

Structural Ambiguity Found In Reader's Digest Usa Magazine

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Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisis makna-makna yang muncul dari kalimat ambigu secara struktural yang ditemukan di majalah berbahasa Inggris, *Reader's Digest USA* edisi Agustus 2014- Desember/Januari 2015. Dalam penelitian ini ada tiga teori yang digunakan untuk menjawab 2 pokok permasalahan. Adapun teori yang dimaksud, diantaranya teori tentang kalimat ambigu secara struktural oleh Lyons (1977), teori tentang struktur kalimat dan frasa oleh Fromkin(1990) dan teori tentang eksperimnen sederhana untuk mengetahui keakuratan kalimat ambigu secara structural oleh Baker(1995). Penelitian ini menemukan 22 kalimat ambigu secara structural yang terbagi menjadi 8 kategori sesuai dengan faktor-faktor penyebab. Di dalam penelitian ini terbukti bahwa kalimat/frasa bahasa inggris yang tatabahasanya benar dengan struktur tertentu bisa memunculkan makna berbeda.

Kata kunci: ambigu secara structural, factor-faktor penyebab, kalimat/frasa

1. Background

In written language ambiguity can happen. Kreidler (1998:156) states the structure of sentences may lead to different possible interpretations which are generally known as structural ambiguity. Structural ambiguity is an interesting phenomenon, and natural in a language. Sentence structure obviously can lead to be ambiguous even though they are grammatically correct.

In the case of structural ambiguity, the grammar of a sentence can be interpreted in more than one way. For example the sentence *They are killing animals*. In the first case, *killing animals* is a unit and in the second, *are killing* is a unit. *Killing animals* is a noun phrase that functions as a complement, *are killing* is a verb phrase and *animals* is an object. The first sentence means *they are animals that like to kill* and the second means the animals are being killed by *they* (the subject).

Reader Digest USA magazine is one of famous trusted magazines all over the world. It is recommended as one of ten best English magazines for learning English which means the writing is grammatically good.

2. Problems

Based on the background, this study focuses on finding the answer to the following questions:

- a. What structural ambiguities are found in the articles of *Reader's Digest USA* magazines?
- b. What are the meanings of the ambiguous phrases/sentences found in the articles of *Reader's Digest USA* magazines?

3. Aims

To respond the problems, the aims of this study are:

- a. To find out structural ambiguities in the articles of *Reader's Digest USA* magazines.
- b. To analyze the meanings of ambiguous phrases/sentences of the articles.

4. Research Method

4.1 Data Source

The data source in this study was taken from the articles of *Reader's Digest USA* magazines from August 2014 to December 2014. This magazine was chosen as data source because it is one of famous trusted magazines all over the world. It is also recommended as one of ten best English magazines for learning English by fluentu.com which means its writing is grammatically good.

4.2 Method and Technique of Collecting Data

The data was collected by applying the documentary method. In order to get the data, all the articles of the selected magazines were read carefully. By using note taking technique, the sentences containing structural ambiguity noted. And all the required data found in the selected magazines were grouped into different kind of structural ambiguity according to the factors which cause structural ambiguity.

4.3 Method and Technique of Analyzing Data

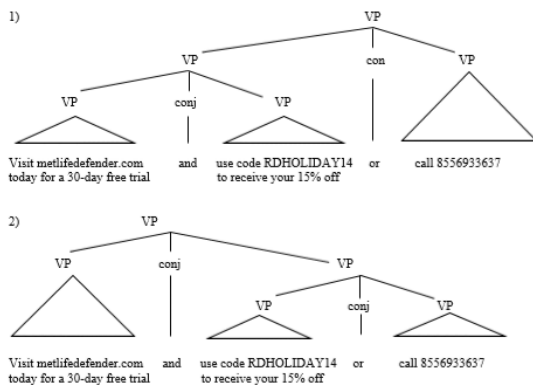
The data are analyzed by using the descriptive qualitative method. All the data were then grouped into different kinds of structural ambiguities according to the causal

factors. One of data was chosen as representative to be analyzed. The structural ambiguity was shown by means of tree diagram and analyzed with the theory of *Phrase-structure explications: grouping and categorization* according to Lyons (1977). The simple experiment proposed by Baker (1995) was also applied in order to make sure the accuracy of the structural ambiguity.

5. Result and Discussion

There were seven different kinds of structural ambiguity in terms of surface structure found in the Reader's Digest Magazine according to their causal factors.

a. Structural ambiguity caused by constructions containing the coordinators *and* and *or*.

