

**PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ALGERIA**  
**MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**  
**UNIVERSITY OF IBN KHALDOUN – TIARET**

**Faculty of Letters and Languages**

**Department of English**



Cohort n° 5

Dissertation N°

***Investigating the Ambiguities in the Algerian Newspaper Headlines***  
***(Al-Khabar) A Linguistic and Psycholinguistic Study***

**A Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Linguistics**

**Submitted by:**

**Mr. Abdelhalim BENAMARA**

**Mr. Rabah BENYAHIA**

**Supervised by:**

**Dr. BELARBI Khaled**

**BOARD OF EXAMINERS**

<b>Members</b>	<b>Name &amp; Surname</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Chairman	<b>BENABED Ammar</b>	<b>Pr</b>	Ibn Khaldoun Tiaret
Supervisor	<b>BELARBI Khaled</b>	<b>MCA</b>	Ibn Khaldoun Tiaret
Examiner	<b>TOUBIDA Mostafa</b>	<b>MAA</b>	Ibn Khaldoun Tiaret

**Academic Year: 2023/2024**

## ***Dedication***

*I dedicate my efforts to:*

*My sweet and loving Mother & Father,*

*My Dear Wife Zaddam R.*

*My Sisters and Brothers: Hmama, Azzadine, Youcef, Abd El Khader, Fatiha, Salah El dine, Houria, and Bouchra, I am grateful to all of you.*

*My extended family who encouraged me and pray for me.*

*My colleagues: Yashkour M, Bouchnafa D, Bousalem H,*

***Rabah Benyahia***

## ***Dedication***

*I dedicate my efforts to:*

*My loving Mother & Father.*

*My Sweet Wife Dhiyf Samiha.*

*My Daughters Nihal, and Razan and My Son Luoai.*

*My extended family.*

***Benamara Abdelhalim***

## ***Acknowledgements***

*We are very much thankful to our supervisor **Dr. BELARBI Khaled** whose guidance and suggestions have contributed in accomplishing our work.*

*The participants from all Algerian cities, we appreciate your time.*

*To Ibn Khaldoun University teachers,*

*Finally, thanks to everyone who helped us along the way.*

## **Abstract**

A newspaper headlines is the gateway of news article or story, the writers utilize ambiguity unintentionally or intentionally, this research aims to investigate the ambiguity in Algerian newspaper headlines, focusing on the newspaper Al Khabar. The study adopts a linguistic and psycholinguistic approach to explore the phenomenon of ambiguity in headlines, shedding light on its linguistic types, which play significant roles in headline comprehension, by analyzing a corpus of Al Khabar headlines. Furthermore, combining and analyzing the psycholinguistic data to explore the effects of ambiguity on readers. The study's findings to both linguistic and psycholinguistic research have shown the dominance of pragmatic ambiguity type in AL Khabar newspaper; however, the Algerian readers prefer lexical ambiguity.

### **Keywords:**

newspaper Headlines, Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Lexical Ambiguity, Pragmatic Ambiguity.

## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms:**

CD-ROM: Compact Disc Read Only Memory

DVD: Digital Video Disc

NP: Noun Phrase

NPH: Newspaper Headlines

NP1: Noun Phrase Number 1

NP2: Noun Phrase Number 2

PP: Preposition Phrase

PDF: Portable Document Format

VP: Verb Phrase

TV: Television

UNSC: United National Security Council

## **List of Figures:**

<b>Figure 1:</b> Linguistic Analysis .....	41
<b>Figure 2:</b> Age Percentage .....	42
<b>Figure 3:</b> First NPH (Syntactic) .....	42
<b>Figure 4:</b> Second NPH (Pragmatic) .....	43
<b>Figure 5:</b> Third NPH (Lexical) .....	43
<b>Figure 6:</b> Ambiguity Preference .....	44
<b>Figure 7 :</b> Comfort Level .....	44
<b>Figure 8:</b> Reading Habits .....	45

## **Lists of Tables:**

<b>Table one: Methodology process</b> .....	24
<b>Table two: Phonological ambiguity examples</b> .....	30
<b>Table tree: Types of ambiguity</b> .....	31

## **Table of contents:**

<i>Dedication</i> .....	I
<i>Dedication</i> .....	II
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	III
<b>Abstract</b> .....	1
<b>List of Abbreviations and Acronyms:</b> .....	2
<b>List of Figures:</b> .....	3
<b>Lists of Tables:</b> .....	3
<b>General Introduction:</b> .....	7
<b>Purpose of the Study:</b> .....	7
<b>Methodology:</b> .....	7
<b>Research Questions:</b> .....	8
<b>Hypotheses:</b> .....	8
<b>Chapter One:</b> .....	13
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	13
<b>Introduction:</b> .....	14
<b>1- Newspaper Headlines (NPH):</b> .....	14
<b>2-Stractical, Lexical, and Syntactical Ambiguity in Newspaper Headlines:</b> .....	15
<b>2-A-Stractical and Lexical Ambiguity in NPH:</b> .....	15
<b>2-B-Lexical and Syntactical Ambiguity in NPH:</b> .....	16
<b>3-Semantic Ambiguity:</b> .....	19
<b>4- Chomsky and the Ambiguity:</b> .....	20
<b>5-Conclusion:</b> .....	20
<b>Chapter Two: Methodology, Definitions of Newspaper Headlines, and Ambiguity</b> .....	21
<b>Section one: Methodology process</b> .....	22
<b>Methodology:</b> .....	23
<b>Table one: Methodology process</b> .....	24



<b>Section two: The NPH and the Ambiguity:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Introduction:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1- Headlines:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2-Headline Functions:</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>3-News Headlines:</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4-Newspaper Headlines:</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5-The Characteristics of Newspaper Headlines:</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6-Ambiguity Definitions:</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>7-Characteristics of Ambiguity:</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8-Formes of Ambiguity:</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-1-Semantic Ambiguity:</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-1-1-Lexical Ambiguity:</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-2-Syntactic ambiguity:</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-2-1-Types of syntactic ambiguity:</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>8-3-Pragmatic ambiguity:</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>8-4-Phonological Ambiguity:</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Table two: Phonological ambiguity examples</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>8-5-Metaphor Ambiguity:</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>8-6-Referential Ambiguity:</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Table tree: Types of ambiguity</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>9-Ambiguity and Vagueness:</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>10- Ambiguity and culture:</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>11-Conclusion:</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter Three: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation</b>	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Data Collection and Analysis:</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>1-Linguistic Data:</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>A-Introduction:</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>B-Collection, Translation and Analysis of Newspaper Headlines:</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>C-Conclusion and Discussions:</b>	<b>40</b>

<b>Figure 1: Linguistic Analysis</b> .....	41
<b>2-Psycholinguistic Data:</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>A-Introduction :</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>B-Collecte and analysis Psycholinguistic data:</b> .....	<b>42</b>
<b>Figure 2: Age Percentage</b> .....	42
<b>Figure 3: First NPH (Syntactic)</b> .....	42
<b>Figure4: Second NPH (Pragmatic)</b> .....	43
<b>Figure5: Third NPH (Lexical)</b> .....	43
<b>Figure 6: Ambiguity Preference</b> .....	44
<b>Figure 7 : Comfort Level</b> .....	44
<b>Figure 8: Reading Habits</b> .....	45
<b>General Conclusion:</b> .....	46
<b>Limitations:</b> .....	47
<b>References:</b> .....	48

## **General Introduction:**

Newspaper headlines serve as gateways to news article or story, providing readers with a snapshot of the story's essence. The prevalence of ambiguous headlines has raised concerns regarding their impact on readers' comprehension and engagement. Ambiguity in headlines can stem from various factors, including linguistic choices, psycholinguistic effects, cultural influences, and editorial decisions. Understanding the causes and implications of this ambiguity is essential for ensuring effective communication and fostering informed public discourse. However, the selected of Algerian newspaper “Al-Khabar” because it is an independent national daily newspaper publishing in Arabic and French languages, as well as one of the most influential newspaper in Algeria.

## **Purpose of the Study:**

The aim of this research is to investigate the causes and implications of ambiguity in newspaper headlines in Algeria, especially Al-Khabar newspaper. With a specific focus on its impact on readers' comprehension and engagement. By examining this phenomenon, we seek to shed light on the underlying and analysing linguistic and psycholinguistic factors contributing to ambiguous headlines, explore their effects on readers, and propose strategies to enhance clarity and understanding.

This research is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it addresses a gap in the existing linguistic by specifically examining the issue of headline ambiguity in the Algerian context. While studies have explored similar topics in other countries, a focused investigation on Algeria will provide valuable insights into the unique factors and challenges faced in the country's news. Secondly, understanding the implications of ambiguous headlines on readers is crucial for promoting critical thinking, ensuring accurate interpretation, and facilitating active engagement with news content. Finally, this research aims to contribute practical recommendations that can assist journalists, editors, and news organizations in minimizing ambiguity and enhancing the effectiveness of headline communication.

## **Methodology:**

To achieve our research objectives, we will employ a multi-method approach encompassing data collection and analysis. This will involve the examination of a sample of newspaper headlines from Al-Khabar Algerian newspaper, as well as conducting online

questionnaire to gather readers' perceptions and interpretations. The analysis will employ both qualitative and quantitative techniques to identify patterns, themes, and levels of ambiguity.

**Research Questions:**

- What are the most types of ambiguity used in newspaper headlines in Al Khabar (Algeria)?
- What are the perceptions and interpretations of readers regarding ambiguous newspaper headlines in Al-Khabar?
- What strategies can be employ to minimize ambiguity in newspaper headlines and enhance readers' understanding in Algeria?

