

Lexical Ambiguity and Humor in “Funny Tweets” @JokesMemesFacts Account on Twitter During the COVID-19

Nursabrina Rahmawati

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

sabrina.rahma23@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18860/lilics.v3i1.6107>

Copyright © Nursabrina Rahmawati



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

How to Cite: APA Style 7th edition

Submission

Track:

Received:

07-12-2023

Available online:

30-04-2024

Corresponding

Author:

Nursabrina Rahmawati

sabrina.rahma23@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to understand humor as a form of linguistically creative language, especially in the realm of semantics, focusing on dimensions of meaning such as homonyms and polysemy. Moreover, a trend of new language and terms among Twitter X users emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led people to spend more time on social media for social criticism, expressing sadness, or simply for entertainment. The main theories used in this research were Murphy's theory (2010) on lexical ambiguity, which includes homonymy (homograph, homophone, absolute homonymy) and polysemy, and Leech's theory (1981) on semantic meaning, which covers conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meanings. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed in this study. The results showed that homonymy occurred more frequently than polysemy in language phenomena containing humor. Absolute homonymy was the most common type of homonymy, followed by homophones, while homographs were the rarest. The findings revealed that many humorous tweets on Twitter X contained lexical ambiguity, which could confuse readers or lead to misinterpretations of the true meaning, intent, and motive. The study highlighted the importance of lexical ambiguity in humor, as it shapes how humor is perceived. It also emphasized the role of social media in the evolution of language. Furthermore, it suggested that ambiguity is often used strategically to engage audiences and provoke thought. Lastly, the research pointed out the challenges of interpreting humor in online spaces where context is limited, and meaning can shift rapidly.

Keywords: Homonymy, Humor, Irony, Lexical Ambiguity, Polysemy, Semantic Meaning,

INTRODUCTION

Intensive interaction without having to meet in person is currently a phenomenon that is happening massively on social media. The virtual world as a place that overshadows social media uses images, videos, and words as weapons. The large number of users and the frequency with which they use social media make the topics discussed trending worldwide. Funny things

that are tried to be created on social media often use language as the main medium. As a result, the phenomenon of humor with language has become a skillful thing to do in today's society. This creativity turned out to give rise to the phenomenon of a new means of humor. In the past people used to have slapstick humor by using physical and property interactions with other people, now people are more creative in using language.

The COVID-19 pandemic has just occurred which has made all people in the world spend their daily activities on social media for a period of approximately two years, whether it is in work, school, or other daily activities. This pandemic makes many things happen and develop on social media, especially in the language aspect which gives rise to a social media phenomenon that often becomes viral. The phenomenon of social media which becomes a trend and growing tremendously among the world's people is currently spreading widely to all environments. A report by We Are Social entitled "Digital 2022: Global Overview Report" notes the latest global 'Digital in 2022' reveals that most of the connected world continues to grow faster than it did before the pandemic. Global social media users have increased by more than 10% in the last 12 months, with 424 million new users joining the platform in 2021. While for Twitter X users, it is 2.43 billion total visitors (wearesocial.com, 2022). Social media requires written language to express the speaker's intent. Thus, the more often social media is used, the more linguistic phenomena can be analyzed. The peculiarity of Twitter X is that there are accounts that specifically display a certain scope, some accounts that specifically upload funny tweets, or ordinary tweets that are meaningful and have a humor or sarcasm context that many people can relate to.

Difficulties with lexical ambiguity can frequently be encountered, both verbally and non-verbally on social media. This is applicable for both verbal and non-verbal communication. Because of its dual or even multiple interpretation, which is the very essence of lexical ambiguity, it is frequently seen in both everyday writings and videos, as well as humorous ones, that are published to social media. People who read or listen to posts that contains lexical ambiguity experience a sense of confusion as a result of the post's dual or multiple purposes. This is because the meaning of the post can be interpreted in more than one way. Because lexical ambiguity is employed to create a hilarious impact, the readers will find that this kind of thing appears quite frequently in postings that contain funny content. This frequently leads to confusions in the readers mind, particularly if they are not scrutinized too deeply into lexical ambiguity.

Research on lexical ambiguity has used many objects such as EFL learners' narrative text (Williyan, 2022), the pattern of lexical ambiguity studied in the contextual language model (Poesio & Haber, 2021), headlines in the Jakarta Post (Saputri & Suastra, 2022), and Coco's film script (Faina et al., 2021). There is also research that directly discusses homonymy and detects it with Multilingual Information (Habibi et al., 2021). Besides, case studies have been carried out on homonymy and polysemy in exploring the representation of word meanings in context (Garcia, 2021).

There were also a number of previous studies and academic journals containing linguistic and ambiguity studies on humor. They discussed the relationship between humor and lexical ambiguity, homonymy, and polysemy, such as evaluating the performance of EFL students in the linguistics of humorous texts (Ahmed, 2019), and studies of semantic-syntactic ambiguity in humorous contexts (Ma'yuuf & Nashaat, 2021). In addition, there was also research related to the creation of humor and the ambiguity of morpho-syntactic phenomena (Kagan, 2020) and

lexical ambiguity and verbal humor in several jokes and English riddles that helped researchers understand the application of humor to ambiguity (Makroum, 2021).

