) universally is a recognized and demonstrable fact that many of the acceptable utterances of English and other languages ambiguous, they can be interpreted in two or more different ways. The statement shows us that ambiguity can be in many languages. It means, each languages has an occasion to have an ambiguity. So, we can ambiguity conclude that everywhere. And once, it happened when we can interpret and get two or more meanings from it, because it actually has two or more ones.

Kinds of Ambiguity

Ambiguity can happen because of several factors. It does not only occur in one way. That is why there are some classifications on how ambiguity is formed. Kreidler had written those several types of ambiguity.

a. Lexical Ambiguity

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 one hand, or, on the other hand, fishing or boating (Kreidler, 2002:55).

According to Kreidler above, lexical ambiguity can happen when the speaker or writer use a homonym, a word which has two or more meanings in the same sound and graph. It can make an ambiguity because it has two or more meanings, so people can interpret it in some ways, of course it just happened when the meanings are appropriate enough to substitude each other.

b. Referential Ambiguity

Misunderstandings occur when a speaker has one referent in mind for a definite expression like George or the papers, and the addressee is thinking of a different George or some other papers. No doubt we have all experienced, and been troubled by, this kind of problem in reference. We can see other instances of referential ambiguity that are due to the nature of referring expressions, the vagueness that pieces of language necessarily have (Kreidler, 2002:151)

Based on the definition above, we can conclude that ambiguity also can happen because of difference in looking the reference. When one object can be interpreted into two or more references, it will product an ambiguity. Simply, when someone says or writes *A*, some listeners or

readers think A in the house, but some others may think A in the school, so they can be able to have different references in their mind about one object. Further, Kreidler (2002:151) shows how referential ambiguity occur with the examples as the following.

- An indefinite referring expression may be specific or not
 Example: I wanted to buy a newspaper
 Here a newspaper may refer to a specific newspaper or some newspaper, any newspaper?
- 2) Anaphora is unclear because a personal pronoun, he, she, it or they, can be linked to either of two referring expressions

 Example: Jack told Ralph that a visitor was waiting for *him*Him here may refer to Jack or Ralph?
- 3) The pronoun you is used generically or specifically Example: If *you* want to get ahead, you have to work hard. Is *you* the addressee or is this sentence a general platitude?
- 4) A noun phrase with every can have distributed reference or collected reference Example: I'm buying a drink for everybody here. One drink for all or one drink for each?

c. Syntactic Ambiguity

Beside two kinds of ambiguities above (lexical and referential), there is another one which is different from them, that is syntactic ambiguity. Syntactic ambiguity is devided into two types; surface structure and deep structure.

Syntactic ambiguity may be in the *surface structure* of a sentence: words can cluster together in different possible constructions. Syntactic 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, 2002:169).

The explanation from Kreidler above tells us that surface structure happened when groups of word in the sentence can be arranged to some different constructions. By being arranged, it can has different meanings. So, the ambiguity depends on the sentence construction only, that is why it can be found in the surface, surface structure. And deep structure shows an ambiguity from its without meanings changing construction. So, it does not have any relationship with its structure, because the multi interpretations are inner the sentence (deep). Further, Kreidler (2002:169) classifies both surface structure and deep structure to the more spesific types and explains them by the examples following.

Surface Structure

 constructions containing the coordinators and and or Example:
 John and Mary or Pat will go. ([John] and [Mary or Pat], or [John and Mary] or [Pat]?

- 2) a coordinate head with one modifier
 Example:
 The only people left were old men and women.
 ([old men] and [women], or old [men and women]?
- 3) a head with a coordinate modifierExample:Your essay should contain four or five hundred words.([4] or [500], or [400] or [500])?
- 4) a head with an inner modifier and an outer modifier Example:
 The sick pet was taken to a small animal hospital.
 ([small] [animal hospital], or [small animal] [hospital])?
- 5) a complement and modifier or two complements
 Example:
 Joe bought the book for Susan.
 ([bought] [the book for Susan],
 or [bought the book] [for
 Susan]?
 The tourists objected to the
 guide that they couldn't hear.
 [objected to] [the guide that
 they couldn't hear], or [objected
 to the guide] [that they couldn't
 hear])?
- 6) certain function words, including not, have possible differences in scope Example: The tennis courts are open to members *only* on Thursdays.

