Multifaceted Dimensions of Ambiguity in English

Rabin Kumar Das

Assistant Teacher of English, Department of English, Parulia Sri Ramkrishna High School (H.S)

Abstract

Language is an effective means of communication. Words, phrases, and sentences are the standard units of a language. Every word is associated with a particular meaning/sense. Sometimes the meaning of a word undergoes a change, depending on the context or the structure. This triggers ambiguity. When a word, a phrase or a sentence is said to have more than one meaning or multiple meaning, they are said to be ambiguous. Homophonous or polysemous words can give rise to ambiguity depending on the context. There are various types of ambiguity in English. They include lexical ambiguity, syntactic/structural ambiguity, pragmatic ambiguity, phonological ambiguity, scope ambiguity, anaphoric/ referential ambiguity, semantic ambiguity, etc. Lexical ambiguity arises due to polysemous words. Structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase, clause or a sentence possesses more than one meaning. Phonological ambiguity arises when homophonous words—words having identical sounds –are used. Anaphoric ambiguity is perceived when there is more than one potential antecedent in the text. Scope ambiguity is found when a structure has two or more than two quantifiers or floating quantifiers and conveys more than one meaning. When the functional value of a phrase or a sentence changes, we find pragmatic ambiguity. When a sentence or a structure has more than two meanings, it contains multiple ambiguity. Ambiguous words lend a spicy dimension to the use and application of the language. Ambiguous words or phrases or sentences present in a text enhance the value of the text. Ambiguous words, phrases, and sentences are interesting and entertaining. Ambiguity tests our sophisticated cognitive skills for disambiguating. This disambiguation imparts pleasure to us. Ambiguity can assess our competence in the language. It tests the skill of comprehension. We enjoy disambiguating words, phrases and sentences in English from the core of our heart, and our disambiguating these whets our competence in the language.

Keywords: ambiguity, signification, multiple meaning, disambiguation

Introduction: Language is an effective means of communication . Sometimes Verbal language is expressive of more than one meaning. This triggers ambiguity. The term ambiguity comes from the Latin *ambiguus* , which was formed by combining *ambi-*(meaning'both') and *agere* (meaning 'drive') . Ambiguity refers to "the possibility of interpreting an expression in two or more distinct ways." It is the type of meaning in which a phrase, statement or resolution is not explicitly defined, making several interpretations plausible" (Wikipedia). Ambiguity is "the state of simultaneously admitting plausible interpretations or explanations, thus permitting double meanings that 'drive both ways' "(Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). When a word or a single string of words is assigned two or more sharply distinct meanings, ambiguity arises. It is the property of having more than one linguistic meaning. It is multiple meanings of words, phrases or sentences which give rise to ambiguity.

Methodology: It is a document -based qualitative research. The various documents, texts, books, reference books are used for data collection. The research method used is document or content analysis.

Multiple Meaning: We find multiple meaning in which one word form is related to a number of meanings. It is categorized into two types: *homonymy* and *polysemy*. Homonymy refers to the relation between words whose forms are the same but whose meanings are different and cannot be connected. In other words, *homonymy* is the case of a single word form having a number of meanings which are not relatable in terms of shape, functions, etc. For example, the same word form 'bank' means (a) financial institution (b) a riverbank. The word form has two meanings but the two meanings are not connected at all. In English we find a number of words with cognitive meanings. Each of the words has a basic or primary meaning and also one or more secondary meanings. The secondary meanings of these words are metaphorical extensions of the basic meaning. The primary meaning of the word is extended to denote a number of similar objects. *Polysemy* is the case of a single word having two or more related senses. The primary meaning of the word *foot* is 'that movable part of the body at the end of the leg on which a man stands'. This primary meaning is metaphorically extended to refer to 'the lower part 'as in 'the foot of a hill '. The basic meaning of the word *foot* is related to its secondary meaning on the point of shape (lower part). The word *mouth* has the primary meaning 'the part of our face 'and its secondary meanings are 'entrance of a cave', a place where a river meets the ocean or river ', 'the top part of a bottle', etc.