Ambiguity in narrative texts reflected the traditional distinctions of polysemy and homonyms. Williyen (2022) investigated the ambiguity in five narrative texts of EFL learners. The study revealed that narrative texts contained lexical and syntactic ambiguity. This research used qualitative methods, and the results revealed that narrative texts contained some ambiguity in language usage, and ambiguity was unavoidable. Poesio and Haber (2021) investigated the extent to which the embedding of contextualized tenses displaying multiple meanings reflected the traditional distinctions of polysemy and homonyms. In this study, the data were developed by modifying and expanding the contextual word similarity dataset published in Haber and Poesio (2020a, b). The results suggested that the collected data supported previous observations of significant differences in similarity between interpretations of polysemy and led to the discovery of tentative patterns of word meaning similarity for some types of alternation.

There were also previous studies that analyzed lexical ambiguity in reading materials such as newspapers, manuscripts, translations, literary works, and others. Saputri and Suastra (2022) investigated lexical ambiguity in news headlines from the Jakarta Post. They used a qualitative method, collecting data from Jakarta Post articles published between 2019-2021 that contained ambiguous words, phrases, and sentences, which were then analyzed using Ullmann's (1967) theory of lexical ambiguity. The results showed that four words from four news article titles were categorized as lexical ambiguity. Homonyms and polysemy were identified as two types of lexical ambiguity.

Regarding the analysis of lexical ambiguity, Faina et al. (2021) conducted a similar study but used the *Coco* film script as the data source. They applied a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the homonymy of lexical ambiguity used by Miguel, the main character in the *Coco* film script. The results indicated that two homonymous forms of lexical ambiguity appeared in the script: homophones and homographs. The most dominant form of homonym in lexical ambiguity was homophones, consisting of 70 words and appearing 645 times.

Further discussing homonymy, a study by Habibi et al. (2021) focused on this topic and introduced a new method using information from multilingual lexical sources. They presented a graphical method to determine whether a given word is homonymous, essentially deciding if the word has semantically unrelated meanings. The approach set a new standard for homonym detection, relying on vector-based methods that take advantage of distributional semantics, which measure semantic similarity continuously.

Garcia (2021) presented a multilingual study on the representation of word meanings in context. He created a new multilingual dataset for controlled evaluations of factors like the impact of surrounding context or the overlap between words with similar or different meanings. Garcia's results showed that in most cases, the best contextualization model identified homonyms conveying different meanings in various contexts. However, because homonyms depend heavily on context, the model sometimes misinterpreted words with different meanings in similar sentences.

Two previous studies also examined humor in the context of linguistics and ambiguity. Ahmed (2019) explored the ability of EFL students to distinguish between funny and non-funny texts, finding that lexical ambiguity was central to language-based jokes. Ma'yuuf and Nashaat (2021) researched how ambiguity creates humor, analyzing data from newspaper headlines,

riddles, jokes, and narratives. They found that lexical and syntactic ambiguity were important tools in creating puns in humor.

Various kinds of ambiguity contributed significantly to the creation of humor, as predicted by the incongruity theory. This applied to homonymy, polysemy, structural ambiguity, scope, and the multiplicity of meanings arising from pragmatic factors. In languages with rich inflectional morphology, linguistic humor could be based on the semantic uncertainties of certain grammatical phenomena. Kagan (2020) supported this claim by considering aspects like imperfective aspects, genitive case assignment, and instrumental case assignment. The ambiguity or uncertainty associated with these phenomena created a humorous effect. The results showed that similar contributions could be made by what was termed “grammatical ambiguity.” Specifically, Kagan argued that the linguistic basis for humor might lie in the multiple sub-meanings associated with phenomena such as genitive and instrumental case markers and imperfect aspects.

Lexical ambiguity, a type of linguistic ambiguity, could be a significant source of verbal humor. Makroum (2021) conducted research focused on this, analyzing 20 examples of jokes and riddles from three internet sites, all relying on lexical ambiguity. Makroum used a qualitative-quantitative data analysis method, combining both approaches. The results showed that lexical ambiguity could create verbal humor according to the Incongruity Theory of humor.

This research aimed to identify forms of lexical ambiguity, describe the semantic meanings represented through homonymy and polysemy, and explore the motifs of lexical ambiguity in funny tweets from the Twitter X account *@JokesMemefacts*. The account, which had 1.3 million followers (as of January 23, 2023), contained jokes and language trends that resonated with everyday life. The choice of this account was based on its relevance to the research topic, as it presented a rich collection of wordplay and humor. By analyzing the content of *@JokesMemefacts*, this research sought to reveal the complex relationship between linguistic ambiguity and humor in the digital age.

The study also aimed to understand humor as a form of linguistically creative language, especially in semantics, focusing on dimensions such as homonyms and polysemy. The trend of new language and terms among Twitter X users, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, made this a timely and relevant topic. Social media engagement, through social criticism, expressions of sadness, or entertainment, had led to a fascinating use of language in humorous tweets, making lexical ambiguity an intriguing phenomenon to study. The rarely similar research that discussed homonymy and polysemy simultaneously, directly related to the language phenomenon that occurred on Twitter X, was also the reason why this research was necessary. Written language was more difficult to interpret than spoken language. Meaning interpretation was the most challenging component of written language. People who read the same word could interpret it differently. Some types of written language, such as notices, articles, labels, advertising, subheadings, and web pages, contained these varying interpretations (Crystal, 2003). Since these types of written language were not consistently produced, they did not comply with all grammatical norms and used atypical patterns that were difficult to deconstruct into a succession of sentence elements. Ambiguity resulted in varying interpretations from readers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used a descriptive qualitative method to examine the forms of lexical ambiguity contained in funny tweets on Twitter X, the semantic meaning represented through homonymy and polysemy in funny tweets on Twitter X, and the effects of lexical ambiguity represented through homonymy and polysemy in the funny tweets on Twitter X in accordance with Miles and Huberman's qualitative theory (2014). In this context, researchers who focused on qualitative methods frequently worked with small groups of persons who were deeply immersed in the environment in which they were being studied. As a result of the requirement for an in-depth analysis that made use of the pertinent ideas, it was suitable for the research.