**Hypotheses:**

- The ambiguous headlines increase the attraction of the readers because it is most important source of communication and information that related to their life.
- There are readers who have special admiration and attraction for certain content such as, art, sports, or politics, and they does not miss reading even if the content is ambiguous.
- Wherever the headlines are ambiguous, the read is increase, unless the reader Does not exaggerate.

The dissertation is divided into three chapters; the first chapter represents the literature review about newspapers' headlines and the different types of ambiguity. The second chapter is devoted to the methodology used in this research and finally the last chapter will tackled the findings' discussion and interpretation.

# **Chapter One:**

## **Literature Review**

<b>Literature Review about NPH and the ambiguities.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Introduction: .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1- Newspaper Headlines (NPH): .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2-Stractical, Lexical, and Syntactical Ambiguity in Newspaper Headlines: .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2-A-Stractical and Lexical Ambiguity in NPH: .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2-B-Lexical and Syntactical Ambiguity in NPH: .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>3-Semantic Ambiguity:.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4- Chomsky and the Ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5-Conclusion: .....</b>	<b>20</b>

## **Introduction:**

This literature review provides an overview of existing research and scholarly works related to the ambiguity in newspaper headlines, both in Algeria and in other contexts. This section aims to identify key themes, theories, and findings that have been explored in previous studies. By reviewing the literature, we can gain insights into the factors contributing to headline ambiguity, its implications, and potential strategies for mitigating ambiguity in news communication.

### **1- Newspaper Headlines (NPH):**

Newspapers as a type of media text are considered as a credible and authoritative source of local, national and international information that have immediate concerns for every reader. To draw the readers' attention to their papers and topics, the journalists rely heavily on the headlines which are in themselves a distinct type of text.

The Linguistic Features of Newspapers Headlines Zeydan Khalaf Omer, Sundus Hassan Ali. Journal of Al-Anbar University for Language and Literature,(2013). This study has shown that, the journalists heavily depend on the headlines, which are a unique form of text. The language used in headlines has various characteristics. While it shares some similarities with standard language, it also exhibits numerous differences and peculiarities. These differences can sometimes make headlines unclear and misleading. After considering the prominent features of headlines, it becomes apparent that this language differs more than it resembles standard language. Headlines deviates significantly from standard rules and disregards regularities to create a specific impact. Its primary goal is to generate memorable headlines and, most importantly, convey the intended message within a limited space.

The language of headlines is different from the ordinary language in the following points:

1. In headlines, abbreviations are frequently manipulated by sub-editors to cope with space pressure.
2. Headline writers use special vocabulary that is unusual outside headlines in order to grab the readers' attention.
3. Ambiguity in headlines helps in achieving the attention-seeking function of headlines as they arouse the readers' curiosity to read the article to solve the ambiguity.

Linguistic Features of Newspaper Headlines. Asst. Prof. Dr. Qais Abdul Majeed Younis Mehdi Salih Abdulla MA Student.

Newspaper headlines present interesting comprehension problems, because they are syntactically impoverished and, consequently, often syntactically ambiguous. This makes it

advantageous for a reader to use nonlinguistic information as quickly as possible in comprehension. Comprehending newspaper headlines Charles A Perfetti, Sylvia Beverly, Laura Bell, Kimberly Rodgers, Robert Faux(1987).

Their experiments aimed at investigating headline comprehension, they compared a syntactic hypothesis with a problem-solving hypothesis. The syntactic hypothesis suggests that ambiguous headlines will require more processing time compared to unambiguous headlines. However, the problem-solving hypothesis does not make the same prediction.

Clickbait-style headlines and journalism credibility in Sub-Saharan Africa: exploring audience perceptions by Judith Flora Wanda, Baraka Samson Chipanjilo, Gregory Gondwe, Joseph Kerunga 2021 (), their findings suggest strong statistical evidence that clickbait headlines pose negatives effect on the perceptions of journalistic credibility in Zambia and Tanzania. The results tend to suggest clickbait headlines may still have the ability to lower perception level of credibility and quality.

## **2-Structural, Lexical, and Syntactical Ambiguity in Newspaper Headlines:**

### **2-A-Structural and Lexical Ambiguity in NPH:**

In Lexical and structural ambiguity in humorous headlines in English electronic Newspapers, Thị Ánh Nguyệt Nguyễn Studies,(2011), The study's findings indicate that ambiguity is a source of humor in headlines, particularly in the fields of lexicology and syntax. The majority of ambiguities observed were at a structural level, while a smaller portion exhibited lexical ambiguity. Homonymy, polysemy, and the distinctive features of newspaper headlines, such as the use of loaded words and the omission of grammar signals, were identified as the origins of ambiguity in humorous electronic headlines.

Structural Ambiguity in the Headlines by: Diyah Elmawati,

This study has shown three sources of structural ambiguity in the headlines. A word may have different categories depending on the following or preceding words. This difference of syntactic category causes the headline to be structurally ambiguous. A prepositional phrase which is usually placed in the final position also creates structural ambiguity.

It can be the adjunct of a noun phrase or the adjunct of a verb phrase. Sub-categorization of verbs causes structural ambiguity as well. Transitive verbs may follow by a direct object only or a direct object and an infinitive phrase.

Structural ambiguity of news headlines “YAHOO NEWS” by SARAH LIZARA SEVIDA (2015). Among various phrasal categories, the prepositional phrase is the most common source of structural ambiguity in headlines. Additionally, other phrasal categories such as noun phrases, adjective phrases, and relative clauses can also contribute to structural ambiguity.

Ambiguity in headline on 2017 French election in BBC NEWS ONLINE. By Tuhfatut Taufiqoh (2017).

The researcher identified and examined three types of ambiguities: lexical ambiguity, referential ambiguity, and syntactical ambiguity. Among these, the most common type of ambiguity was found to be lexical ambiguity, which often arises from the use of figurative language. As a result, it can be concluded that political news articles frequently contain multiple instances of ambiguity. Therefore, readers are advised to carefully consider the context of the news article to accurately interpret the intended meaning and avoid misunderstandings caused by ambiguity.

Investigating structural ambiguity in newspaper headlines, by: ELISABETH MASSAMBA (2022), the research conducted on the headlines of The Namibian newspaper reveals that structural ambiguity is a prevalent phenomenon. Specifically, the ambiguity primarily arises from the inclusion of 'prepositional phrases' as modifiers within the headlines. The placement of these modifiers within the headline structure introduces ambiguity, as they are attached to the proceedings phrasal category. Consequently, this ambiguity results in the headlines having multiple interpretations for readers. The findings of this study have been visually represented using tree diagrams, which effectively illustrate the complexities of structural ambiguity within these headlines.

## **2-B-Lexical and Syntactical Ambiguity in NPH:**

In lexical and syntactic ambiguity in the headlines of the telegraph and yahoo news. Silvyana has defined the

analytical ambiguity as a specific type of ambiguity whereby certain words can be interpreted as part of one phrase or another, depending on the context in which they are used. This type of ambiguity is distinct from attachment ambiguity. Analytical ambiguity manifests in various instances, including cases where a preposition can be interpreted as part of a verb phrase or a prepositional phrase. Similar to attachment ambiguity, analytical ambiguity also exhibits distinct characteristics and implications that warrant further investigation and



analysis.

In the work of, Chiara Bucaria (2004),

Lexical and syntactic ambiguity as a source of humor: The case of newspaper headlines. Firstly, a significant proportion of ambiguous headlines were identified in the corpus, suggesting potential variations across different genres. Secondly, two novel patterns were discovered in the processing of the disjuncture/connector order. In the first pattern, the disjuncture precedes the connector, rather than following or coinciding with the ambiguous element. In the second pattern, two ambiguous elements are present, each serving as both a connector and a disjuncture. In syntactic ambiguity in newspaper headlines, Hameed M Al Janaby, Ammar A Abed (2011), they have found that, the prevalence of ambiguity is observed in news headlines, where intentional utilization of ambiguity is common. This deliberate employment aims to pique readers' curiosity and enhance the headline's appeal, thereby capturing their attention and encouraging them to read the article or even purchase the newspapers.

The analysis of syntactical ambiguity encompasses class ambiguity, as well as other forms such as propositional, phrase attachment, ellipses, and referential ambiguity. Class ambiguity refers to the shifts between noun and verb classes, and vice versa. Additionally, omission plays a significant role in news headlines, where grammatical words are frequently elided more than lexical ones. Attachment ambiguity arises when a modifying phrase can be attached to different components within the headline.

It can be inferred that the majority of ambiguities in headlines are unintentional, and readers can derive the correct interpretation by relying on additional contextual information or the lead of the article.

The objectives of the study of Lexical Ambiguity in the Headlines of the Jakarta Post Newspaper by Nanda Ramadani (2015), was, firstly, to identify ambiguous words with multiple lexical meanings from the headlines of The Jakarta Post newspaper, and secondly, to classify the types of ambiguous words encountered. The researcher has observed that all the collected data, consisting of 10 ambiguous words extracted from 9 headlines, can be categorized as instances of polysemy.

In Lexical and syntactical ambiguity in the headlines of CNN, Anisa Fitri, has found that, the major dominant type of ambiguity was lexical ambiguity. The lexical ambiguity made up of homonymy, polysemy, synonymy, and antonym. While, syntactical ambiguity consisted of surface structure ambiguity and deep structure ambiguity.

Anna Dudek in her research *Syntactic ambiguity in newspaper headlines*, intends to further explore the topic and examine the subject by referring to headlines. In addition, the issue of misunderstandings that occur during the translation of ambiguous statements and puns will be left for future research.

