CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims at finding out what linguists say about the topic-related matters. This focuses with these topics: ambiguity, types of ambiguity, and academic writings.

2.1 Ambiguity

Ambiguity is anything that can be interpreted in more than one way or the interpretation of which is uncertain. A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning. The most common words in English are ambiguous. An example is *deck*, which can both mean the deck of a ship or a deck of cards. To be able to distinguish the meaning of an ambiguous word, people naturally look at the context in which the word appears.

In a book titled *Language Files 8th Edition* (2008), ambiguity is an individual expression that has two or more distinct meanings. An ambiguous expression is classified as ambiguity because it has more than one possible constituent structure. Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman added in a book titled *Introduction to Language Fifth Edition* (1997) using syntactic knowledge let people to identify ambiguity, or double meaning. The rules of syntax allow both these groupings that

this phrase has two meanings or ambiguous. There are two types of ambiguity by which are structural ambiguity and lexical ambiguity.

Brenda S. Gillon (1990) said that to find out the definitions of ambiguity, she sets out the definitions of traditional semantics which are meaning, denotation, and connotation. According to Alston (1964, as cited in Gillon, 1990) meaning is cognitive meaning or connected with mental process of understanding of a person. Denotation is set of an object which its meaning is truly applies to what it is while connotation is an idea that suggested by a word or words in addition to its main meaning. Within the definitions of meaning, denotation and connotation, Gillon (1990) concluded several definitions of ambiguity. The first definition is ambiguity is an expression that has more than one meaning, for example, the word *pike* which can be meant as a fish or a weapon. Gillon said that an expression can be ambiguous without being general. An expression can be ambiguous although that expression only has one meaning because its one meaning can give a connotation to something else.

Scheffler (1979, as cited in Gillon, 1990) stated that a word can be ambiguous if its denotation in one occasion of its use will be different from its denotation on another occasion of its use, for instance the word *table*. In these two sentences *Jesse and Andrew moved the table* and *the table of trigonometric functions contains an error,* the word *table* does not have same meaning. The first sentence *table* refers to kind of furniture that has four legs that is usually made of wood while in the second sentence *table* refers to list of numbers that arranged in order in columns and rows. In

the second sentence, the word *table* is quite clear in the context because it mentioned trigonometric functions that people whom read it will immediately think that this sentence is discussing table in math. However, in the first sentence, the word *table* is ambiguous which leads the sentence has more than one meaning. It can be interpreted that Jesse and Andrew moved the table which is furniture or Jesse and Andrew moved the table of mathematic functions which probably from the board to their textbook.

Kempson (1977, as cited in Gillon, 1990) added that a sentence is ambiguous if the sentence meaning can be true in very different states of affair, for example in the sentence *Young Jesse and Andrew went to play in New York City.* This sentence can be interpreted in two ways which are: "young Jesse and young Andrew went to play in New York City" and "only young Jesse and Andrew went to play in New York City". In the first interpretation, both Jesse and Andrew when they were still young went to play in New York City while in the second interpretation it is only Jesse that was young and Andrew's age was not mentioned but they both went to play in New York City. Through Kempson's definition of ambiguity, an ambiguous sentence is related to its distinct structural analysis which is done in terms of a phrase marker. So, Gillon concluded that an expression or a sentence that is ambiguous if that expression or sentence can accommodate more than one structural analysis.

According to Creswell (1973) and Montague (1970), ambiguity happens because the relation between many syntactically unambiguous elements of an intentional logic and an expression corresponding to them in a natural language.

Meanwhile, Katz (1972) said that ambiguity can be happened because there is a relation between semantic representation and an expression corresponding to them in natural language.

2.1.1 Structural Ambiguity

In a book titled *Language Files 8th Edition* (2008), structural ambiguity is an ambiguous expression because it has more than one possible constituent structure. For example, the expression *expensive bags and shoes* in a sentence *Emma buys expensive bags and shoes.* It can have either two of this following constituent. The first one is *bags and shoes* forms a constituent; (a) represents the interpretation in which the adjective *expensive* applies to both the bags and the shoes. In (b), on the other hand, *expensive bags* forms a constituent; (b) represents the interpretation in which only the bags that are expensive.

Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman in *Introduction to Language Fifth Edition* (1997) stated types of ambiguity which one of them is structural ambiguity. The double meaning happens not because of ambiguous words but rather to the fact that the words in the sentence can appear in two different phrase-structure trees, both of which are permitted by the phrase-structure rules. In a sentence *flying planes can be dangerous*, it can be meant as the act of flying planes is dangerous or planes that are flying are dangerous. The

words in the sentence can be grouped in two ways by which are: *flying planes (can be dangerous)* and *flying (planes can be dangerous)*. MacDonald, Pearlmutter and Seidenberg (1994) added that structural ambiguity happens because of the grammar that is constructed in that sentence leads the sentence becomes ambiguous. Kroeger (2005) added that structural ambiguity is a term that means the different interpretations of each phrase arise because people can assign different grammatical structures to the same string of words. Structural ambiguity often appeared in the newspaper headlines where many functions of words are omitted and there is no discourse context to rely on.

2.1.2 Lexical Ambiguity

In *Language Files 8th Edition* (2008), lexical ambiguity is an ambiguous individual word because it has two meanings, for example the word *crane* which has two meanings; either to kind of bird or to a large construction device. Because words like crane have no internal constituent structure, sentences containing such words clearly cannot be categorized as structurally ambiguous. Instead, a sentence containing a word with more than one meaning is said lexically ambiguous. Fromkin and Rodman (1997) gave another example of lexical ambiguity that is opposed to structurally ambiguous. This following sentence is the example of the sentence, *People like us.* There are two interpretations of this sentence because the two

meanings of *like* which could be referred as similar with someone or people find them attractive or pleasant. The double meanings of *like* word have lead to an ambiguity that appear to this sentence. It can be interpreted as people are similar with them or people find them attractive. MacDonald, Pearlmutter and Seidenberg (1994) added that lexical ambiguity has addressed how the reader or listener determines the contextually appropriate meaning of a word with multiple senses. Lexical ambiguity is thought to involve meanings that are stores in the lexicon.

2.2 Unambiguity

The unambiguous sentence is a sentence that forms in grammatically correct and contextually correct. According to Kroeger (2005), in a need to create a sentence, a speaker needs to know and follow the rules of the language. By knowing these rules, even a person who has limited vocabulary knowledge, she or he could produce large number of sentences. In English, there are rules concerning the sequence of sounds within a word as well as the arrangement of words within a sentence, the arrangement of "meaningful elements" within a word and many more. Grammar is a term that is often used to refer to this set of rules which is needed in producing all the regular patterns in a language. Grammar also means as the all structural properties of the language such as structure of words, phrases, sentences, and texts. In English,

there are eight parts of speech that are: nouns, determiners, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions. Each part of speech has its own role in sentence construction. A typical sentence in English contains one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. It usually uses a conjunction to form longer sentences to link more than one sentence. A clause commonly contains with a subject and a predicate. A dependent clause also commonly contains a subordinating conjunction before the subject and the predicate. In English syntactic rule, a sentence is usually SVO (subject-predicate-object). This is an example of English sentence that follow its grammatical rule, *Andrew plays skateboard*. The subject in this sentence is Andrew and it is shown clearly. The predicate in this sentence is plays and the object is skateboard. The sentence follows the grammatical rules and the meaning of this sentence is clear enough because there is only one interpretation that can appear from this sentence.

However, as Chomsky (2002) added that though a sentence follows the grammatical rules and is clear enough to be grammatically correct, but it could be ambiguous or it has more than one meaning. An unambiguity sentence should be grammatically correct and contextually correct. For example, a word *bank* has double meanings which are as a river and the other one is a place to save the money. A word bank could lead to an ambiguous sentence. However, it will not occur if the word *bank* uses in a sentence when the co-text in the sentence emphasize the meaning of *bank* there. In a sentence *I'm going to a bank to save my money,* the word *bank* here

is unambiguous because *to save my money* supports the meaning of *bank* which refers to a place to save the money.