The concept of ambiguity was investigated in this research. In relation to these statements, ambiguity as a phenomenon in language could be studied by explaining how it occurred in language. To be more specific, a descriptive qualitative approach was taken for this research. According to Ponterotto (2006), a thick description was an in-depth description or an approach to understanding, interpreting, and explaining a phenomenon, event, idea, social custom, or whatever else, and it prioritized the depth of data from various aspects of the phenomenon. It was appropriate to the objective of the study, and it also made it easier for the researcher to evaluate the data.

In this research, the data source was Twitter X user accounts, namely @JokesMemesFacts on Twitter X. Words and phrases that were retrieved as data were funny tweets from specific Twitter X user accounts selected by the researcher for this research that could be classified as ambiguous words. The tweet data that the researcher collected were funny tweets starting from June 2022 to December 2022. However, the researcher did not take all existing tweets as data, only tweets that contained lexical ambiguity were used as data for this research. The researcher chose the tweets from the Twitter X account @JokesMemesFacts as the data source because the account was a specific account that presented funny tweets that were in accordance with this research, also enjoyed and followed by 1.3 million followers on Twitter X.

In the process of collecting data, the researcher went through several steps to properly gather the data. The first step involved selecting tweets from @JokesMemesFacts as the primary data source. The data were read attentively, and then the researcher identified the words and phrases written by the user accounts to categorize the forms of lexical ambiguity. Subsequently, with Murphy's theory of lexical ambiguity (2010), the data were chosen from the tweets. Then, the researcher made note of the ambiguous words. The portion of the tweet that constituted the data included only the words written by the user account in the tweet.

The data were obtained and then analyzed by the researcher. Firstly, the data were selected and categorized into homonymy and polysemy forms using Murphy (2010)'s theory to address the first research question. The researcher classified the data into data sheets by selecting the relevant parts of the tweets and inputting them into the data sheets. The second research question was addressed by interpreting the data, represented through homonymy and polysemy in the humorous tweets on Twitter X using Leech (1981)'s theory to identify and determine the semantic meanings. The third research question was also addressed by applying Leech's theory (1981) to analyze and identify the motifs behind the lexical ambiguity portrayed through homonymy and polysemy in the humorous tweets on Twitter X. In the final step, the researcher drew conclusions based on the research findings.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

This chapter outlined data analysis and then discussed the research findings. The findings demonstrated the responses to the research questions that guided the study. Furthermore, the findings were presented in three tables comprising the examined phenomenon's quantity and percentage. Descriptions were frequently used by the researcher in a brief explanation of the

findings. The discussion provided a more in-depth explanation of lexical ambiguity by showing some examples of the phenomena appearing in the text of humorous tweets on Twitter X. Meanwhile, the discussions related the findings with the theories of Murphy (2010) and Leech (1981).

Finding

After analyzing all the data and rechecking through peer discussion, the researcher got the fixed data to be analyzed. There were 21 data of forms of lexical ambiguity. The table showed that both homonymy and polysemy occurred in funny tweets. All three forms of homonymy occurred in the funny tweets: homophone, homograph, and absolute homonymy. Absolute homonymy was the most frequently occurring form of lexical ambiguity, occurring 9 times. Absolute homonymy had the highest occurrence since most ambiguous words in the tweets had the same written forms. Then, the homophone occurred 3 times. Meanwhile, the homograph occurred 2 times. Following homonymy, polysemy occurred 7 times out of the total data. After finding the results above, the researcher examined the seven types of semantic meaning by Leech and the motifs of lexical ambiguity contained in the 21 data containing lexical ambiguity that had been found.

In Leech's 1981 work "Semantics: The Study of Meaning," he introduced seven types of semantic meaning. Conceptual meaning referred to the literal, core definition of a word or expression. Connotative meaning included the additional emotional, social, or cultural associations a word carried beyond its primary definition. Social meaning related to language's reflection of social relationships, politeness, and formality. Affective meaning involved the emotional responses evoked by words. Reflected meaning occurred when one sense of a word influenced the interpretation of another due to familiarity or frequency. Collocative meaning pertained to the typical associations of words with other words in specific contexts. Thematic meaning examined how sentence element structure sentences to show prominence or convey specific information. Together, these seven types provided a comprehensive framework for understanding the nuanced and layered nature of meaning in language.

All seven types of semantic meaning by Leech (1981) were found in the data containing lexical ambiguity, which had been found by the researcher. Conceptual meaning had a higher position from the total 21 data; this type of meaning became the most frequent type of semantic meaning by Leech. Most of the tweets contained conceptual meaning. It was because each word contributed its specific conceptual meaning to the sentence, and together, they conveyed a coherent and comprehensible message to the reader. As the second most frequently found meaning, social meaning occurred the same as affective meaning. Then, connotative and reflected meanings were found in 2 data each from the total data. Meanwhile, collocative and thematic meanings were found only once each with a percentage. Then, the researcher examined the motifs of lexical ambiguity in the data that contained lexical ambiguity that had been found by the researcher.

Lexical ambiguity added a layer of complexity to communication, as words or phrases could possess multiple meanings, leading to varied interpretations. Trask (1999) stated that lexical ambiguity, in which two different meanings existed in a single word, often had humorous and ironic effects. It meant that ironic effects, which were specifically created through satire and parody, could also be created through lexical ambiguity. Thus, there were two motifs that could be created in lexical ambiguity: humorous and ironic motifs.

