Sudan University of Science and Technology

College of Graduate Studies

College of languages

Investigating the Difficulties Facing EFL Students in Dealing and Understanding Ambiguous Sentences

تقصي الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية في التعامل والفهم الجمل الغامضة

A Thesis Submitted in partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master Degree in English Language (Linguistics)

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my dear parents, to our teachers who sacrifice day and night to get us out of darkness to the lightness and also to my colleagues who bear the difficulties of life bravely and never forget saying thank to my god.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly would like to thank to almighty God who has granted me the strength to finish this study. I would like to express my acknowledgement to my supervisor Dr. Abas Mukhtar for his great encouragement and support me. Also my thanks to Dr.Hillary Marino Pitilia ,Dr. Sawson and Dr. Najla the jury of judgment to the research instrument for their notifications and advices. Also I would like to thank my colleagues who helped me to conduct this study. And students at Sudan University of Science and Technology. Also my special thanks to everyone who stand and cooperation with me and they gave their hands to do this study I do thank them a lot.

ABSTRACT

This study aims at investigating the difficulties facing E F L students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences. The researcher adopted the descriptive method for data collection. The test was designed and given to 40 students at Sudan University of Science and Technology. Then the researcher analyzed the data and arrived at the following results: E F L students at Sust University are unable to deal with ambiguous sentences correctly particularly to identify semantic and structural ambiguous sentences. According to above results the researcher recommended that: Teachers of English language should give more exercises to Students, so as to be able to deal and understand ambiguous sentences correctly. Also Teachers of English language should introduce to students different types of ambiguous sentences in order to facilitate learning process.

المستخلص (Arabic Version)

هدفت هذه الدراسة لتقصي الصعوبات التي يواجهها طلاب اللغة الانجليزية لغة أجنبية في التعامل وفهم الجمل الغامضة. تبنى الباحث المنهج الوصفي لجمع وتحليل البيانات . أستخدم

الباحث اختباروزعت لعدد أربعين طالب وطالبة من جامعة السودان للعلوم والتكنولوجيا،ومن ثم قام الباحث بتحليل البيانات باستخدام الحزم الاحصائي للعلوم الاجتماعية spss ، وأثبتت التحليل أن طلاب قسم اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة السودان غير قادرين في التعامل وفهم الجمل الغامضة وبصفة خاصة التميز بين الجمل الغامضة من حيث المعنى والتركيب.واستنادا على النتائج المذكورة أعلاه،أوصى الباحث:على أساتذة اللغة الانجليزية منح الطلاب مزيد من التمارين حتى يتمكنومع التعامل و فهم الجمل الغامضة, ذات المعاني الغامضة بصورة سليمة لتسهيل عملية التعلم .

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Introduction

1.0 Background

 In this chapter researcher is going to focus on research introduction in general which include context of the study, statement of the study, objectives of the study, questions of the study, hypotheses of the study, significance of the study, methodology of the study and limitations of the study, The great number of English Language learners are often confused when they are listening to someone speaking or reading news in English Language that is because there some English Language sentences which are ambiguity in there meanings. Plausibility and verb sub categorization in temporarily ambiguous sentences: Evidence form self-paced reading experiment investigated processing of sentences containing a noun phrase that could temporarily be mistaken as the direct-object argument of a verb in a subordinate clause but actually constituted the syntactic Subject of the main clause often referred to as an early vs. closure ambiguity sub categorization preference of the subordinate verb and plausibility of the misanalysis were manipulated. Elevated reading times occurred during processing of temporarily ambiguous noun phrase for those sentences where the noun-phrase was an implausible direct –object of the preceding verb, regardless of the verbs sub categorization preferences. Elevated reading times were observed for all sentence types following syntactic disambiguation. Ambiguity is a pervasive phenomenon in language which occurs at all level of linguistic analysis. Out of context, words have multiple senses and syntactic categories, requiring listeners to determine which meaning and part of speech was intended. Morphemes may also be ambiguous out of context as in the English – s, which can denote either a plural noun marking (trees), a possessive (student's), or a present tense verb conjugation (runs).Phonological forms are often mapped to multiple distinct word

meanings, as in the homophones *too*, *two* and *to*. Syllables are almost always ambiguous in isolation, meaning that they can be interpreted as providing incomplete information about the word the speaker is intending to communicate. Syntactic and semantic ambiguity is frequent enough to present a substantial challenge to natural language processing.

1.1 Statement of the Study Problem:

This study is investigating the difficulties facing E F L students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences. These ambiguous sentences are common in English language and in spite of their using and understanding it's very important in language for E F L learners because they do not understand the ambiguous sentences. If they do not know how to deal and understanding when they hear somebody speaking using ambiguous sentences in this case the message going to be miss understandable to the listener and this may cause difficulties to E F L students.

.1.2 Objectives of the Study

1-This study is attempting to investigate the difficulties that facing E F L students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences.

2-To illustrate some sentences and expressions of ambiguous sentences which are confuse to the E F L learners to deal with them.

1.3 Questions of the Study:

 The present study attempts to provide answers to the following Questions:

1-To what extend do the students of English language at Sudan University of Science and Technology understand ambiguous sentences?

2-Why the E F L students do not able to deal and understand ambiguous sentences during communication in everyday life?

