



## THE ANALYSIS OF AMBIGUITY FOUND IN T.S. ELIOT'S POEMS

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### Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the ambiguity found in T.S. Eliot's poetry. This research was focused on Eliot words such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," "The Waste Land," and "Gerontion." This research used qualitative descriptive methods to discuss the ambiguity of analysis contained in T.S. Eliot's poetry. The data was analyzed using Katz's (1971) theory of ambiguity. The result found ambiguity divided into three types, namely structural, referential and lexical ambiguity. This research identifies types of ambiguity in the data, then explains how ambiguity occurs in the data. The research results show that lexical ambiguity frequently occurs in T.S. Eliot's poetry rather than structural and referential ambiguity. In this study, phonetic ambiguity was not found in T.S. Eliot's poems.

**Keywords:** *Ambiguity, Poems, Structural, Referential, Lexical*

### A. INTRODUCTION

Language is a human communication system. It plays a crucial role in shaping how people communicate and coexist. The diverse nature of language facilitates global information exchange, whether through written words describing global events or through verbal and non-verbal expressions conveying thoughts and emotions. According to Sampson (2001:1), language is a communication tool, where individuals organize their thoughts through speaking or writing to ensure mutual understanding.

According to Fromkin (2000:3), linguistics is the study of human language. It examines how languages are structured, how they convey meaning, and how they are acquired and used by individuals and communities. By studying linguistics, we can understand the complexity of language and how language is used in communication.

Linguistics has various aspects related to language, including semantics. Semantics is a crucial subfield of linguistics that examines how context influences the meaning of words. According to Palmer (1981:1), "The technical term used to refer to the study of meaning and since meaning is a part of language, semantics is

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a part of linguistics” which is meant that Semantic is a technical terminology that concern with study about meaning and because meaning is a part of language so that semantic is a part of linguistics. It elucidates contextual significance, which can sometimes be mistaken for the literal meaning by certain individuals. Consequently, words, phrases, and sentences can have multiple interpretations, leading to issues of ambiguity.

According to Leech (1981:30), an expression is said to be ambiguous when it can be interpreted in more than one way. Furthermore, Fromkin and Rodman (1983:168-169) also state that a word, phrase, or sentence is considered ambiguous if it can be understood or interpreted in more than one way. From the above quotation, we can simply conclude that ambiguity occurs when a word, phrase, or sentence has more than one meaning.

The importance of studying ambiguity is to reduce any judgments that occur in the field of language where some people study language. They make judgments among themselves that their friend's interpretation is wrong. They simply stick to their own interpretation without considering others' interpretations. Furthermore, they are not aware that linguistics does not consider the correctness or incorrectness of a language. What they should realize is how a language is appropriate or not in its usage.

The analysis of ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's poems delve into the intricate layers of linguistic complexity embedded within his works. Eliot, a key figure in the modernist literary movement, crafted poems such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," "Gerontion," and "The Waste Land," each exhibiting a deliberate and profound use of ambiguity. These instances prompt diverse interpretations, mirroring the internal conflicts and uncertainties inherent in Eliot's characters. The dramatic monologue form employed by Eliot introduces unreliable narrators, inviting readers to discern between reality and illusion, contributing to the intentional ambiguity that permeates his works. This deliberate ambiguity extends to Eliot's use of symbolism, intertextuality, and allusions, constructing a poetic labyrinth that demands active reader engagement.

The poems were situated within historical contexts, exploring the psyche of characters like Prufrock and the Hollow Men, addressing broader themes of modernity, existentialism, and societal disintegration. In conclusion, Eliot's masterful incorporation of ambiguity invites readers to navigate the intricate layers of meaning, making his works enduring subjects for analysis across literary, cultural, and psychological dimensions. The identified ambiguities, phonetic, structural, lexical, and referential, create complex and profound layers of meaning, illustrating the intricacies of the human mind, existential doubts, and the changing social paradigms of Eliot's era. The intentional obscurity in Eliot's poetry serves to stimulate deep thought and interpretation, allowing readers to actively participate in the meaning-making process, enriching the reading experience and exemplifying the profound challenges and changes of the times Eliot faced.

This research zooms in on the ambiguity inherent in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, a prominent individual in the modernist literary movement. The exploration of

Eliot's works, known for their layers of meaning and exploration of human desires and suffering, aims to analyze the types of ambiguity present and how ambiguity occurs in the poetry of T.S. Eliot. The identification, description, and analysis of these ambiguities not only contribute theoretically by expanding the examples of ambiguity types but also hold practical significance for linguistic students, encouraging a nuanced understanding of word-level ambiguities and fostering open-minded interpretation. Ultimately, this research seeks to enrich the comprehension of language as a subjective and interpretive medium, urging language professionals to appreciate the contextual nature of interpretation within the intricate tapestry of linguistic expression.

