

**LEXICAL AMBIGUITY IN NOVEL
“THE PRINCESS DIARIES” BY
MEG CABOT (2000)**

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the types of lexical ambiguity in the novel 'The Princess Diaries by Meg Cabot (2000)'. This study uses descriptive qualitative methods. The techniques used to collect data are such as reading novels, then identifying word containing lexical ambiguity. This study focuses on the lexical ambiguity called polysemy and homonym. Based on the results of the study, there are 34 data of ambiguity; 16 words belong to polysemy and 18 words belongs to the homonym. It can be concluded that the novel “The Princess Diaries by Meg Cabot

(2000))” uses the lexical ambiguity called polysemy and homonym 34 times in total.

Keywords: *Semantics, Lexical Ambiguity, Polysemy, Homonym, The Princess Diaries Novel, Meg Cabot*

A. Introduction

Language serves as a tool for human beings to interact verbally with each other, to work together, as well as to recognize each other. Language itself is an arbitrary sound-symbol system that human beings use for communication. It is a human-made way of sharing ideas, feelings, and desires through spoken or written symbols, produced by human beings’ organs of speech (Sapir, 2013).

The study of language is well known as ‘linguistics’ (Bloomfield, 1973). According to Saussure (1916), linguistics is about understanding the ways human beings speak. Linguistics can be broadly divided into three different parts: phonology, which studies sounds; syntax, which studies structure; and semantics, which studies the meaning of words (Palmer, 1976). Out of these three parts, this study aims to focus on semantics. Semantics can be tricky, considering how the same meaning can be presented using different words, or how the same words can refer to different meanings. The thing that causes this confusion is called ‘ambiguity’. Ambiguity can occur when a word or sentence has more than one meaning (Fauziati in Agnira, 2014).

Ambiguity in language can be further divided into three types: phonetic ambiguity, grammatical ambiguity, and lexical ambiguity (Ullman, 1977).

Phonetic ambiguity, according to Ullmann (2007: 196) the occurrence of dual meanings or ambiguity in spoken language can be attributed to the phonetic structure of the sentence. Grammatical ambiguity, according to Ullmann (2007: 196) the presence of dual meanings in language can be traced back to grammatical factors, either emerging from the duality of meaning in grammatical forms or within sentence structure. Lexical ambiguity, according to Ullmann (2007: 196) highlights that the primary factor contributing to the most significant dual meanings is the lexical factor, where a word can process various meanings. However, this study specifically addresses lexical ambiguity, focusing on the uncertain meanings of words or sentences (James and Brendan Heasley, 1983).

Novel as a text is a source of meanings and messages. In order to understand the content of the novel, an effort of understand meaning through the text is necessary to do as a student of English Education Study Program. A novel is a complex text that often contains many words that one meaning ambiguous. There are often found words or sentences with unclear meanings in the novel. When the meanings of the words are not clearly understood, it will also influence the reader's understanding of the novel. The confusion and misunderstanding that might arise from ambiguous words in the novel must be prevented. That is why the writer is triggered to conduct a study under the theme of lexical ambiguity in a novel.

In this study, the novel "The Princess Diaries" by Meg Cabot (2000) will be the main writer object. This novel acts as the first book in its series, being published in 2000 by Harper Collins Publishers, and was then turned into a movie in 2001, starring the movie star Anne Hathaway. This novel tells a story of a child named Mia Thermopolis, a junior high-schooler living

in a village called Greenwich with her mother, Helen Thermopolis. Mia's father, Philippe Renaldo, is a prince in a small European kingdom called Genovia (Cabot, 2000). Considering Mia's mother can no longer bear children, Mia then becomes a sole heir to the throne. In this story, Mia's life turns upside down. Starting from being a normal girl living a normal life, to becoming a princess. After extensive reading the novel, the writer found lexical ambiguity in the sentences. This novel is suitable to be used as the object of the study.

Based on the explanations above, the writer will find out the types of lexical ambiguity and a number of lexical ambiguity that are found in novel 'The Princess Diaries' by Meg Cabot (2000) by using Ullmann theory about types of ambiguity and using Kreidler theory about semantics. Because basically lexical ambiguity can also be called semantic ambiguity, because semantics is a term used to describe the literal meaning of word. Thus, the title of thesis is "Lexical Ambiguity in Novel "The Princess Diaries" by Meg Cabot (2000)."

B. Literature Review

In this part, the writers explain the general concept of semantics and ambiguity.