2.3 Meaning in Language

Thomas (1995) stated that meaning in language from the semantic point of view is dealt with what a morpheme, word, phrase, sentence, etc. could mean. However, when word already came into a phrase or a sentence, it may provide alternative meaning of the word which makes the difficulty lies in selecting the appropriate meaning of words. Yet, what the words actually meant on the occasion in question could only be determined in context. Widdowson (1996) added that word order in syntax helps to understand the meaning of the word in a sentence.

2.4 Contextual Meaning

According to Luo (2011), word meaning may change from context to context. According to Akmajian, *et al* (1984), in the actual use of elliptical sentences, the pragmatic context plays its important role throughout an inference process to attain the necessary information which has been neglected. However, the interpretation of a certain utterance/sentence which has missing necessary data, can only be obtained by using inference process. This process may exclude the plenty lack of

information that makes a perfect comprehension, through background knowledge, culture, assumptions, and many more.

2.4 Sentence Meaning

Yule (1996) mentioned that semantics is the study that studies the conventional meaning conveyed in using of words and sentences of a language rather than the intended meaning in language use. Therefore, it deals with the study of the meaning of words, phrases and sentences in language. Kearns (2000) added that semantic or sentence meaning studies the literal meaning of words and the meaning of the way they are combined with another word, thus the whole meaning of a particular utterance can be constructed.

2.5 Academic Writing

Academic writing is constantly a form of evaluation that asks people to exhibit their knowledge and show proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting. (Irvin, 2010) According to James Hartley (2008), academic writing is complicated and technical because there are some rules in writing an academic writing. Hartley also stated that academic writing is a humourless writing because it is a very serious kind of writing that mostly use and appropriate for specific circumstances especially for academic needs and usually the

chosen words are academic words but they are easy to be understood by non-native speakers especially the elitist students.

Murray and Moore (2006) describe academic writing consists of advances and retreats. Writing an academic writing makes the writer to create new knowledge and gain approval by the readers; however, while conducting it, there are some problems that the writers will face such as having difficulties to start writing, revising the text, putting their argument's side and others which cause them to delay in publishing their writings and new knowledge. Murray and Moore also discuss factors that can influence to reduce the writers' spirit such as environmental factors and internal factors.

2.6 Types of Academic Writing

There are many types of academic writings, including essays, research journals, journal articles, book review, synthesis, summary and many more. Essay is usually an argumentative because it fills with writer's idea and question in his/her mind. Research journal is almost same as an essay but it has some following procedure to answer writer's questions such as go to library, find sources and etc. Research journal is more difficult than an essay because the writer should do a proper research and he/she should do it precisely.

2.6.1 Research Journal

There are two types of research journals. The first is an academic research journal which presents research as a straightforward and clear process. The second type of research journal is usually kept by qualitative researchers and exhibits the messy business that in their research it shows the researcher's journey and contains the reasons why they made one decision instead of another. The academic research journal is significant because it is a record of new research and knowledge in a particular academic discipline.

2.6.1.1 Structure of Research Journal

2.6.1.1.1 Introduction

Swales and Feak (2004, as cited in Hartley, 2008) describe what they characterize as 'moves' in the various sections of academic articles. A 'move' is a stage in the argument that all writers go through. There are three moves in introduction. The first move is how the authors begin a research territory by showing the general research area is important, interesting or relevant and then introducing and reviewing items of previous research in that area. This is an obligation that has to be put in the introduction. The second move is showing the weakness on the previous related studies which raising question to

their readers and gain the authors to make a deeper research about the study. And the last move is mentioning the authors' purposes and research questions on the study.

2.6.1.1.2 Method

According to Hartley (2008), method sections in many journals are not as long as the introduction. Most method sections are usually subdivided into three sections which are participants, measures and procedure(s). If no participants are involved, then the method simply describes the measures and procedure(s). Sletcher and Pennebaker (2006) stated there are three subdivided in the method section: Participants, Procedure and Linguistic Analysis (or measures). Method sections may be brief and concise or fairly lengthy. It depends whether the methods used are well-known or new and different.