1.4   hypotheses of the Study:

1- Students of English Language of Sudan University of Science and Technology may unable to understand ambiguous sentences.

2-Students of English language at Sudan University of Science and Technology do not differentiate ambiguous sentences.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

This study attempts to identify the following statement:

This study is important because it tries to find out the difficulties encountered E F L students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences that has multiple meanings or seems vague.

1.6 Methodology of the Study

This study is investigating the difficulties facing E F L students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences. The researcher should adopt descriptive approach and tool of the study is test for fourth year students Sudan University of Science and Technology.

1.7 Limits of the Study:

 The study is conducted at investigation the difficulties facing E F L students at Sudan university of Science and Technology college of languages in the academic year fourth year 2020 in dealing with ambiguous sentences.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and Previous Studies

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical aspects related to investigating the Difficulties encountered by E L F students in using and understanding ambiguous sentences and definitions of ambiguity, types of ambiguity sentences, characteristics, the most common ambiguity sentences and their meanings of ambiguous sentences and other previous studies.

2.1 The Definition of Ambiguity:

According Molly Triffin et al (2008) Ambiguity is the quality or state of being ambiguous especially in meaning, also ambiguity is a word or expression that can be understood in two or more possible ways. According to Jordi Fortuny (2013) On the origin of ambiguity in Efficient communication in Journal of local language and information the emergency of ambiguity in communication through the concept of local irreversibility and within the framework of Shannon's information theory, This leads us to precise and general expression of the intuition behind Zipf's vocabulary balance in terms of a symmetry equation between the complexities of the coding and the decoding processes that imposes and unavoidable amount of local uncertainty in natural communication. Accordingly, the emergence of irreversible computation is required if the complexities of the coding and the decoding processes are balanced in a symmetric scenario, which mean that the emergence of ambiguous codes in a necessary condition for natural communication to succeed. It is a common observation that natural languages, namely that linguistic utterances can potentially be assigned more than one interpretation and that receivers of linguistic utterances need to resort supplementary information {i.e. the linguistic or the communicative context} to choose one among the available interpretations. Both linguistics and logicians have been interested in this observation. On the one hand, a traditional task of grammar is to illustrate and classify ambiguity, which may be different types: in this regard it is important to determine how apparently ambiguous utterances are disambiguated at the relevant level of representation. Indeed, the search for a parsimonious treatment of certain ambiguities such as scope ambiguities has been one of the most powerful motors in development of the formal inquiry of the syntax-semantics interface, since its modern inception in Montague's semiotic program (13).It is no exaggeration at

all, to say that the presence of ambiguity particularly, scope ambiguity and the apparent mismatch between the form and the alleged semantic structure of quantified expressions in natural languages have been the two major guiding problems in the development of a formal theory of the syntax-semantics interface of natural language. On the other hand, logicians in general would not be as interested in describing or characterizing the phenomenon of ambiguity as in the construction of unambiguous artificial languages, whose primitive symbols have a univocal interpretation and whose formulae are constructed by the appropriate recursive syntactic definitions and unambiguously interpreted by the relevant compositional semantic rules, formulated as recursive definitions that trace back the syntactic construction of the formulae. All human languages are ambiguous. Ambiguity is not restricted to some special constructions that linguists are fond of discussing, but is quite ubiquitous. It is hard, in fact. To find a sentence that is *not* ambiguous. This fact is all too familiar to computational linguists "One of ten hears in computational linguistics about completely unremarkable sentences with hundreds of parses, and that is in fact no exaggeration (Abney, 1996). The question is, simply why? Why is language ambiguous?

Ambiguity Vs Vagueness

Krifka (2002) raises similar question vagueness. He shows that there are good reasons for language to allow, and even encourage vagueness. Vagueness, however, is not ambiguity. When we are told that the theater is far from here, we may be insure as to the precise distance, but we know what the speaker intends, and we can draw inferences based on, e g, that we should take a cab instead of walking to the theater. But with an ambiguous term, the intended meaning is not merely insufficiently specified, it is not known, until the term is disambiguated. When we hear that John has a kid, we draw very different inferences if John is a father or if he owns a young goat. Thus the advantages of vagueness do not seem to apply to ambiguity, and we are back to the question: Why ambiguity?

 Some may say that it doesn't matter. Humans possess very powerful mechanisms for disambiguation; these mechanisms resolve ambiguities, so that we are not normally aware of them. But this is not really an answer: these powerful mechanisms are there because language is ambiguous. If weren't they wouldn't have developed. Moreover, these mechanisms must require extra processing time. We know that all senses of an ambiguous word are accessed first, and only then does disambiguation occur (Swinney, 1979). If Language

were not ambiguous, we would need to access fewer meanings, and we would be saved the additional process of dis ambulation.