1. Semantics

According to Kreidler (1998: 3), systematic exploration of meaning is called Semantics specifically investigates how languages organize and express meanings. The term "Semantics" itself encompasses various ideas, ranging from popular to highly technical. It is often used in everyday language to indicate issues of understanding that arise from the choice of words or connotations.

These issues or understanding have been the subject of many formal inquiries over an extended period, especially in the field of formal Semantics.

2. Ambiguity

According to Sennet Adam (2011: 3) ambiguity means a word or sentence has more than one meaning. According to Sennet Adam (2011: 1) the word 'ambiguous' is an ambiguous word, it can be interpreted as uncertainty or doubt and is a sign that has many meanings. Ullman (2007: 196) emphasizes that duality of meaning or ambiguity can manifest in various ways. Stephen Ullman (2007: 196), as adapted by Sumarsono in the "Introduction to Semantics", classifies ambiguity linguistically into three forms, as follows:

a. Phonetic Ambiguity

According to Ullman (2007:196), the occurrence of dual meanings or ambiguity in spoken language can be attributed to the phonetic structure of the sentence. This is due to the fact that in continuous speech, the acoustics are based on units of breath rather than individual words. Consequently, two breath units formed from different words may become homonyms, leading to the potential consequence of conveying a double meaning. For example: "I" and "eye", "write" and "right", "hear" and "here".

b. Grammatical Ambiguity

According to Ullman (2007: 196) the presence of dual meanings in language can be traced back to grammatical factors, either emerging from the duality of meaning in grammatical forms or within sentence structures. One source of grammatical ambiguity lies in certain morphological

elements like prefixes and suffixes, which may carry multiple meanings, which then lead to interpretive challenges. Additionally, the structure of phrases, known as amphibology or amphiboly, introduces another layer of grammatical ambiguity, where individual words within a phrase do not possess double meanings, but their combinations can mean different interpretations. For example: “The chicken is ready to eat”. This sentence either means the chicken is cooked and can be eaten now or the chicken is ready to be fed. “The burglar threatened the student with the knife”. This sentence either means that a knife-wielding burglar threatened a student or the student a burglar threatened was holding a knife.

c. Lexical Ambiguity

Lexical ambiguity refers to ambiguity that arises at the level of individual words in use. Ullmann (2007: 200) highlights that the primary factor contributing to the most significant dual meanings. Lexical ambiguity results from a word having multiple meanings, creating a challenge in pinpointing its intended interpretation. James and Heasley (1983) assert that the ambiguity often stems from the inherent polyvalence of words. The relevance of studying lexical ambiguity extends beyond linguistic curiosity to practical implications in communication.

In conclusion, lexical ambiguity constitutes a captivating aspect of linguistics, embodying the intricate dance between words and their diverse meanings. As language users,

deciphering the nuanced layers of lexical ambiguity enhances our comprehension of communication complexities.

As mentioned before, when a word can denote several distinct meanings, this situation is sometimes termed "polyvalence," taking the forms of polysemy or homonymy (Ullmann, 2000). Therefore, it can be asserted that lexical ambiguity is shaped or observed from two perspectives, namely:

1) Polysemy

Instances in which a word can encompass multiple meanings can be referred to as polysemy. To illustrate, consider the word "head" which can signify either "the uppermost part of the body" or "a leader" (Ullmann, 2007). The word "bank" can signify a financial institution or the land alongside a body of water, or a set in a row as in "bank of lights."

2) Homonym

According to Dwi (2019: 1) a word that has the same spelling and pronunciation as another word, but has different meaning is called a homonym. The way to identify homonyms is to look for words with the same spelling and pronunciation but usually have different meanings.

C. Method of Investigation

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data source is a novel entitled *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot (2000) taken from the Online Available website at:

https://sg.docworkspace.com/d/sIGK7gLbbAbLZm7AGPrincessdiariesv00cabo_255.pdf (Accessed on August 5, 2024 at 08.30). The writers apply the following steps to analyze the data: reading the novel repeatedly, identifying the words belong to lexical ambiguity (polysemy and homonym), and describing the words based on its type of lexical ambiguity.

D. Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine the types of lexical ambiguity and the number of lexical ambiguities found in the novel *The Princess Diaries* (2000). There are two types of lexical ambiguity that are the focus of this study, namely homonyms and polysemy. The following is a discussion of the types of lexical ambiguity and their number in the novel *The Princess Diaries* (2000). The following is an explanation of each type:

1. Polysemy

There are 16 words of polysemy found in the novel *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot (2000). The “important person” means someone who has a significant influence or role in a particular context. “Popular” means something or someone known and liked by many people. “Boyfriend” might mean as a “boyfriend” or guy friend in the context of a romantic relationship also a man who is close or intimate with someone, although not in a romantic context. “Tall” means the physical condition of someone’s height and someone with high character.