## **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

This study was a descriptive qualitative research methodology, aiming to provide a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of ambiguity within T.S. Eliot's poems. The decision to employ a qualitative approach is grounded in four key criteria outlined by Bodgan and Biklen (1998), reflecting the nature of the research objectives and the intricacies of Eliot's poetic works. The qualitative methodology is rooted in a naturalistic approach, aligning with the researcher's role as the primary instrument in the data collection and analysis process. The researcher, in this case, the writer, actively engages with the poems of T.S. Eliot to unravel the layers of ambiguity present within them.

The primary data source for this research comprises the poems written by T.S. Eliot himself. While T.S. Eliot has an extensive body of work encompassing around 277 poems, this study narrows its focus to a select group of five poems for in-depth analysis. The chosen poems include "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Waste Land," "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," and "The Gerontion." These poems were selected based on their significance within Eliot's oeuvre and their propensity to evoke diverse interpretations, thereby providing a rich and varied dataset for the investigation of ambiguity. The meticulous analysis of these specific poems serves as the cornerstone for unraveling the intricate layers of linguistic ambiguity within T.S. Eliot's poetic creations.

## **C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The result show types of ambiguity found in T.S. Eliot's poems. The data was collected from the T.S Eliot Poems which are *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *The Waste Land*, *The Hollow Men*, *Ash Wednesday*, and the last one is *The Gerontion*. Here are some types of ambiguity found in this poem:

### **1) Result**

#### **a. Structural Ambiguity**

Structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or sentence has more than one underlying structure. The ambiguity arises from the prepositional phrases that can function as both adverbs and adjectives.

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot, structural ambiguity is prevalent, contributing to the complexity and depth of the poem. One instance that showcases structural ambiguity is in the opening stanza 2 lines 1,2,3:

*"Let us go then, you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherized upon a table;"  
(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Elliot)*

The phrase "Like a patient etherized upon a table" creates structural ambiguity because the prepositional phrase "upon a table" can be interpreted in two different ways, depending on its relationship to the preceding clause. In the context of the poem "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot, this phrase brings two possible understandings that give different nuances to the stanza.

First, the phrase "upon a table" can be thought of as an adjectival modifier describing the condition of the subject "patient." In this interpretation, the phrase implies the image of an unconscious or helpless patient, lying on a table, perhaps in the context of a medical procedure or procedure being performed. Secondly, the phrase can also be considered an adverbial phrase describing the location or manner of action described in the previous clause. In this context, the phrase "upon a table" indicates that the subject's action or state is occurring on the table, rather than the subject itself being located on the table.

These two interpretations have different implications in understanding the verse as a whole. The structural ambiguity here provides depth and richness of meaning to the poem, allowing readers to ponder multiple possible interpretations and providing complex nuances to their reading experience. In another instance of structural ambiguity within "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot employs linguistic complexity to convey nuanced meaning, in the lines:

*"And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me."  
(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Elliot)*

In the poem's stanza, "Would it have been worth it, after all," contains structural ambiguity because this sentence can be interpreted in several different ways depending on how the reader understands the sentence structure.

First, the phrase "after all" can be thought of as an adverbial clause indicating the time or sequence of events. In this case, the sentence can be interpreted as a question about whether something (which is not yet specific) will have value or success at the end of a series of events or experiences that have

occurred. Second, "after all" can also be considered an idiomatic phrase that implies consideration or regret for something that has been done or experienced. In this context, the sentence may describe doubt or reflection about whether something that has been done or pursued has the value or success commensurate with the sacrifice or effort that has been made.

These two interpretations show how structural ambiguity can enrich the meaning and complexity of poetry, allowing readers to explore the various layers of interpretation and emotional nuance contained in the words.

In T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," structural ambiguity is prevalent throughout the poem, contributing to its complexity and the reader's engagement. One instance of structural ambiguity can be found in the following lines from the first section, "The Burial of the Dead":

*"April is the cruellest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
Memory and desire, stirring  
Dull roots with spring rain."  
(The Waste Land, Elliot)*

The clause, "April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing," has structural ambiguity because the phrase "breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing" can be interpreted in several different ways, depending on how the reader interprets its connection with the previous sentence.

Firstly, this phrase can be considered an adverbial clause that explains more about why April is considered a cruel month. In this case, the phrase implies that in April, dead or infertile soil produces lilac flowers. This creates an image of nature's fury bringing back life from the void, providing the backdrop for the assertion that April is a cruel month. Second, the phrase can also be seen as a participial clause referring to April as a subject who is "breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing." In this interpretation, April herself acts as a maker, causing the dead soil to become fertile and produce lilacs, as well as mixing natural elements to create a new balance. Because these two interpretations offer different understandings of April's role and meaning in the sentence, there is a structural ambiguity that allows readers to interpret and appreciate the poem's stanzas in a variety of different ways.

.Another example of structural ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land" can be found in the section titled "A Game of Chess." The ambiguity is evident in the following lines:

*"The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
Glowed on the marble, where the glass  
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines  
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out  
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)  
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
Reflecting light upon the table as  
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
From satin cases poured in rich profusion;*

*In vials of ivory and colored glass,  
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused,  
And drowned the sense in odors; stirred by the air  
That freshened from the window, these ascended  
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,  
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,  
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling."  
(The Waste Land, Elliot)*

The sentence "Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra" has structural ambiguity because the phrase can be interpreted in two different ways depending on how the reader understands its relationship to the previous clause.

