

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains the background of study, problems of the study, purposes of the study, limitation of the study, significance of the study and previous related studies.

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Ambiguity is anything that can be interpreted in more than one way or the interpretation of which is uncertain. In a book titled *Language Files 8<sup>th</sup> Edition*, an ambiguous expression is classified as ambiguity because it has more than one possible constituent structure. A word, phrase, or sentence is ambiguous if it has more than one meaning. The most common words in English are ambiguous. To be able to distinguish the meaning of an ambiguous word or sentence, people naturally look at the context in which the word or sentence appears. 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. 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. (Scheffler, 1979)

According to Fromkin and Rodman (1997), there are two types of ambiguity which are lexical ambiguity and structural ambiguity. In lexical ambiguity, the ambiguity happens because there are words that have double meanings, for example, a word '*bank*' which can be meant either as a river or a place where people save their money at. Structural ambiguity happens when the structure of the sentence makes a confusion of the meaning which makes the sentence has double meanings, for example in a sentence '*She ate the cake on the stool*' which can be meant that she ate cookies that were on the stool or she was eating cake while sitting on the stool.

Writing is a skill that is required in many contexts throughout life. However, academic writing does many of the things that personal writing doesn't have which are set of rules and practices. These rules and practices may be organized around a formal order or structure in which to present ideas, in addition to ensuring that ideas are supported by author citations in the literature. Academic writing is also using some theories from experts for explaining some topics. The structure itself for academic writing is different from personal writing. There are many kinds of academic writings including research proposals and essays. In the research proposal, the content of the writing should have an 'Introduction', 'Methodology', 'Discussion' 'Result' and 'Conclusion'. While in the essay, the

content of the writing should have an 'Introduction', 'Body' and 'Conclusion'. Because an academic writing has certain of rules and practices, it classified as an academic one which students and high scholar should be capable of. This is one of a reason why English Department students in State University of Jakarta need to attend Academic Writing class. However, there are some mistakes that happened when people write an academic writing that is also happened to English Department students. One of them is ambiguity that appeared on their writings. According to Norris (2012), ambiguity is the worst sin in the academic writings that should be avoided while writings.

So, the writer wants to analyze type of ambiguity that is mostly found in academic writings of English Department students major in English Language and Education Study Program and English Literature Study Program batch 2010. The writer also analyzes the reason a certain type of ambiguity is mostly found in students' academic writings. To analyze the ambiguity, the writer chooses grammatical analysis in syntax.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the background study, the research question is:

1. What type of ambiguity that are mostly encountered in 2010 students' academic writings?

### **1.3 Scope of the Study**

In the study, the writer focused on finding out the types of ambiguity that are found in 2010 students' academic writings in their academic writings based on Victoria Fromkin and Robert Rodman's theory. The writer focuses the analysis in 31 academic writings from 2010 students in State University of Jakarta which are collected from *Academic Writing I* subject.

### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

Based on research questions, the purpose of the study is:

1. The study is conducted to find out what type of ambiguity that is mostly encountered 2010 students' academic writings.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is expected to give better understanding about ambiguity, broaden their knowledge in syntax and linguistics study, help students to avoid ambiguous word, phrase, clause and sentence and develop the study of linguistic in English Department of State University of Jakarta.