Difficulties of Ambiguity

According to Donald G Macky (1966) Attention Perception and psychophysics To end ambiguous sentences A study of time required to complete ambiguous sentences suggested that even though Ss are unaware of the ambiguity while completing sentences, they take more time to complete ambiguous sentences than unambiguous one: the degree of difficulty in completing ambiguous sentences is related to the linguistic level at which the ambiguity occurs: sentences containing two ambiguities are more difficult to complete than those containing only one, and when these two ambiguities occur at different linguistic levels, these sentences are harder to complete than when both occur within the same linguistic level: ambiguity may affect the grammaticality and relevance of completions, and may cause stuttering and laughter, even without awareness of the ambiguity. An attempt to fit these result to several theories of the processing of ambiguous sentences led us the conclusion that ambiguity interferes with our understanding of a single meaning of a sentence, and that the degree of interference varies with the linguistic level at which the ambiguity occurs.

According to Fox and Tverskys{1995) comparative ignorance hypothesis, ambiguity aversion is driven by the comparison with more familiar events or more knowledgeable individuals, and diminishes or disappears in the absence of such a comparison. Comparative ignorance refers to the state of mind of the decision maker. We extend the comparative ignorance hypothesis by documenting four new ways in which decision context can affect willingness to act under uncertainty that do not rely on the comparative-noncompetitive evaluation paradigm used in previous studies. First, people find uncertain bets more attractive when preceded by questions about less familiar items than when preceded by questions about more familiar items. Second, the preference to bet

on more familiar domains Third, people find bets less attractive when they are provided with diagnostic information that they do not know how to use ,compared to when they are provided with no such information Finally, people are sensitive to the relative competence of their counterpart when playing a simple competitive game

Conceptual Ambiguity

In this section it will be argued that the classification of democratic regime types should be made on the basis of one or other of two separate and distinct types of properties: dispositional properties and rational properties. It will be argued that when classifications are made on the basis of these two types of properties then the conceptual ambiguity which was at the core of the classification examined above is eliminated.

There is an essential distinction between dispositional and relational properties. Dispositional properties indicate nothing per se about the powers of institution and office holders. For example, in the same way that a fragile cup (fragility being a dispositional property) is one which may easily be broken but not one that is actually breaking (Dowding 1991:4), so a properly elected president(popular election being a dispositional property) is one who may be strong but not one who necessarily is strong. To use Ieraci 1996: 56-57) . That is to say, they refer simple to the characteristics of the institutional framework within which any given setoff power relations occurs. By contrast, relational properties are descriptions of the actual capacity of presidents and prime ministers to mobilize the political resources at their disposal. To use Ieracis' terminology they refer to the set of power relations that may be seen to occur within any given institutional framework. To return to Dowding's example, fragile cups break when they are dropped but the fact that a particular fragile cup has broken is simply a description of the fact that it has been dropped. In other

words, it is a description of the fact that a particular set of circumstances has occurred which has resulted in the fragile cup breaking. So if a state has popularly-elected president who is strong, then this is simply description of the fact that a particular set of circumstances has occurred which has resulted in the popularly elected president becoming strong.

2.2 The Communicative Function of ambiguity in Language:

According to (Hockett , 1960 , Pinker and Bloom, 1990). One might imagine that in a perfect communication system, language would completely disambiguate meaning. Each linguistic form would map objectively to a meaning and comprehenders would not need to expend effort inferring what speaker intended to say. This would reduce the computational difficulties in language understanding and comprehension because recovering meaning would be no more complex than, for instance, compiling a computer program. The communicative efficacy of language might be enhanced since there would be no danger of comprehenders incorrectly inferring the intended meaning. Confusion about "who is on first" could not occur. Indeed, the existence of ambiguity in language has been argued to show that the key structures and properties of language have not evolved for purposes of communication or use. The natural approach has always been: Is it well designed for use, understood typically as use for communication? I think the use of language for communication might turn out to be a kind epiphenomenon. If you want to make sure that we never misunderstand one another, for that purpose language is not well designed, because you have such properties as ambiguity. If we want to have property that the things that we usually would like to say come out short and simple, well, it probably doesn't have that property (Chomsky, 2002, p107).

Here, we argue that this perspective on ambiguity is exactly backwards. We argue contrary to the Chomskyan view, that the ambiguity is in fact a desirable property of communication systems, precisely because it allows for a communication system which is "short and simple." In Zipf,s view, ambiguity fits within the framework of his grand unifying *principle of least effort* and could be understood by considering the competing desires of speaker and the listener. The speaker can minimize their effort if all meanings are expressed by one simple, maximally ambiguous word, say, ba.To express a meaning such as "The accordion box is too small," the speaker would simply say ba. To say "It will rain next Wednesday," to expend any effort thinking about or searching memory to retrieve the correct linguistic forms to produce, Conversely, from the comprehender's perspective, effort is minimized if each meaning maps to a distinct linguistic form, assuming that handling many distinct word forms is not overly difficult for comprehenders. In that type of system, the listener does not need to expend effort inferring what the speaker intended, since the linguistic signal would leave only one possibility. Zipf suggested that natural language would strike a balance between these two opposing forces of unification and diversification, arriving at a middle ground with some but not total,ambiguity.Zipf's argued this balance of speakers' and comperhenders' interests will be observed in a balance between frequency of words and number of words: speakers want a single(therefor highly frequent) word, and comprehendres' want many(therefor less frequent) words. He suggested the balancing of these two forces could be observed in the relationship between word frequency and rank frequency: the vocabulary was "balanced" because a words' frequency multiplied by its frequency rank was roughly a constant, a celebrated statistical law of language .Ferrer I Cancho and Sole(2003) provide a formal backing to Zipfs' intuitive explanation, showing that the power law distribution arises when information-theoretic difficulty for speakers and comprehenders is appropriately balanced.Zipf (1949) further extends his thinking

to the distribution of word meanings by testing a quantitative relationship between word frequency and number of meanings. He drives a law of meaning distribution from his posited forces unification and diversification, arguing that the number of meanings a word has should scale with the squire root of its frequency.Zipf reports a very close empirical fit for this predication. Functionalist linguistic theories have also posited trade-offs between total ambiguity and perfect and unambiguous logical communication (e.g. Givon, 2009), although to our knowledge these have not been evaluated empirically.