First, the phrase can be considered a participial clause that functions as a modification for the unclear subject in the sentence. In this context, the sentence can be interpreted as the non-specific subject doubling the flame intensity of the ten-branched candelaber. It shows the action or effect of an unclear subject in increasing the power or light of the candelaber. Second, the phrase can also be considered an adverbial clause that provides additional information about what is happening in the broader context. In this case, the phrase describes how the intensity or power of the flames of the ten-branched candelabra increases, creating a visual image of the event taking place.

Both interpretations show how structural ambiguity gives rise to different understandings of the events described in the sentence. This gives depth and nuance to the sentence, allowing readers to imagine different situations and interpret the sentence in different ways.

In T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men," an example of structural ambiguity can be found in the lines:

*"Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralysed force, gesture without motion;"  
(The Hollow Men, Elliot)*

The sentence "Shape without form, shade without color" from the poem "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot has structural ambiguity because the phrase can be interpreted in several different ways, depending on how the reader understands its relationship to the context of the poem as a whole.

First, the phrase can be considered a paradoxical or contradictory description. In this case, "shape without form" refers to something that has form but no actual substance or essence, while "shade without color" describes something that exists but without the obvious presence of color. This interpretation creates an image of something vague or unreal, which creates an impression of vagueness or confusion.

Second, the phrase can also be considered a metaphorical statement describing a certain abstract or psychological state. In this context, "shape without form" may refer to emptiness or absence of substance in life or experience, while "shade without color" may describe the absence of life or vitality in an atmosphere

or situation. This interpretation highlights the emotional or philosophical aspects of the sentence. Because these two interpretations offer different understandings of the meaning and implications of the sentence, there is a structural ambiguity that allows readers to interpret the poem in different ways and explore multiple layers of meaning.

Another example of structural ambiguity can be found in the lines:

*"Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow"  
(The Hollow Men, Elliot)*

The sentence "Falls the Shadow" is an example of structural ambiguity because it can be interpreted in several different ways, depending on how the reader understands its relationship to the larger context.

First, the sentence can be thought of as a clause in passive construction, with "the Shadow" as the subject and "falls" as the verb. In this case, the phrase describes the action of a shadow or silhouette falling from an object or entity that is not specifically mentioned. This interpretation provides a visual representation of a falling shadow, which may be related to changes in lighting or the presence of certain objects.

Second, the phrase can also be understood metaphorically, with "the Shadow" representing something abstract or figurative such as uncertainty, darkness, or death. In this interpretation, "Falls" can be interpreted as the act of falling or coming of something undesirable or frightening, creating an emotional or philosophical picture of change or a frightening state. Because the sentence is simple and does not provide clear context, readers have the freedom to interpret its meaning according to their own experiences and interpretations. This creates a structural ambiguity that allows the sentence to have a variety of possible meanings, depending on the reader's perspective and the context.

In T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday," structural ambiguity can be identified based on the theory of Katz, which involves the presence of multiple underlying structures in a phrase or sentence. It is consider the opening lines of the poem:

*"Because I do not hope to turn again  
Because I do not hope  
Because I do not hope to turn  
Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope"  
(Ash Wednesday, Elliot)*

The sentence "Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope" has structural ambiguity because the phrase can be interpreted in several different ways depending on how the reader understands its relationship to the previous clause.

First, the phrase can be considered a participial clause that functions as a description of the speaker's subject. In this case, the speaker's subject is considered to be longing for or wanting the talents or abilities possessed by one

person and the scope or opportunities possessed by another person. Ambiguity lies in how the phrase relates to the subject of the sentence as a whole.

Second, the phrase can also be thought of as a series of objects in a sentence. In this interpretation, the speaker's subject is thought to want a "gift" from one person and a "scope" from another. Ambiguity lies in the way the phrase is connected to other clauses in the sentence and in the wider context. Both interpretations show that the phrase "Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope" has a structural ambiguity that allows for a variety of different understandings, depending on the reader's interpretation of the structure and context of the sentence.

Another example of structural ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday." Consider the following lines from the poem:

*"Because these wings are no longer wings to fly  
But merely vans to beat the air  
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry  
Smaller and dryer than the will"*  
(Ash Wednesday, Elliot)

In the phrase "Smaller and dryer than the will," structural ambiguity can be observed:

1. Coordinate Structure

The line could be understood as presenting two separate characteristics of the air: being "smaller" and being "dryer." This suggests a coordinate structure where both characteristics are independent but related.

2. Subordinate Structure

The line can be interpreted as expressing a single characteristic of the air: being "smaller and dryer." This suggests a subordinate structure where the second adjective further describes the first, creating a unified characteristic.

The ambiguity in this instance influences the reader's perception of the air's nature and contributes to the overall complexity of Eliot's poetic expression. It invites multiple interpretations and allows for a richer engagement with the themes presented in the poem.