([members only], or [only on Thursdays]?
I'd like to find ten *more*interesting articles.
[ten more] [interesting articles],
or [ten] [more interesting
articles]?
They didn't leave because they
were angry.
[didn't leave] [because...], or
[didn't] [leave because...])?

❖ Deep Structure

- Gerund+object or participle modifying a noun Example: Overtaking cars on the main road can be dangerous. ('Overtaking cars is dangerous' or 'Cars overtaking are dangerous').
- 2) Adjective+infinitive, tied to subject or to complement Example: The chicken is too hot to eat.('Too hot to eat anything' or 'too hot for anybody to eat it')
- 3) Ellipsis in comparative constructionsExample : I like Mary better than Joan.('Better than I like Joan' or 'better than Joan likes Mary')

METHOD

This is a qualitative research, Qualitative research seeks to understand what, how, when, and where of an event or an action in order to establish its meaning, concepts, and definitions, caracteristics, metaphors, symbols, and discriptions (Angrosino in Latief,

2013:76). This study is done to find the ambiguous utterances of English advertisement in banners, posters, and billboard and do the analysis on it to understand its interpretations, the meanings possible that the advertisement has. The source of data is English advertisement in banners, posters, and billboards and the data is utterances of English advertisement in banners, posters, and billboards. The writers collects the datas by taking in a pictures, sellecting, and presenting. The next is analysis and conclusion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The datas are classified based on the publication media (banner, poster, and billboard). Each data is presented one by one and analyzed directly based on the problem of the research.

1. Banner

a. Data (Build something great)

The data has an utterance Build something great. This advertisement is ambiguous because the word great can be interpreted into more than one meaning. Great can mean big (in size) or wonderful (in quality). That is a homonym. So, this is a lexical ambiguity. are: interpretations banner states that the product can build something big (in size), or something wonderful (in quaility).

b. Data (**Full synthetic lubricant**) *Full synthetic lubricant* is the utterance of data. The utterance

consists of an inner modifier (synthetic) and an outer modifier (full). Full and synthetic at once can be a modifier for *lubricant* or place full only as a modifier for synthetic lubricant, those will produce different meanings. It is surface structure ambiguity. Here are the interpretations; [Full][synthetic lubricant], the product is a synthetic lubricant full, which is or [Full synthetic][lubricant], it is a lubricant which is synthetic fully.

c. Data (Great fabric with great character)

The advertisement is about seat of car. Great fabric with great character is its utterance. Great has two meanings; large or wonderful. Defining great for modifying fabric as large will produce different meaning from wonderful. It has a homonym, so it can be concluded that data has a lexical ambiguity, but it not be applied can modifying character, because large/big character and wonderful character has similar sense. The interpretations are; the banner advertises the large fabric seats of car which has a great character or good quality, or the wonderful fabric seats of car which has a great character or good quality.

d. Data (Gudo Toys)

Gudo Toys, that is the utterance of data. It is a place for buying

toys (toys store) or for playing toys (toys rent)? This ambiguity is happened because of omiting one or some words in it. This is a deep structure ambiguity. The interpretations are; It is a place for buying toys, or a place to rent toys.

e. Data (Hair beauty and wedding)

This is the utterance : Hair beauty and wedding. It has a coordinate head (beauty and wedding) with one modifier (hair). Positioning hair as a modifier for beauty and wedding will produce different meaning from hair modifier for beauty only, not for wedding. That is surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations; [Hair][beauty and wedding], it is about hair beauty and hair wedding, the shop may offers a hair beauty service and hair wedding rental or store, or [Hair beauty][and wedding], the advertisement is about hair beauty and wedding in general (not hair wedding only), the shop may offers a hair beauty service and wedding preparation service; clothing, decorating, or others.

f. Data (Integrated audio solution)