2.3 Ambiguity in general communication:

In his section, we motivate an information-theoretic view of ambiguity. We will assume that there exists a set m of possible meanings. For generality, we will allow m to ranger over any possible set of meanings, For instance m might be the space of compositional semantic structure, the space of parse tree, or set of word senses. The argument in this section is general to any space of meaning. Intuitively, a linguistic form is ambiguous if it can map to more than one possible meaning. For instance the word "run" is ambiguous because it can map to a large number of possible meanings, including a run in pantyhose, a run in baseball, a jog, to run, a stretch of consecutive events, etc. It turns out, however, that we do not need to consider the ambiguity of specific word or linguistic units to argue that ambiguity is in general useful. This is because language can fundamentally be viewed as conveying bits of information about the speaker's intended meaning.

2.4 Types of Ambiguity:

There are seven main types of ambiguity: on the merits and risk of multiple interpretations of collaborative visualizations sense making and collaboration in general. Special feature of such visualizations {i.e. sketches, diagrams, visual metaphors) there is ambiguity or their quality to be open to multiple interpretations While such ambiguities may cause misunderstandings and lead to loosing valuable time, they also offer the potential to reveal new insights, the people interpreting the image, and the interaction. We use these categories to propose a more fine- grained categorization consisting of seven types of visual ambiguity: icon, symbol, index, interpreter background, familiarity, and reference and scope ambiguity.

Lexical Ambiguity:

Lexical ambiguity, also known as semantic ambiguity, occurs when a sentence has ambiguous word or phrase (which has more than one possible meaning) Lexical ambiguity is sometime used deliberately to create pun and other wordplays. Some linguistic ambiguity in English in specific register, i e newspaper headline.in particular the lexical and syntactic ambiguity that result in sources of voluntary or involuntary humor The linguistic phenomena that contribute to create this kind of semantic confusion in headlines will be analyzed and divided in to the three main categories of lexical, syntactic, and phonological ambiguity. **Lexical ambiguity** is by far the more common. Every day examples include nouns like *chip*, *pen* and *suit*, verbs like *call*, *draw* and *run* and adjectives like *deep*, *dry* and *hard*. There are various tests for ambiguity. One possible is to have two unrelated antonyms, as with *hard,* Which has both soft and *easy* as opposites. Another is the conjunction reduction test. Consider the sentence *The tailor pressed one suit in his shop and one in the municipal court.* It is evident that the word *suit* (not to mention *press*) is ambiguous. It is provided by the anomaly of the *crossed interpretation* of the sentence, in which *suit* is used to refer to an article of clothing and one to a legal action.

2.5 lexical sources of Ambiguity in English and daily communication:

According to Basil Friday (2011) One major way which ambiguity occurs in daily communication is in the use of some lexical items which have more than one interpretation within a sentence. Such ambiguity is known as lexical ambiguity. This study looked at some lexico-semantic concepts that often cause ambiguity in daily communication, namely: homograph, homonym, homophone and polysemy. The study suggested that knowledge of the subtle ways through which ambiguity usually runs into simple, everyday expressions can be an important guide to English language users in choosing the right words and providing adequate contextual details that would assist their audience when speaking or writing. The study also affirmed that words or sentence would for the most part be ambiguous when they lack adequate contextual details. Thus to work out the intended meaning of ambiguous expressions, readers (and indeed listeners alike) would of necessity appeal to context and or shared background knowledge.

One interesting fact about daily communication is that language users often find it puzzling assigning specific meanings to expressions even when such expressions contain simple everyday words. In other words, even increase in vocabulary without commensurate knowledge of contextual details surrounding words does not in any way diminish the incidence of ambiguity in daily communication. This observation is particularly true of the English language. For instance, the sentence blew is ambiguous.

I saw the *bank* this morning.

The ambiguity in the above sentence comes from the word *bank* which has several meanings. A dictionary entry for *bank* contains different meanings like: financial institution or side of a river, place for storing things (e g blood **bank**),

as well as other meanings as in *a mass of earth, cloud or fog* (*Longman active study dictionary*, 2008 p53). A question then arises as to which of these myriads of meaning was intended by the user of this sentence, especially as each of them can pass as a possible interpretation of the construction.