In T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion," structural ambiguity can be identified, aligning with Katz's concept of syntactic ambiguity. One instance is found in the following lines:

*"Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after-dinner sleep  
Dreaming of both."*  
(Gerontion, Elliot)

The sentence "Dreaming of Both" has structural ambiguity because the phrase can be interpreted in several different ways depending on how the reader understands its relationship to the previous clause. One way to understand this sentence is that "both" refers to two previously mentioned things or concepts in a broader context. In this case, the speaker's subject is dreaming or longing for both



things simultaneously. The ambiguity lies in what is meant by "both" and what is the object of the dream or desire.

Another interpretation is that "both" could refer to two things or options being considered by the speaking subject. In this case, the subject may be dreaming or longing for the possibility of having or achieving both things, without choosing one of them. The ambiguity lies in what is the object of the dream or desire and how the subject's choices or actions relate to these two things. Both interpretations suggest that the phrase "Dreaming of Both" has a structural ambiguity that allows for several different understandings, depending on the reader's interpretation of the context and sentence structure.

. Here's another example of structural ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion," specifically in the following lines:

*"My house is a decayed house,  
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner.  
 Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,  
 Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London."  
 (Gerontion, Elliot)*

The structural ambiguity arises in the phrase "The Jew squats on the window sill, the owner." This phrase can be interpreted in two ways:

1. Coordinate Structure (Coordination):

The line could imply that there is a Jew squatting on the window sill, and simultaneously, there is an owner. Both entities (the Jew and the owner) are distinct and separate.

2. Subordinate Structure

The line can be understood as the speaker describing the Jew who squats on the window sill as the owner of the decayed house. In this case, "the Jew" is both squatting and the owner, forming a subordinate structure.

The structural ambiguity in these lines opens up different possibilities for understanding the dynamics of ownership and decay within the speaker's contemplation. This complexity contributes to the richness of interpretation in Eliot's poem.

**1.1.1 Referential Ambiguity**

Referential ambiguity occurs when words, especially pronouns, can refer to more than one entity in the same sentence, another sentence, or another item in the world.

In T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," referential ambiguity is present in several instances, contributing to the overall complexity of the poem. One example can be found in the following lines:

*"Should I, after tea and cakes and ices,  
 Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?  
 But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,  
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon a platter.  
 I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
 I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,  
 And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,*

*And in short, I was afraid."*

*(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Elliot)*

The sentence "Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald] brought in upon a platter" has referential ambiguity because the phrase "my head" can be interpreted in two different ways, depending on how the reader understands the sentence structure.

The first interpretation is that "my head" refers literally to the head of a person who has experienced slight baldness, which is then used as an object or object placed on a plate. In this case, the sentence may describe an unusual or perhaps surreal situation, in which a person sees his own slightly bald head placed on a plate, perhaps in a dream or fantasy.

The second interpretation is that "my head" is used metaphorically to refer to a person's identity or self-esteem. In this case, the sentence can be interpreted as an expression of an experience or betrayal in which a person feels like his or her self-esteem or identity has been destroyed or compromised. This understanding creates a picture of a deep emotional state or dramatic experience.

Referential ambiguity occurs because the phrase "my head" can be translated literally or metaphorically, and this allows the sentence to have varying meanings depending on the context and the reader's interpretation.

Here's another example of referential ambiguity from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock";

*"I am no prophet—and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker.*

*And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker,  
And in short, I was afraid."*

*(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Elliot)*

The sentence "I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker" is referential because the phrase "the moment of my greatness" refers directly to a period of time or circumstances that the reader has previously understood from a wider context or narrative. In this sentence, "the moment of my greatness" refers to a time in the past where the speaker felt he had reached the peak of his achievement or success.

These references may have been established previously in the narrative or conversation, or they may refer to experiences the speaker has previously shared. Therefore, this sentence relies on an implied understanding of the concept of "greatness" which has been introduced previously in the text or context of conversation.

Thus, this sentence uses reference to a particular time or situation to convey an idea of the change or decline that the speaker has experienced, with "flicker" indicating that the moment in question no longer shines as brightly as before.

Another example can be seen in the following sentences:

*"And would it have been worth it, after all,*

*Would it have been worth it, after all,*

*After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,*

*Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,  
Would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor—  
And this, and so much more?—  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!"*  
(*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Elliot*)

The sentence "Would it have been worth it, after all," has referential ambiguity because the phrase refers to a consideration or question that is not explicitly explained in the sentence itself.

The ambiguity lies in what exactly "it" refers to. The phrase "Would it have been worth it" does not provide a direct clue as to what "it" actually means. This requires readers to refer back to the broader context or their own inferences to determine the meaning of "it". For example, "it" can refer to a specific action, decision, sacrifice, or event that was discussed previously in a text or conversation. However, without clear context, readers may have different interpretations of what is meant by "it", creating referential ambiguity in the sentence.