According to David Crystal , homonymy has two types: homophones and homographs. **Homonyms** (homo 'same' + onoma ' name' : If the two words have two different and unrelated meanings , but the same pronunciation and the same spelling , they are called homonyms. For example, bear /beə(r)/: (a) large heavy animal with thick fur , (b) to carry. fire/ˈfaɪə(r)/: a) combustion or burning, b) strong criticism. **Homophones** (homo 'same' + phone 'sound') : If words have different meanings and different spellings but have the same pronunciation, they are called homophones. For example, Feet /fiːt/ ,Feat /fiːt/ ; Hear /hɪə(r)/, here /hɪə(r)/. **Homographs** (homo 'same' + graph' writing') : If words which have different meanings and different pronunciation but the same spelling , they are called homographs. For example, lead(N) /led/: the name of a metal , lead (V)/liːd/ : to show the way sow(N) /saʊ/ : a female pig, sow(V) /səʊ/: to put seeds in soil **.**

Types of Ambiguity: In English there are different types of ambiguity:

1. Lexical or word ambiguity: If a word or a lexical item or a lexeme has more than one meaning, it is said to be lexically ambiguous. For example, *port* can mean 'fortified wine' or ' city by the sea'. Hence, sentences containing ambiguous lexical item are usually ambiguous. The sentence "The sailors looked at the port "is ambiguous due to the presence of the ambiguous lexical item *port.* The word *bat* means ' an animal like a mouse with wings that flies and feeds at night' or ' a piece of wood used for hitting the ball in games such as cricket' , etc. The sentence "He found a bat " is ambiguous due to the ambiguous word. The term *fire* means 'discharge a bullet from ', ' bake in a kiln', ' terminate the employment of '. Thus the sentence " The man could not fire the gun " is ambiguous .Homonyms and polysemous words are accountable for creating ambiguity. In poetry we find a figure of speech called PUN. For example, " It is easy to follow a dictator than to follow the abstract principles of democracy ."—here the first verb 'to follow' means 'to obey' and the second verb 'to follow' means 'to understand'**.**

2. Word formation or Morphological Ambiguity: It is a kind of lexical ambiguity. This type of ambiguity is found in morphology . The different ways in prefixes and suffixes are attached to the stems give rise to this ambiguity. The word 'unlockable ' has two meanings depending on the ways of attachment of prefixes and suffixes : (a) un-- + lock = unlock + --able = unlockable (meaning ' able to be unlocked ') , (b) lock+ -able= un-- + lockable = unlockable (meaning' not able to be locked ') . The word ' undoable' has two meanings depending on the same : (a) un-- + do = undo + --able = undoable (meaning' able to be undone') , (b) do + --able = un-- + doable = undoable (meaning ' not able to be done'). The word ' unpackable' conveys two meanings depending on the same : (a) un-- + pack = unpack + --able = unpackable (meaning ' able to be unpacked ') , (b) pack + -- able = un -- + packable = unpackable (meaning ' not able to be packed') . The word ' undressable ' is ambiguous depending on the same : (a) un-- + dress = undress + --able = undressable (meaning' able to be undressed') , (b) dress + -- able = un-- + dressable = undressable (meaning' not able to be dressed') . The word ' unloadable' conveys double meanings depending on the ways of word formation: (a) un-- + load = unload + --able = unloadable (meaning ' able to be unloaded') , (b) load + --able = un -- + loadable (meaning' not able to be loaded')

3. Semantic Ambiguity : Lexical ambiguity is a type of semantic ambiguity. In lexical ambiguity , a lexical item or a morpheme is said to have ambiguity or double meaning . When a word, phrase , a clause or a sentence , taken out of context, has ambiguous meaning , semantic ambiguity arises. A ''necessary condition on the semantic ambiguity of a sentence is that it contains an ambiguous lexical item .''(Soon Peng Su) For instance, the sentence " We saw her duck " is semantically ambiguous because the verb 'saw' has two interpretations :(a) We looked at her duck (saw=looked). (b) We cut her duck with a saw (saw=a sharp tool for cutting).