Meaning of **Ambiguity and Explanation of Key Terms**

Ambiguity refers to situation where a word or construction "expresses more than one meaning"(Crystal,2008 p 22).An ambiguous word or structure, therefor , has more than possible interpretation Again, linguistic generally differentiate between two types of ambiguity: lexical and structural ambiguities (Jackson & Amvela,2001: Akmajian et al, 2004: Ndimele,2007:Saeed, 2008: Crystal, 2008: Umera-Okeke,2008). Lexical ambiguity is caused by the presence of one word which my be interpreted in two or more different ways within a single construction while structural ambiguity takes place when no particular word is ambiguous rather then "ambiguity is due to structural relations in the sentence," (Akmajian et al,2004 p.242). Hence, the use of **bank** as in the above sentence illustrates the case of lexical ambiguity while structural ambiguity may be found in any of the sentence below:

-He killed the woman with a knife.

-call me a taxi.

-Flying planes can be dangerous.

-Visiting relatives can be boring.

Lexical relations and their contribution to ambiguity in daily communication, Lexical relations refer to semantic concepts as antonym, homograph, homophone, homonym, hyponym, meronym and polysemy ect. However, only four of such lexical relations are relevant to the present study namely, homograph, homophone, homonym and polysemy.

Homograph

Another name for homograph is heteronomy. It refers to a situation where two or more words have identical spelling (I e visual similarity) but differ in both pronunciation and meaning.

Words	Part of speech	Meaning
Lead	Verb	To give direction
Lead	Noun	A piece of metal
Minute	Noun	A minute of time
Minute	Adjective	Small in size
Wind	Noun	Air in motion
Wind	Verb	To role something up
Wound	Noun	An injury or pain
Wound	Verb	The past form of wind
Bow	Noun	A device used for hunting
Bow	Verb	To bend oneself

This Table shows examples of Homographic Words

Each of the words listed above is capable of causing ambiguity (particularly in written discourse) if it used in a sentence without providing any sufficient clue to assist readers in working out the meaning. Consider the sentence below:

-the man smiled and took a **bow**.

Although the expression in an acceptable sentence in English, a closer look at it proves it to be ambiguous. For example, the reader may want to know if the man *smiled* and *bowed down* or that he *smiled* and *picked a bow* (perhaps to shoot an animal). The sentence is ambiguous as a result of the dual meaning invested in the word bow. This makes it communicatively desirable to recast the sentence in order to reflect the exact meaning intended by the user of that sentence above.

Structural Ambiguity: also called syntactic ambiguity, amphiboly or amphibology, is a situation where a sentence may be interpreted in more than one way due to ambiguous sentence structure. Oaks, Dallin D.(2010).Structural Ambiguity in English . Structural ambiguity arises not from the range of meaning of single word , but from the relationship between the words and clauses of sentences , and the sentences structure underlying the word order therein .in other words, a sentence is syntactically ambiguous when a reader or listener can reasonably interpret one sentence as having more than one possible structure. Such as phrases *English history teacher, a student of high moral principle* and *short men* and *women* and sentences *The girl hit the boy with a book* and *Visiting relatives can be boring.* These ambiguities are said to be structural because each such phrase can be represented in two structurally different ways.

Key Difference between Lexical & Structural Ambiguity

Ambiguity is the quality of having more than one interpretation. A word, phrase, or sentence becomes ambiguous if it can be interpreted with more than one meaning. Ambiguity can be classified into two different categories named lexical and structural ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity occurs when a word has more than one possible meaning. Structural ambiguity is a situation where one sentence has more than one meaning due to its sentence structure.

2.6 Syntactic Ambiguity Resolution in L1 Learners:

In the area of first language (l1) and second (l2) acquisition, a considerable amount of research is guided by the assumption that the learner is innately programmed with a predetermined set of decisions to make about the properties of the language being learned (e, g foe l1 acquisition, see Chomsky, 1981,1995 for l2 acquisition see White,1989,2003).The issue of the correctness of this

assumption side, minimizing the amount of learning that is believed to occur is worthy goal, as it result in a theory-or theories- with explanatory force (Fodor, 1998).Furthermore, if one accepts the viewpoint that syntactic acquisition is guided by innate principles of language, it seems natural to ask whether the processes that guide syntactic parsing-that is, the assignment of a syntactically licit structure to an incoming string of words that leads to an interpretation of a sentence during real time –are also innate. Although in some sense both the grammar and the parser have a similar task- that of associating a structural analysis with and input string-it seems clear that the principles that guide them are not identical. This is because a string of words may honor the grammar of the language and still cause processing breakdown, whereas other very similar structures present no trouble to the processing mechanism. A case in point is the contrast (from Frazier and Clifton, 1996, p12) between the near minimal pairs.

1-*John knew the answer to the physics problem was wrong*.

2-*John knew the answer to the physics problem very well.*

In legal disputes, courts may be asked to interpret the meaning of syntactic ambiguities in statutes of contract. In some sentences, arguments asserting highly unlikely interpretations have been deemed frivolous.

Semantic Ambiguity semantic ambiguity often occurs within languages (e g. the word "organ in English means both a body part and a musical instrument) but it can also across a language boundary, such that a given word forms is share in two languages, but its meanings are different.