The utterance is *Integrated* audio solution. *Integrated* can be a modifier for audio solution. Beside it, *Integrated* audio can be a modifier for solution. It can be happened

because this utterance has an inner modifier (audio) and outer modifier (integrated). Understanding this character, it can be known that data has a surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations [Integrated][audio solution], audio solution which integrated, the workshop has an audio solution that is integrated, or [Integrated audio][solution], a solution for integrated audio, when someone has SO problem with his integrated audio, the workshop can solve that problem.

g. Data (Motorcycle tyre and tube)

Motorcycle tyre and tube. It has a coordinate head (tyre and with modifier tube) one (motorcycle). The ambiguity occurs when Motorcycle is arranged as modifier for tyre only in one side. Motorcycle as modifier for tyre and tube in another side. It is a surface structure ambiguity. interpretations The [Motorcycle][tyre and tube], the workshop provides motorcycle tyre and motorcycle tube, or [Motorcycle tyre][and tube], the workshop provides motorcycle tyre and general tube.

h. Data (**Printing quality**)

The data has an ambiguity because the utterance, *printing quality*, consists of *verb ing+complement*. Itcan be interpreted as

gerund+complement or participle which modifies a noun. Those interpretations produce different meaning each other. This is a character of deep structure ambiguity. The interpretations are; the shop has an ability to print a quality, or the shop has products with high quality which can print good results.

i. Data (Sampoerna retail community).

The utterance has an inner modifier (retail) and modifier (Sampoerna). Located Sampoerna as modifier for retail community will give different meaning from Sampoerna retail as modifier for community. It is a surface structure ambiguity. Here are interpretations; [Sampoerna][retail community], a retail community which the Sampoerna, name is [Sampoerna retail][community], a community which retails Sampoerna products.

j. Data(Spreading happiness all around)

Spreading happiness all around, that is the data utterance. It consists of Verb ing+complement. That structure be interpreted can as gerund+complement or participle which modifies a noun. Because of this condition, the data has a deep structure ambiguity. The interpretations; the banner shows that the shop or product is spreading happines to all around, or there is a happiness which spreads to all around.

k. Data (We make a complete musician)

This advertisement is about a music school. This is the utterance, We make a complete musician. The word complete has more than one meaning; perfect or all? This condition causes the data has a lexical ambiguity. The interpretations are; the music school will make someone to become a perfect musicion who can play music perfectly, or make someone to be able to play all of music kinds completely.

l. Data (X'treme power and protection)

The utterance is X'treme power protection. From surface structure, we can see that the utterance consists of a coordinate head (power and protection) with one modifier (X'treme).X'treme can be modifier for and protection, or X' treme as modifier for *power* only, not for protection. It is a surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations;

[X'treme][power and protection], the product has *X'treme* power and *X'treme* protection, or [X'treme power][and protection], *X'treme* power and general or usual protection.

2. Poster

- a. Data (Connecting people) Connecting people, that is the utterance of data. It is about an international celular phone brand. This utterance consists of Verb ing+complement which interpretations; two gerund+complement participle which modifies a noun. This is a deep structure ambiguity. Here is the interpretations; The advertisement tells that the product can connect people among each other, or there are people who connect each other.
- b. Data (Experience our innovation) The datahas an utterance, experience our innovation. possible These are two meanings; as an instruction to experience their innovation or an information that experience innovation? their The ambiguity occures because there is an ellipsis, so it has a deep structure ambiguity. Its interpretations; the advertisement wants the readers to experience the shop's or product's innovation, or just wants to show that experience is the shop's or product's innovation.
- c. Data (Flower and home decoration)
 The poster has an utterance flower and home decoration.
 Decoration is a head, and

- flower and home is a coordinate modifier. Readers can place flower and home, or home only as modifier for decoration. Those ways will produce two different meanings. That is surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations are; [Flower] [and home decoration], a shop which sells flower and also sells home decoration, or [Flower home] [decoration], a shop which sells flower decoration and also sells home decoration
- d. Data (Made fresh for you) Made fresh for you, that is the utterance. Actually, it has the word you which shows a referential. It can be ambiguous; you as a spesific person or you as a general platitude. But as a public advertisement, of course that it is not for a spesific person, so it can be sured that it is for general. So. will not discussed referential as ambiguity. Then, its ambiguity is in deep structure. Made fresh means making for you customers fresh or making something fresh for customers? That sequence of the words actually have more than one meanings, it is a deep structure ambiguity. The interpretations; The room is very comfortable the bakeries are delicious, so everybody who come in it or consume the bakeries will feel fresh, or The