4. Syntactic or structural ambiguity/derivational ambiguity: This type of ambiguity arises due to more than one constituent structure for a complex phrase or clause or a sentence. In the case of syntactic ambiguity the same string of words is interpreted as having more than one structure. but in the case of semantic ambiguity the same constituent structure conveys more than one meaning because of different meanings of the same lexical items .The phrase 'very old men and women' is structurally ambiguous as the phrase means (a) men are very old but women are not very old , or (b) both men and women are very old . In the case of structural ambiguity, words have the same meaning but different structures can be assigned to the entire string of words producing different meanings. The sentence " The doctor asked the patient not to smoke daily" is structurally ambiguous : (a) Daily the doctor advised the patient not to smoke—here the adverb 'daily' modifies the verb phrase ' advised….smoke' , (b) The patient smoked daily and the doctor advised the patient not to smoke daily but he might smoke sometimes. From the syntactic point of view, a sentence or a constituent may be globally ambiguous or locally ambiguous. A sentence which is globally ambiguous is said to have at least two different meanings. For example, "' The lady held the child in the white towel" is globally ambiguous: (a) The child was incidentally covered in the white towel and was held by the lady , (b) The lady used the towel to hold the child . On the other hand, a sentence which is locally ambiguous is said to have one meaning in spite of the presence of an ambiguous phrase. Local ambiguity is found in *garden path sentences*. These sentences are syntactically ambiguous. They mislead the hearer to a false interpretation. The hearer the has to backtrack and look for an alternative sound interpretation at the syntactic level. These trick the hearer into interpreting the

sentences incorrectly. for example, the sentence "The old man the boat" – initially the reader interprets the expression as "the man who is old the boat" This is an incorrect interpretation. Hence the reader is compelled to reinterpret the expression as "the old(= old persons) man(verb) the boat " . The sentences "The complex houses married and single soldiers and their families "and "The house raced past the barn fell" are classic examples of garden path sentences. Structural ambiguity is a type of *derivational ambiguity* as there exists more than one syntactic derivation.

5. Attachment ambiguity : According to M.Murphy & A. Koskela (2010) , one type of structural ambiguity is an *attachment ambiguity*, in which there are (at least) two possible ways of linking a constituent to the rest of the sentence . For example, the headline *COMPLAINTS ABOUT NBA REFEREES GROWING UGLY* can be interpreted as a noun phrase that refers to people complaining that the referees are getting uglier , or an abbreviated sentence about a situation in which the complaints about referees are growing ugly . In this example , regardless of the interpretation of the phrase , the words have the same meanings and belong to the same word classes (Murphy & Koskela) .

6. Lexico-categorial ambiguity: It involves both lexical ambiguity and syntactic ambiguity. The same sentence is both semantically and syntactically ambiguous. The sentence " We saw her duck" involves lexico-categorial ambiguity because here we find both lexical and structural differences. For the phrase 'her duck ' has two semantic and structural interpretations : (a) Her (possessive adjective) duck (duck= a kind of animal) was seen by us. (b) We saw that she ducked (in 'her duck' , 'duck' is a bare infinitive placed after the verb of perception 'saw'). Here the ambiguity is due to ambiguous lexical items and syntactic structures. Ambiguity due to the presence of ambiguous lexical items and structural differences is specifically known as *lexical-categorial ambiguity* (M.Murphy & A. Koskela, 2010) . It is observed that the same sentence may involve both semantic ambiguity and syntactic ambiguity. The sentence " We ate the cake on the table " is semantically and syntactically ambiguous. It is syntactically ambiguous because the prepositional phrase (PP) " on the table" may modify the noun phrase "the cake" or the verb phrase " ate" : (a) We were sitting on the table and ate the cake –the PP here functioning as an adverbial (b) The cake was on the table and we ate it—the PP here modifies the preceding noun phrase" the cake" . We also find some sentences which are only syntactically ambiguous but not semantically ambiguous. The sentence " Cook, cook ! " is a case in point. Here the first 'Cook' is a noun which is in the vocative case here and the second 'cook' is a verb ---here the speaker orders the cook to cook. We also find sentences which are semantically ambiguous but not syntactically. For example, the sentence " The dog looked at the water fondly "—here the term 'fondly' may mean (a) affectionately or (b) foolishly . The sentence" Jane made the robot fast " is ambiguous: (a) The robot was slow and Jane made it fast ,(b) Jane compelled the robot to fast .