"The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot contains instances of referential ambiguity. Here are two examples along with explanations:

*"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,  
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?"*  
(*The Waste Land, Elliot*)

The sentence "Will it bloom this year?" and "Has it begun to sprout?" has referential ambiguity because both sentences use the phrase "it" without providing clear context about what "it" actually refers to.

Referential ambiguity lies in the absence of sufficient information to identify the object or subject referred to by "it". Readers must rely on the broader context or their own inference to understand what is meant by "it" in the sentence. For example, in the sentence "Will it bloom this year?", "it" may refer to a specific plant previously discussed or may generally refer to something that can bloom, such as a flower or plant in a broader context.

Likewise, in the sentence "Has it begun to sprout?", "it" could refer to the same plant or perhaps to something that can grow or develop, such as a plant, a seed, or even a concept or idea in a broader context. Since both sentences do not provide enough information about the object or subject referred to by "it", this creates a referential ambiguity that allows readers to have different interpretations of the meaning of the sentences.

Another example can be seen in the following sentences;

*"What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow  
Out of this stony rubbish?"*  
(*The Waste Land, Elliot*)

The sentence "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow" has referential ambiguity due to the use of the phrase "what" without providing a clear context about what the "roots" and "branches" actually refer to.

Referential ambiguity lies in the absence of sufficient information to identify exactly what is meant by "roots" and "branches". Readers must rely on the broader context or their own inference to understand the objects or subjects referred to by the "roots" and "branches" in the sentence. For example, "roots" can refer to the roots of a plant, but in a more metaphorical context, "roots" can also refer to the origins or root causes of a problem or condition. Likewise, "branches" can refer to the literal branches of a tree, but in a metaphorical context, "branches" can also refer to the outcome or consequences of something.

Due to the lack of clear context in the sentence, this creates a referential ambiguity that allows readers to have different interpretations of what is actually meant by "roots" and "branches" in the context of the sentence.

In this poem can be seen the referential ambiguity as follow;

*"Eyes I dare not meet in dreams  
In death's dream kingdom  
These do not appear:"  
(The Hollow Men, Elliot)*

The sentence "These do not appear" has referential ambiguity because it does not provide enough information to identify what "these" actually means. The phrase "these" refers to an object or subject that is not explicitly described in the sentence itself.

Referential ambiguity lies in the lack of clarity regarding what is meant by "these". Without further context or additional information, readers must rely on the broader context or their own inference to understand what is meant by "these" in the sentence. For example, "these" may refer to an object that has been mentioned previously in the text or conversation, or it may refer to something already familiar to the reader or listener in a broader context. Without clearer information, "these" can have different interpretations depending on the context of the sentence. Due to the lack of clarity in identifying the object or subject referred to by "these", this creates a referential ambiguity that allows readers to have different interpretations of the meaning of the sentence.

In this poem can be seen the referential ambiguity as follow;

*"Because I do not hope to turn again  
Because I do not hope  
Because I do not hope to turn"  
(Ash Wednesday, Elliot)*

The sentence "Because I don't hope" has referential ambiguity because the phrase "I don't hope" does not provide enough information to identify what "hope" actually means. Without further context or additional information, readers must rely on the broader context or their own inference to understand what is meant by "hope" in the sentence.

Referential ambiguity lies in the lack of clarity about whether "hope" refers to a particular wish, belief, or expectation held by the speaking subject, or perhaps refers to something more abstract such as hope in general. Due to the lack of clear context in the sentence, this creates a referential ambiguity that allows readers to have different interpretations of what "hope" actually means in the sentence.

In this poem can be seen the referential ambiguity as follow;

*"Who walked between the violet and the violet"*

*Who walked between*

*The various ranks of varied green"*

*(Gerontion, Elliot)*

The sentence "Who walked between the violet and the violet" has referential ambiguity due to the use of the phrase "the violet" twice without providing clear information about what is actually meant. The ambiguity lies in whether the first and second "the violet" refer to the same or different things. Without clearer context or additional information, readers must rely on their own inference to interpret the meaning of this sentence.

A possible interpretation is that the first "the violet" refers to one particular object or subject, while the second "the violet" refers to a different object or subject. This will create an image of a person walking between two different things called "violet".

However, it is also possible that the first and second "the violet" refer to the same thing, and that the repetition of the phrase is used to emphasize or describe something specific. Due to the lack of clear context in the sentence, this creates a referential ambiguity that allows readers to have different interpretations of what "the violet" actually means in the sentence.

### **1.1.2 Lexical Ambiguity**

Lexical ambiguity occurs in 'lexeme' because it has more than one meaning.

Lexical ambiguity in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot based on the provided information.

*"And would it have been worth it, after all,*

*Would it have been worth it, after all,*

*After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,*

*Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me,"*

*(The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Elliot)*

The sentence "And would it have been worth it, after all" has lexical ambiguity because the phrase "it" can be interpreted in several different ways depending on the context. "It" can refer to an action, decision, sacrifice, or specific event that has been discussed or implied previously in the text or conversation. "It" can also refer to a more abstract concept or idea, such as happiness, success, or appreciation that may have been previously explained or debated in the context of the conversation. Because "it" is not clearly defined in the sentence, readers must rely on the broader context or their own inference to

understand what is meant by "it" in the sentence. This creates lexical ambiguity that allows readers to have different interpretations of the meaning of the sentence. Another example of lexical ambiguity in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot.