There were two motifs that could be created through lexical ambiguity: irony and humorous motifs. Both motifs occurred in funny tweets on Twitter X by @JokesMemesFacts. However, the difference in the occurrences between the two motifs was not that high. Irony was the most frequently occurring motif that could be created in lexical ambiguity represented through homonymy and polysemy. This motif mostly happened in the funny tweets on Twitter X by @JokesMemesFacts since the user tended to show more about the facts and reality of life. Then, the humorous motif placed second.

Homophone

Homophone was a word that was pronounced the same as another word but had a different meaning, and sometimes, a different spelling. Homophones could be confusing because they sounded identical when spoken, but they might have distinct definitions and usage in writing. Due to their similar pronunciation, they could lead to misunderstandings, especially in verbal communication.

Datum 1

"A sign you are a grown-up is when you realize, school is actually more fun than work."

(posted on 9/6/22)

The word "grown" was a homophone because this word had the same sound /groun/ as the word "groan." These two words had different meanings, so it was possible to have two meanings that could be understood in the intended context. The word "grown" meant "progress to maturity," while the word "groan" meant "sound made in pain or despair," which in this sentence could mean; "We would realize that school would be more enjoyable than work when we were adults" or "we would realize that school would be more enjoyable than work when we made noises of complaining about the burden because of work." As a whole, the sentence could be understood as "progress to maturity" because before the word "grown," there was an indefinite article "a," and after it, it was followed by the word "up." However, verbally, the word "grown" could be included in the homonymy section, a type of homophone that could confuse people because they had the same sound.

The word "grown-up" from datum 1 was a conceptual type of the seven meanings in semantics by Leech (1981). The conceptual meaning of the word grown-up was physically and mentally mature and no longer depending on their parents or another adult. The physical form of the word grown-up was an adult. The word "grown-up" was usually included by people aged 18 and over. The characteristic of the conceptual meaning was close-ended. It indicated that no renewal of a word's prior meaning occurred at any moment. This sentence contained a written conceptual description of what you were aware of as a sign that you had become a grown-up person. This was conceptual because a sentence was a mental picture that was felt by humans when they grew up. Containing an idea in a sentence that said "a sign that you were a person who had grown" was (=) "you realized that school was more fun than work," grown-up = + human + male/female + adult. Therefore, this sentence was included in the conceptual type. The provided sentence on datum 1 exhibited lexical ambiguity, a linguistic phenomenon wherein a word or phrase possessed multiple meanings, potentially resulting in misinterpretations or subtly humorous motifs. In this context, the irony lay in the contrast between the typical perception that young children found school tiresome and eagerly wished

to grow up, while the user contended that school was actually more enjoyable than work—a sign of maturity. The statement humorously challenged the conventional notion that adult life was easier and more pleasant than school days. By using the word "grown-up" in an unexpected context and emphasizing the idea that adult life was filled with greater difficulties and unpleasantness than school, the user played with the audience's expectations, leading to an ironic twist on the traditional perspective on school and adulthood.

Homograph

A homograph was a word that had the same spelling as another word but had a different meaning and, in many cases, a different pronunciation. Unlike homophones, which were words with the same pronunciation but different meanings, homographs had the same spelling but could be pronounced differently depending on the context or the meaning they conveyed. Homographs could be a source of confusion in both written and spoken language, as their meaning and pronunciation might change based on the context in which they were used.

Datum 2

"I don't really want to be a superhero. I just want superpowers."

(posted on 16/07/22)

The word "hero" in this sentence could be included in the lexical ambiguity category of the homonymy homograph type because this word had the same word, two different sounds, and also had a different meaning. The first sound of the word was /'hi:əʊ/ which meant "a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities," while the second sound of the word "hero" was /'hɪəʊ/ which meant "another term for submarine sandwich (New York English)." If applied to the sentence on the data, the meaning of the whole sentence from the first sound of the word "hero" was "I don't really want to be a super person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities. I just want superpowers," while the second meaning could mean "I don't really want to be another super submarine sandwich. I just want superpowers." In writing, this word could have been confusing because one word was the same but the sound was different. If the meaning was applied to this sentence, then the two meanings of the different sounds could have been in accordance with the context, but the first meaning, which meant "I just want superpowers," was more related to the next sentence in the data.

The word "superpowers" found in this sentence could have been a keyword to find out about the conceptual meaning. In this tweet, it was written that the user was not really interested in becoming a superhero, the user only wanted a superpower. This meant the user had an idea that it was better to just have superpowers than to be a superhero in living this life. This was a concept that the user conveyed through his writing about what he wanted. A concept that said that it was okay not to be a cool superhero, just having superpowers was enough for the user. Therefore, he did not really want to be a superhero; this was included in the conceptual type.

This sentence conveyed ironic motifs by presenting a humorous contrast between the desire for superpowers and the reluctance to assume the responsibilities of a superhero. While many people might have fantasized about having extraordinary abilities like flying, super strength, or invisibility, the irony lay in the user's declaration that they did not actually wish to

embrace the heroic obligations that came with being a superhero. This playful remark suggested that the user would rather enjoy the advantages of having superpowers without the burden of using them for altruistic purposes or fighting crime. The humor arose from the absurdity of the proposition, as having superpowers naturally implied the potential for heroic feats, making the user's reluctance to become a superhero both amusing and ironic. By expressing this amusing contradiction, the sentence delivered a lighthearted and entertaining commentary on the complexity of desires and the whimsical aspects of superhero fantasies.