7. Anaphoric or referential ambiguity: According to Charles W. Kreidler (1998) , misunderstanding occurs when a speaker has one referent in mind for a definite expression like George or the papers and the addressee is thinking of a different George or some other papers. Referential ambiguity is due to the nature of referring expressions. it occurs "when an indefinite referring expression may be specific or not " (Kreidler, 1998) . For example, in "The man wanted to buy a car ", *a car* may refer to a particular car in mind or some car, any car. Referential ambiguity occurs "when anaphora is unclear because a personal pronoun, *he, she*, *it* or *they* , can be linked to either of the two referring expressions" (Kreidler, 1998) .

For example, in " Aditya told Atanu that a visitor was waiting for him", *him* can refer to either Aditya or Atanu . Referential ambiguity can arise when "the pronoun *you* is used generically or specifically." For example, in "If you want to shine in life, you have to work hard ", *you* may be used generically or specifically (a particular person before the speaker)—*you* may be the addressee present before the speaker or the entire sentence may be interpreted as a general platitude. Referential ambiguity occurs when "a noun phrase with *every* can have distributed reference or collected reference " (Kreidler 1998) . For example, in "I am buying a tea for everyone here", a tea may be for all present or a tea is for each person.

8. Pragmatic ambiguity : According to Oxford advanced Learner's Dictionary , pragmatics is " the study of the way in which language is used to express what somebody really means in particular situations, especially when the actual words used may appear to mean something different. " According to Jalaj Thanki (2017), pragmatic ambiguity occurs "when the context of a phrase gives it multiple different interpretations." Here the same sentence /utterance conveys different interpretations depending upon the context . The same sentence can have more than one functional value . The plain meaning of the sentence " It is now four o' clock" is " telling the time". For example,

A: What's the time ,please ?

B: It is four o'clock

When the context changes, the meaning also changes.

Husband : Shall we go to watch a movie ?

Wife: It is now four o'clock.

In the conversation the husband makes a suggestion but his wife rejects the suggestion because movies begin at four. They are too late for the movie. In this context the same utterance operates as a refusal to the suggestion.

Mother: Kaushiki, out with your history book

Kaushiki : Mummy, it is now four o'clock.

In this conversation, the same utterance functions as a plea/request. Depending on the context, the sentence "The police is coming" can operate as an assertion or a warning or an expression of relief. "Can you give me a pen?" can operate as a request or a simple question. " Close the door" can function as an order or a request depending upon the context . These are also known as *speech act ambiguity*.

9. Presuppositional ambiguity : A presupposition is " something that you assume to be true , especially something which you must assume is true in order to continue with what you are saying or thinking " (*Collins Cobuild English Dictionary*).It is a kind of assumption . If one thing presupposes another, the first thing cannot be true or exist unless the second thing is true or exists. "Have you stopped beating your wife?" presupposes that the person addressed has a wife and beaten her. Presupposional ambiguity arises at the level of presupposition. *Too* is a word which can trigger presupposition According to Kent Bach , the sentence " I love you too" can have four distinct semantic interpretations :

(a) I love you (just like you love me).

(b) I love you (just like someone else does).

(c) I love you (and I love someone else).

(d) I love you (as well bearing some other relationship (i.e. admiring) to you .

10. De dicto / de re Ambiguity : It is a kind of semantic ambiguity .The two terms 'de dicto 'and 'de re ' are expressive of modal meanings ' It is possible that …' and ' X believes that …' (Crystal) . *De dicto* (Latin 'about what is said ') refers to the belief in the truth of a proposition (Matthew) and *de re* (Latin 'about a/the thing) refers to the belief in an individual or an individual entity . The sentence " Rachana believes that Rina is a teacher " is ambiguous . On a de re reading , the speaker refers to a particular individual as Rina and asserts that Rachana believes the individual to be a teacher . Here the individual Rina exists but the sentence does not make any claim as to whether Rachana knows her by that name . On a de re reading the sentence expresses a belief concerning an individual that she is a teacher. On a di dicto reading , the sentence asserts that Rachana stands in the belief relation to the sentence " Rina is a teacher" . The sentence as a whole does not express that such an individual actually exists. On a de dicto reading the sentence expresses a belief in the proposition that Rina is a teacher but does not expresses that Rina actually exists . The sentence " I believe his wife is rich" is ambiguous . On a de re reading this sentence expresses a belief concerning an individual , the lady (his wife) that she is rich . On this reading this sentence expresses that his wife actually exists but does not make any claim as to whether I believe her to be rich.On a de dicto reading ,the sentence expresses a belief in the proposition that she is married to a rich man . The sentence " The prize will be given to the winner by the manager of the company " is ambiguous due to the two readings of the phrase " the manager of the company" . On a de re reading, the phrase refers to the person who is the manager of the company at the time of the utterance , who may or may not still be manager at the time of giving . This reading takes into account the current reference of the term. On a de dicto reading, the phrase refers to the person who is the manager at the time of giving the prize. This sentence expresses that whoever is the manager at the time of giving will give the prize .