*"I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each."*

The sentence "I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each" creates lexical ambiguity because the phrase "each to each" does not provide a clear enough context to understand its meaning with certainty. This phrase can be interpreted in several different ways, depending on the reader's interpretation.

One interpretation is that "each to each" refers to the interconnected interactions between the mermaids as they sing to each other. This implies that each mermaid responds or sings back to the other mermaids, creating a collaborative atmosphere in their singing activities.

However, another interpretation is that "each to each" refers to each mermaid singing individually or for herself, without any direct interaction between them. This means that each mermaid has an independent singing experience, without the involvement or direct response of other mermaids. The ambiguity of the phrase "each to each" creates room for readers to interpret the meaning of the sentence differently, depending on their individual understanding of the mermaids' singing activities and the relationship between them. Thus, this causes lexical ambiguity which allows various interpretations of the sentence.

An example of lexical ambiguity found in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." Such as "*April is the cruellest month, breeding*".

In the opening line of "The Waste Land," the word "*breeding*" introduces a form of lexical ambiguity. The term "*breeding*" has multiple meanings, and its interpretation in this context is open to different possibilities. The ambiguity arises from the potential dual meanings of "*breeding*." It could be interpreted in a biological sense, referring to the act of producing offspring or new life, typical of spring. On the other hand, it may carry a more metaphorical sense, suggesting the emergence or proliferation of negative or destructive elements.

This instance aligns with the concept of polysemy, where a single lexeme (in this case, "*breeding*") has multiple related meanings. This is intentional use of such ambiguous language invites readers to delve into the complexities of interpretation. The choice of the word contributes to the overall elusive and enigmatic nature of "The Waste Land," encouraging readers to grapple with various layers of meaning within the poem. Another example of lexical ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land."

*"Son of man,*

*You who hear my words but cannot say them, tell me,*

*What is the truth?"*

*(The Waste Land, Elliot)*

The sentence "Son of man" creates lexical ambiguity because the phrase has a meaning that can be interpreted differently depending on the context. In some contexts, "Son of man" can refer to divine or spiritual aspects, while in other

contexts, this phrase can refer to human existence in general. Historically and theologically, the term "Son of man" is often associated with Biblical references, particularly in books such as Daniel and the Book of Ezekiel, where the term is used to refer to a figure sent by God or as a title for Jesus Christ in the Testament New.

However, in general, outside of a religious context, "Son of man" can be interpreted as a male child or descendant of a human without religious connotations. In this context, the phrase refers to humans as creatures. Therefore, when reading the sentence "Son of man", readers may experience lexical ambiguity because it is unclear whether this phrase refers to a divine aspect, a religious figure, or simply to humans in general. Further understanding of the context is required to properly interpret the meaning of the phrase.

An example of lexical ambiguity is found in T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men."

*"Shape without form, shade without colour,*

*Paralysed force, gesture without motion;"*

*(The Hollow Men, Eliot)*

The sentences "Shape without form" and "shade without color" create lexical ambiguity because they combine words that have contrasting or contradictory meanings, but are used together in the same context. This ambiguity allows readers to interpret the meaning in various ways depending on their individual interpretation. "Shape without form" describes something that has shape or structure, but no meaningful substance or essence. It can be understood in an artistic or philosophical context as a representation that is visible but lacking in meaning or depth.

On the other hand, "shade without color" describes something that has color or visual appearance but is lacking in substance or real existence. This may refer to shadows or silhouettes that are visible but have no obvious or obvious color.

When the two phrases are used together, namely "Shape without form" and "shade without color", it creates an interesting dissonance and contrast. The two describe seemingly contradictory concepts, as shape and color are often considered interrelated in visual understanding.

Lexical ambiguity here provides room for readers to interpret the sentence in various ways, either artistically, philosophically, or metaphorically. This creates complex literary beauty and enriches the reader's experience with a variety of possible interpretations. Another example of lexical ambiguity is in T.S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men."

*"Between the idea*

*And the reality, between the motion*

*And the act, falls the Shadow..."*

*(The Hollow Men, Elliot)*

The sentence "And the act, falls the Shadow..." has lexical ambiguity due to its unconventional structure and word order, which results in an unclear or ambiguous interpretation. In a standard sentence structure, we would get something like "And the shadow falls upon the act...", which clearly states that the shadow falls upon the action performed. However, with an inverted sentence structure like this, "the act" followed by "falls the Shadow", there is syntactic confusion.

The ambiguity lies in two possible interpretations: "The act" mentioned at the beginning of a sentence may be intended to highlight or emphasize a particular action that is taking place. However, with the sentence structure reversed, "falls the Shadow" becomes unclear because we don't know what "the Shadow" means. "Falls the Shadow" could be interpreted as a complete sentence in itself, with "the Shadow" as the subject and "falls" as the verb. In this case, "the Shadow" may refer to a more abstract concept, such as uncertainty or fear, that comes after or submerges "the act." Due to the absence of clear context or unusual word order, these sentences create lexical ambiguity that allows for multiple interpretations, requiring deeper understanding or additional context to decipher their meaning properly.

