

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

People interact with other people, express their thoughts or ideas to other people and communicate to other people to maintain and to establish relationship with other people by using a language. People are social creatures in their daily life. It means that they cannot live alone if they are separated from other people because they always need other people in their daily life so they need to communicate each other. Therefore, a language is very important in people's daily life as means of communication.

Language can be a spoken language form or a written language form. Both of them are different in terms of the clarification of meaning. An understanding of a written language form is more difficult than an understanding of spoken language form. A listener can ask directly to a speaker when the listener does not understand about the speaker's utterance because it is possible for the listener to ask directly to the speaker as to confirm; on the other hand, a reader cannot ask directly to a writer when the reader does not understand about the writer's writing because it is impossible for the reader to ask directly to the writer in reading books, magazines, newspapers or other written media. There is no living voice that helps the readers to get the meaning of sentences, because the writers only depend on the written form alone (arrangement, word choice, word form, punctuation, spelling and capitalization) in conveying what the writers want to say. That is the reason why readers sometimes have difficulties in determining the meaning of a sentence. Readers may get more than one meaning for one sentence, which is referred as ambiguity.

According to Norman Stageberg (2004) in his study of structural ambiguity in the Noun Phrase," the term ambiguity refers to the multiple meaning of a given utterance". There are two kinds of ambiguity that must be distinguished: lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. In lexical ambiguity, the double or multiple meaning comes from the meaning of the words themselves,

but in structural ambiguity the double or multiple meaning comes from the arrangement of words into phrases or sentences. Therefore, the structural ambiguity deals mainly with the patterns of the arrangement of words into phrases or sentences. These patterns are called the syntactic structures of phrases or sentences. An example of a sentence, which is structurally ambiguous, is “Miranda saw the boy with a telescope”. This sentence has two meanings. The first meaning of the sentence is “Miranda saw the boy by looking through a telescope”, and the second meaning of the sentence is “Miranda saw the boy who had a telescope” (Veit, 1986). The Prepositional Phrase - with a telescope - in this sentence causes the ambiguity.

The fact that a sentence can yield two different meanings, and that can later on create misunderstanding, also confirms that as one of language's components, grammar has its own significant role. According to Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman (1999), there are some grammar points that tend to cause possible ambiguities. Those grammar points that can potentially cause structural ambiguity are classified into 10. They are degree comparatives and equatives; causatives and passives “have”; conjoined constituents; indefinite articles; -ing and -en forms of adjectives and verbs; modal auxiliaries and periphrastic modals; prepositions; sentence-final adverbial participle clauses; complements of verbs of interception versus verbs of mental imagery; and yes-no vs. alternative questions.

In terms of any further analysis of grammar, Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman (1999) believe that there is a set of Phrase Structure Rules for English. It is the Phrase Structure Rules, in addition to the lexicon, that produces the underlying structure. Therefore, through a series of those rules, we can possibly analyze in greater details the basic structure of English sentences. There are five major elements in Phrase Structure Rules. They are Noun Phrase, Verb Phrase, Prepositional Phrase, Adjective Phrase, and Adverb Phrase.

The Jakarta Post is the first newspaper, which is published in Indonesia by using English language in the writing of the news and is read by Indonesian and foreign readers so far the only Indonesian newspaper thus internationally acknowledged. Moreover, the goal of the newspaper is to improve the standard of

English language media in Indonesia, but also in producing a quality newspaper with an Indonesian perspective so the newspaper has strong presence in the printed media market. The newspaper is also well known for its high standard of journalism, both in terms of balance and presentation. It is also considered as an inspirational standard not only to the Asian media, but to the media everywhere (James Dunn, 2002). Therefore, it is a suitable source of data for a research.

In addition, Your Letters is a section of The Jakarta Post newspaper in which readers can send their letters by using English language as to express their opinions, suggestions and critics, such as on human rights' problems, labors' problems, the increasing of the goods' price in the markets problems, and other social or political issues. Based on his observation when reading this section, the writer noticed that there were some structurally ambiguous sentences. Those sentences were ambiguous since they could have more than one meaning that could then make readers misunderstand.