Absolute

Absolute homonymy, or perfect homonymy, refers to a situation in which two or more words share identical spelling, pronunciation, and entirely different meanings. Essentially, absolute homonyms are words that are both written and spoken the same way but carry distinct and unrelated definitions. This phenomenon is relatively uncommon in natural languages since most homonyms exhibit subtle differences in pronunciation or spelling to disambiguate their meanings. The existence of absolute homonyms can lead to communication confusion, particularly when the context fails to provide clarity in the intended sense. Instances of absolute homonymy are considered accidental and infrequent in everyday language usage.

Datum 3

"If you want dreams to happen go to bed."

(posted on 16/6/22)

The word "dreams," which is the plural noun form of "dream," was included in the lexical ambiguity type of homonymy absolute because the word had the same spelling, sounded the same, and had totally different meanings. First, the word could mean "person's mind during sleep," the second could mean "a cherished aspiration, ambition, or ideal." So the whole sentence was ambiguous because it could mean "if you want a dream (sleep flower or reaching your goals and desires) to happen, go to bed." At the beginning of the sentence, one might have thought that the word "dream" there meant a cherished aspiration, ambition, or ideal. But when the next sentence "go to bed" was read, people would have realized that the "dream" in question was the person's mind during sleep.

Everyone must have had a dream. Here, the user wrote, "If you want a dream to come true," in which anyone who read it would have surely at first thought that it was a dream which was an aspiration or goal that everyone wanted to achieve. However, if we continued reading, the user wrote, "Go to bed," meaning it wasn't a dream as we initially thought. Here it was included as conceptual meaning because the concept referred to as a whole in this sentence was a dream that meant hallucination or slumber. Just like the first data, which was a mental picture, this sentence could have been described by explaining that "you want the dream to happen" > "go to bed."

The sentence contained lexical ambiguity with humorous motifs, skillfully playing on the double meaning of the word "dream." Initially, the user appeared to be offering a profound suggestion that many people sought, namely "if you want dreams to happen," implying achieving one's aspirations or desires. However, the comedic twist came with the phrase "go to bed," where the word "dream" took on its second meaning—a series of thoughts, images, and sensations during sleep. By juxtaposing these two meanings, the sentence created a humorous

effect as it cleverly subverted the audience's expectations, shifting from inspirational life advice to a simple reminder to sleep in order to have dreams during bedtime. The humor arose from the pun-like nature of the sentence, catching the reader off guard and eliciting laughter through the unexpected and amusing interpretation of the word "dream."

Polysemy

Polysemy referred to a linguistic phenomenon in which a single word or phrase had multiple related meanings or interpretations. In other words, polysemy occurred when a word had several distinct but interconnected senses that were all derived from a common origin. These related meanings of a polysemous word were often connected by a shared underlying concept or semantic thread. The different senses of a polysemous word might have been more or less related, and the context in which the word was used typically helped determine the intended meaning. Polysemy was a natural aspect of language and contributed to its richness and flexibility, allowing speakers to convey different nuances and ideas using the same word with distinct but interconnected meanings.

Datum 4

"Sometimes the phone battery lasts longer than the relationship."

(posted on 16/7/22)

The word "longer" in this sentence could be included in the category of lexical ambiguity of the type of polysemy, because this word had the same word, the same sound, and had several different but identical meanings. Identical meanings that this word had were "measuring a great distance from end to end" and "lasting or taking a great amount of time." These two things had different meanings, the first as a comparative adjective while the second as a comparative adverb. But the two meanings were identical to each other because they had the same purpose as a characteristic measure for units of length and units of time. Overall, the sentence could be understood as "lasting or taking a great amount of time" because before the word "longer" there was the word "lasts" which literally meant the second meaning. However, because the word had two identical meanings, the sentence could also have the meaning of the first meaning because "the journey of a relationship could be described with distant motifs" as well as "the journey of a green cell phone battery was still far from getting to red."

In datum 4, the user wrote a tweet related to a relationship as the main point. The user used the phone's battery to compare with a relationship. The user wrote that sometimes the phone battery could last longer than a relationship, this was the reason why this sentence was included in the collocative. There was the word "last-longer" written between the sentences, the word could collocate with "battery" or a "relationship." The word "last-longer" meant a time for a battery to be used with a predetermined capacity strength and was set by the factory. As for a relationship, the word "last-longer" meant a period in which two people had a special relationship like a pair of lovers whose duration was not determined and could end at any time. The sentence "Sometimes the phone battery lasts longer than the relationship" carried ironic motifs as it cleverly juxtaposed the durability of a phone battery with the fragility of a romantic relationship. The statement humorously suggested that in some instances, the phone's battery life (often considered ephemeral) outlasted the longevity of a romantic partnership (typically perceived as long-lasting and meaningful). This ironic twist played on the stereotype of modern

relationships being short-lived or transient compared to the technological devices we used daily. The humor lay in the unexpected comparison between two entirely unrelated things—electronic gadgetry and human emotions. By employing irony, the sentence invited readers to reflect on the transitory nature of relationships in contemporary times, where the symbol of a "phone battery" became a whimsical metaphor for the fleeting connections experienced in modern dating and digital communication. The sentence delivered a witty commentary on the realities of modern life while eliciting a smile from the reader through its clever use of irony.