Let's explore an example of lexical ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's "Ash Wednesday."

"Because I do not hope to turn again.  
Because I do not hope.  
Because I do not hope to turn..."  
*(Ash Wednesday, Elliot)*

The sentence, taken from the poem "Ash Wednesday" by T.S. Eliot, presents an interesting lexical ambiguity. This ambiguity is mainly related to the repetition of the word "hope" in various contexts, which gives rise to variations in interpretation.

First of all, the repetition of the word "hope" at the beginning of the sentence, "Because I don't hope to turn again," highlights a strong feeling of hopelessness or hopelessness. The speaker states that he has no hope of experiencing change or recovery for the better. However, the object of the lost hope is not explained clearly. Then, the use of the word "hope" as a separate sentence in the middle of the sentence, "Because I don't hope," adds a layer of ambiguity. It is unclear whether "hope" in this context refers to the same thing as at the beginning of the sentence or has a different meaning.

The repetition of the word "hope" at the end of the sentence, "Because I don't hope to turn," creates a strong sense of cycle or repetition of hopelessness. This could be interpreted as a reinforcement of the speaker's feelings of hopelessness, or it may reflect a deep reflection on the continued loss of hope. Due to the varied use and repetition of the word "hope" in various contexts, the



sentence creates lexical ambiguity that allows readers to interpret the poem in various ways. This invites reflection on the meaning of hope, uncertainty and human experience in facing life.

Let's explore an example of lexical ambiguity in T.S. Eliot's "Gerontion."

*"Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'*

*The word within a word, unable to speak a word.*

*(Gerontion, Elliot)*

The sentence "The word within a word, unable to speak a word" creates lexical ambiguity due to the repetition of the word "word" in different contexts, which can be interpreted in various ways.

First of all, "The word within a word" can be interpreted literally as a word located within another word, highlighting the metaphorical or philosophical concept of the existence of hidden meaning or complexity in language. However, without clearer context, it is unclear what is meant by "word within a word". Furthermore, "unable to speak a word" implies a person's inability to speak or utter words. In this context, "word" refers to an actual word, not a metaphorical or abstract concept as the previous phrase might be interpreted.

The ambiguity lies in the relationship between the two uses of the word "word" in the sentence. Does the "word" in "unable to speak a word" refer to the same or different meaning as the "word" in "The word within a word"? Is there a connection between the concepts explained in the two parts of the sentence? The lexical ambiguity in the sentence allows for multiple interpretations and interpretations, requiring additional context or deeper understanding to properly understand the intended meaning. This creates richness and complexity in the experience of reading and understanding the text.

## 2) Discussion

The results of this research reveal various types of ambiguity found in the poetry of T.S. Eliot, which includes structural, referential and lexical ambiguity. Through careful analysis, structural ambiguity appears in sentence structures that can have more than one basic structure, as in "The Waste Land" with the description "breeding Lilacs out of the dead land" which can be understood both biologically and metaphorically. In other hand, referential ambiguity arises from the use of pronouns that can refer to several entities, as in "The Hollow Men" with the sentence "Eyes I dare not meet in dreams" which leaves the reader to question the specific reference. Meanwhile, lexical ambiguity can be seen from words that have double meanings, as in "Ash Wednesday" with the repetition of the word "hope" which enriches the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the poem.

The types of ambiguity most often used in poetry T.S. Eliot is structural ambiguity. Katz(1977) stated that structural ambiguity occurs when a phrase or sentence has more than one underlying structure. Structural ambiguity often appears in poetry because poetry is a form of literature that emphasizes the creative and expressive use of language. In an effort to create complex artistic effects, poets often exploit structural freedom in the construction of sentences and

phrases. This allows them to create multiple meanings or rich nuances, enriching the reader's experience through diverse interpretations. By using structurally ambiguous words, poets can broaden the horizons of meaning and invite readers to think deeply about the message and emotions the poem wants to convey.

The second types of ambiguity that is widely used in poetry T.S. Eliot is lexical ambiguity. Katz (1972) stated that when homonyms can occur in the same position in utterances, the result is lexical ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity often appears in poetry because poetry tends to utilize rich vocabulary and the use of words with various meanings. In creating these literary works, poets often choose words that have double connotations or figurative meanings to create additional layers in the message and nuance of the poem. By utilizing lexical ambiguity, poets can create a deeper reading experience, allowing readers to explore the various interpretations and meanings hidden behind each word.

The results of this research are the same as the results of Sinambela (2014) research which examined ambiguity in English text translation. This research states that lexical ambiguity is the most dominant types used in the translation. Addition, research conducted by Irawan (2009) states that the most common types of ambiguity identified is lexical ambiguity in article of the Jakarta post. This research also discusses pragmatic ambiguity.