- bakeries are very fresh, and it is made for customers.
- e. Data (Moslem fashion and accessories)

Moslem fashion and accessories is the utterance of data. It has a coordinate head (fashion and accessories) with one modifier (Moslem). When Moslem is placed as modifier for fashion and accessories, it will give different meaning from Moslem as modifier for only, not for fashion accessories. It has a surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations;

[Moslem][fashion and accessories], the shop sells moslem fashions and moslem accessories, or [Moslem fashion][and accessories], the shop sells moslem fashions and general accessories, not moslem accessories only.

f. Data (My bike my experience, what's yours?) My bike my experience, what's yours?, that is the utterance of data. To which does yours refer bike to; your or your experience? because there are two nouns here; bike and experience. Looking the case, it can be known that the data has referential ambiguity. The interpretations; the advertiser asks to the readers, if the readers' bike are experience as the advertisement?, or readers' experience are bike as the advertisement?

- g. Data (Only woman and kids) The poster contains the word only, one of certain words produce which can ambiguity. Only woman and kids. Positioning only just for woman will produce a different meaning from positioning only for woman and kids. It can be known that the poster has surface structure ambiguity. interpretations; [Only] [woman and kids], only for woman who is with kids. So, woman without kids will be refused, or [Only woman] [and kids], only for woman and only for kids. So, woman and kids are not in one, but apiece
- h. Data (Original VCD rental) This is the utterance: Original VCD rental. It consists of inner modifier (VCD), and outer modifier (Original). Original can be a modifier for VCD rental or Original VCD is the modifier for rental. From it, it is known that the poster has surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations; [Original] [VCD rental], VCD rental in the advertisement is original, or [Original VCD] [rental], the poster is about a rental which provides original VCD.
- i. Data (Watering gallon is here) Watering gallon is here, that is the utterance. Verb-ing+noun potentiallyhas an ambiguity; as gerund+complement or participle which modifes a noun? It can be known that the

- data has a deep structure ambiguity. The interpretations; it is the shop is a place for filling gallon with water, or the shop sells a gallon which contains water.
- j. Data (We are ready to contact)
 Datashows a computer service
 advertisement. This is the
 utterance: We are ready to
 contact. An adjective which is
 followed by to+invinitive can
 be ambiguous in deep structure.
 So, it has deep structure
 ambiguity. The interpretations;
 The shop is ready to contact
 customers, or ready for being
 contacted by customers.
- k. Data (We try to serve customers better than others)

We try to serve customers better than others, that is utterance. It is a preference form. Preference has a chance to be ambiguous. Its ambiguity occurs because there is an omitted phrase in the utterance. This data contains deep structure ambiguity. Here is the interpretations; the shop tries to serve the customers better than the shop serve others (buyer), or the shop tries to serve the customers better than others (shop) serve the customers.

3. Billboard

a. Data (Baby kids shop)

The data utterance is *Baby kids shop*. People can think if it is a shop that sells baby kids or

- baby kids equipment. The utterance is a squence of words that has more than one meaning because of an ellepsis. It has a deep structure ambiguity. The interpretations; the shop sells baby and kids, or the shop sells baby kids equipment.
- b. Data (Coating is beautiful)

 Data has the utterance coating is beautiful. It is ambiguous because the word coating has two meanings; wearing a coat or doing coating (layering). It is homonym, it is a lexical ambiguity. The interpretations; the advertisement tells to the public that wearing a coat is beautiful, or layering is beautiful.
- c. Data (No. 1 in quality and service)
 - This advertisement is about computer shop. Here is the utterance, No. 1 in quality and service. Its ambiguity happens because the word service has two meanings; serving the customers in transaction or repairing the product for customers? It also has a lexical ambiguity. Here the interpretations; the advertisement shows that the shop is number one in quality and serving the customers in transaction, or the shop is number one in quality repairing the product for customers.
- d. Data (Play your apps with Treq)

Play your apps with Treq, it is the data utterance. The utterance is ambiguous because it uses a certain word which can product an ambiguity, the word is with. Positioning with just for the after noun (Treq) will give a different meaning from positioning with together with the before noun (apps) and after noun (Treq). This is surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations; [Play] your with apps Treq], the advertisement suggests the readers to play their apps which is operated by Treq only, not others which are not operated by Treq, or [Play your apps] [with Treq], in order to play (all) their apps by using Treq.