The study by Siti Nurfadilah. *syntactic ambiguity found in business headlines of THE NEW YORK TIMES* (2022) has come to the conclusion that ambiguous headlines can be represented using tree diagrams based on syntax categories, such as parts of speech and phrases. Furthermore, the research identified nine news headlines that are consistent with the news content, as well as one headline that is not in line with the news content.

Structural and lexical ambiguities in the Jakarta Post headlines by, Nurradiatummardiah (2020). Based on the analysis of 137 headlines from the Jakarta Post, it was found that structural ambiguity is more common than lexical ambiguity. Out of the 15 headlines that contained ambiguity, 10 of them were structurally ambiguous and 5 were lexically ambiguous.

The researcher has found that ambiguous words, phrases, and sentences in the headlines of The Jakarta Post can be interpreted in two or three ways. Out of the 6 instances of ambiguity, 4 were interpreted in two ways and 4 were interpreted in three ways. Additionally, one instance of lexical ambiguity was found in a headline published between March 13<sup>th</sup> and April 13<sup>th</sup> 2015. However, the presence of multiple interpretations in the headlines can confuse readers about the intended meaning. To understand the correct interpretation, readers must delve deeper by reading the entire articles and considering the context of the situation and the topic covered.

In semantic analysis on sense of ambiguity in the headline printed the Jakarta post published on march 13TH– APRIL 13TH , 2015 Erisa Kurniati.

Also in *Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity in the Vaccine News Headlines of the Star*.Chang Chui Shan, Bharathi Mutty, (2020).

The findings showed that there were both lexical and syntactic ambiguities present in the vaccine-related news headlines from The Star. Specifically, there were five instances of lexical ambiguity and three instances of syntactic ambiguity. However, the participants in the study were not significantly affected by these ambiguities due to their contextual understanding and knowledge of the topic. The research study also identified some limitations and gaps, suggesting that additional considerations and a larger sample of participants could be taken into account in future studies.

According to Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity in the Headlines of the Telegraph and Yahoo News, by Silvyana Silvyana, Prodi Bahasa Inggris,(2020).

Out of the thirty data analyzed, thirteen of them were found to be ambiguous. Among these, eight data exhibited lexical ambiguity, while the remaining five data exhibited syntactic ambiguity. It was observed that newspaper headlines tend to have a higher occurrence of lexical ambiguity, which is attributed to journalists intentionally using ambiguous words to capture readers' attention.

An Analysis of Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity on The Headlines of The Jakarta Post Online Newspaper, Rachmad Aditya Pradyta Jayaprana (2015).

The 24 headlines that has found, there were eight headlines categorized as lexical ambiguity; and 17 headlines as syntactic ambiguity; with one headline has double lexical and syntactic ambiguity.

In Syntactic Ambiguity of Arabic Prepositional Phrase Attachment in Saudi Newspaper Headlines, Khadija Alamoudi, (2017).

The study focused on analyzing PP (preposition phrase) attachment as a significant source of syntactic ambiguity in Arabic newspaper headlines. The results indicated a clear preference for NP1 (noun phrase) over NP2 and NP over VP (verb phrase) when using prepositions such as /fi:/ and /li-/. The choice of NP1 and NP was found to be closely related to the selection of NP2 and VP with prepositions like /bi-/ and /min/. However, the use of PP attachment, particularly in relation to structural ambiguity, was observed in Arabic newspaper headlines....

A Syntactic Analysis of Ambiguity in Nigerian Newspaper Headlines by, Ayoola Moses Olusanya. It has found out that majority of the ambiguous structures were caused ambiguous through the deletion or omission of certain sentential elements.

### **3-Semantic Ambiguity:**

Semantic study of the use of association, ambiguity, and lexical meanings, daily news headlines of Sinar Indonesia Baru Medan, by Salliyanti Salliyanti, Robert Sibarani, Hariadi Susilo, Nurhayati Harahap (2022), they has found that, the use of association or connotation constitutes 52% of the meaning. Ambiguity is present in 32% of the news, while the use of lexical meaning accounts for 16%.

Semantic analysis on sense of ambiguity in the headline printed, THE JAKARTA POST published (2015), by Erisakurniati, concluded that, when a text has multiple interpretations, readers might become confused about the intended meaning. They have suggested that, to

understand the whole message, readers must carefully analyze the context, topic, and content of the entire article.

#### **4- Chomsky and the Ambiguity:**

Clearly, a child who has learned a language has developed an internal representation of a system of rules that determine how sentences are to be formed, used, and understood. Using the term "grammar" with a systematic **ambiguity** (to refer, first, to the native speaker's internally represented "theory of his language" and, second, to the linguist's account of this), we can say that the child has developed and internally represented a generative grammar, in the sense described. He has done this on the basis of observation of what we may call primary linguistic data. Aspects of the theory of syntax, By Noam Chomsky p 126.

Chomsky, N. (2014). Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (No. 11). MIT press. Google scholar

At peak periods of language growth, a child is acquiring words at a rate of about one an hour, with extremely limited exposure under highly **ambiguous** conditions. The words are understood in delicate and intricate ways that are far beyond the reach of any dictionary, and are only beginning to be investigated. When we move beyond single words,

Explaining language use Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Foreword by Neil Smith

#### **5-Conclusion:**

The literature review on ambiguity in newspaper headlines highlights the various techniques and effects of this linguistic and psycholinguistic phenomenon. The researchers have examined the use of different types of ambiguity, such as lexical, syntactic, pragmatic, and semantic ambiguity, and its impact on readers' engagement and interpretation of news articles.

Researchers also emphasize the importance of considering readers' individual differences and background knowledge when examining the effects of ambiguity in headlines.

The literature review highlights the significance of ambiguity in newspaper headlines and its impact on readership and engagement. The use of lexical, syntactic, pragmatics, metaphor, and semantic ambiguity creates curiosity, surprise, and humor, prompting readers to delve deeper into news articles. Understanding readers' individual differences is essential for comprehending the effects of ambiguity in headlines and its role in shaping readers' engagement with news content.

## **Chapter Two: Methodology, Definitions of Newspaper Headlines, and Ambiguity**

<b>Section one: Methodology process .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Methodology: .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Table one: Methodology process.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Section two: The NPH and the Ambiguity:.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Introduction: .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>1- Headlines: .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>2-Headline Functions: .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>3-News Headlines: .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>4-Newspaper Headlines: .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>5-The Characteristics of Newspaper Headlines: .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>6-Ambiguity Definitions: .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>7-Characteristics of Ambiguity:.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>8-Formes of Ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-1-Semantic Ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-1-1-Lexical Ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-2-Syntactic ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>8-2-1-Types of syntactic ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>8-3-Pragmatic ambiguity:.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>8-4-Phonological Ambiguity:.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Table two: Phonological ambiguity examples.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>8-5-Metaphor Ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>8-6-Referential Ambiguity: .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Table tree: Types of ambiguity .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>9-Ambiguity and Vagueness:.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>10- Ambiguity and culture: .....</b>	<b>32</b>

**11-Conclusion:** ..... 33

**Section one: Methodology process**

### **Introduction:**

This second chapter will be devoted to the methodology used in the research together with the clarification of the different existing types of ambiguity in newspaper headlines.

### **Methodology:**

To achieve our research objectives, we will employ a multi-method approach encompassing data collection and analysis. This will involve the examination of a sample of newspaper headlines from Al-Khabar Algerian newspaper, as well as conducting online questionnaire to gather readers' perceptions and interpretations. The analysis will employ both qualitative and quantitative techniques to identify patterns, themes, and levels of ambiguity.

From 44 Arabic headlines that seem to be ambiguous, we translate them to English language and confirm primarily 23 ambiguous headlines, from The choose of Algerian newspaper “Al-Khabar. We choose two months to collect our data (January and February) in which these months have important events nationally and internationally, applying qualitative method.

The collected newspaper headlines will be analyzed to find out the type of the existing ambiguity in the selected, than to figure out the possible intended meaning, and the interpretations for each ambiguous newspaper headline and give the right interpretation in the end.

In the part of psycholinguistics study, we employ an online questionnaire, applying quantitative method to gather data from respondents located in various cities of Algeria (despite some difficulties that we have faced, being students and workers traveling around the country, and the prior knowledge about places and people helps us to gather the responses). The study is divided into three main sections. The first section involves the selection of the participants' age. In the second section, we assess the participants' proficiency in correctly interpreting three headlines. These headlines contain specific instances of ambiguity that are discussed in our linguistic part, (pragmatics, syntactic, and lexical). Lastly, the third section is dedicated to examining the impact of these ambiguous headlines on the 100 reader's attention and desire (Ambiguity Preference, comfort level, reader's habits).

The table explains the methodology process:

	Parts of study	Methodology	Samples
1	Linguistic part	Qualitative	Al khabar Algerian newspaper Collection and translation headlines  (January and february)
2	Psycholinguistic part	Quantitative	100 participants  All over Algeria  Three sections:  1-Age range 2-Interpritation 3-Impact on readers:  a-Ambiguity preferences b-Comfort level c-Reader 's habits

**Table one: Methodology process**



## **Section two: The NPH and the Ambiguity:**

### **Introduction:**

Language is fundamental aspect of human expressions, powerful communication tool, sharing public perception, understanding of current events and news. The language in news plays a crucial role in all domain and societies. News organizations employ specific techniques and strategies to convey information and capture the attention of their audiences and readers, especially headlines.