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that lexical ambiguity is the most dominant type that is often found in poetry T.S. Eliot. By utilizing lexical ambiguity, poets can create additional layers in poetry, inviting readers to ponder the deeper and more varied meanings of each word, and stimulating the reader's imagination and reflection.

The second research question is how ambiguity occurs in the T.S. Eliot Poems. First, The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock, the researcher found that ambiguity happens on structural ambiguity. Structural ambiguity occurs through the use of literary techniques that create ambiguity in the reader's understanding of sentence structure and narrative. For instance, the sentence " Like a patient etherized upon a table" has two possible structure. The structural ambiguity lies in the dual function of the prepositional phrase "upon a table," which can either modify the evening (adjectival) or describe the action of spreading out (adverbial).

In addition, the researcher found that ambiguity happens on referential ambiguity. Referential ambiguity refers to instances where the meaning of certain elements in the poem, such as words, phrases are not explicitly defined or clearly referenced, leaving room for interpretation by the reader. For instance, The phrase "The moment of my greatness flicker" can be considered referential ambiguity because it has an unclear or specific interpretation. These words do not explicitly indicate what is meant by "The moment" or "My greatness," leaving room for various interpretations. For example, "The moment" can refer to a moment or period in a person's life that is considered important or significant. Meanwhile, "My greatness" can refer to proud accomplishments or accomplishments, or perhaps to ambition or potential that has not been realized.

Thus, the researcher found that ambiguity happens on lexical ambiguity. lexical ambiguity refers to the presence of words or phrases that possess multiple meanings or interpretations, contributing to the complexity and depth of the poem.

For instance, the phrase "Would it have been worth it, after all," and "After the cups, the marmalade, the tea, Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me," The phrase "after all" can be interpreted as finally or after all things have been considered, but it can also be interpreted as something to be desired or hoped for. Additionally, words like "cups," "marmalade," "tea," and "porcelain" can have deeper or symbolic connotations beyond their literal meanings. Likewise, the phrase "some talk of you and me," which can be interpreted concretely as a conversation between two people, but can also imply a deeper emotional or philosophical meaning depending on the context and reader's interpretation. Therefore, these phrases exhibit lexical ambiguity that allows for multiple interpretations and understandings.

The results of this research are different from the results of Sari (2017), which discusses how ambiguity occurs in the *Drama Script of William Shakespeare's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*. The results of her research show that ambiguity occurs in only two types of ambiguity, namely lexical and structural ambiguity. Meanwhile In this research, ambiguity occurs in three types of ambiguity, namely structural ambiguity, referential ambiguity, and lexical ambiguity.

Meanwhile, phonetic ambiguity is a type which is not found in poetry T.S. Eliot. In the poem T.S. Eliot, phonetic ambiguity may be rarely encountered because his work tends to use other literary techniques, such as complex syntactic structures, the use of words with double connotations, or strong imagery, to create artistic effects and complexity of meaning.

## D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### 1. Conclusion

In the exploration of T.S. Eliot's poems, notably "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," "Gerontion," and "The Waste Land," reveals a profound and deliberate use of ambiguity to convey complex themes of modernity, existentialism, and societal disintegration. The overall conclusion from the three types of ambiguity found, namely structural, referential, and lexical ambiguity in the writer poetry, indicates that writer use of ambiguity is not merely coincidental but a deliberate literary strategy to enrich and deepen the meaning of his poems. Structural ambiguity is arising through sentence structures and phrases, provides depth and complexity to the imagery and interpretation within the poetry. Referential ambiguity, especially through the use of pronouns, creates uncertainty that enriches the psychological exploration of characters and existential themes. Lexical ambiguity, emerging from the multiple meanings of words, helps create a nuanced and profound atmosphere in Eliot's poetry. Words like "after all," "breeding," and "hope" carry diverse connotations, enriching the emotional, spiritual, and thematic dimensions of the poetry. Lastly, syntactic, referential, and lexical ambiguity all contribute to creating a versatile work of poetry that can be interpreted in various ways by readers from different cultural and interpretative backgrounds.

The use of ambiguity in Elliot's Poems can also be seen as an invitation for readers to actively participate in the interpretation process. By exploring these ambiguities, readers are encouraged to reflect on profound questions about the human condition, existence, and the meaning of life. Overall, Eliot's approach to ambiguity creates poetry that is not only linguistically beautiful but also contains philosophical, spiritual, and psychological depth that continues to inspire readers across generations.

## 2. Suggestion

For future research, scholars could delve deeper into the specific socio-cultural and historical contexts that influenced T.S. Eliot's use of ambiguity, providing a more nuanced understanding of the intricate layers within his poetry. Additionally, exploring the reader's role in shaping interpretations and the impact of cultural diversity on the perception of ambiguity could contribute to a more comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, comparative studies with other modernist poets could shed light on distinctive stylistic choices and thematic variations in the use of ambiguity. Finally, interdisciplinary approaches, integrating psychological and philosophical perspectives, could unveil new dimensions of meaning and enrich the exploration of Eliot's enduring poetic legacy.

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