

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Research

The reader notices the headline first when reading the news. A captivating headline encourages readers to continue reading. This fascination is evident in the clicks on the headlines in online news. 59% of social media links are never viewed, according to a study by computer scientists at Columbia University. People read the headline and disseminate the article without pursuing a single word of the body text. Recent statistics from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism indicate that only 51% of consumers who "read" an online news article do so in its entirety. Individuals must fully comprehend it to read the headline and make the sentence precise. (Martineau, 2016; Schröder, 2019)

In comparison, 26% read only a portion of the article, and 22% viewed only the headline or a few words (Ward et al., 2021). More content can confuse readers who spend more time "simply reading headlines" than investigating the article's body and details. Individuals must fully comprehend it to read the headline and make the sentence precise. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of people who rely on the internet as their primary daily news source. According to Rahman et al. (2022), online news has become a significant source of information. Overall, Rahman suggests that people tend to read online news and that the design and presentation of online news can affect how it is consumed (Rahman et al., 2022).

Misinformation spread via the internet can sway people's perspectives and cause them to reconsider their choices (Chen et al., 2022).

People have noticed that online news headlines can sometimes confuse readers. Normala (2021) stated that headlines in the media often influence people's perceptions more than the content of news articles when it comes to forming opinions about current events. It is important to understand that headlines can occasionally be misleading or lacking in detail. Therefore, readers should consistently read the complete article in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the story.

Mann (n.d.) states that readers assume a similar error rate will continue when they see some errors. They must decide whether it is worth their time to read a story that starts with a 20% error rate in the headline. According to him, there are four things to do when writing a headline: It must be correct (in fact and implication), it must connect with ordinary readers (be easily understood), it must attract the reader's attention (using interesting, active words), and it must set (or match) the tone for the article. The responsible use of headlines is crucial to maintaining the credibility of news and shaping readers' perceptions of it.

The biggest problem among readers is understanding the news's content. Research from Akinlotan (2019) examined the extent to which ambiguity was present in Nigerian online newspaper headlines in his study "*Ambiguity in News Headlines: A Predictive Corpus/Variationist Approach*" and found a considerable number of ambiguous headlines. The study found that certain variables strongly influenced unclear headlines. Ambiguous headlines were linked to headline

structure, modifier/quantifier presence, and preverbal complexity. Structural ambiguity was more likely than lexical ambiguity. Lexical-based ambiguous headlines were associated with phrase structure, argument and object animacy, main verb tense, verbal component complexity, and verb type. News headline complexity did not affect structurally motivated ambiguity.

One of the places where ambiguity can be found is in news headlines (Ward et al., 2021; Akinlotan, 2019). According to Ovu (2011), ambiguity is a situation where a word or the construction of an expression has more than one meaning. Moreover, ambiguity occurs when sentences have more than one meaning or sense. It has a range of functions that specifically dictate its shape, content, and structure, and it operates within a range of restrictions that limit the writer's freedom.

Based on the previous studies above, the researcher is intrigued to analyze the types of ambiguity in language that can be explained in several ways. Kreidler (2017) distinguishes between two types of ambiguity: lexical and syntactical ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity occurs when a single term has many meanings. For example, "*I was on my way to the bank.*" Of course, the ambiguity is not likely to be sustained in a longer discourse. A following utterance, for example, is likely to carry information about depositing or withdrawing money, on the one hand, or, on the other hand, fishing or boating.

The other type of ambiguity is syntactical ambiguity, which occurs when a phrase or a sentence has structures that is read in various ways, resulting in ambiguity. These ambiguities can also occur in written language, causing readers to perceive things differently. Syntactical ambiguity can be found in the headline,

"A Summit named Jerusalem." There is an ambiguity in how the word "named" is put together because it can be used in two different ways. The first thing that comes to mind is that the *Summit* is called Jerusalem. The second way to look at the *Summit* is that the name of Jerusalem is mentioned. Syntactical ambiguity in structure can be caused by phrases, leading to headlines that are considered ambiguous.

The second research on ambiguity in media was conducted by Cahyani and Islam (2020) with the title "*The Ambiguity of English Advertisement*" and provided evidence of this issue. The purpose of this study was to analyze and apply Kreidler's theory in order to gain an improved comprehension of ambiguity in Semantic theory. The discussion explored the various types of ambiguity that exist and the ways in which they could be interpreted. The data source consisted of English advertisements, specifically the utterances found in banners, posters, and billboards. The various types of ambiguity observed in English advertisements displayed on banners, posters, and billboards included lexical ambiguity, referential ambiguity, and syntactic ambiguity, which could be further categorized into surface structure and deep structure.

The third study titled "*Ambiguity in Egyptian Newspaper Headlines*" by Abdel-Hafiz (2017) conducted a study on ambiguous headlines gathered from various Egyptian daily newspapers. Headlines could contain multiple sources of ambiguity, such as pronominal forms, attributive adjectives, and prepositional phrases. According to the study, it was found that the existing approaches for disambiguating ambiguity in Egyptian newspaper headlines were unable to address ambiguities caused by non-lexical sources. However, it was not effective in dealing with

headline ambiguity caused by other factors, such as pronominal forms. These previous studies focus on the issue of ambiguity in news headlines, which is an important topic in the field of media and communication. Secondly, the findings can provide valuable insights into the types of ambiguities that may also be present in headlines from The Guardian News. Thirdly, the study by Abdel-Hafiz (2017) highlights the limitations of existing approaches for disambiguating ambiguity in newspaper headlines, which can inform the development of more effective methods for addressing this issue in your study. Overall, three previous study provides a useful point of comparison for your research and can help to deepen our understanding of the complexities of ambiguity in news headlines.