“Date” means a meeting of a man and woman for romantic purposes also means a specific day, month and year as well as the fruit of

palm trees, which is often dried and has a sweet taste. ‘‘Table’’ means furniture, structure, or a meeting. ‘‘Learned across the table’’ means a learning experience that takes place at the same table, in a metaphorical context to indicate learning or understanding gained through the exchange of ideas or collaboration, especially in settings where face-to-face interactions.

‘‘Sterile’’ refers to the state of being free from microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, or fungi in medical term, also means as unable to reproduce. ‘‘Red’’ refers to a colour that lies on the light spectrum between orange and purple. It can also mean angry, spirit, else. ‘‘Girlfriend’’ refers to a woman who is involved in a romantic relationship with someone but also can be used in friendship context.

‘‘Head’’ can be the upper part of the human body but it also means a leader. ‘‘Fly’’ is moving through the air. It might also mean technological vehicles such as aeroplane. ‘‘Poor people’’ means someone with economically disadvantaged or someone to be pity of or someone disadvantages in anything. ‘‘Star’’ might refer to a celestial body, a famous person, or successful person. ‘‘White’’ is the mixing of all the colour of light, it also means cleanliness, purity and peace. ‘‘Homework’’ might means the household task and the assignment given by teachers to students to be done outside school. Polysemy words are commonly used in novel. Polysemy words do have ambiguous meanings so they need to be explained or searched for the true meaning.

2. Homonym

There are 18 words of homonym in the novel such as bear, kind, well, line, back, box, fair,

hot, change, keep, cool, find, right, over, paper, dear, lie, up. There are around 18 homonyms found in the novel *The Princess Diaries* by Meg Cabot (2000) namely, ‘‘Bear’’ which mean in animal context: Bear: ‘‘Bear’’ refers to a large animal, in financial context: bear market: ‘‘Bear’’ in stock market terms refers to a market trend indicating a decline in prices or an expectation of a decline in stock prices. ‘‘Kind’’ which mean in the context of nature or character: ‘‘Kind’’ or friendly, in the context of kind or type: kind or type: ‘‘Kind’’ also means a category or type of something. ‘‘Well’’ which mean health, quality and place.

‘‘Line’’ which mean ‘‘line’’ or ‘‘lines’’. ‘‘Back’’ means both the action of returning to a previous position or place and the part of the body. ‘‘Box’’ means a container and a restricted area. ‘‘Fair’’ showing something that is unbiased or impartial, beautiful or attractive. ‘‘Hot’’ refers to high temperatures as well as spicy for food.

‘‘Change’’ is making something different from its previous state or the act of replacing one thing with another. Change means the return of money as well. ‘‘Keep’’ means the act of guarding and maintaining. ‘‘Cool’’ means ‘‘cool’’ in the context of weather and it means attractive and calm in the context of characters. ‘‘Right’’ refers to something that is in accordance with the truth or facts. It also shows direction or position. ‘‘Find’’ refers to the act of finding something that has been sought or lost and also to find or obtain something through search or effort. ‘‘Over’’ can indicate a position or location, something finished, or something over too much.

“Paper” is a thin material usually made from wood pulp and used for writing, but it also means newspaper. “Dear” has the meaning of honourable, expensive price, or a call to lovely one. “Lie” means giving false information or hiding the truth, or it can also mean to a body position that is flat on a surface. “Up” refers to a direction or position higher than a reference point, increase in amount, level, or intensity.

It is undeniable that the use of lexical ambiguity, such as polysemy and homonyms, is present in a novel text, but of course there are not too many of them because if you use too many words that contain polysemy and homonyms, they will obscure the meaning or make it difficult for the reader to understand them so that they are not used too much.

E. Conclusion

The results shows that ambiguous words are often used in the novels. In the novel 'The Princess Diaries' by Meg Cabot (2000) contains words that contain lexical ambiguity. Based on the results of the study, the use of lexical ambiguity words, there are 34 data. The first finding, the use of polysemy, as many as 16 findings. The second finding that uses homonyms as many as 18 findings.

Acknowledgement

The writers wish to convey their sincere thankfulness to Dr. Muh. Kadarisman, S.H., M.Si. The Rector of Universitas Peradaban, as well as to Mr. Akhmad Nurkholis, S.S., M.Pd. The Head of English Education Study Program of Universitas Peradaban.

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