2.6.1.1.3 Results

According to Hartley (2008), in the result section, it consists of findings of the study. Typically, the authors state the main findings in order by relating them in turn to the hypotheses and methods used and after that, the authors state the subsidiary findings. However, some authors likely link the two of findings; main and related subsidiary

findings. It is typical in results sections to present the main data that support the hypotheses in the form of tables and graphs.

2.6.1.1.4 Discussion

Lewin *et al*. (2001, as cited in Hartley, 2008) and Swales and Feak (2004, as cited in Hartley, 2008) describe typical 'moves' in the discussion sections of academic research papers and there are five 'moves' in the discussion. The first move is the authors restate the findings and accomplishments of their study. And the second one is the authors should evaluate the result of the study that they achieve like seeing if their research is contradicting or agreeing the previous related studies. The next move is the authors have to list the limitations of the study that they have been doing. And then, the author interpret the results of the findings deliberately. Then, the last move is the authors state what readers could do after they read the authors' research for example further research that readers could do in the future. Swales and Feak state that some scientists believe that a long discussion implies weak methods and results, whereas social scientists and people in the arts may well believe the opposite. Day and Gastel (2006, as cited in Hartley, 2008) suggest that journal editors reject many papers because of their weak discussions. They

recommend that discussions should end with a short summary regarding the significance of the work.

2.6.1.4 Conclusion

Stephen Bailey (2003) stated that there is usually a link between the title, and the conclusion of the academic writing. If the title is asking a question the answer should be contained in the conclusion. The readers may look at the conclusion first to get a summary of the main arguments or points. However, not every academic essay has a conclusion. In some cases it may be linked to the discussion section, or it may be called' concluding remarks', or 'summary'. However, in most cases it is helpful for the reader to have a section which looks back at what has been said and makes some comments about the main part.

2.6.2 Essay

According to Perutz (2008), to make a good essay, people should make a prior planning in what they want to write and also they are suggested to set out their mind idea clearly and organize it well. By managing a good

structure of an essay, it will make the readers understand the question that the writer wants to discuss in their essay.

2.6.2.1 Structure of Essay

2.6.2.1.1 Introduction

According to Perutz (2008), a good introduction of an essay is a writing that can make readers' interest aroused. And after that, the writer should set a scene of what kind of topic that she/he wants to discuss on their writing and then the way the writer interprets the question set also determine readers' interest to read the essay. An introduction consists of brief outline of an issue that the writer wants to discuss on his/her essay.

2.6.2.1.2 Body

According to Perutz (2008), a body of an essay consists of two or more paragraphs. Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence with the main idea of the paragraph. When the writer wants to write a new paragraph, the first sentence or topic sentence on the new paragraph should be related to the previous paragraph. In body, it includes with relevant examples, details, quotations, evidences and references.

2.6.2.1.3 Conclusion

According to Perutz (2008), in the conclusion, the writer states his/her general conclusion and also makes a point why their conclusion is significant for the readers. And in the last sentence of the conclusion, the writer sums up their argument very briefly and then links it to the title of his/her essay. Sometimes, writer mentions the lackness of his/her writings and state what question that has not been answered, if there is one.

2.7 Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is using writers' own words to report someone else's material or ideas. A paraphrase allows writers to use another writer's material and support a point they are making in their own work without using the other writer's exact wording. Writers will probably use paraphrasing when they want to change the style or the language used in the original, either to make it easier to understand. Unlike summary, a paraphrase is usually about the same length as the original, but both the words and the sentence structure of the original must be changed in a paraphrase (Leki, 1999). Bailey (2003) also said that paraphrasing involves changing a text so that it is quite different from the source, while keeping the original meaning. This skill is important in several areas of academic work, but this unit focuses on using paraphrasing in

note-making and summary writing. Effective paraphrasing is vital in academic writing to avoid the risk of plagiarism.

2.8 Theoretical Framework

Based on the previous definitions, ambiguity is an individual expression that has two or more distinct meanings and there are two kinds of ambiguities which are structural ambiguity and lexical ambiguity. The writer uses the theory based on Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman (1997) about ambiguity in 2010 students' academic writings. The writer classifies the ambiguity that the writer encountered in students' academic writings and after that the writer concludes which type that mostly encountered and the reason that type is likely to be encountered the most.