	Site	Visits, Oct 2022	Year-on-year change (%)	Month-on-month change	Change in rank within top 50 vs Sep 2022
1	bbc.co.uk & bbc.com	1.2bn	6	4	-
2	msn.com	795.8m	-6	5	-
3	nytimes.com	634.3m	82	3	1
4	cnn.com & edition.cnn.com	645.2m	6	0	-1
5	news.google.com	469.2m	-6	1	-
6	theguardian.com	404.4m	15	5	1
7	dailymail.co.uk	387m	6	-6	-1
8	foxnews.com	284.2m	-15	1	-

Figure 1. Website traffic statistics for news and media publishers

The Guardian News is one of the most famous news websites because of the readership shown in Figure 1. Writing headlines and word selection in large media will go through a comprehensive stage, so it must have a newsroom with an editor. It aims to eliminate errors, but some could result in ambiguous headlines in *The Guardian News*. In writing headlines, the news writer often uses words intended to

get the reader's attention and increase the number of visitors. Both intentional and unintentional, because the publication wants to attract readers. The newspaper's titles or headlines could be more precise to spark readers' interest.

This study analyzed ambiguous headlines from The Guardian News website and incorporated theories from Breaux (2022), Kreidler (2017), and Saeed (2009), providing a unique and valuable contribution to the field of ambiguity in media. While previous studies, such as those by Akinlotan (2019), Cahyani and Islam (2020), and Abdel-Hafiz (2017), had also examined ambiguity in media, this research offered a fresh perspective by focusing on a specific news source and incorporating multiple theories. The researcher identified certain variables that influenced unclear headlines and found a considerable number of ambiguous headlines, building upon the work of these previous studies and providing new insights into the topic. By analyzing ambiguous headlines from The Guardian News website and incorporating theories from Madison Breaux (2022), Kreidler (2017), and Saeed (2009), the thesis offered a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of ambiguity in media.

1.2 Statement of Problems

According to the background of the research, the following research problems are examined:

1. What types of lexical ambiguity are found in headlines of The Guardian News?
2. What types of syntactical ambiguity are found in headlines of The Guardian News?

1.3 Research Objectives

According to the statement of the problem, the following purposes can be obtained from this study:

1. To identify the types of headlines that shows ambiguity in The Guardian News.
2. To find out types of lexical ambiguity found in headlines of The Guardian News.
3. To find out types of syntactical ambiguity found in headlines of The Guardian News.

1.4 Scope and Limitations

The research focuses on headlines of The Guardian news in the online website. The aspects looked into are forms of kinds of headline, ambiguous words or phrases in news headlines such as lexical ambiguity and syntactical ambiguity.

1.5 Research Methodology

This research uses a qualitative research method to analyze the lexical and syntactical ambiguities of the news headlines and the types of news headlines used by The Guardian newspapers in their articles. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is a way to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups attribute to social or human problems. This involves formulating research questions and methods, collecting data from participants in their natural settings, analyzing the data inductively, constructing general themes from specific details, and interpreting the significance of the results. Qualitative methods, especially description, are useful for analyzing data at the individual or group level and for presenting the findings of the study. The qualitative method is

considered the most suitable method for this study as it will identify the ambiguous headlines and their possible meanings stated.

1.5.1 Data

This research collects all ambiguous phrases, clauses, and sentences from headlines as its data.

1.5.2 Data Sources

The main data sources in this research were obtained from the headlines of The Guardian in the online website newspaper <https://www.theguardian.com/>. This research's data were obtained from the internet, with the total numbers consisting of 22 headlines from the British news website, The Guardian News, released in July 2022 until July 2023.

1.5.3 Data Collection

The data collection technique is how the writer collects and gets the data. In collecting the data for this research, there are some steps:

- a. Searching the news headline from the website The Guardian News
- b. Choosing randomly the headlines on The Guardian News that are potentially ambiguous.
- c. Reading the chosen headlines and the news text to understand the sentence that contains several possible meanings.
- d. Underlining the ambiguous words or phrases in the headline.

1.5.4 Data Analysis

After collecting the data from online newspapers, all data are analyzed. The data are categorized into which type of headline using Breaux's (2022) theory about headline types. Furthermore, the researcher identifies the headline using Kreidler's (2017) and Saeed's (2009) theory of lexical and syntactical ambiguity. The ambiguous words or phrases are underlined. Data are analyzed by using the qualitative analysis technique.

1.6 Organization of Writing

This research consists of four chapters. Chapter I consists of background of research, statement of problem, research objective, scope and limitations, and research methodology. Chapter II consists of the theories that support the research and a framework that are used as a guidance in this research proposal. Chapter III is the analysis of the data using theory from Charles W. Kreidler and Saeed. Chapter IV is the final chapter which gives the conclusion of the research.