2.7 Ambiguity Matters in Linguistics and Translation:

According to Elena Boyarskaya (2019), Ambiguity implies that there are at least two distinct senses ascribed to one sign. It's inherent to language and speech. In this the researcher reflect on types of ambiguity, its typology, production and

effect and propose an algorithm for tacking ambiguity in translation the researcher posit that the choice of translation strategy and the need for disambiguation in general depend on the type of ambiguity, its sources and characterize whether ambiguity is intended or not. Intended ambiguity occurs when the speaker intentionally does not follow the logic of conceptual clues primes and opts for a set of communicative strategies and linguistic means which allow him or her to offer several possible interpretations of one event or even refer to several different events. The researcher explores a rarely analyzed event referential ambiguity, which requires additional conceptual information for disambiguation and, consequently, may pose the problem for translation. The problems in disambiguation may occur for a variety of reasons the translator or the recipient may have a wrong reference, have insufficient background knowledge to resolve the ambiguity or make wrong references since each recipient bears a different combination of cognitive, axiological, social, and professional and gender attributes.

2.8 Managing ambiguity in strategic alliances:

According Rajesh Kumar (2014) Alliances have become a core component of many firms strategy, but they are often characterized by a high level of instability that can lead to failure. Ambiguity is an intrinsic aspect of strategic alliances and effective management of it determines how well the partners are able to make the alliance work. Alliances are subject to three types of ambiguity- partner, interaction, and evaluative- that are important at different stages of alliance evolution. Partner- related ambiguity is most prevalent at the formation stage of the alliance, interaction, ambiguity at the operational stage, and evaluative ambiguity at the outcome stage.

2.9 Semantic Ambiguity and Perceived Ambiguity: the

researcher explore some of the issues that arise when trying to establish a

connection between the under specification hypothesis pursued in the literature and work on ambiguity in semantics and in the psychological literature. A theory of under-specification is developed from the first principles i.e. starting from a definition of what it means for a sentence to be semantically ambiguous and from what we know about the way humans deal with ambiguity. An underspecified language is specified as the translation language of grammar covering sentences that display three classes of semantic ambiguity: lexical ambiguity, scopal ambiguity, and referential ambiguity. The expressions of this language denote sets of senses. A formalization of defeasible reasoning with underspecified representations is presented, based of default logic. Some issues to be confronted by such formalization are discussed.

2.10 Ambiguity in Linguistic Meaning in relation to Perceptual multi-stability:

According to Wildgen W.(1995)The central question assessed in this article is directly related to the topic of the conference: Is semantic ambiguity in some way related to perceptual multi-stability? In the first section a phenomenal classification of perceptual ambiguity is given (immediate disabilities in perception, perception of texture, spatial relation in mental imagination). In second and third sections several types of semantic ambiguity and there relation to perceptual multi-stability are described.

2.11 The important of ambiguity:

One possible reason that ambiguity is also important to art and literature is that it offers us the chance to be innovative in our interpretations. Faced with a work that has multiple meanings or seems vague, we to actively use our own ideas and judgments to find meaning. In this sense, studying how people respond to ambiguity is also a way to study creativity. Ambiguity in the humanities has

often valued as the basis of depth, subtlety and richness in art. Its role and function in art is also the subject of much debate in contemporary empirical approaches to aesthetics: ambiguous work offers a particularly complex kind of cognitive experience in which a reader or viewer has to navigate multiple meanings and cope with the indeterminacy. Understanding how we do this, and why the experience is enjoyable, seems to promise insights to cognitive processes and the evolution of art in human culture.

Ambiguity is also interesting because it makes a tension between the disciplines and the methodologies they employ. Literary language is often distinguished from scientific discourses in terms of ambiguity and clarity and it is in these terms that many of the debates about the differences between two cultures of science and the humanities have been argued. From one perspective, the apparent ambiguities of literary criticism and philosophical aesthetics have been challenged as "Fuzzy, thought, whereas from another, the scientific desire for clarity, stability and constancy has been decried as reductionism. Looking at the role ambiguity in the different discipline therefor is one way of considering the relationship between them.

2.12 Some Examples of Ambiguous Sentences:

Ambiguity is a funny thing. Sometime, people do it on purpose. Other times, they don't know they are doing it. Sometimes people enjoy a little ambiguity because it feels like you are solving a puzzle. Other times, they find it annoying and want you just come out with it. In speech and writing, however, ambiguity can be useful tool. In your speech, you might want to use ambiguity to make your audience consider things for themselves.

Ambiguity in Everyday Life:

Let's take a look at some common examples of ambiguity. Hopefully, these will get the wheels turning so you can incorporate a little bit into your everyday speech and writing. Each of these general examples of ambiguity can carry double meanings:

Marcy got the bath ready for her daughter wearing a pink tutu.

Was Marcy wearing the tutu? Or was her daughter?

- Call me a taxi, please

   Is the speaker asking someone to hail them a taxi or to be called a taxi?

- Stop trying to push the envelope.

   Is someone trying to push the boundaries in a current situation or literally push an envelope across a desk?

- I saw someone on the hill with a telescope.

   Did you use a telescope to see someone on the hill or did you see someone on the hill holding a telescope?

- Marcy got the bath ready for her daughter wearing pink tutu.

   1- Was Marcy wearing the tutu? Or was her daughter?

   In these four sentences their meaning are ambiguous because there are two possible interpretations.

   Here are some other examples of ambiguous sentences

- We saw her duck.

1- We looked at a duck that belonged to her.

2- We looked at her quickly squat down to avoid something.

3- We used her saw to cut her duck.