Headlines provide the readers with the optimal ratio between contextual effect and processing effort, and direct readers to construct the optimal context for interpretation (Daniel Dor, 2003). News headlines highlight specific details or quote some incidents that are decided by the editor to be in the foreground (Dor, 2003). A newspaper headlines is a very short summary of a news report. It normally appears in large letters above the report.

The grammar of headlines is often non-standard and they can be difficult to read (Cambridge dictionary).

To produce headlines that best tell and sell, journalists rely on linguistic options, word choices, a special lay out to achieve these goals..... Being the first element encountered by readers who are not equipped with any contextual information, it is risky to intentionally create ambiguity in headlines. Yet, ambiguity is still a device widely used by news headlines writers to attract clients to buy and read, (HM Al Janaby, AA Abed 2011).

### **1- Headlines:**

-The title of news article printed in large letters, especially at the top of the front page of newspaper or the home page on news website (Oxford dictionary).

-A line of words printed in large letters as the title of the story in newspaper, or main points of the news that are broadcast on television or radio (Cambridge dictionary).

### **2-Headline Functions:**

-Macro-function: (Gattani 2005)

A-Informative.

B-Indicative.

C-Eye-catching.

-Micro-function: (Dor 2003)

a-To summarize.

b-To highlight.

c-To enable selection.

d-To attract.

-Umbrella function: (Dor 2003)

Negotiators between the stories and the readers.

### **3-News Headlines:**

-News headlines highlight specific details or quote some incidents that are decided by the editor to be in the foreground (Dor,2003).

-News headlines are telegram-like items that direct and lead the readers towards specific details (Teriszkiewicz,2012).

-A news headlines is an integral part of the journalistic (Riham Khalifa, 2018).

### **4-Newspaper Headlines:**

-A newspaper headlines is a very short summary of a news report. It normally appears in large letters above the report (Cambridge dictionary).

- News headlines highlight specific details or quote some incidents that are decided by the editor to be in the foreground (Dor, 2003).

### **5- Characteristics of Newspaper Headlines:**

A newspaper headline is a very short summary of a news report. It normally appears in large letters above the report.

The grammar of headlines is often non-standard and they can be difficult to read. The main features of the grammar of headlines are the use of a series of nouns and use of ellipsis (leaving out words which are not necessary).

We often leave out (a/an, the) and verbs (especially the verb to be):

Headlines often use the present simple, even where the report refers to a past event. This is done to make the news more dramatic and immediate:

Headlines often use the to-infinitive form to refer to future events:  
(Cambridge dictionary).

According to the definition above, the characteristics are:

Visual, and clear (large letters), concise (short summary), using drama and motivation (the news seem more dramatic and immediate). Moreover the headlines are simple to read but sometimes ambiguous, objective, up to date, and accurate.

### **6-Ambiguity Definitions:**

- The concept of ambiguity is hesitation, doubt, from the first usage until the most recent linguistic definition (Mohammad Awaad, 2017).

-A situation or statement that is unclear because it can be understood in more than one way (Cambridge Dictionary).

-Having or expressing more than one possible meaning, sometimes intentionally (Cambridge Dictionary).

### **7-Characteristics of Ambiguity:**

According to Tom Johnson (2021), ambiguous content has one or more of the following characteristics:

The ownership of the content is not clearly defined. The content and product involve multiple teams, with several individuals serving as co-owners, contributors, and points of contact.

Furthermore, the content does not align with any forthcoming release. Although the content may be crucial, such as a product overview or a getting started tutorial, the absence of a deadline associated with an upcoming release makes it susceptible to being overlooked or neglected.

The content is inadequate in terms of information and resources to serve as a starting point. Despite the need for additional information, it is unavailable, and the team responsible for providing the relevant details has disbanded, renounced stewardship, or is uncooperative in sharing specific information and prioritizing it. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity regarding the strategy for the content. For instance, the deliverables for the content are unclear, including the length. Additionally, some sections may not address user needs or use cases appropriately, and it remains uncertain whether the content aligns with the intended goals. The individuals responsible for approving the content may hold senior positions, making it challenging to locate them, given their busy schedules. However, once found, these individuals tend to have strong opinions on almost every detail. Additionally, the content is exceedingly difficult to test independently due to the extensive setup, hardware, tooling, access, or engineering expertise required. Consequently, you must rely on the engineer's assurance regarding the accuracy of the content. The content presents various complex publishing requirements, including gated access, PDF output, content re-use, localization, personalization with variables, and conditional content. However, the authoring/publishing system being used may pose challenges in implementing some of these features. Moreover, there is limited information available about the users, including their needs, pain points, and other relevant details. Additionally, reaching out to the users is restricted, further hindering the ability to write effectively for them. As a result, there is a lack of clarity and understanding when it comes to addressing the user's perspective. The content is based on an existing set of content; however, it involves adding or modifying

tasks in different ways. Consequently, the content lacks a complete narrative and appears as fragmented, standalone articles that assume the necessary knowledge is already defined elsewhere. The content can be seen as individual building blocks without a clear understanding of their intended use. Therefore, it becomes necessary to deduce the rationale and purpose behind these building blocks and determine how they can be effectively integrated.

As a result, the ambiguous content usually have one or more of those characteristics, sometimes one ambiguous word can make difficult in understanding the whole content or headline in story or writing in general.

## **8-Formes of Ambiguity:**

### **8-1-Semantic Ambiguity:**

According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary, the term semantic means, the study of the meanings of words and phrases. However, the semantics in linguistics means the scientific study of meaning, the semantic ambiguity is the multiple or the possible meanings the word or phrase has, the degree of the ambiguity (higher or lower) depends on the number of the synonyms the word has.

The major type of semantic ambiguity is lexical ambiguity.

#### **8-1-1-Lexical Ambiguity:**

Hyams (2009) noted that lexical ambiguity arises when a lexical item in a phrase carries more than one meaning.

Lexical ambiguity is ubiquitous. In English over 80% of common words have more than one dictionary entry (Rodd, Gaskell, & Marslen-Wilson, 2002) .This type of ambiguity arises when a word multiple meanings. For example, the word "bank" can refer to a financial institution or the edge of a river.

##### **8-1-1-1-Common types of lexical ambiguities:**

There are three common types of lexical ambiguity, the first one is Homographs , when two words share their spelling like sow, bow, however when terms share their pronunciation, for instance, buy and by ,that named Homophones .Sometimes the word has different alternative meaning, but the same pronunciation and writing as the word date, this called, Homonyms.

### **8-2-Syntactic ambiguity:**

The study of interrelationship between elements of sentence structure, and of the rules governing the arrangement of sentences in sequences (David Crystal, 2008:497).

Syntactic ambiguity refers to a phenomenon in linguistics where a sentence or phrase has multiple possible interpretations due to the structure or arrangement of its words or phrases, in other words, it occurs when a sentence can understand in more than one way.

### **8-2-1-Types of syntactic ambiguity:**

#### **8-2-1-1-Attachment ambiguity:**

Attachment ambiguity when a word or phrase attaches to different part of sentence, leading to different interpretations; for instance, "I saw the man on the floor with the binoculars" can mean "I used binoculars to see the man on the floor" or "I saw the man that had the binoculars on the floor".

#### **8-2-1-2-Analytical ambiguity:**

The analytical ambiguity refers to the uncertainty in determining the structural relationships between words or phrases in a sentence. It occurs when the sentence structure allows for multiple possible interpretations of the relationship between words. For example, consider the sentence "The old man and woman are sitting on the bench." Here, the phrase "old man and woman" can be interpreted in two ways:

A. "The [old man] and woman are sitting on the bench." - In this interpretation, only the man is old, and both the man and the woman are sitting on the bench.

B. "The old [man and woman] are sitting on the bench." - In this interpretation, both the man and the woman are old, and they are sitting on the bench.

In both cases, attachment and analytical ambiguity highlight the challenges interpretations in determining the correct syntactic structure of a sentence due to multiple possible interpretations.

### **8-3-Pragmatic ambiguity:**

Pragmatics acts as the basis for all language interactions and contact. It is a key feature to the understanding of language and the responses that follow this. Therefore, without the function of Pragmatics, there would be very little understanding of intention and meaning (Dr-Nasri 2002).

The pragmatic ambiguity refers to a situation where the intended meaning of a statement is unclear due to the use of ambiguous language or context. It occurs when a speaker's words can be interpreted in multiple ways depending on the listener's understanding and the context in which the statement is made. This ambiguity can sometimes be intentional, used for rhetorical or humorous effect, or it can be unintentional, resulting from poor

communication or unclear language. Pragmatic ambiguity often requires the listener to make inferences or rely on contextual cues to understand the intended meaning of the speaker.

#### **8-4-Phonological Ambiguity:**

Phonological ambiguities are words that **sound** the same but have different meanings and can be used in very different ways.

#### **Examples**

See	Sea
There	Their
Weekend	Weak and
Wait	Weight
Two	Too
Ice cream	I scream

(Doug O'Brien under Blog JANUARY 7, 2009)

**Table two: Phonological ambiguity examples**

#### **8-5-Metaphor Ambiguity:**

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the metaphor means, an expression, often found in literature, that describes a person or object by referring to something that is considered to have similar characteristics to that person or object:

"The mind is an ocean" and "the city is a jungle" are both metaphors.

Metaphor and simile are the most commonly used figures of speech in everyday language.

Metaphor ambiguity occurs when a metaphorical statement or expression is open to multiple interpretations or can be understood in different ways. Metaphors are figures of speech that use comparison or symbolism to convey a deeper meaning, often by relating something abstract or unfamiliar to something more concrete or familiar. However, because metaphors rely on associations and subjective understanding, they can be open to ambiguity. For example, if someone says, "She has a heart of gold," it is a metaphor suggesting that the person being described is kind and generous. However, this metaphor can also be interpreted as a literal statement, implying that the person's heart is made of gold, which would obviously be impossible.

