
UNDERSTANDING AMBIGUOUS MEANING AND SOUND THROUGH THE LEARNING MATERIALS OF MICROLINGUISTICS

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Abstract: Since language is universal, its linguistic components also can be learnt universally. Ambiguity happens to any kind of language. It can be both written and spoken. Written words, phrases or sentences can be analyzed both lexically and structurally. Spoken ones can be analyzed through its lexical, structural, and sound meaning. Ambiguous meaning in written language can be solved through some contextual analysis, while in spoken language, both contextual analysis and sound focus and clearness are needed. Microlinguistics provides the basic language features which cover phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. Commonly, ambiguity deals with meaning and sound. If the sound is unclear, the meaning will be unclear as well. Phonetics and phonology can solve the students' problems of having ambiguous meaning because of sound. Syntax and semantics can solve the wrong interpretation of particular language especially English, both lexically and structurally. In the learning activity, students are facilitated with materials which are presented through power point of the features they need to know in microlinguistics. There is also some phonetics drilling of sound producing until they can master how to pronounce English sounds well. For the practice of analyzing ambiguity through its structural components, the students should use syntactic analysis to break the phrase or sentences until the correct meaning is found. Analysis of ambiguous meaning and sound can give the new knowledge for students to be familiar with ambiguity in daily communication. Students also can respond ambiguity scientifically through its linguistic features.

Keywords: *Ambiguous meaning and sound, Learning materials, microlinguistics*

1 INTRODUCTION

English learning has a massive improvement in Indonesia. Many ways of teaching are invented as a method and approach to make the teaching and learning activity successful, especially in formal schools. English teaching and learning in formal schools become a special attention because of its curriculum is arranged by the government. English is commonly related to four skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Those skills are the key of English learners to produce this international language fluently, both spoken and written. Cultural knowledge will be the additional support besides using the language actively.

Since English is produced through its sounds, words, and grammar rules as well as all languages in this world, understanding the meaning of particular sounds both spoken and written is very important. Microlinguistics is the study of language system, like other languages, English also has the elements that build the language; phonology, morphology,

syntax, and semantics. The nature of language is the nature of human thought and human action. Sound and meaning are two crucial things in a spoken language. Meaning as language is the consequence of meaning as behavior. There can be behavior without language, but there could be no meaning as language without behavior. Language is a utility, an instrument, a tool of the business of living.

When an unfamiliar foreign language is uttered, the only language component is sound, there is no meaning. Instead of the nature, the effectiveness of language also depends on the nurture. Nurture can influence the performance of language. It is essential to improve the expressions of utterance.

The utterance, both in spoken and written, needs something to focus on the meaning to avoid ambiguity. Phonology is related to the potential ambiguous sound, and syntax is related to the potential ambiguous written utterance. English learners, especially in Indonesia, sometimes are trapped into some

situations which demand them to think fast about the meaning of English utterance. Microlinguistics knowledge can at least help them to avoid the ambiguity which can cause a misunderstanding.

1.1. AMBIGUOUS MEANING AND SOUND

Ambiguity, in general meaning, means something related to different interpretations. It closely focuses on the use of language. Sometimes it is also connected to someone's behavior. Ambiguous sound and meaning can cause a kind of effect to both speaker and hearer. Unclear sound can make a different interpretation of meaning in language. English has different way to sound of its alphabets. It is totally different from Bahasa Indonesia which has simpler way to sound alphabets in Bahasa Indonesia. The way to pronounce alphabets can cause different way to pronounce words, sentences, or even meaningless sounds. Every language has its own unique things. Indonesian English learners still have an easy point to pronounce English words, because some speech sounds in Bahasa Indonesia is closely the same as English.

Sound and meaning are two things which are important to understand language, especially spoken. If the sound is different from the one should be produced, it will make a different interpretation, even the use of comma. Comma can be easily identified when it is shown in written language, while in spoken language, comma depend on the speaker how to perform the sentence which uses comma to get a slight gap between clauses. Sometimes the gap is also can be clearly shown when the language is orally produced if the speaker knows well about intonations. This kind of knowledge is also important for English learners, because most of the intonation is quite different for speakers with different mother tongue. Phonology and syntax are generally used in all languages especially English that can be used to make a starting point to avoid misunderstanding through ambiguity happens in communication between speaker and hearer. This is why the learning materials of microlinguistics is useful for not only a linguistic learner, but also a general language learner.

1.2 LEARNING MATERIALS OF MICROLINGUISTICS

Learning materials of microlinguistics are taken from the lecture of microlinguistics; phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. Language is universal and linguistics knowledge is for everyone who wants to learn all languages, not only English. Since it is used to teach the students of English Education Department, it is like a scientific method to learn English besides traditional grammar lecture.

1.2.1 Phonology

Written pronunciation is one of the essential ways to learn language instead of spoken pronunciation. It is expressed in symbols of sounds. It is about the study of how speech sounds are produced. It is useful to refer the sound of particular letter when we are talking to someone in a particular language. There are three types of the study of the sounds of language: 1) Acoustic Phonetics is the study of the physical properties of sounds; 2) Auditory Phonetics is the study of the way listeners perceive sounds; 3) Articulatory Phonetics is the study of how the vocal tracts produce the sounds.