Discussion

Murphy (2010) highlighted two main types of lexical ambiguity: homonymy and polysemy. Homonymy occurred when two or more words had the same spelling or pronunciation but possessed different meanings. For example, the word "bank" could refer to a financial institution or the edge of a river. Polysemy, on the other hand, involved words or phrases that had multiple related meanings, often sharing a common underlying concept. An example of polysemy was the word "run," which could signify actions such as sprinting, managing, or functioning.

The first research question focused on identifying the different forms of lexical ambiguity present in the collected data. According to Murphy (2010), lexical ambiguity was categorized into two forms: homonymy and polysemy. The analysis revealed that both forms were indeed present in funny tweets on Twitter X by @JokesMemefacts, with absolute homonymy being the most frequent, followed by homophones and homographs. This underscored the richness and complexity of lexical ambiguity in the context of humorous communication. Murphy's classification of lexical ambiguity provided a framework for understanding the different ways in which words and phrases could be ambiguous due to their multiple meanings. The result indicated a notable inclination towards the utilization of homonymy, where words sharing identical spelling or pronunciation but possessing distinct meanings were favored over polysemy. Out of the examined dataset comprising 21 instances, homonymy emerged as the dominant phenomenon, with 15 instances, compared to the 6 instances of polysemy. This suggested that the deliberate selection of words with multiple unrelated meanings contributed to the creation of humor in the tweets from @JokesMemefacts, surpassing the use of morphemes, words, or phrases with related meanings.

Further delving into the specifics of homonymy, the study underscored the prevalence of absolute homonymy categories, which emerged as the most frequently employed form. Among the total of 15 data of homonyms, 10 data were classified as absolute homonyms, 3 data were of homophones, and 2 data were of homographs. This distribution elucidated a preference for employing words that shared both spelling and pronunciation but possessed entirely divergent interpretations, lending a distinct layer of humor to the tweets disseminated by @JokesMemefacts. Moreover, the research revealed a nuanced pattern within homonym usage, wherein words pronounced similarly but with different meanings and often distinct spellings exhibited a prevalence comparable to words sharing identical spelling yet harboring unrelated meanings and frequently distinct pronunciations.

Moving on to the second research question, this research delved into the semantic meanings conveyed through lexical ambiguity in funny tweets on Twitter X by @JokesMemefacts. One of the central aspects of contextualized language models was that they should be able to distinguish the meaning of lexically ambiguous words by their context (Haber

& Poesio, 2021). They investigated the extent to which the contextualized embeddings of word forms that displayed multiplicity of sense reflected traditional distinctions of polysemy and homonymy. The results showed that the similarity of polysemic interpretations fell in a continuum between identities of meaning and homonym.

This research discovered a diverse array of meanings embedded in the tweets by applying Leech's seven types of semantic meaning (1981). Conceptual meaning emerged as the dominant type, indicating that despite the presence of ambiguity, the core definitions of words played a pivotal role in conveying humor and irony. Social and affective meanings also held significance, reflecting the emotional and interpersonal dimensions inherent in humorous language use. The coexistence of connotative, reflected, collocative, and thematic meanings further showcased the multifaceted nature of the humorous content.

Sentences with ambiguous words or ambiguous structures could be clearly delivered as long as the writers were able to provide a clear context (Williyan, 2022). This analysis of funny tweets from the Twitter X account @JokesMemefacts yielded significant insights into the prevalent types of semantic meaning employed within humorous online communication. The findings underscored that conceptual meaning, encompassing the fundamental and literal definitions of words and phrases, was the most commonly utilized semantic category, with 7 instances out of a total of 21 data. This suggested a propensity for conveying humor through direct and straightforward linguistic expressions on the platform.

Interestingly, connotative meaning and affective meaning emerged as the second most frequently employed semantic categories, each appearing 3 times in the dataset. Indicating that the nuances of language usage that conveyed social status, politeness, formality, and other aspects of communication in different social contexts occurred most often in the data. The emotional associations or attitudes that words or expressions evoked in communication were also the most frequently found in the data besides the other 4 types of semantic meaning. The analysis further revealed a balance between connotative meaning and reflected meaning, both appearing twice in the dataset. These additional or associated meanings that extended beyond the primary definition of words or expressions demonstrated the intricate interplay of linguistic elements in constructing humor. While collocative and thematic meanings appeared only once each, their presence underscored the diversity of semantic strategies utilized, albeit with lower frequency, in the pursuit of comedic effect.

The third research question explored the motifs behind the use of lexical ambiguity, particularly in terms of homonymy and polysemy. Ambiguity was a vital source of humor when it involved double interpretations in which one interpretation suggested the actual meaning and the other interpretation suggested a humorous one which was not normally occurring in a normal context (Ma'yuf & Nashaat, 2021). Since humor required highly sensitive linguistic and cultural competence, expressing and appreciating humor was often a challenge in cross-cultural communication (Ahmed, 2019). What was considered as funny might differ across cultures. Linguistic ambiguity enriched language and produced positive effects such as creating irony and adding a sort of humor (Makroum, 2021).

The findings revealed two primary motifs: irony and humorous effects. The prevalence of irony motifs, comprising a majority of occurrences, underscored the deliberate utilization of ambiguity to create satirical and parodic effects. This aligned with Trask's observation that lexical ambiguity often contributed to humorous and ironic outcomes. The humorous motif,

though slightly less frequent, emphasized the comedic dimension of lexical ambiguity, highlighting the playfulness and wit inherent in the tweets.

The insightful analysis of humorous content from the Twitter X account @JokesMemefacts illuminated a distinctive trend in language usage that underscored the prevalence of irony motif over straightforward humor. The findings unequivocally demonstrated that tweets characterized by deliberate irony, where the intended meaning stood in stark contrast to the literal or anticipated interpretation, were more frequently encountered than those intended solely for humor. Among the 21 instances examined, 12 data were found to employ irony motif, while the remaining 9 were characterized as straightforwardly humorous.

