

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON ADVERTISEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the analysis of discourse on advertisement. The aim of this discussion is to try to make sense of an advertisement from the point of view of linguistic construction, meaning, and its textuality.

Results of the discussion indicate that in order to be called a text the observed advertisement should be analyzed by means of elliptical operation. As soon as the elliptical clauses and sentences of the advertisement are established, the meaning or intention of the advertisement can be derived. Unless the truths of the messages conveyed by the advertisement are clarified, ambiguities will still remain that will affect the understanding and response of the readers or potential buyers.

As a material for discourse analysis, however, the advertisement is a very interesting thing to be talked about.

Key words: advertisement, ellyptical, ambiguity

INTRODUCTION



Look at the picture above. It is no doubt a photograph showing a number of features, trees, a road, vehicles, durian sellers, etc. This photograph can be readily found when we drive or ride up the hill from Semarang downhill to

UNNES campus. The most striking thing seen in this picture is the presence of a banner of an advertisement hung above and across the road. This feature is quite conspicuous, not only because it is very colourful, thus in contrast with

other features, but also centrally placed in the picture, right in front of passers-by so that it is indeed eye-catching. Generally, this banner is a take-for-granted thing for people who happen to be passing along the road and noticing it. It is an advertisement of a certain product, thing, or property. Such a phenomenon can be found anywhere else in other parts of the cities or even countries. However, for people studying language, especially those interested in discourse, **this advertisement** is not just something. It is a very interesting thing worth pondering and then analyzing.

At first notice, the ad is just an ordinary advertisement promoting a certain kind of goods/property. However, when we try to look at it again not from a common viewpoint but from the aspect of discourse, this ad brings about a number of questions. From the point of view of discourse analysis, this creates a number of problems. The questions that might come up in our minds are at least as follows.

- (1) How can we categorize the linguistic forms used in this ad—are they just words, clauses or sentences? The answer to this question can lead to other questions;
- (2) Can the stretches of the linguistic forms used in the ad form a communicative text? And
- (3) Does this ad convey truthful information?

There may be some other problems arising from the advertisement above, but in this discussion I will only focus on trying to answer the specified questions above. To answer those questions, I will draw on several approaches commonly used in discourse analysis. The role of pragmatics in this discussion will also be quite apparent.

METHOD OF THE STUDY

Object of the Study

The object of this study is a text on an advertisement about land property credit.

Data Collecting Activity

The data are obtained by photographing an advertisement appearing on a banner hung across a road leading to UNNES campus.

Procedure of Data Analysis

- (1) The data are exposed by copying the words written on the banner in the photograph;
- (2) They are then analysed by employing elliptical operation;
- (3) The textuality of the text is tested using de Beaugrande and Dressler's 7 standard of textuality;
- (4) The felicity of the textual meaning is examined by means of Gricean maxims; and
- (5) Existing ambiguity and infelicity is then removed.

Significance of the Study

The result of the investigation will be useful for readers of the research report in that they will have a better idea that advertisement, though, looking trivial, produces a wealth of meanings on the part of the receivers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Inevitably, though not surface-structurally manifest, the issues based on the available data being put forward in this paper, are very much related to the notions of discourse, text, discourse analysis, advertising discourse, ellipsis. Therefore, to provide scientific relevance to the subsequent discussion pertinent to the statements of the problem, the concepts of discourse in general, discourse analysis, discourse on advertisement and the idea of ellipsis and that of text will be highlighted.

To begin with, the notion of discourse will be briefly talked about. Discourse is defined differently by different people. Schiffrin (1994) offers two definitions of discourse; 'a particular unit of language (above the sentence), and a particular focus on language use'. The former notion finds support in Stubbs (1983: 1) who defines discourse as 'language above the sentence or above the clause.' From structuralists' view, discourse is regarded 'as a level of structure higher than the sentence, or higher than another unit of text' (in Schiffrin, 1994: 24). Discourse refers to "extended , multisentence 'texts'" (Schegloff, in Schiffrin et al., 2001). Meanwhile, in a different manner, Cook (1992) defines discourse as "text and context together, interacting in a way which is perceived as meaningful and unified by the participants (who are both parts of the context and observers)." From this, we can define that discourse analysis is an analysis of language use beyond sentences (Tannen, Internet Source; Brown and Yule, 1987).

