Syntactic Ambiguity and Syntactic Analysis: Transformational Grammar Approach

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Abstract : Within linguistics, various approaches have been adopted to the study of language. One of such approaches is the syntax. The syntax is an aspect of the grammar of the language which deals with how words are put together to form phrases and sentences and how such structures are interpreted in language. Ambiguity, which is also germane in this discourse is about the uncertainty of meaning as a result of the possibility of a phrase or sentence being understood and interpreted in more than one way. In the light of the above, this paper attempts a syntactic study of syntactic ambiguities in The English Language, using the Transformational Generative Grammar (TGG) Approach. In doing this, phrases and sentences were raised with each description followed by relevant analysis. Finding in the work reveals that ambiguity cannot always be disambiguated by the means of syntactic analysis alone without recourse to semantic interpretation. The further finding shows that some syntactical ambiguities structures cannot be analysed on two surface structures in spite of the fact that there are more than one deep structures. The paper concludes that in as much as ambiguity remains in language; it will continue to pose a problem of understanding to a second language learner. Users of English as a second language, must, however, make a conscious effort to avoid its usage to achieve effective communication.

Keywords : language, syntax, semantics, morphology, ambiguity

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