This observed emphasis on irony motif suggested a deliberate linguistic strategy employed by @JokesMemefacts to elicit amusement through the artful manipulation of linguistic expectations. By crafting statements that motifally deviated from conventional interpretations, the account engaged its audience in a cognitive shift, compelling them to reconcile the disparity between the intended and literal meanings. This subtle linguistic subversion introduced an element of surprise and intellectual engagement, ultimately contributing to the comedic effect.

The prevalence of irony motif over other forms of humor, such as puns that relied on the multifaceted nature of language, underscored a preference for linguistic subtlety and layered meaning within the humorous tweets. While puns, which played upon the multiple meanings of words or phrases to create humorous wordplay, were found to be less frequent, irony motif emerged as the more dominant mechanism for generating laughter. This suggested that @JokesMemefacts leaned towards sophisticated linguistic constructs that challenged conventional interpretation, inviting its audience to unravel the clever interplay between the intended message and its literal manifestation.

Previous research within this study, Makroum (2021), who explored the presence of lexical ambiguity in English jokes and riddles, focusing on its role as a source of verbal humor, showed the same result as this research, which showed that homonymy was one of the lexical ambiguities that occurred more often than polysemy in the phenomenon of language that contained humor. Apart from that, there were also equations that showed that absolute homonymy was the most common type of homonymy, followed by homophones, then homographs, which were the rarest to find and occur in the phenomenon of language that contained humor. As a result, there were quite a lot of funny tweets containing lexical ambiguity on Twitter X, which were enjoyed by Twitter X citizens because they were entertaining and became a trend so that many accounts were now writing similar things and @JokesMemefacts was one of the most followed among them.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

In this research, the researcher aimed to identify different types of word ambiguity in funny tweets from the Twitter account @JokesMemefacts. A total of 21 instances of this ambiguity were found, with the main types being homonymy and polysemy. Within homonymy, the researcher observed three subtypes: absolute homonymy, homograph, and homophone. Absolute homonymy, where words had unrelated meanings, was the most common. Polysemy,

where words had related meanings, ranked second. Homophones and homographs, where words shared spelling or sound but had distinct meanings, were less frequent.

This research also explored how seven types of semantic meaning were conveyed through this ambiguity. The researcher identified 21 instances in total, including conceptual, connotative, social, affective, reflected, collocative, and thematic meanings. The analysis showed a strong preference for using words in their literal sense to create humor, with conceptual meaning being the most prominent. Connotative and affective meanings played a significant role, adding depth to the comedic content. This demonstrated the complexity and thoughtfulness behind @JokesMemesFacts' humor.

Delving into the motifs behind using lexical ambiguity in these tweets, the researcher found 12 instances of irony and 9 of humor. The user often created ironic situations related to real life and also used humor to craft amusing content. It created an ironic situation. The user also wrote something that sounded funny. It created a situation in which the user wrote jokingly or unseriously to the reader. This situation occurred with the humorous motif. In summary, these tweets tended to convey the ironic side of life and reality.

The current study offered several insightful suggestions for further research in the realm of linguistic humor and ambiguity. To expand the scope and depth of investigation, it was recommended that future studies explore diverse data sources beyond Twitter X, capitalizing on the proliferation of new social media platforms that had emerged post the Covid-19 pandemic era. These platforms could yield unique insights into evolving linguistic trends and humor dynamics. Moreover, in light of the written nature of the current research data, it was advisable to delve into the intricate interplay between lexical ambiguity and syntactic or grammatical structures. Investigating how these elements contributed to humor creation would provide a more comprehensive understanding of linguistic humor's multifaceted nature. It was advisable for future research to consider conducting investigations either prior to June 2022 or after December 2022. This temporal shift would allow researchers to identify and analyze any discrepancies that may have emerged in comparison to this research. The further researchers were also encouraged to venture into the realm of verbal humor, including videos and podcasts, as these dynamic formats offered an engaging avenue for exploring humor's nuances. Such an approach would not only diversify the modes of humor analysis but also open up new dimensions for understanding the interaction between linguistic features and delivery methods. This shift from textual to multimedia forms of humor could have proved particularly captivating and could have served as a departure from the predominantly text-based studies in fields such as news and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, B. S. (2019). An Assessment of EFL Students' Performance in the Area of Linguistics Humorous Texts. *Journal of Garmian University*, 6(2), p. 417-434.
- Baron, K. (2005). *Lexical Relations: Homonymy*. Munich: Seminar paper published by GRIN Verlag on 9 June 2005.
- Chaer, A. (2010). *Pengantar Semantik Bahasa Indonesia*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.
- Cowie, A. P. (2001). Homonymy, Polysemy, and the Monolingual English Dictionary. *Lexicographical* 17, p. 40-60.
- Erk, K., McCarthy, D., & Gaylord, N. (2013). Measuring Word Meaning in Context. *Computational Linguistics*, 39(3), p. 511-554.

