

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

Language is an important tool of communication (Amelia in Cenita and Nurmaily, 2020; Izzah et al, 2021) because it serves as a device to deliver message from one person to another (Kuswoyo, 2016; Halliday in Cahyono and Pribady, 2020: Samanik, 2018) and one interesting fact about communication is that language users often find it puzzling to assign specific meanings to expressions even when such expressions contain simple everyday words (Ovu, 2011). In a text, a word or clause can be interpreted in several meanings and sometimes it brings confusion to predict a certain meaning in which someone tries to convey in a certain context (Kuswoyo and Siregar, 2019). Since it leads people to get several related meanings or different meanings instead which is then known as ambiguity. Ambiguity itself can be defined as linguistic condition which can arise in variety of ways (Ullmann in Purwaningsih, 2014). Ambiguity happens when a single word has more than one meaning (Gallagher, 2013) which means that when a word turns out as an ambiguous one, it leads the listener to get multiple interpretations in mind toward an utterance. As a result, sometimes the listener gives a different response from what the speaker actually expects in the utterance.

Further, Ullmann in Gallagher (2013) divides ambiguity into three kinds; phonological ambiguity, lexical ambiguity and grammatical ambiguity. Phonological ambiguity relates to the sound of language that if this is said, it will generate two or more interpretations by the hearers and it does not arise in written

form. Lexical ambiguity arises when a single word has more than one meaning. Meanwhile, grammatical ambiguity arises when a phrase or a sentence creates ambiguity due to the structures that can be interpreted in many ways. Both grammatical ambiguity and lexical ambiguity lead the readers to have different interpretations because when there are too many interpretations, it makes the readers hardly understand the meaning of the words or sentences.

Hence, since ambiguity can be noticed in both verbal and non-verbal forms, the writer prefers to discuss lexical ambiguity in the written form, especially creative words that are commonly found in internet memes or also known as Meme(s). The term “meme” was firstly coined by Richard Dawkins to describe a theoretical self-replicating unit of cultural transmission that spreads by imitation (Chandler, 2008), which means that meme itself is a reflection of what people commonly do and it has been creatively reanimated.

Within the internet culture, the term meme(s) is commonly used to refer to phrases, videos, images or the combination of all and it is widely spread out by internet users. In many cases, the form of meme can be various and it is commonly consisting of a single image with text on it and mostly the image is intended to evoke a humorous effect. Gardner in Sartika and Pranoto (2021) explained that humor can be defined as anything (both in the form of text and/or verbal) that makes people laugh or feel amused and it is considered as an emotional response of joy that is expressed through smiling and laughter (Martin in Ayu, 2018; Darmansyah in Pranoto and Suprayogi, 2020).

Further, related to memes, typically, there are two lines of text, one at the top of the image serving as the set-up for the joke and another at the bottom of the image

-serving as the punch line. Aside from sustaining popularity among Internet users, memes have also received attention from journalists, academics and media organizations that have borrowed elements of internet memes for advertising and marketing efforts (Chandler, 2008). Moreover, in order to find memes, there is this one specific website that commonly people can access freely called 9gag. 9gag itself is known as social media that contains with humorous content of memes with various issues, such as politics, sports, social, music and many more (Pranoto and Suprayogi, 2020).

Lexical ambiguity arises when context is insufficient to determine the sense of a single word that has more than one lexical meaning based on dictionary. In that case, the writer sees this opportunity to explain to the readers how lexical ambiguity appears in humor memes. Thus, seeing this phenomenon, the writer is interested in analyzing the lexical ambiguity in the selected humor memes that can be taken from the official website of 9gag.com.

Further, because studying ambiguity also learning about another interpretation of meaning in verbal and non-verbal, then the writer considers that analyzing ambiguity is quite important to be discussed because to figure the exact interpretation or exact meaning of the words, sentences or even utterances, people need to see the context so they are not misunderstood.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of research above, the writer formulates the research questions as follow:

1. What are lexical ambiguities found in selected humor memes?
2. What are the possible meanings of the lexical ambiguities from the selected humor memes?

1.3 Objective of Research

Regarding to the research question, the objective of this research is to determine the lexical ambiguity found in the selected humor memes whether they are categorized as homonymy or polysemy and also to describe the possible meaning from each of the humor memes.

1.4 Uses of Research

1.4.1 Theoretical Uses

Theoretically, this research gives contributions toward linguistics performance particularly semantic which can enrich the knowledge of readers to understand the meaning of words or phrases even sentences and also able to construct an effective sentence in communication. Moreover, the writer also believes that this research can be used as one of the future references for other researchers who are interested in conducting similar topic discussion of lexical ambiguity.

1.4.2 Practical Uses

Practically, the writer hopes that through this research, the readers further are able to recognize the characteristic of lexical meanings in humor memes. In addition, by understanding the lexical ambiguity in memes, both common readers and further researchers can understand the relationship between language and humor and how language can combine with non-linguistic symbols and signs in order to create meaning.

1.5 Scope of Research

In analyzing the 9gag memes, the writer noticed that many primary points can be discussed. However, in this research, the writer only limits the topic that is only focused on analyzing and explaining the lexical ambiguity that can be found on the humor memes whether it is homonymy or polysemy according to Ullman's theory (1977). Moreover, the writer also limits the data to be analyzed where the writer only collects the data from the official website of www.9gag.com from year of 2020 to 2021.