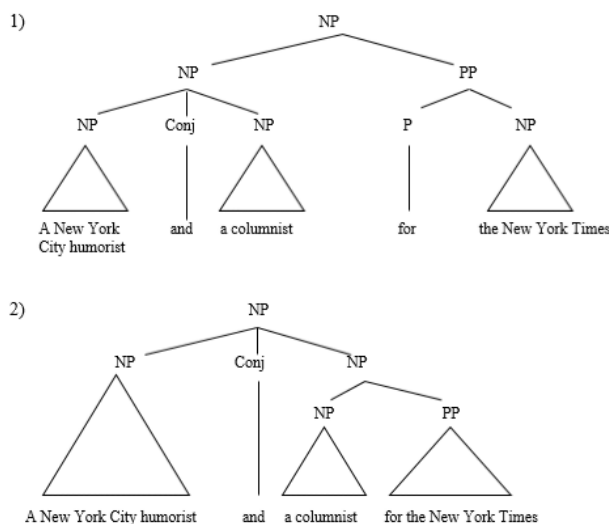


The sentence *Visit metlifedefender.com today for a 30-day free trial and use code RDHOLIDAY14 to receive your 15% off or call 855-693-3637* is structurally ambiguous.

The construction of the sentence contains two coordinators, *and* and *or* which connect three verb phrases of equal importance. Since each coordinator has different meanings, the sentence is led to be

ambiguous. The first meaning is *Visit metlifedefender.com today for a 30-day free trial and use code RDHOLIDAY14 to receive your 15% off as the first choice, or just call 855-693-3637*. The second meaning is *Visit metlifedefender.com today for a 30-day free trial and then do this; using code RDHOLIDAY14 to receive your 15% off or calling 855-693-3637*.

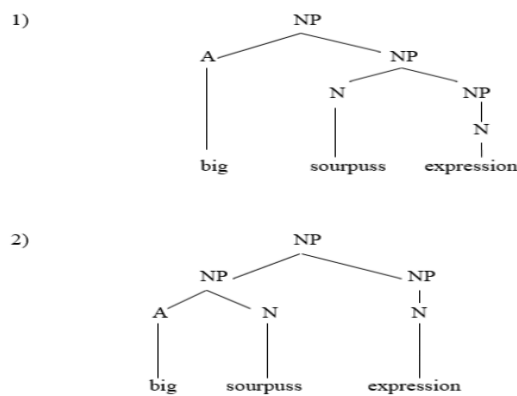
b. Structural ambiguity caused by a coordinate head with one modifier



Structural ambiguity in sentence *Joyce Wadler is a New York City humorist and a columnist for the New York*

Times is caused by noun phrase ‘a New York City humorist and a columnist for the New York Times’. In this case, the PP *for the New York Times* does both modifying NP *a New York City humorist and a columnist* or only modifying NP *a columnist*. The first meaning is *Joyce Wadler is a New York City humorist for the New York Times and also a columnist for New York Times* and the second meaning is *he is a columnist for the New York Times but not a New York City humorist for the New York Times*.

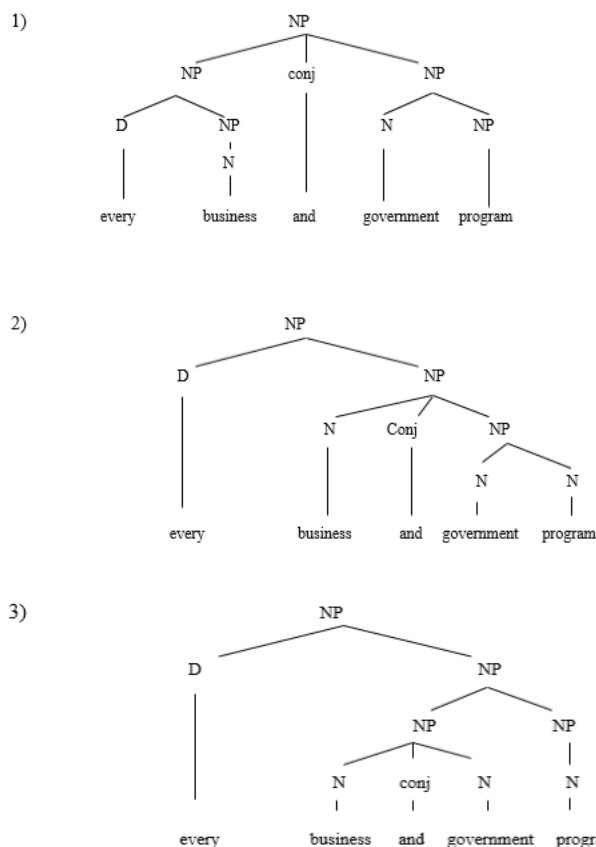
c. Structural ambiguity caused by attributive modifiers