- e. Data (Ride the perfection) This billboard contains motorcycle promotion. In it, there is an utterance: Ride the perfection. What does it mean? Ride (to) the perfection or ride the perfect (motorcycle)? The utterance is ambiguous with the ellipsis. It can be known that the data has deep structure ambiguity. Its interpretations; the motorcycle factory as a producer always tries and tries to reach the perfection, or the products (motorcycle) is on progress to go to the more perfection.
- f. Data (Sallon and wedding gallery)The data contains this utterances, sallon and wedding

- gallery. The coordinate modifier is Sallon and wedding, and gallery is the head which is modified. It can produce ambiguity because positioning sallon and wedding as modifier for gallery will have different meaning from wedding only as modifier for gallery. That is surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations; [Sallon] [and wedding gallery], the shop promotes a sallon and wedding gallery, or [Sallon and wedding] [gallery], a sallon gallery and a wedding gallery.
- g. Data (Take a wefie smartphone Andromax C2S) Take a wefie with smartphone Andromax C2S. The utterance contains the word with which has a possibility to produce an ambiguity. Positioning with for the after noun only (*smartphone* Andromax C2S) will give a different meaning positioning with together with the before noun (wifie) and the after noun (smartphone Andromax C2S). That is a surface structure ambiguity. The interpretations; [Take][a wefie with smartphone Andromax C2S], the advertiser wants to the readers to take a wefie which comes from smartphone Andromax, [Take a wefie][with smartphone Andromax C2S], take a wefie connection by using smartphone Andromax C2S.
- h. Data (The trusted parts shop)

The trusted parts shop, that is the utterance. The trusted is an outer modifier, while parts is the inner modifier. Positioning The trusted parts as modifier for shop will give a different meaning from positioning The trusted as modifier for partss shop. It is surface structure ambiguty. The interpretations; [The trusted] [parts shop], a parts shop which is trusted, or [The trusted parts] [shop], a shop which sells the trusted parts.

- Data (Walls fight stains like no other)
 - Walls fight stains like no other is the utterance. Its ambiguity is in the word other, to which does it refer to? There are two nouns in front of the it, walls or stains? It has a referential ambiguity. The interpretations; the wall which is painted with the product can fight stains like no other wall which is not painted with the product, or other stains in other wall which is not painted with the product.
- j. Data (2 all new beat for everyone)

The data contains this utterance; 2 all new beat for everyone. Everyone can shows a distributed reference or collected reference. So, its ambiguity is in its referential. It is a refential ambiguity. The interpretations; the factory is presenting two new beats for all people, or suggesting two new

beats for each person, the factory wants each person to buy those two new beats. So each person will buy two new kinds of beat at once.

CONCLUSION

This studywas conducted to find applied Semantic theory about ambiguity by using Kreidler's theory. There are twelve banners, eleven posters, and ten billboards which contain ambiguous English advertisement utterances. After doing analysis and discussion, here are the conclusions:

- 1. Kinds of ambiguity of English advertisement that are found in in banners, posters, and billboards are lexical ambiguity, referential ambiguity, and syntactic ambiguity (surface structure and deep structure).
- 2. The interpretations of ambiguity of English advertisement that are found in banners, posters, and billboards are; lexical interpretations which contain a homonym, referential interpretations which refer to two references, inner and outer modifier interpretations, coordinate head with one modifier interpretations, coordinate modifier for a head interpretations, certain function words that can produce ambiguity interpretations, verbing+complement interpretations, to+infinitive interpretations, and ellipsis interpretations.

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