11. Phonological or phonetic ambiguity: According to Marta Dynel, phonological ambiguity "involves manipulations of words at the sound level " (2011). Phonological   ambiguity may be defined as an ambiguity that results from two similar phonetic sequences (differing only in a single phonological segment) identifying separate words, which have different meanings e.g. cracker/quacker. Phonological ambiguity results from homophones. For example, *hare* may be confused with *hair* as their pronunciations are identical.

12. Punctuation Ambiguity: It occurs when two sentences share the same overlapping word. It is created by lack of punctuation .. For example, " Kill him not leave him" –it is ambiguous : (a) kill him not , leave him , (b) Kill him, not leave him. The sentence " I want you to see your hand me the book" is ambiguous --I want you to see your hand (hand—noun) .Hand me the book. (hand—verb) .

13. Orthographic ambiguity: It occurs when the two words share the same spelling e.g.' desert ' meaning (a) to abandon , (b) an arid region . This type of ambiguity results from homographs.

14. Multiple ambiguity : It occurs when a structure has more than two meanings . In the case of multiple ambiguity , a sentence / utterance has more than two meanings- multiple meanings. The sentence " It is too hot to eat " has multiple semantic interpretations : (a) the weather is too hot for us to eat ,(b) the tea is too hot for us to eat , (c) the dog is too hot to eat something. The sentence " We saw her duck" has multiple ambiguity.

15. Scopal Ambiguity: Scope is the extent of the influence of a grammatical form or element over surrounding language. The scope-bearing elements include adverbials, quantifiers (everyone) , negatives (no, not) and focusing words (only, even) .

A. Adverb and scope : The adverb 'always' exhibits scope phenomena. The sentence " The boy always meets five friends on Sundays " is ambiguous due to scope. It is ambiguous between two readings : (a) it is always the case that the boy meets exactly five friends on Sundays (the number of the boy's friends remains the same but friends differ e.g., A B C D E on one Sunday , F G H I J on another Sunday , K L M N O , so on. The number of the friends is five but friends are different. (b) there are same five friends whom the boy meets on Mondays e.g. A B C D E on one Sunday , A, B C D E on another Sunday , so on.

B. focusing words, negation and scope: *Only* exhibits scope phenomena in relation to negation. The sentence " Rina cannot only praise her friend " is ambiguous : (a) Rina can not only praise her friend—here *only* has wider scope meaning' Rina can do something in addition' . (b) Rina cannot only praise her friend—here *not* has wider scope over *only* meaning' Rina is not allowed to praise her friend.'

C. Quantifiers and scope: Here we find the interactions of two quantifiers. The sentence "Everyone in the room knows two languages" is ambiguous. (a) there are two languages English and Bengali such that for every person in the room knows the two languages – in this reading *two languages* has wider scope over *everyone*, (b) for every person –-Amal, etc.---in the room, there are two languages such that everyone knows ---Amal knows Bengali and English, Bimal knows Punjabi and Tamil , Simal knows Hindi and Punjabi –no two particular languages are known to them.

16. Deep structure ambiguity and surface structure ambiguity: The above types of ambiguity are called surface structure ambiguity because they are observed in the surface structures. In the case of deep structure ambiguity, different semantic interpretations are available in the Deep Structure. For the same sentence there are two deep structures. The sentences "The shooting of the hunters was appalling "is an example of this type of ambiguity: (a) The way in which the hunters shot was appalling, (b) the fact that the hunters were shot was appalling. The sentence "Flying planes can be dangerous" is ambiguous: (a) some people fly planes. this can be dangerous. (b) Planes are flying. They can be dangerous.