Structural ambiguity in sentence *I'll pick out a person in the crowded who has a big sourpuss expression* caused by NP *big sourpuss expression*. In the first tree diagram, the NP *sourpuss expression* is a unit modified by A *big*. In the second tree diagram, N *expression* is a unit modified by NP *big sourpuss*. The meaning whether a

person has a sourpuss expression that is strong or a person has an expression of a big sourpuss.

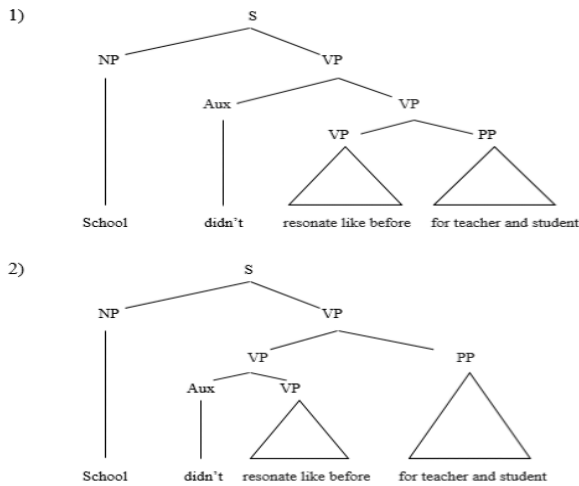
d. Structural ambiguity caused by a head with a coordinate modifier



Structural ambiguity in sentence *We can eliminate waste from every business and government program* is caused by NP *every business and government program*. There are three meanings found in this sentence. In the first tree diagram, NP *every business* is a unit and NP *government program* is a unit. In the second tree diagram, N *business* is a unit modified by D *every* and NP *government program* is a unit modified by D *every*. In the third tree

diagram, NP *business program* is a unit modified by D *every* and NP *government program* is a unit modified by D *every*.

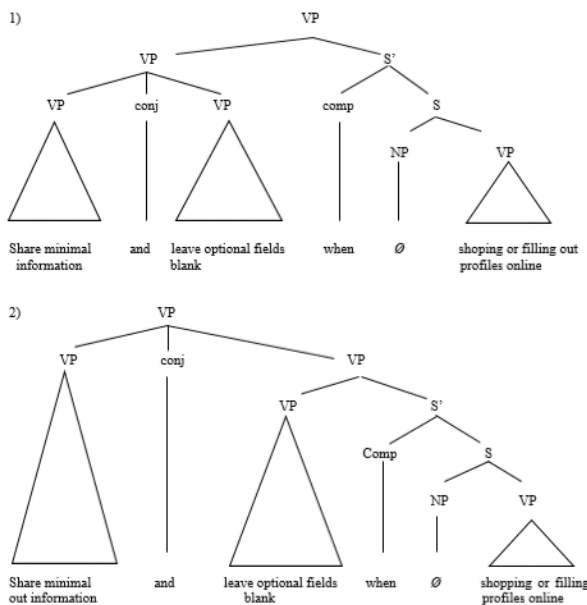
e. Structural ambiguity caused by negation



The sentence *School didn't resonate like before for teacher and student* is structurally ambiguous caused by negation. In this case, the Aux *didn't* does both effecting VP *resonate like before for teacher and student* or only effecting VP *resonate like before*. The meaning can be *school resonate like before, but it is not for teacher and student* or the meaning can be the

school didn't resonate like before, and it is done for the teacher and student.

f. Structural ambiguity caused by constructions containing the coordinating and subordinating conjunctions



In this case the the S' when shopping or filling out profiles online does both as adverbial complement for VP *share minimal information and leave optional fields blank* or as adverbial complement for only VP *leave optional fields blank*. The first meaning will be doing both share minimal information when shopping or filling out profiles online and leave optional fields blank when shopping or filling out profiles online. The second meaning will be doing

share minimal information doesn't matter whenever it is, and leave optional fields blank when shopping or filling out profiles online.

This study shows English sentences which grammatically correct can be ambiguous structurally. A sentence which has differences in which the forms are grouped can be ambiguous structurally. A constituent in a sentence which has different functions to the sentence also leads the sentence to be ambiguous structurally.

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