In line with the general concept of discourse, advertisement is also a type of discourse (Cook, 1992: 4) which is defined as 'text occurring within a specific context' ([http//74.125](http://74.125) ...). 'Context includes knowledge of elements existing outside the text' (op cit: 4). 'The culture in which a certain advertisement is created forms part of the context' (op cit).

Most often, the structural appearance of an advertisement are words arranged together which visually do not seem to form a sentence or sentences. Appearing this way, in turn, on the surface, these stretches of words are not sentences and thus not subject to discourse analysis which has been defined by Tannen as an analysis of language use beyond sentences.

In order to determine that the words in an advertisement are not just words but sentences, the concept of ellipsis must be obtained. Therefore, the notion of ellipsis is worth reviewing here. According to Martin (2001), 'Ellipsis refers to resources for omitting a clause, or some part of a clause or group, in contexts where it can be assumed.' In line with this, Downing (internet source), claims that ellipsis together with presupposition may influence the establishment of a conversational tone in advertising discourse by setting up relationship between 'characters of the fictional world and addressee

After the concepts of discourse, discourse analysis, advertising discourse and ellipsis have been briefly reviewed, finally, in order that we can relate the data with the discussion of text, the concept of what a text is will be presented.

Halliday and Hasan define a text as 'language that is functional.' (1985: 10). Furthermore, they expand the term in four ways: text as meaning, text as a semantic unit, text as product and process, text as a social exchange of meanings (op cit, 10--11). For a text to be able to meet the requirements of being communicative, it must possess 7 standards of textuality; cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informaticity, situationality, and intertextuality (de Beaugrande and Dressler, 1981). These 7 standards of textuality will later be used to test whether or not the text presented in this observation is valid in terms of its textuality.

DISCUSSION ON THE PROBLEMS

Let me firstly try to answer the first questions by analysing the linguistic forms seen in the advertisement. Arranged in a different layout, the forms of the ad looks as follows:

**KREDIT KAVLING
DEKAT UNNES & DEKAT AKPER UNGARAN
100 M = 20 JUTA
HUBUNGI (NOMOR-NOMOR INI)**

Translated loosely, the English **form** of the above ad can be seen below:

**REAL ESTATE CREDIT
CLOSE TO UNNES & CLOSE TO UNGARAN NURSING ACADEMY
(UNA)
100 M = 20 MILLIONS
CONTACT ... (THESE NUMBERS ...)**

For the sake of clarity, the analysis will mostly make use of the original data, in this case in bahasa Indonesia, but if necessary, for practicality and convenience sake, English version will also be used.

It goes without saying that given the four stretches of linguistic construction above, only one, that is the last stretch, *HUBUNGI ... (...)*, can be considered to be a sentence from the point of view of grammatical construction or a proposition in terms of pragmatics. It has the imperative force of requesting. Whereas the first three forms, on the surface structure, look like words or phrasal nouns (NP).

If the above stretches of word construction should be regarded as a discourse which is subject to discourse analysis, they must serve as sentences because discourse analysis is previously defined as “the analysis of language ‘beyond the sentence’” (Tannen, internet source) which is supported by Schiffrin (1994), and by Stubb’s (1983: 1) who states that “discourse is ‘language above the sentence or above the clause’”. The question worth posing is that: Should “**KREDIT KAVLING**”, “**DEKAT UNNES & DEKAT AKPER UNGARAN**” and “**100 M = 20 JUTA**” be treated as merely NPs, or as separate

sentences or even a single sentence forming a unified idea and consisting of several propositions? Let me try to analyse these NPs one by one.

If either one of above NPs, for example “**KREDIT KAVLING**”, stands alone without being followed by any subsequent NPs, it will not mean anything from the point of view of propositional intent. However, together with the rest of the words they form a unified whole which means something to the receivers. Since they are a unity conveying a certain meaning, each of the seemingly linguistically “non-sentences or subsentential” (Stainton, 2007) must contribute some meaningfulness which in turn can be interpreted and understood by the receivers.

To be meaningful, “**KREDIT KAVLING**” must be interpreted as not just two words combined together; they must be part of a construction bigger than just words or an NP. However, the interpretation of those subsentential forms varies:

First, it is a subsentential structure forming a clause, for example: “*Jika anda menginginkan kredit kavling*”, ... Secondly, it may be a subsentential structure having a capacity of a complete sentence, for example: “*Mau kredit kavling?*” It can also be a non-sentence forming a

sentence when it is combined with '**DEKAT UNNES & DEKAT AKPER UNGARAN**' and "**100 M = 20 JUTA**".