17. Collective-distributive ambiguity: In the case of this kind of ambiguity, the subject-noun phrase and the object-noun phrase can be interpreted in two ways. For the collective reading of the subject noun phrase, the subject noun phrase is construed as a group-singular. For the distributive reading of the subject noun phrase, the subject noun phrase indicates the individuals, not a group. The sentence "The boys assembled at the school." is ambiguous. On the collective reading the sentence means "all the boys assembled together at the same time". But on the distributive reading, the sentence means "each boy assembled at the school separately." The sentence "The hunter killed three deer." is ambiguous. On the collective reading, the sentence means" the hunter killed three deer at the same time "but on the distributive reading the sentence means" the hunter killed the three deer separately." This ambiguity is also seen in conjoined noun phrases. The sentence " Aditya and Kaushiki went to London " is ambiguous. On the

collective reading, the sentence means "they went to London together at the same time" but on the distributive reading the sentence means" they went to London separately."

18. Ellipsis & Complement Ambiguity: Ambiguity may be due to ellipsis. The sentence "Robert washed his car and Frank did too" is ambiguous. In the sentence we find bound/unbound ambiguity. On the bound reading 'Frank did too' coveys more than one meaning. It means a) Frank washed Robert's car ,and b) Frank washed his own car. On the unbound reading, 'his car' is not Robert's car. Hence the sentence may mean "Robert washed another man's car, not his own." Ambiguity may arise from two interpretations of the complement. The sentence "Robert loves his mother more than his brother" is ambiguous. On one reading, 'his brother 'functions as the cpmplement to the verb'loves'. And On another reading 'his brother' functions as the subject. The sentence means a) Robert loves his mother and his brother but he loves his mother more, and b) Robert loves his mother and his brother loves his mother but Robert loves more.

Role of Ambiguity: In order to learn a good command one English and to comprehend the inner meaning of literary texts we must have a good knowledge of various types of ambiguity. It creates confusion and may lead to misunderstanding between the speakers. Thus, it may hinder our communication. Besides ambiguity creates humour and laughter-provoking situations, Ambiguities are a good source of humour and also show the wit of the speaker and the writer

PATTERNS OF AMBIGUITY

Pattern 1: Noun/classifier + Head Noun	**Pattern 7: Noun+ Noun Possessive +Head Noun:**
woman murderer :	**Hostel girls' garden:**
(a) the woman who murdered (here the first noun functioning as the subject of the verb base of the second noun)	(a) the garden belongs to hostel girls
(b) the murderer who murdered only women (here the first noun functioning as object of the verb base of the second noun)	(b) hostel garden belongs to the girls
Rubber knife :	**Pattern 8: Adjective + Noun Possessive + Head Noun**
(a) knife made of rubber	A beautiful girl's car :
(b) knife used for cutting rubber	(a) a car of the beautiful girl
Pattern 2: Participle(present /past) + Head Noun	(b) a beautiful car of the girl
	Pattern 9: Adjective + Noun + Head Noun:
Dancing teacher :	**Hard iron rod :**
(a) a teacher who teaches how to dance (compound)	(a) rod made of hard iron
(b) a teacher who is dancing (noun phrase)	(b) hard rod made of iron
Spinning wheel:	**Pattern 10: Participle + Noun Possessive + Head Noun:**
(a) a wheel used for spinning	
(b) a wheel which itself is spinning	**Alarming flood situation :**
Pattern3: Any + Head Noun	(a) situation caused by alarming flood
The Teacher will not admit any students:	(b) alarming situation caused by flood
	Pattern 11: Adjective + Noun +Noun + Head Noun:
(a) The teacher will not admit students .	**A new student orientation camp :**
	(a) a camp for orientation of new students

(b) The teacher will admit only some selected students.

Pattern4 : Noun+ Noun+ Noun:

Ambuja cement factory:

(a) the name of the cement factory is Ambuja

(b) the factory where Ambuja cement is manufactured –Ambuja is the name of cement

Pattern 5: Noun + Noun + Noun+ Head Noun :

Summer party dress discount :

(a) summer discount on party dress

(b) discount on dress for summer party

Pattern 6: Possessive of Noun /Pronoun + Noun Possessive + Head Noun :

In this pattern The first possessives can modify the noun possessive or the head noun.