All in all, due to some facts that sentences can potentially be structurally ambiguous, that The Jakarta Post newspaper is published in Indonesia by using English language in the writing of the news and has strong presence in the printed media market, and that its Your Letters section is about readers' letters that can contain ambiguous sentences which may confuse the readers, the writer is interested in conducting a study on structural ambiguity in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The writer is interested in conducting a research on the structural ambiguity in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper so as to answer the following research questions:

- a. In what ways could the sentences in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper have the potentially structural ambiguity?
- b. What are the grammar points that can potentially cause structural ambiguity of the sentences in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper?

- c. What is the grammar point that most potentially causes structural ambiguity of the sentences in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper?
- d. What are the elements of Phrase Structure Rules that potentially cause structural ambiguity of the sentences in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper?
- e. What is the element of Phrase Structure Rules that most potentially causes structural ambiguity of the sentences in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper?

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The writer wants to investigate how the sentences in Your Letters of the Jakarta Post could potentially cause structural ambiguities. In line, the writer would like to investigate what grammar points that can potentially cause structural ambiguity. With regard to a deeper study, the writer also investigates what elements of Phrase Structure Rules that can potentially cause structural ambiguity. Finally, among those grammar points and elements found, the writer is interested to know what grammar point and element of Phrase Structure Rules that can most potentially cause structural ambiguity.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The writer hopes that this research will provide information for the readers of The Jakarta Post newspaper. Hopefully, its readers will get scientific description about the structurally ambiguous sentences so that they will not be confused and will be able to recognize the structurally ambiguous sentences faster when they are reading those sentences, which are found in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper. In addition by knowing the ambiguity, readers will expectedly be more careful either in producing English sentences or interpreting meanings of those potentially ambiguous sentences.

The writer also hopes that this particular study can be insightful for those who are interested in either learning more about ambiguity or making a further study on this topic. It is also the writer's hope that other researchers will get

background knowledge about structural ambiguity and will then be helped in conducting their research on similar topics.

1.5. Scope and Limitation of the Study

The writer wants to do the research by using syntax as a scope. Ambiguity in this study is limited to the structural and not the lexical one.

The writer also wants to limit the data of the research on the structurally ambiguous sentences found in Your Letters of The Jakarta Post newspaper within 1 week edition from February 1st, 2006 until February 7th, 2006. There are 19 letters altogether.

Moreover, the analysis of the potentially ambiguity is in sentential context. In terms of validity, sentences that have grammatical errors are not taken as data since the source of ambiguity may be due to those errors instead. Furthermore, to answer research question number 1 as in what way the sentences can potentially be structurally ambiguous, the writer shows two possible meanings of the sentence. Finally, element in this study, as stated in the research question, refers to the constituent part in the Phrase Structure Rules as proposed by Marianne Celce-Murcia and Diane Larsen-Freeman (1999).

1.6. Definition of Key Terms

- a. Ambiguity is the property of having more than one linguistic meaning (Akmajian, Demers, Farmer and Harnish, 1995; p. 545).
- b. Constituent is a term denoting a structural unit – i.e. an expression which is one of the components out of which a phrase or sentence is built up (Radford, 2004; p.330).
- c. Grammar is a central term in linguistics, but one, which covers a wide range of phenomena (Crystal, 1997; p. 174).
- d. Grammar point in the study refers to particular grammatical areas (e.g. tense, pronoun, and preposition). (Crystal, 1997; p.367).
- e. Immediate constituent is a term used in grammatical analysis to refer to the major divisions that can be made within a syntactic construction, at any level (Crystal, 1997; p. 190).

- f. Phrase Structure Rules are rules in phrase-structure grammars (Crystal, 1997; p. 293).
- g. Structurally ambiguous is the relation between phrases or sentences in which the meanings of their component words can be combined in more than one way (O'Grady, Dobrovolsky and Katamba, 1997; p. 719).

1.7. Organization of the Study

The research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction, which includes the backgrounds, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, the scope and limitation of the study, the definition of key term, and the organization of the study. The second chapter concerns with the review of related literature, which is the review of underlying theories and related studies. The third chapter is about the methodology of the research. The writer gives explanation about the research approach that used, the procedures of data collection, and the procedures of data analysis in this chapter. The fourth chapter is about the analysis and the findings of the research. The last chapter is about the conclusion of the research.