- He fed her cat food.

1- He fed a woman's cat some food.

2- He fed a woman some food that was intended for cats.

3- He somehow encouraged some cat food to eat something.

- I saw a man on a hill with a telescope
- It seems like a simple statement until you begin to unpack the many alternate meaning:
1- There is a man on a hill, and I'm watching him with my telescope.
2- There is a man on a hill, who I'm seeing and he has a telescope.
3- There is a man, and he is on a hill that also has a telescope on it.
4- I'm on a hill, and I saw a man using a telescope.
- Republicans Grill IRS Chief Over Lost Emails

   This type of sentence has great possibilities because of its two different interpretations:
1- Republicans harshly question the chief about the emails
2- Republicans cook the chief using email as the fuel.

2.13 Previous Studies

Study one

Categorization of Ambiguous Sentences as a Function of a Changing Prosodic Parameter: Journal of psycholinguistic Research Vol. 28. 4. 1999

A Dynamical Approach

Recent Linguistic theories and psycholinguistic research treat sentences as a complex structure that results from many local computations (Chomsky, 1995; Frazier & Clifton, 1995). Thus, experimental work uses various on line techniques (for example, Cross Model Lexical Decision task, naming Stroop task) to examine local processes and information present at specific points of an unfolding sentence. The processes involved are sometimes assumed to be exclusively language-specific computation preformed on representations of specifically linguistic information.

Study Two

Exploring Lexical Ambiguity to help Students Understand the Meaning of Random

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This paper describes an action research project that included an implementation of a classroom intervention to help students understand the statistical meaning of word *random*. Action research is a systematic cyclic process carried out by teachers in their classrooms. This paper describes the second cycle of action research associated with the lexical ambiguity project focused on the word *random.* The first research cycle motivated by the third author's experience with students answering the exam question "How would you randomly select a sample of five gas stations in our town? "With responses such as "Drive all over town and just randomly stop at five stations." Result of first cycle, which can be read in detail in Kaplan et al. (2010), were based on sentences and definition written by students at three Universities in the U. S. for the word *random* as used in statistical sense.

CHAPRER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is concerns with the methodology of the study where the researcher explains adopted during the study for the conduction of the research operation; In addition the researcher describes the methods and techniques adopted: the population of the study, sample of the study, instrument of the study, techniques of data analysis, validity and reliability of research tools and the summary of the chapter.

3.1 The Method of the Study:

The researcher adopted the descriptive analytical approach to fulfill the aim of the study. The researcher concentrate on the investigation about the difficulties which raise a question to what extend do the students of English language deal and understand ambiguous sentences in English Language.

3.2 Population and Sample of the Study:

The subject of this study is the investigation of difficulties facing E F L Students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences. The population of the study presented forty (4o) students from Sudan University of Science and Technology fourth Year College of Languages (English Language).

3.4 Tools of the Study:

The aim of the Study is to investigate the Difficulties Facing students of Sudan University of Science and Technology in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences and to achieve this aim the researcher designed diagnostic test as tool for data collection and analysis.

This test is consist of two parts each part consist of five questions containing five ambiguous sentences in order to collect the data of the study and will be analyzed to support questions and hypotheses of the study.

3.5 Summary:

This chapter presented the methodology of the study In addition to that it described the methods and techniques adopted: The population, samples, the instrument, validity and reliability of the research tools and also procedure of data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents the data collection which collected through test which was given to (40) students from Sudan University of Science and Technology who represents the sample of the study. The result will be used to provide answers to research questions and verifications of hypotheses.

4.1Test analysis:

As it had been mentioned in previous chapter the test was given by researcher to (40) students of Sudan University of Science and Technology, They were forty students from both gender male and female whom participated in this study. They represent fourth year class at Sudan University of Science and Technology. The aim of this study is to investigate the difficulties faced by students of Sudan University of Science and Technology in using and understanding ambiguous sentences. This test consist two parts each part consist five questions of English ambiguity sentences, in order to collect the data of the study and will be tabulated and analyzed to provide answers to research questions and verifications of the hypotheses of the study. The following are the data analysis and result of test.

Test part one: table no (1) verification of hypothesis no (1) English language students of Sudan University of Science and Technology may unable to understand ambiguous sentences.

4.2 Result of data analysis

The following tables display the results of data analysis obtained by the means of the test.

Table 1-Responses to **Q 1**: I saw someone on the hill with a telescope

Responses	**Frequency**	**Percentages**
correct answers	20	50%
Wrong answers	20	50%
Total	40	100%

This table shows that the students are equally divided in to twenty (20) of them have got correct answers and (20) of them have chosen incorrect answers so they

are understand to determine whether this sentence is ambiguity, because it has two possible interpretation.(the speaker used a telescope to see someone or someone was having a telescope when he saw).

Q 2 call me a taxi, please.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	17	42.5%
Wrong answers	23	57.5%
Total	40	100%

The data of the question (2) in the table (2) above show that there are only (40) participants in the study sample (17) have chosen correct answers while (23) of them have chosen wrong answers.so according to the result above it is clear that students of Sudan University of Science and Technology encountered difficulties in understanding ambiguity sentences.