Metaphor ambiguity can add depth and richness to language, but it also requires careful interpretation and consideration of context to understand the intended meaning.

### 8-6-Referencial Ambiguity:

Referential ambiguity arises when the context does not make it clear what a pronoun or quantifier is referring to, e.g. Ally hit Georgia and then she started bleeding. In the preceding sentence, it is not clear whether it was Ally, Georgia, or some other person who was bleeding.( Linguistic Pitfalls - Humanities Libre Texts).

-The table below briefly summarizes the types of ambiguity above:

Semantic Ambiguity	Pragmatic Ambiguity	Syntactic Ambiguity	Phonological Ambiguity	Metaphor Ambiguity
Lexical Ambiguity: 1-Homography: Words share spelling, like: Sow, Bow, Bass, Lead. 2-Homonyms: Words share their spelling and pronunciation such as: Bank, Date, Pen. 3-Homophones: Words share their pronunciations, for example: By Buy, tow too.	Pragmatics goes beyond the literal meaning of the word, or the phrase, for instance: -It is hot here, it means, could you open the window.	1-Attachment Ambiguity: When a word attaches to different part of sentences I saw the man with telescope. It may, I saw the man who has a telescope or, I saw the man by using a telescope. 2-Analytical Ambiguity: It occurs when the sentence structure allows for multiple possible interpretations of the relationship between words. -The [old man] and woman are sitting next to me. -The[ old man and woman] are setting next to me.	The <b>sounds</b> are the same but different meanings, like: See, Sea. There, their. Wait, weight.	When metaphorical expression open to multiple expressions, like: A heart of gold.

**Table tree: Types of ambiguity**

### 9-Ambiguity and Vagueness:

#### -Ambiguity:

-Having or expressing more than one possible meaning, sometimes intentionally (Cambridge Dictionary).

#### -Vagueness:

-The fact of not being clear in a parson's mind.

-The fact of not having or giving enough information or details about something.

(Oxford Learner's Dictionaries)

Prof Handke - The Nature of Meaning (2013) claimed that:

Both are unclear expressions, one of the strategies to make difference between them is the identity test. For instance, let us take this two sentences.

1-Sarah visited the bank.

2-Marry adopted a child.

In the first sentence, it is homonym ambiguity (lexical), it one possible place that Sarah visited (the money institute or the riverbank), the word bank has two distinct reading, that why is ambiguous. In contrast in the second sentences the lexeme child can have several interpretations among them (boy, male, female). the child here is not ambiguous but vague for gender.

#### **10- Ambiguity and culture:**

Cultural ambiguity likewise goes through phases when it is stigmatized and when it receives approval. Cultural ambiguity often becomes most visible when a dominant host culture protests against a real or imaginary "contamination" by minority cultures or when a culture that has been in subjection seeks to emancipate itself from cultural imperialism.(Introduction to Ambiguity in Ambiguity in Culture and Literature Paolo Bartoloni National University of Ireland Galway Anthony Stephens. University of Sydney)

Cultural ambiguity refers to situations or aspects of culture that are difficult to define or understand clearly due to their complex and multifaceted nature. It involves the presence of multiple interpretations, meanings of languages, or perspectives within a particular cultural context. Cultural ambiguity can arise when there are diverse beliefs, values, customs, or practices within a society or when cultural elements are influenced by globalization and intercultural interactions. This ambiguity can lead to misunderstandings, challenges in communication, and a need for deeper exploration and understanding of different cultural perspectives.

For instance, in the same society we may find humor, gestures, and taboo different and ambiguous especially in large space communities.



**11-Conclusion:**

The linguistic use of different types of ambiguity in newspaper headlines serves as a strategic way. By employing various linguistic techniques such as lexical, syntactic, pragmatics, and others, these headlines create a sense of intrigue, prompting readers to delve deeper into the article. Newspapers utilize this technique by selecting words that could be interpreted, structured, arranged, and understood, by different ways, however cultural expressions and metaphor, lead to different possible interpretations of the newspaper headlines as well.

<b>Chapter Three: Data Collection, Analysis and Interpretation .....</b>	<b>Error!</b>
<b>Bookmark not defined.</b>	
<b>Data Collection and Analysis: .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>1-Linguistic Data: .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>A-Introduction:.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>B-Collection, Translation and Analysis of Newspaper Headlines: .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>C-Conclusion and Discussions: .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Figure 1: Linguistic Analysis .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2-Psycholinguistic Data:.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>A-Introduction :.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>B-Collecte and analysis Psycholinguistic data: .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Figure 2: Age Percentage .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Figure 3: First NPH (Syntactic) .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Figure4: Second NPH (Pragmatic).....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Figure5: Third NPH (Lexical) .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Figure 6: Ambiguity Preference .....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Figure 7 : Comfort Level.....</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Figure 8: Reading Habits.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>General Conclusion:.....</b>	<b>46</b>

## **Data Collection and Analysis:**

### **1-Linguistic Data:**

#### **Introduction:**

From 44 Arabic headlines that seem to be ambiguous, we translate them to English language and confirm primarily 23 ambiguous headlines, from the Algerian newspaper “Al-Khabar. We chose two months to collect our data (January and February) in which these months have important events nationally and internationally, applying qualitative method.

The collected newspaper headlines will be analyzed to find out the type of the existing ambiguity in the selected headlines (from 44, there are 23 headlines are ambiguous), than to figure out the possible intended meaning, and the interpretations for each ambiguous newspaper headline and give the right interpretation in the end.

#### **B-Collection, Translation and Analysis of Newspaper Headlines:**

هذا ما سيتغير في 2024

B-1-(This what will change in 2024) (02/01/2024)

The headline has syntactic ambiguity, because there is ellipsis in it, the change in which domain and how, it opens interpretations, the change will be in taxes, economy, agriculture, health care, education, or other domains.

The content of the entire article was meant for the new taxes and economy changes that will be applied in the new year.

شبح الفوضى المستدامة يهدد الساحل

B\_2-(The specter of sustainable chaos threatens the coast) (03/01/2024)

This headline has pragmatic ambiguity, the headline has intended message, and warning, because of the situation there, but has several interpretations, it may politic, economic, or security mess.

The writer talks about the mess of military coups.

تقريركم مغلوط

B\_3-(Your report is wrong) (07/01/2024)

This one is syntactic, for the ellipsis in it, the reporter, and the kind of the report are unknown, it may about education in Algeria, economy, human rights, or something else, and what the report source?

After exploring the content, it has found that the report was about Algerian financial expectations by World Bank.

حادثة "التسلل" تسقط بن شيخ

B-4-(The "sneaking" incident brings down Ben Sheikh) (09/01/2024)

This headline has pragmatic ambiguity, the obvious meaning is to enter or leave a place quietly with careful caution, the word (sneaking) has numerous interpretations, it could be a living being sneaking like human or animal, human escaping or crossing the borders, but the intended meaning could be elections, inspection, or unexpected incident.

The headline tells the incident of human sneaking onto the plane's wing and crossing the country's borders.

إنذار أخير لـ "بلد عربي شقيق"

B-5- (final warning to a "brotherly Arab country") (13/01/2024)

The above headline has pragmatic ambiguity, the writer intentionally avoids mentioning the warning source, it could be from the parliament, council of ministers, or the president, also the headline does not mention the country, but refers to it by "brotherly Arab country". This Arab country could be more than 20 Arab countries.

The headline does not mention which country for political purposes, the text tells that the warning was from Algerian Supreme Security Council.

الطوفان "يزيد من غرق الكيان"

B-6-(The flood increases the sinking of the entity) (16/01/2024)

This headline has metaphor ambiguity, when the author creates and expresses a complex situation by using a similar situation in nature. The meaning of this headline is that the entity is sinking because of the increase of the flood.

The body content talks about a similar expression and gives the war situation, and the international court trials a natural character, which is the flood sinking.

... و شهد شاهد من أهلها

B-7-(And, the witness was from her family, (the witness was from inside)) (17/01/2024)

This headline has pragmatic ambiguity, the writer wants to say that, the witness came from inside the country it could be a court, government organizations, or institution. This

headline carries messages for the reader or readers that it is clear that we have evidences, how it happened, or who is the victim.

The content support the interpretation that says government organizations from inside country.

الجزائر صوت " عدم الانحياز " في مجلس الأمن

B-8-(Algeria is the voice of Non-alignment in the Security Council (UNSC) (United National Security Council)).(18/01/2024)

Here it has also pragmatic ambiguity, in which Algeria the only country in the NSC (National Security Council), and Non-alignment. But it has more than one interpretations, such as:

Voice itself, politic voice, speaking instead of them, or the non-alignment position.

The content ensure the politic voice.

عهد إفلات الاحتلال من العقاب قد انتهى

B-9-(The era of the occupation's impunity has ended) (20/01/2024)

This headline has syntactic ambiguity, for the reasons of ellipsis in it. It could be more than one occupation country (France, Israel, or others).

The content ensure the second interpretation.

الخضر ..... الخطأ غير مسموح

B-10-(Greens... Error is not allowed) (21/01/202)

This one has lexical ambiguity, because the word (green) refers to color, and football team in Algeria.

The content supports the second hypothesis.

الخضر ..... الانتصار لإكمال المشوار

B-11-(Greens.... The victory to complete the journey) (23/01/2024)

This headline has lexical ambiguity as well, talking about the same topic in headline number 10.