Acoustic phonetics describes the speech sounds of their physical attributes, such as pitch, length, and loudness. Auditory phonetics describes the speech sounds based on how they are heard (imitating someone to pronounce the sound). Articulatory phonetics describes how speech sounds are produced; phonetic alphabets, organs of speech, and so forth.

1. Phonemics → the study of speech sounds which is carried out to distinguish meaning in the expression system of language.
2. Phonemes → smallest units of speech sounds. Examples: - book → /buk/ → /b/, /u/, /k/ → 3 phonemes - home → /houm/ → /h/, /o/, /u/, /m/ → 4 phonemes
3. Minimal Pair → minimal difference of phoneme in a pair of utterance. Examples: pill → /p/ ; hill → /h/ ; kill → /k/
4. Free variation → the sounds produced are different but they remain the same in meaning. Examples: grobake → /k/ ; the variation is the sound ; grobage → /g/ of /k/

- and /g/, can't → /ɛ/ ; the variation is the vowel , can't → /ʌ/ ; sound of /ɛ/ and /ʌ/
5. Segmental phonemes → phonemes which can be segmented out of an utterance; consonants and vowels. Example: go home → /gou houm/ ; segmented to → /g/, /o/, /u/, /h/, /o/, /u/, /m/ ; conclusion → there are 7 segmental phonemes → 3 vowels and 4 consonants
 6. Suprasegmental phonemes → the group of segmental phonemes which are pronounced with some degree of loudness/stress, highness/lowness of tone (pitch).
 7. Juncture → the way of joining one sound/utterance with another
 8. Stress → degree of force with which a syllable is pronounced. Example: /ə + neim/ , /ən + eim/ , /g ə ʊ/
 9. Length → vowel sounds which are pronounced longer. Example: Banana → /bə'na:nə/

The features above can be applied well if the English learners follow the rules of how to produce meaningful sound through the correct way in linguistic matters. English phonology can also be applied in speaking class which needs pronunciation.

1.2.2 Syntax

Syntax is the study of arrangement of words into phrases and sentences or syntactic constructions. It is part of Linguistics. It is part of the grammar of every language. And the grammar of a language is part of a native speaker's linguistic knowledge. There is an infinite number of possible utterances in every language. It is obvious that all these utterances cannot be stored in our brains. Our knowledge of a language consists of a finite number of words (the lexicon; the "dictionary in your head"), and rules (the grammar of the language). It is the job of the syntactician (and the morphologist) to find out what these rules are. Here are the word classes of syntax:

1. Content words; Nouns (class-1 words), Verbs (class-2 words), Adjectives (class-3 words), Adverbs (class-4 words).
2. Structural words; auxiliary verbs, determiners or articles, prepositions, qualifiers (very, somewhat, quite, etc.), interrogators (when, how which, etc.), negators (not, never, etc.), subordinator (if,

- as, although, etc.), coordinator (and, or, but, etc.), and other minor groups of words.
3. Lexical meaning → meaning of words which can be found in a dictionary. Example: Ali kicked dogs. Ali → a particular human being kicked → hitting by using one's foot which happened in past time. dogs → more than one four-footed domestic animal.
 4. Structural meaning → meaning which is derived from putting words together in a construction. Example: Ali kicked dogs. Ali → it performs an action of "kicked" kicked → the action performed by the previous function word, "Ali". dogs → it undergoes an action of "kicked".
 5. The total linguistic meaning → the output of both lexical and structural meaning which is understood by the hearer. Example: Ali kicked dogs. → particular human being called "Ali" performed the action of kicking in the past, while the object of kicking was dogs, a kind of four-footed domestic animals numbering more than one.

The structure of syntactic analysis can be learnt through the tree diagrams or Chinese boxes. The clauses can be analyzed through the finding of structural ambiguity of the sentences. the clauses are analyzed through its word class, and the ambiguity will be found structurally. If the sentence is spoken, it can be directly analyzed through the speaker's intonation because there will be a slight gap between the clause. Its' interpretation will be clear for the learners if they do the Chinese boxes or tree diagram analysis.

Structural ambiguity can be one of the obstacles in all languages in finding its' true meaning. Commonly, there are two different interpretation which can be found after analyzing it through the two ways of structural analyses; Chinese boxes and tree diagrams. Learner will investigate the ambiguity which can cause misunderstanding between the speaker and the hearer. If it is clear enough to be confirmed, then it can be confirmed which one is meant by the speaker. This kind of linguistic knowledge is important, since it

commonly happens in all language, including Bahasa Indonesia and English.

2 CONCLUSION

Sound and meaning are two language components which are important to find a meaningful communication. Misunderstanding can be avoided if ambiguity is reduced through its basic system of language. this knowledge can be learnt through linguistics features like phonology and syntax.

Every communication has meaning, and if it is spoken, it will be analyzed through its sound, and if it is written, it can be analyzed through its structural ambiguity if there is any. It is proved that learning materials of microlinguistics can reduce the ambiguous meaning and sound if the speaker knows better linguistic knowledge.

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