Q 3 They are hunting dogs.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	21	51%
Wrong answers	19	49%
Total	40	100%

This table above shows that (21) of students have got right answers while (19) of them answered this questions wrongly this means the majority of them understood the meaning of this sentence whether it's ambiguous. Because, it has more than one meaning to be understand.

 Q 4 look at the dog with one eye.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	17	42.5%
Wrong answers	23	57.5%

Total	40	100%

From the table above show that the minority (17) of students have answered the question correctly whereas (23) of them have chosen wrong answers, this indicate that students face difficulties in understanding ambiguity sentences.

Q 5 the fisherman went to the bank.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	17	42.5%
Wrong answers	23	57.5%
Total	40	100%

In this question 17 of students have chosen right answers and 23 of them answered the question wrongly this shows them difficulties in understanding ambiguity sentences.

Test part two:
Q 1 I saw a man on the hill.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Correct answers	23	57.5%
Wrong answers	17	42.5%
Total	40	100%

The data in the table (1) part two figure (1) clarified that they are (23) of participants got right answers and (17) of them have chosen wrong answers, in this statement the students understand have been able to determine ambiguity sentence.

Q 2 they went to the bank for enjoying.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	20	50%

Wrong answers	20	50%
Total	40	100%

In this table above show that the student divided equally (50%) are chosen right answers while (50%) are chosen wrong answers.

Q 3 stop trying to push the envelope

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	20	50%
Wrong answers	20	50%
Total	40	100%

in this table the result has been equal 50% percent have chosen right answers and 50% percent have chosen wrong answers.

Q 4 we saw her duck.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	14	35%
Wrong answers	26	65%
Total	40	100%

The data in the table above showed that there is only

(14) of participants have got correct answers and (26) of them are not be able to determine whether this statement is ambiguous or not so there is difficulties faced students in differentiating semantic and structural ambiguity.

Q 5 they were the important people.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
correct answers	17	42.5%
Wrong answers	23	57.5%
Total	40	100%

The result showed that E L F students at Sudan University of Science and Technology have really problem in understanding ambiguous sentences in

English language because they failed (57.5%) and (42.5%) are passed so is means that they faced problem.

This table the frequency and percentage distribution of answers according to test in general.

Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Pass	16	40%
Failure	22	60%
Total	**40**	**100%**

This table show that (40%) of students have succeeded in test and (60%) have failed so this indicate that students have faced difficulties in understanding ambiguity sentences this number has represented students weakness on ambiguous sentences therefor the hypotheses two has successfully achieved.

4.3 Reliability and validity of instrument:

In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the data collection instruments, the researcher designed test relevant to the study (test for students) then presented to the supervisor for approval, after that the test was taken for judgment by a jury of three Doctors from Sudan University of Science and Technology Dr.Hillary Marino Pitiaaki,Dr Sawsan and Dr.Najla Taha Bashri to judge the questions of the test after they have been designed by the researcher to fulfill the aims of the study and produce required findings.

4.4 Discussion

The result show that E F L learners are face difficulties in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences especially undergraduate students at Sudan University of science and Technology, because they have problem in differencing between English ambiguous sentences in case of semantic and structure. In hypothesis one the student's number who failed to pass greater (6%) so the hypothesis of this study related to this test is accepted.

In hypothesis two do E F L students determine if a sentences is ambiguous or not the number of students who pass is (40%) so this number is represents highly point of students a weakness.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

5.0 Introduction:

This chapter presents conclusion of the study, it relates to the data analysis and discussion of obtained data which comes from research questions and the hypotheses. The researcher also offers recommendations and suggestions for further studies to those who will study.

5.1 Conclusion:

At this study the researcher has investigated the difficulties facing E F L students in dealing and understanding ambiguous sentences and the study show that E F L students are unable to identify ambiguous sentences. Ambiguous sentences are most important in Linguistic and general communication because the speakers sometime wanted to be fluent during conversation. Moreover, ambiguity plays a key role in every day communication.

5.2 Main Findings:

According to the data analysis the researcher summaries the following results findings:

1-The English language speakers sometimes use sentences which have ambiguous semantically unconsciously.

2-Students of E F L learners find difficulties in understanding ambiguous sentences which have more than one interpretation.

3-E F L learners are unable to deal with ambiguous sentences which are structurally ambiguous.

4-Ambiguity can be in word level or whole sentence can be ambiguous according to its structure.

5-E F L teachers neglected to teach the students ambiguous sentences in isolation during lectures.

6-E F L students learn English language only for instrumental goals not for integrated goals.

5.3 Recommendations:

The research recommended that:

1-E F L Students at university level should have to deal with ambiguous sentences at different levels.

2-E F L students should practice ambiguous sentences while speaking English with each other in daily interaction

3-Teachers of English language should give more exercises to E F L students, so as to be able to identify ambiguous sentences.

4-Students should be aware about different types of ambiguity in sentences in written and spoken English.

5-Teaching activities of English ambiguous sentences should not be neglected.

6-Teachers of English language should give many different types of ambiguous sentences in order to facilitate leaning process.

5.4 Suggestion for Further Studies:

1-The impact of English ambiguous sentences in enhancing communication skills

2-The effect of literal translation in understanding ambiguous sentences

3-The role of E L F teachers in using ambiguous sentences among students to facilitate learning process

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