نظام تعويضي جديد لـ " التعليم العالي "

B-12-(A new compensation system for higher education) (25/01/2024)

This headline has lexical ambiguity, considering that the word compensation open numerous interpretations, it may monetary compensation, time compensation, or other ways. The content discuss a monetary compensation.

عسكريو باماكو يختارون الحرب الأهلية

B-13-(Bamako soldiers choose civil war) (27/01/2024)

This headline has pragmatic ambiguity, does not mean that the soldiers really choose civil war but it may refer to rejection of other solutions such as, elections, negotiations, or political agreement.

The content supports the final interpretation.

البرهان في الجزائر لدعم مناعة السودان

B-14-(Al-Burhan is in Algeria to support Sudan's immunity) (29/01/2024)

This headline has pragmatic ambiguity, the real and clear meaning is health immunity however, it could mean (economic, military, relationship or politic and security immunity).

The content supports the fourth and the fifth interpretation.

باماكو تفقد البوصلة

B-15-(Bamako loses the compass )(31/01/2024)

It has pragmatic ambiguity, the real meaning is the country loses the direction, but it has other hidden meaning, it could be the country loses the leadership, the control, politic direction or someone important.

The content supports the third interpretation.

هذا هو موقف واشنطن

B-16-(This is Washington's position) (3/02/2024)

There is a lexical ambiguity, the word "position " could pretty fair to physical location, a particular stance, or opinion.

The content has explored a Washington's stance on Algerian agreement in Mali.

صفقة الهدنة ... غزة لن تنكسر

B-17-(The truce deal ... Gaza will not be broken) (08/02/2024)

Due to incomplete nature of the headline it is challenging to determine the rest of the headline, so it is syntactic ambiguity. It opens interpretations such as, trade, political, labor, or a peace truce deal.

The headline explored the forth interpretation.

الجزائر و تونس رابطة بدماء الشهداء

B-18-(Algeria and Tunisia... a link with the blood of martyrs) (10/02/2024)

There is a pragmatics ambiguity in which the written meaning shows that there is a link of blood, but it has intended meaning depending on the specific historical events, ethnic, or cultural context.

The content supported the first one.

مبادرة جديدة لنصرة فلسطين

B-19-(A new initiative to support Palestine) (12/02/2024)

It has lexical ambiguity because the word initiative could refer to political support, protest support, or through the organization.

The content refers to the political support.

النيجر ... هل يغرق في الفوضى؟

B-20-(Niger...Is it drowning in problems?)(15/02/2024)

It has pragmatic ambiguity, the words "drawing in problems" are suggest a numerous of problems that this country has. It could be politic, economic, or national security problems.

The content supported the last one.

تجاوزنا المؤشرات الحمراء

B-21-(We crossed the red flags) (18/02/2024)

There are pragmatic and lexical ambiguity, pragmatics, it could refer to disregarding or violating warning signals, or red flags to indicate caution or danger, lexical the phrase "crossed the red flags" can have multiple interpretation, it could be physical crossing or passing by flags that are red in color, crossing the natural disaster, or economic danger. The lexical ambiguity is strongly convincing.

The content supported the last one.

هذه شروط تعويض مصاريف المهمات

B-22-(These are the conditions for reimbursement of mission expenses) (28/02/2024)

It has lexical ambiguity, the word reimbursement has several interpretations, it could be financial or time reimbursement or others.

The contest talks about the financial reimbursement.

قمة الجزائر ... قرارات منتظرة ورسائل

B-23-(The Algeria summit... awaited decisions and messages) (29/02/2024)

It has lexical ambiguity, in which the word summit could refer to national, International, gas, regional, or other summit.

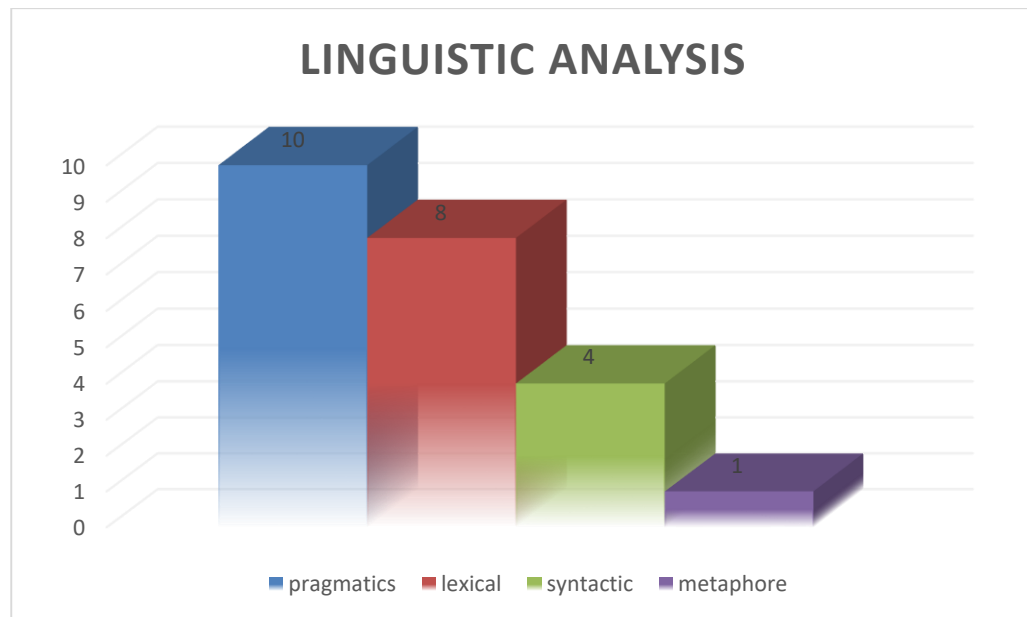
The content supports the third interpretation.

### **C-Conclusion and Discussions:**

This collection from Al-Khabar, could contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced in news communication and the importance of clear and precise language in journalism. As we have mentioned in the introduction, almost more than the half of headlines are ambiguous, as a result the journalists in Al-Khabar prefer ambiguous headlines.

In the number of 23 ambiguous Algerian NPH analyzed, it was observed that, 10 headlines exhibited pragmatics ambiguity, 8 headlines displayed lexical ambiguity, 4 headlines demonstrated syntactic ambiguity, and 1 headline contained metaphor ambiguity. So the Algerian writers in Al Khabar prefer pragmatics, and 60% of the pragmatic NPH have political hidden meanings (B5,B7,B8,B12,B14,B15). It may because of those topics that involving national and international policies, can be highly sensitive and have significant implications. Journalists often use pragmatics to navigate these sensitive issues.





**Figure 1:** Linguistic Analysis

## **2-Psycholinguistic Data:**

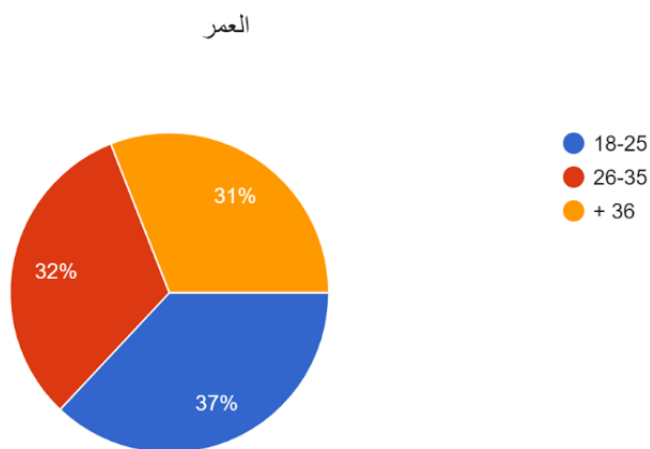
### **A-Introduction :**

In the part of psycholinguistics study, we employ an online questionnaire, applying quantitative method to gather data from respondents located in various cities of Algeria. The study is divided into three main sections. The first section involves the selection of the participants' age. In the second section, we assess the participants' proficiency in correctly interpreting three headlines. These headlines contain specific instances of ambiguity that are discussed in our linguistic part, (pragmatics, syntactic, and lexical). Lastly, the third section is dedicated to examining the impact of these ambiguous headlines on the 100 reader's attention and desire (Ambiguity Preference, comfort level, reader's habits).

## B-Collecte and analysis Psycholinguistic data:

The age

100 réponses



**Figure 2:** Age Percentage

After collecting data from a group of 100 participants, we found that the percentages were almost equal across different age ranges. Specifically, we observed that 37% of participants fell in the age range of 18 to 25, 32% fell in the age range of 26 to 35, and 31% were above the age of 36. However, we need to conduct further analysis to provide more detailed insights.