Their father's property :

(a) the property belonging to their father

(b) father's property is their property

Pattern 15: Noun + Head Noun +and + Head Noun:

Palace rooms and gardens :

(a) gardens and palace rooms

(b) palace rooms and palace gardens

Pattern 16: More/Most + Adjective +Head Noun : More beautiful girls :

(a) girls are more beautiful

(b) more girls who are beautiful

Pattern 17: Head Noun + prepositional Phrase (PP) + Relative Clause (RC):

The tail of a flying kite which we are seeing:

(a) we are seeing the tail

(b) we are seeing a flying kite

Pattern 18: Head Noun +RC+ PP:

..the lady whom he had met in the shop:

(a) the lady was in the shop

(b) the man met her in the shop

(b) a new camp for orientation of students

(c) a camp for new orientation of students

Pattern 12: Adjective + noun + Participle +Head Noun:

A beautiful fog covered morning :

(a) a beautiful morning covered with fog

(b) a morning covered with beautiful fog

Pattern 13: Appositives with Nouns:

…her husband , John Powell , a poet (and a philosopher)

(a) a poet is appositive ? or John Powell appositive?

(b) her husband , John Powell and a poet are three individuals

Pattern 14: Adjective + Head Noun +and +Noun + Head Noun :

Old palace room and room heater :

(a) palace room is old and room heater is old

(b) palace room is old but room heater is not

Pattern 24: HN+ AND + HN +PP :

The textbook and reference books in Bengali , English and Santali:

(a) PP ' in Bengali…Santali' postmodifies only reference books

(b)PP postmodifies the textbook and reference books

Pattern 25: HN (object)+Participle +PP/other elements:

The lady found the child studying in the room :

(a) the lady discovered it in that situation and this is unexpected—she found it to be studying

(b) The was studying there and the lady found it and did not find it in the action

Pattern 26: Nouns derived from verbs :

Tina's appearance surprised her son:

(a) Tina's arrival

Pattern 19: Head Noun +PP+PP:

An analysis of the poem by Mr. Sen :

(a) poem written by Mr. Sen

(b) analysis made by Mr Sen

Pattern 20: Head Noun + PP+ Adverbial of time /place :

The game after the rain yesterday :

(a) the game held yesterday

(b) the rain took place yesterday

Pattern 21: Head Noun + RC+ Appositive:

The person who abused his grandfather , an engineer, was punished

(a) the person was an engineer

(b) his grandfather was an engineer

Pattern 22: Head Noun + Infinitive Phrase +PP:

An attempt to break hunger strike by the men:

(a) attempt made by the men

(b) strike staged by the men

Pattern 23: HN + Participle clause + RC:

…a house located in the ward which was beautiful

(a) a house is beautiful

(b) ward is beautiful

(b) Tina's look

Pattern 27: Genitive –subjective /objective

The boy's punishment was severe

(a) the boy punished one

(b) the boy was punished

Pattern 28: HN+ RC+Participle

..the man who met the lady crossing the road

(a) man crossing road

(b) lady crossing road

Pattern 29: As well as

Rana loves his mother as well as his brother

(a) Rana loves her and him (as well as – conjunction)

(b) Rana and his brother love their mother (equally) well

Pattern 30: Exocentric compound

black market

(a) an illegal market

(b) a market without lights

Dealing with ambiguities in the classroom: The teacher would teach the students how to disambiguate the words, phrases, sentences in context. This is the contextual approach adopted by the teacher. Through the appropriate tasks and activities, the teacher would make clear the various aspects of ambiguities. The teacher will set fill-in-blanks exercises to test their competence in homophones. The teacher may set match- the-columns exercises in this regard. She/he may ask them to make meaningful sentences with the homographs. She may set choose-the-right-word exercises.

Conclusion: Ambiguities abound in English literary texts. They embellish the literary works. We must learn different types of ambiguities to whet our ability to comprehend the texts. They are reflection of the speaker's wit or the author's wit. In a nutshell, a thorough mastery over ambiguity and a sensitivity to its various types will enable us to eliminate bars to clear communication.

Author's Biography: Rabin Kumar Das is an assistant teacher of English at Parulia Sri Ramkrishna High School (H.S.) (E-mail: mail2rabindas@gmail.com) , West Bengal ,India .

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