

Research Article

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Analysis of Lexical of English Spoken by Non-Native Speakers in British Television Series *Mind Your Language* Session 1

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Abstract

In language, ambiguity is often considered a problem. Ambiguity can be found in every aspect of language whether it is written or spoken. Research in terms of ambiguity mostly found in written language, but this study conducted using spoken data. In this research, the ambiguity that is going to be studied is an ambiguity spoken by Non-native English speaker in a humoristic way. Lexical ambiguity is usually caused by homonymy and polysemy. This research aims to describe the ambiguity in the British television series *Mind Your Language Season 1* and the writer focus on the lexical ambiguity and contextual meaning. The type of this research is descriptive qualitative. The technique of collecting the data is note-taking technique. The writer describes all possible meanings from the ambiguous jokes by analyzing the contextual meaning. This study conducted to find types of lexical ambiguity used by non-native English and described all possible meanings from the ambiguous jokes within the context. There are two lexical ambiguities found in this data, polysemy and homonymy. The writer found 51 words considered as lexical ambiguity. From 51 words, 15 words were classified as polysemy and 36 as homonymy. In homonymy, there are 18 words categorized in both homonyms and homophones. By analyzing the contextual meaning, the writer reveals the correct interpretation and intention of the ambiguous words. The writer also found the reason why the jokes are considered as lexical ambiguity. Finally, the writer reveals the type of lexical ambiguity used by non-native English.

Keywords: ambiguity; contextual meaning; lexical ambiguity; polysemy; homonymy

1. Background of the Study

According to David Crystal [1], ambiguity is the reference to a word or sentence which expresses more than one meaning and this reference has to do with linguistics. Hartmann and Stork believe that ambiguity is a construction which admits more than one interpretation [2], which also makes Ulmann divides ambiguity into three kinds; phonetic,

structural, and lexical ambiguity [3]. Nevertheless, the writer focuses only on the lexical ambiguity and the object of the study is about humor. The study of the semantic ambiguity allows for practical insight into the attributes of the text and the parsing process, which may be associated with writing a comedy script.

Hurford and Heasley believe that the lexical ambiguity is caused by ambiguous words [4]. Lexical ambiguity is usually caused by synonymy and ambiguity. For instance, *the captain corrected the list*. This word 'list' has two meanings. First is *the captain corrected the inventory*. Second is *the captain corrected the tilt*. We do not know the exact meaning of the word because the context is unobvious.

The research about ambiguity has often been conducted in written language such as analyzing the headlines, newspapers, and novels. However, there is hardly any research in spoken language. At this point, the writer is analyzing the lexical ambiguity and contextual meaning of ambiguous jokes spoken in a British television series *Mind Your Language*. The show was conducted in a college in London and focused on English as a foreign language for foreigners. In this series, there are 10 foreigners who studied English. Mostly, the ambiguous jokes occurred because the cultural gap between the speaker and the hearer. Cultural gap is a difference in values, behavior, or customs between two cultures or group of people, especially as a hindrance to mutual understanding and communication. Because of cultural gap is inevitable, the writer puts an interest on ambiguity especially in humoristic way. *Mind Your Language* is an interesting object to study in terms of lexical ambiguity. In spite of the object of the study is a television series, which mean it is directed, the conversation in it is also happened in real situation.

Based on the description above, the study conducted to find types of lexical ambiguity spoken by non-native English in the data, to describes the contextual meaning in every ambiguous words, and to figure out the reason of some words categorize as lexical ambiguity.

2. Methods

The type of research is descriptive and qualitative as the writer reveals facts or events that took place in the data, especially by describing, explaining and decoding data. The data for this study is in spoken language. Data are ambiguous words expressed in a humorous manner by non-native English speakers. The data source is a video downloaded from YouTube. This is the title of a British television series *Mind Your Languages. Mind Your Language*. The writer uses the observations to collect data. Observation is the method by which researchers gather data by listening to or observing language use [5]. The writer adopts the method of non-participatory observation. This means that the writer collects data based on the document. The writer also used the method of taking notes. In analyzing data, the writer uses the distributional method.

3. Method of the Study

The writer found 51 ambiguous words which are considered as jokes. There are 15 ambiguous words of polysemy and 36 words of homonymy. In homonymy, the writer found ambiguous words considered as homophones. There are 18 words found either in homonyms or homophones. The writer analyzed the meaning of the ambiguous words based on dictionary and described the situation from the conversation that had been scripted. Then, the writer determined the contextual meaning based on the situation of the conversation. At the end, the writer also described the correct interpretation from a conversation based on the correct definition in the dictionary and the contextual meaning. All of the words found in lexical ambiguity presented in the table below:

Table 1. List of Lexical Ambiguity in Mind Your Language Season 1

Polysemy	Homonymy	
	Homonyms	Homophones
1. Present	1. Right	1. Early /'ɜ:li/ and Ali /Ali/
2. Exercise	2. Sex	2. Shopping /ʃɒp ɪŋ/ and Chopin /ʃɒpæn/
3. Come along	3. Sir	3. Flour /flaʊə/ and Flower /flaʊə/
4. Take	4. Monitor	4. Carrot /'kærət/ and Cart /kart/
5. Knock out	5. Stand	5. Vowel /vaʊəl/ and Bowel /baʊəl/
6. Underground	6. Glasses	6. Bed /bed/ and Bad /bæd/
7. Bugged	7. Bird	7. Beefeater /'bi:fi:tər/ and Beef-eater /bi:f/ - /i:tər/.
8. Cold	8. Star	8. Missed /mɪst/ and Mist /mɪst/
9. Take	9. Practice	9. Bigamy /bɪgəmi/ and Big of me /bɪg ɒv mi:/
10. Naughty	10. Celtic	10. Adore /ə'dɔ:/ and a door /ə dɔ:/
11. Fight	11. Race	11. Noun /naʊn/ and Nun /nʌn/
12. Engagement	12. Bitch	12. Sheep /ʃi:p/ and Ship /ʃɪp/
13. Word	13. Toilet water	13. Foul /faʊl/ and Fowl /faʊl/
14. Bottom	14. Draw	14. Palace /'pæləs/ and Paris /'pærɪs/
15. Follow	15. Toast	15. What /wɒt/ and Watt /wɒt/
	16. Complaint	16. Feet /fi:t/ and Fit /fit/
	17. Brown	17. Four /fɔ:/ and Fore /fɔ:/
	18. Catalyst	18. Sikh /si:k/ and Sick /sɪk/

The writer found two types of lexical ambiguity, polysemy and homonymy. There are 15 words found in polysemy and 36 words in homonymy. Homonymy divided into two types, homonyms and homophones. The description between polysemy and homonymy is that polysemy is the different meanings of word that has connection between each other. According to Lyons, "Polysemy is where one lexical form has two or more related meaning" [6]. Then Apresjan defined that polysemy is the phenomenon that a single word

has several distinct but related meanings [7]. Klein & Murphy also defined that polysemy is the existence of more than one meaning for a given word that is the capability of a word to convey the different information about objects and phenomena of extra linguistics reality [8].

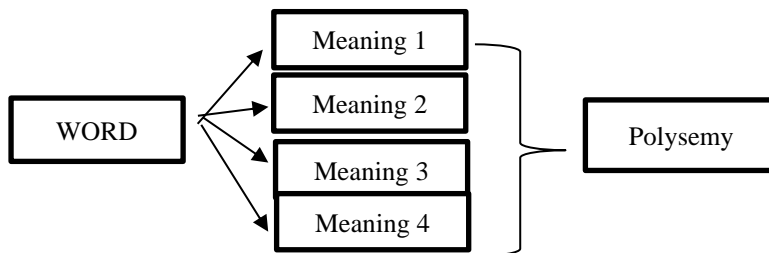


Figure 1. Chart of Word Meaning and Polysemy Connection

From the chart above, the writer argues that polysemy is a word which can be defined as one form (written or spoken) having multiple meanings which are all related by extension. All of those 15 words which are found in the data have multiple meanings and related by extension within the context.

In homonymy, Palmer defines it as words (lexemes) which denote two different meanings at the same time according to the native speakers of the relevant language [9]. This term is also described in semantics for lexical items that are identical in spelling and pronunciation but have different meanings. Moreover, Atchison [10] and Fromkin [11] agree with the previous definition of homonyms but they add that homonyms may or may not be identical. Accordingly, their definition is rather similar to that of homophones. Conversely, homonyms are defined as homophones as words with the same sound but different spellings but without labelling homophones as homonyms as Fromkin [11] do.

In this data, the writer found two types of homonymy. The first type is homonyms which are defined as words with multiple meanings but they are all unrelated. For example, the word “right” have two unrelated meanings. The word “right” can be defined as the opposite of left or correct/suitable. Both definitions are unrelated because ‘the opposite of left’ can be used as direction and ‘correct’ as statement. The second type of homonymy is homophone. Homophones are words that are spelt differently but have similar pronunciation as Sikh /si:k/ and Sick /sɪk/. Sikh /si:k/ is one of the most known religion and Sick /sɪk/ is a condition of feeling unwell. Both words are categorized as homophones because it has similar pronunciation.

1. The distinction between homonymy and polysemy is not always clear cut. However, one indication of the distinction can be found in the typical dictionary entry for words. If a word has multiple meanings (polysemic), then there will be a single entry, with a numbered list of the different meanings of the word. If two words are treated as homonyms, they will typically have two separate entries. You could check in your dictionary and

probably find that the different meanings of words like *head*, *get*, *run*, *face* and *foot* are treated as examples of polysemy, whereas *mail*, *bank*, *sole* and *mole* are treated as examples of homonymy.

One form can be distinguished via homonymy, then shown to have various uses via polysemy. The words *date* (= oblong, fleshy fruit) and *date* (= point in time) are homonyms. But the 'point in time' kind of *date* is polysemous in terms of a particular day and month (= on a letter), an arranged meeting time (= an appointment), a social meeting (= with someone of the opposite sex) and even a person (= that someone of the opposite sex).

4. Conclusion

The writer found two types of lexical ambiguity; polysemy and homonymy. In homonymy, the writer found ambiguous words considered as homophones and homonyms. Either homonyms or homophones have different meaning, however homophones compared with other words which have identical sound. Homonyms discussed the various meaning in different category. The difference between polysemy and homonymy is that polysemy has multiple meaning but all meanings are in the same category, while the meaning of words in homonymy are in different category. In this research, some words considered as lexical ambiguity because it contains multiple meanings and identical sound with another word. The role of the words as the jokes were crucial because it represents that we can make fun of a conversation by playing either the meaning or the sound of the word. To sum up the conclusion, the type of lexical ambiguity used by non-native speakers in this data is polysemy, homonymy and homophony. From 51 words, 15 words were classified as polysemy and 36 as homonymy. In homonymy, there are 18 words categorized in both homonyms and homophones.

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