Below some  
العنوان الاول: تقريركم مغلوط  
التي يلي بعض العناوين الرئيسية من جريدة الخبر الجزائرية الغامضة , نحاول الحصول على معناها الصحيح  
ambiguous headlines from Algerian newspaper AL Khabar, we...g  
100 réponses

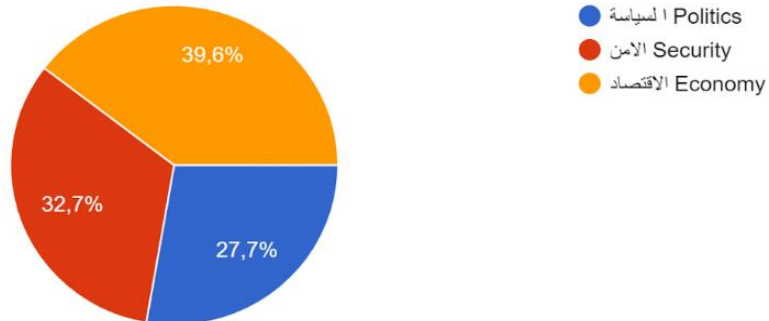


**Figure 3:** First NPH (Syntactic)

### 3- Bamako loses the compass

باماكو تفقد البوصلة

101 réponses

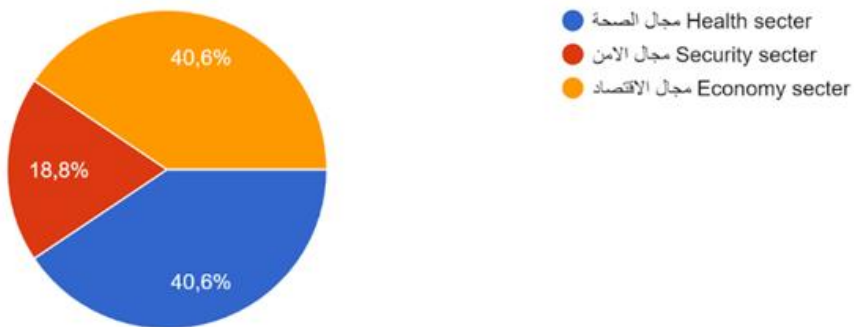


**Figure4:** Second NPH (Pragmatic)

### 4- We crossed the red line

تجاوزنا المؤشرات الحمراء

101 réponses

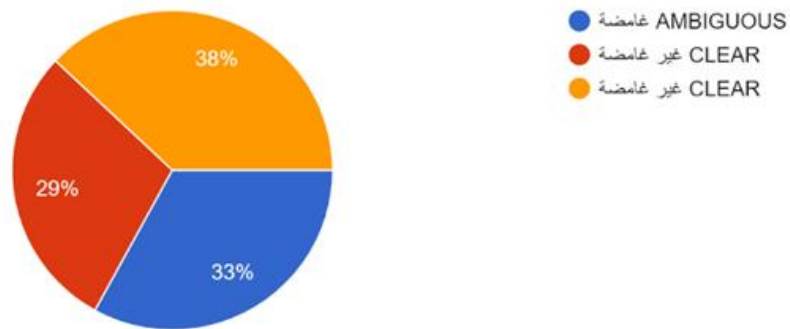


**Figure 5:** Third NPH (Lexical)

The findings of questionnaire data demonstrated that only 22% of the readers were able to grasp the exact meaning of the syntactical ambiguous headline, also for the pragmatic ambiguous headlines 27.7% of the readers could grasp the right interpretation and meaning, however in the lexical ambiguity example, 40.6% of the readers were able to grasp the right meaning. So majority of the readers were not able to grasp the syntactic and pragmatics ambiguous headlines. While in lexical headline the majority of the participants were able to guess the right meaning.

كيف تفضل عناوين الصحف الرئيسية؟ How do you like news headlines ?

100 réponses

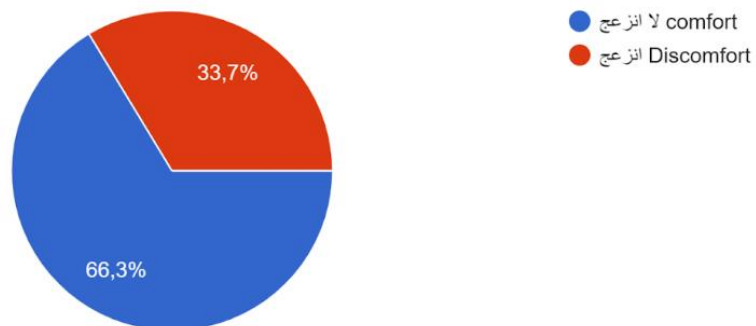


**Figure 6:** Ambiguity Preference

How do feel when you come across an ambiguous headline?

101 réponses

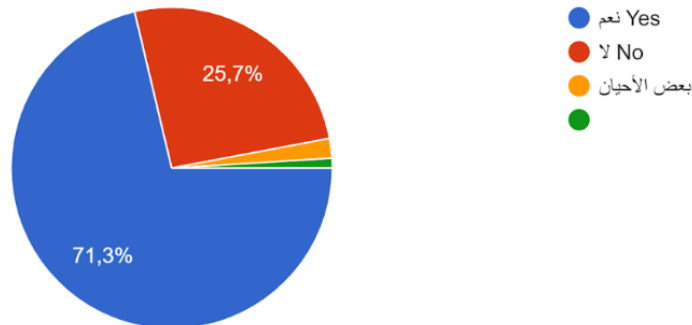
كيف تشعر عند مصادفتك لعنوان غامض؟



**Figure 7 :** Comfort Level

Do you read the content of favorite subject even if the headline is ambiguous, like sport and politics  
هل تقرا محتوى العناوين المفضلة لديك حتى وان كانت غامضة مثل الرياضة والسياسة؟

101 réponses



**Figure 8: Reading Habits**

Based on the data above:

1. Ambiguity Preference: It concluded that, 62% of the readers do not like ambiguous headlines, while 38% do like them. This suggests that a majority of the readers prefer clear and concise headlines that accurately convey the content.

2. Comfort Levels: About 33.7% of the readers feel comfortable with ambiguous headlines, while 66.3% feel discomfort. This indicates that a significant portion of the readership finds ambiguous headlines to be confusing or unsatisfactory.

3. Reading Habits: Interestingly, despite the ambiguity, 72% of the readers still choose to read their favorite content. This suggests that even if the headline is unclear, readers are willing to invest their time in familiar or preferred content. On the other hand, 25.7% of readers opt not to read the content when faced with ambiguous headlines.

These findings highlight the importance of clear and unambiguous headlines in attracting and engaging readers. Ambiguous headlines tend to generate discomfort and dissatisfaction among the majority of readers. However, it is worth noting that readers' personal preferences and familiarity with the content can influence their decision to read despite the ambiguity.

### C-Conclusion and Discussion:

The Algerian readers prefer Lexical ambiguous headlines, in comparison with pragmatic and syntactic, the three types exist in the newspaper, has been observed in (Figure 3, 4, and 5). It is worth noting that, in general, readers do not appreciate headlines that lack clarity, and they prefer them unambiguous (Figure 6). In other hand they do not mind the

headlines ambiguity (figure 7). Especially when the headlines represent interesting and favorite topics to them, they are more likely to overlook its ambiguity and pay attention to it (Figure8). These findings highlight the unique characteristics of Algerian readers' preferences regarding headline ambiguity and their ability to adapt their reading experiences based on personal interests, cultural background and content enjoyment.

### **General Conclusion:**

Newspaper headlines serve as gateways to news article or story. News organizations and journalists employ specific techniques to convey information and capture the reader's attention, one of the strategies is using ambiguity whether in purpose or not, the writers rely on linguistic aspects in headlines. The aim of this research is to investigate the most type of ambiguity used and implications of ambiguity in newspaper headlines in Algeria (Al-Khabar). To achieve our research objectives, we employed a multi-method approach encompassing data collection and analysis. This will involve the examination of a sample of newspaper headlines from Al-Khabar Algerian newspaper, as well as conducting online questionnaire to gather readers' perceptions and interpretations. The analysis employed both qualitative and quantitative techniques. In hypothesis we suggested that, the ambiguous headlines make the readers excited to know and remove the ambiguity, especially if the matter is important. It may increase the attraction of the readers. There are readers who have special admiration for preferred content. The literature review highlights the various techniques and effects of this linguistic and psycholinguistic phenomenon.

The Algerian writers in Al Khabar prefer pragmatics, and 60% of the pragmatic NPH have political hidden meanings. It may be because of those topics that involving national and international topics, it can be highly sensitive and have significant implications. Journalists often use pragmatics to navigate these sensitive issues.

After collecting data from a group of 100 participants, we found that the percentages were almost equal across different age ranges. It has been observed that, the preference of Algerian readers for Lexical ambiguous headlines, comparing to pragmatic and syntactic, the three types exist in the research. It is worth noting that, in general, readers do not appreciate headlines that lack clarity. On other hand, they do not mind the headlines ambiguity. Especially when the headlines represent interesting and favorite topics, they are more likely to overlook its ambiguity and pay attention to it. These findings highlight the unique characteristics of Algerian readers' preferences regarding headline ambiguity and their ability to adapt their reading experiences based on personal interests, cultural background and content enjoyment.

The Algerian journalists prefer pragmatic ambiguity, mainly for the political topics, for sensitive headlines, to send hidden meanings, however the Algerian readers prefer lexical ambiguity for the reason that, using lexical types in writing seem unambiguous such as, homonyms, and homographs. Finally we wish this paper will be reflected on the journalists of Al-Khabar specifically and Algerian journalists generally, and minimize ambiguous headlines, by utilize *this valuable findings that insight the unique Algerian reader and the challenges* faced him to understand the newspaper headlines.

**Limitations:**

The research findings only apply to the headlines taken from Al Khabar, an Algerian newspaper, during a specific period. Additionally, the study did not investigate how readers' academic level influences their ability to understand different types of ambiguous news headlines.

## References:

ACTUAL SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW Universitas HKBP Nommensen  
Pematangsiantar <https://uhnp.ac.id> › uploads › 2024/03 › An-Ana...

Al Janaby, H. M., & Abed, A. A. (2011). Syntactic ambiguity in newspaper headlines. *Journal of the Faculty of Collective Knowledge*, 16, 1-29.  
<https://scholar.google.com/scholar>

Alamoudi, K. (2017). Syntactic Ambiguity of Arabic Prepositional Phrase Attachment in Saudi Newspaper Headlines. *Arabic Language, Literature & Culture*, 2(1), 13-17. Google Scholar

AMBIGUITY | meaning - Cambridge Learner's Dictionary Cambridge Dictionary. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org> › a...