- Faina, R., Rositasari, T., & Elfarissyah, A. (2021). An Analysis of The Lexical Ambiguity Used in Coco Movie Script. *English Community Journal*, 5(1), p. 18-26.
- Frath, P. (2001). Polysemy, Homonymy and Reference. *Recherches Anglaises Et Nord Americaines*, 34, p. 43-56.
- Garcia, M. (2021). Exploring The Representation of Word Meanings in Context: A Case Study on Homonymy and Synonymy. *Galiza: Research Center in Intelligent Technologies*.
- Haber, J., & Poesio, M. (2021). Patterns of Lexical Ambiguity in Contextualised Language Models. *Findings of the Association for Computational Linguistics: EMNLP 2021*, p. 2663–2676.
- Habibi, A. A., Hauer, B., & Kondrak, G. (2021). Homonymy and Polysemy Detection with Multilingual Information. Canada: Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute, Department of the Computing Science University of Alberta.
- Ikhsan, A. N. (2022). Linguistic Study: Meaning Field and Semantic Meaning Components of President Joko Widodo's Speech Text at The G20 Climate Change Summit COP26 GLASGOW. In *National Seminar of Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris (English language Education)*, pp. 189-196.
- Kagan, O. (2020). Humor Creation and The Ambiguity of Morpho-Syntactic Phenomena. *Russian Linguistics*, 44(1), p. 59-78.
- Kinberg, N. (1991). Figurative Uses, Polysemy and Homonymy in Systems of Tense, Mood, and Aspect. *Lingua* 83 (1991), p. 319-338.
- Klepousniotou, E. (2001). The Processing of Lexical Ambiguity: Homonymy and Polysemy in the Mental Lexicon. McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. *Brain and Language* 81, p. 205–223.
- Klepousniotou, E., Pike, G. B., Steinhauer, K., & Gracco, V. (2012). Not All Ambiguous Words Are Created Equal: An EEG Investigation of Homonymy and Polysemy. *Brain & Language* 123, p. 11–21. Quebec, Canada: Elsevier.
- Kreidler, C. W. (1998). *Introducing English Semantics*. London: Routledge.
- Krovetz, R. (1997). Homonymy and polysemy in information retrieval. In *35th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics and 8th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics*, p. 72-79.
- Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics: Volume 2 (Vol. 2)*. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press.
- Ma'yuuf, H. H., & Nashaat, O. O. (2021). A Semantic-Syntactic Study of Ambiguity in Humorous Contexts. *Ilkogretim Online-Elementary Education Online*, Vol. 20 (issue 5): pp. 574-580.
- Makroum, R. A. A. (2021). Lexical Ambiguity and Verbal Humor in Some English Jokes and Riddles. *Scientific Journal of Faculty of Arts* 10 (3), p. 81 - 106.
- Memadova, M. A. (2019). Classification of homonyms of the English language. *UK*, Vol. 7, No. 12.
- Mauws, M. K., & Phillips, N. (1995). *Crossroads Understanding Language Games*. Maryland, USA: Organization Science 6(3), p. 322-334.
- Mowaliev, P. M. (2009). Seven Types of Meaning in Semantics. *Litton's Universe of English Teaching*, A.M.A project, Retrieved July 6, 2023, from <http://universeofenglish.blogspot.com/2009/02/seven-types-of-meaning-in-semantics.html>
- Murphy, M.L. (2010). *Lexical Meaning*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Panman, O. (1982). Homonymy and Polysemy. North-Holland Publishing Company: *Lingua* 58 (1982), p. 105-136.
- Poesio, M. (2020). Ambiguity. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Semantics*, p. 1-38.

- Resmiyati, R. (2020). The distinction between polysemy and homonymy on lexical ambiguity. <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/5nfhj>
- Retnomurti, A. B. (2021). English homonym and polysemy words through semantic approach: novels *Woy & the dancer*. *Deiksis*, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 21-35.
- Rodd, J. (2017). Lexical Ambiguity. *Oxford Handbook of Psycholinguistics*: Eds M.G. Gaskell & S-A Rueschemeyer.
- Simatupang, S. M. (2007). How ambiguous is the structural ambiguity. *Jurnal Lingua Cultura*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p. 99-104.
- Simpson, P. (2004). *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*. London: Routledge.
- Sinambela, E., Pakpahan, C., & Batu, S. L. (2014). An Analysis of Ambiguity In English Text Translations into Bahasa Indonesia Made by Commercial Translators. *Episteme Journal of Linguistics and Literature*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-6.
- Srinivasan, M., & Rabagliati, H. (2021). The implications of polysemy for theories of word learning. *Child Development Perspectives*, Vol. 15, No. 3, p. 148-153.
- Stokoe, C. (2005). Differentiating Homonymy and Polysemy in Information Retrieval. *Proceedings of Human Language Technology Conference and Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing (HLT/EMNLP)*, p. 403-410.
- Swarniti, N. W. (2021). The Analysis of Semantics Meaning Found in Comments of Instagram Account of Info Denpasar. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Linguistik dan Sastra (SEMNALISA)*.
- Tarp, S. (2009). Homonymy and Polysemy in a Lexicographical Perspective. *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 57(3), p. 289-305.
- Veatch, T. C. (1998). A theory of humor. *Humor - International Journal of Humor Research*, 11(2).
- Wahyuni, K. T. (2014). *Lexical Ambiguity Represented through Pun and Wordplay in the Script of Romeo and Juliet Adapted by David Hunsdnes*. Unpublished Dissertation. Yogyakarta: Yogyakarta State University.
- Weinreich, U., & Webster. (1964). Webster's third: A critique of its semantics. *International Journal of American Linguistics*, 30(4), p. 405-409.
- Wearesocial.com. 26 January 2022. Digital 2022 Global Overview Report. Accessed on 1 February, from <https://wearesocial.com/cn/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2022/01/DataReportal-GDR002-20220126-Digital-2022-Global-Overview-Report-Essentials-v02.pdf>