Ambiguity in News Headlines: A psycholinguistic Study. (Tereszkiewicz, 2012) <https://alsun.journals.ekb.eg> ›

Ambiguity in News Headlines: A Psycholinguistic Study  
<https://www.researchgate.net>

Articles of headlines & headlines: Towards distinctive linguistic and pragmatic genericity Shaeda Isani (2011) p. 81-102  
<https://journals.openedition.org/asp/2523?lang=en>

Awwad, M. (2017). The Ambiguous Nature of Language. *International J. Soc. Sci. & Education*, 7(4), 2223-4934.

Bucaria, C. (2004). Lexical and syntactic ambiguity as a source of humor: The case of newspaper headlines. Google Scholar

Bucaria, C. (2004). Lexical and structural ambiguity in humorous headlines (Doctoral dissertation). Google Scholar

Cambridge Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>

Cambridge Dictionary  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org> › dictionary › ambiguity

Chomsky, N. (2014). *Aspects of the Theory. of Syntax* (No. 11). MIT press. Google scholar

Definition of headline noun from the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 2024 Oxford University Press



Dor,(2003). On newspaper headlines as relevance optimizers. Journal of pragmatics, 35(5), 695-721. [www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma)

Dr-Nasri.docx what-is-Pragmatics.1st-Level-Ling. <https://www.universitysaida.dz/uploads/2020/03>

Dudek, A. Syntactic ambiguity in newspaper headlines. Google Scholar

Elmawati, D. (2013). Structural Ambiguity in the Headlines Compiled by Department of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics Bucknell University: A Study on the X-bar Theory. LANTERN (Journal on English Language, Culture and Literature), 2(3), 111-118. Google Scholar

Ericksonian Phonological Ambiguities [ericksonian.com](http://ericksonian.com)  
<https://ericksonian.com> > Blog

Fitri, A. (2019). Lexical and Syntactical Ambiguity in the Headlines of CNN. University of Muhamadiyah. Skripsi. Google Scholar  
<https://human.libretexts.org> > Cosumnes\_River\_College

From English Grammar Today.  
<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/newspaper-headlines>

Gilbert, R. A., & Rodd, J. M. (2022). Dominance norms and data for spoken ambiguous words in British English. Journal of Cognition, 5(1).  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jml.2012.08.002>  
<https://youtube.com/@oer-vlc?si=5hW3fRPXPeUYuZCm>. VLC103

Jayaprana, R. A. P. (2015). An Analysis of Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity on The Headlines of The Jakarta Post Online Newspaper (Doctoral dissertation, UNIVERSITAS AIRLANGGA). Google Scholar

Khalaf Omer, Z., & Hassan Ali, S. (2013). The Linguistic Features of Newspapers Headlines. Anbar University Journal of Languages & Literature, 5(1), 213-229. Google Scholar

Kurniati, E. (2016). Semantic Analysis On Sense Of Ambiguity In The Headline Printed The Jakarta Post Published On March 13th–April 13th, 2015. In PRASASTI: CONFERENCE SERIES (pp. 278-282). Google Scholar

Linguistic Pitfalls - Humanities Libre Texts Humanities Libre Texts

Massamba, E. (2022). Investigating structural ambiguity in newspaper headlines: A case study of selected headlines in the Namibian newspaper between 1st February and 31st December 2020 (Doctoral dissertation, University of Namibia). Google Scholar

METAPHOR | English meaning - Cambridge Dictionary

Neil Smith Book: New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind

Published online: 05 June 2012 Print publication: 13 April 2000, pp 19-45

Nurfadilah, S. (2022). Syntactic Ambiguity Found In Business Headlines Of The New York Times. *EL2J (English Language and Literature Journal)*, 1(1), 27-39. Google Scholar

Nurradiatumardiah, N. (2020). Structural and lexical ambiguities in the Jakarta post headlines (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim). Google Scholar

Olusanya, A. M. A Syntactic Analysis of Ambiguity in Nigerian Newspaper Headlines. Google Scholar

Perfetti, C. A., Beverly, S., Bell, L., Rodgers, K., & Faux, R. (1987). Comprehending newspaper headlines. *Journal of memory and language*, 26(6), 692-713. Google Scholar

Purdue University Paolo Bartoloni National University of Ireland Galway

Anthony Stephens University of Sydney (2010) <https://docs.lib.purdue.edu>

Ramadani, N. (2015). Lexical Ambiguity in the Headlines of the Jakarta Post Newspaper. *Vivid: Journal of Language and Literature*, 4(1). Google Scholar

Reham Khalifa (June 2018) University of Damietta

Salih, Y. M., & Abdulla, Q. A. M. (2012). Linguistic features of newspaper headlines. *Journal of Al-Anbar University for Language and Literature*, 7, 192-213. Google Scholar

Salliyanti, S., Sibarani, R., Susilo, H., & Harahap, N. (2022). Semantic study of the use of association, ambiguity, and lexical meanings, daily news headlines of Sinar Indonesia Baru Medan. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 6(S2), 258-274. Google Scholar

Schramm, W. (1955). *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press

SemanticsnounOxfordLearner'sDictionaries<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com> > definition

Sevida, S. L. (2015). Structural ambiguity of news headlines “yahoo news”(the study of x-bar theory). Google Scholar

Shan, C. C., & Mutty, B. (2020, September). Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity in the Vaccine News Headlines of the Star. In International Conference of Teacher Education. Google Scholar

Silvyana, S. (2020). Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity in the Headlines of the Telegraph and Yahoo News (Doctoral dissertation, Prodi Bahasa Inggris). Google Scholar

Silvyana, S. (2020). Lexical and Syntactic Ambiguity in the Headlines of the Telegraph and Yahoo News (Doctoral dissertation, Prodi Bahasa Inggris). Google Scholar

Taufiqoh, T. (2017). Ambiguity in headline on 2017 French election in BBC News Online (Doctoral dissertation, University as Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim). Google Scholar

The Nature of Meaning Introduction to Ambiguity in Culture and Literature

Tom Johnson on May 19, 2021 categories: technical-writing10 characteristics of ambiguous content I'd Rather Be Writing blog. <https://idratherbewriting.com> › blog › what-is-ambiguou.

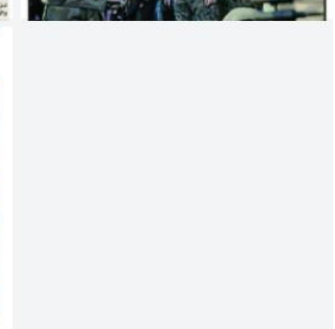
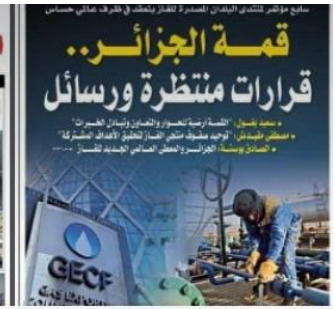
Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pematangsiantar ACTUAL SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW <https://uhnp.ac.id> › uploads › 2024/03 › An-Ana...

University Press & Assessment 2024 Meaning of headline in English Cambridge <https://journals.openedition.org/asp/2523?lang=en>

vagueness noun - Definition, pictures, pronunciation. Oxford Learner's Dictionaries <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>

Wanda, J. F., Chipanjilo, B. S., Gondwe, G., & Kerunga, J. (2021). Clickbait-style headlines and journalism credibility in Sub-Saharan Africa: exploring audience perceptions. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, 13(2), 50-56. Google Scholar.





## Summary:

A newspaper headlines is the gateway of news article or story, the writers utilize ambiguity unintentionally or intentionally, this research aims to investigate the ambiguity in Algerian newspaper headlines, focusing on the newspaper Al Khabar. The study adopts a linguistic and psycholinguistic approach to explore the phenomenon of ambiguity in headlines, shedding light on its linguistic types, which play significant roles in headline comprehension, by analyzing a corpus of Al Khabar headlines. Furthermore, combining and analyzing the psycholinguistic data to explore the effects of ambiguity on readers.

## الملخص

العناوين الرئيسية للصحف هي البوابة التي ينطلق منها الكاتب إلى الخبر أو القصة، ويستغل الكاتب الغموض عن قصد أو غير قصد، ويهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة الغموض في عناوين الصحف الجزائرية، مع التركيز على صحيفة الخبر. وتعتمد الدراسة على المنهج اللغوي والنفسي اللغوي لاستكشاف ظاهرة الغموض في العناوين، وإلقاء الضوء على أنواعها اللغوية التي تلعب دورًا مهمًا في فهم العنوان، من خلال تحليل مجموعة من عناوين صحيفة الخبر، علاوة على ذلك، يتم الجمع بين البيانات النفسية اللغوية وتحليلها لاستكشاف آثار الغموض على القراء.

## Résumé

Les titres d'un journal sont la porte d'entrée d'un article ou d'une histoire d'actualité, les auteurs utilisent l'ambiguïté involontairement ou intentionnellement, cette recherche vise à enquêter sur l'ambiguïté dans les titres des journaux algériens, en se concentrant sur le journal Al Khabar. L'étude adopte une approche linguistique et psycholinguistique pour explorer le phénomène d'ambiguïté dans les titres, en mettant en lumière ses types linguistiques, qui jouent un rôle important dans la compréhension des titres, en analysant un corpus de titres d'Al Khabar. De plus, la combinaison et l'analyse des données psycholinguistiques permettent d'explorer les effets de l'ambiguïté sur les lecteurs.