One way of arriving at these particular meanings is by making these non-sentence constructions sentential by means of elliptical operation. Therefore, by seeing each of them as an elliptical form, we can then offer some possible ellipses. Each of the ellipsis always contains the idea of a proposition. The elliptical propositional sentences will appear as follows:

- (1) An ellipsis containing "**KREDIT KAVLING**" alone

The ellipsis can be in the form of statement, imperative or a question, such as:

- a. **Ingin mendapatkan** 'kredit kavling'?
- b. **Dapatkan** 'kredit kavling!'
- c. **Mau** 'kredit kavling?'
- d. **Kami tawarkan** 'kredit kavling.'
- e. Etc.

- (2) An ellipsis containing "**DEKAT UNNES & DEKAT AKPER UNGARAN**" alone

- a. **Lokasinya** 'dekat UNNES & dekat Akper Ungaran.'
- b. **Yang terletak** 'dekat UNNES & dekat Akper Ungaran.'
- c. Etc.

- (3) An ellipsis containing "**100 M = 20 JUTA**" alone

- a. **Harga per** 100 m 20 juta (**rupiah**).
- b. **Setiap** 100 m **dihargai** 20 juta (**rupiah**).

Though the above construction introduces a mathematical equation indicated by the mark (=), the English ellipsis will possibly appear "**The price per** 100 meters **is** 20 million (**rupiahs**).

- (4) Ellipsis combining the three non-sentential forms

Ditawarkan kredit kavling **yang berlokasi** dekat UNNES & dekat Akper Ungaran **dengan harga per** 100 meter 20 juta **rupiah**.

The list of the possible elliptical sentences which can be offered is by no means exhaustive, for a different reader may construct different elliptical sentences which are equally acceptable depending on their own perception on those pieces of non-sentential information.

Similarly, we can offer different elliptical reconstructions of the above non-sentences in the form of a more meaningful unified sentential form or text, such as the following:

No. 1

Dapatkan 'kredit kavling' **yang terletak** 'dekat UNNES dan dekat Akper Ungaran' **dengan harga** '20 juta (rupiah) **per** 100 meter (persegi)'. 'Hubungi

No. 2

Ingin 'kredit kavling'? **Lokasinya di** 'dekat UNNES dan Akper Ungaran'. **Harga per** 100 meter 20 juta (rupiah). **Jika tertarik**, hubungi

No. 3

Silakan 'kredit kavling' **yang letaknya tidak jauh dari** UNNES dan Akper Ungaran. **Harga per** 100 meter 20 juta (rupiah). **Segera** 'hubungi nomor-nomor ini!'

It is possible for a receiver to recover the message of the advertisement above as (1), (2), (3) or even any other equally acceptable interpretations. The important thing is that whatever interpretation is formed in the reader's

mind, the seemingly non-sentential constructions are in fact sentential and together they create a text conveying a certain message to the receiver.

Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that each of the non-sentences appearing in the advertisement above is categorised as at least an elliptical clause or elliptical sentence which operates together to serve as a possible text. Therefore, the first problem of this paper is solved.

Since the non-sentential linguistic forms used by the ad demonstrate elliptical sentences functioning as a possible text, another thing worth analysing is whether they are qualified as communicative text. In order to prove the communicativeness of the above text, we have to refer to de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). According to them, there are 'seven standards of textuality' for a piece of language use to qualify itself as communicative information. These 7 standards of textuality are listed by de Beaugrande and Dressler as follows: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality.

Whether the language use found in the text above meets these required standards of textuality will be the object of the next analysis.

In terms of cohesion, the ad above is cohesive because the actual words are mutually arranged in a sequential order showing the logical connectedness from one set of words with another. This cohesiveness can be clearly seen after the sets of words are reconstructed using elliptical method.

Seen from coherence, this text presents the mutual accessibility and relevance of the textual world. This can be proved from the relation of the *concept* of selling a property with the support of its location, prices, and a way of obtaining further information and the *concept* of the presence of

potential buyers. These two concepts are related to each other. The relationship of the two concepts can be easily accessed or understood in the words elliptically arranged in the text.

Viewed from the notion of intentionality, the above text meets the criterion of being intentional. This is due to the fact that through words cohesively and coherently arranged in the text the goal of the producer to sell land properties can be seen and understood clearly by readers/receivers. The plan to obtain the goal is by providing necessary information that would likely help interested readers/receivers to do further action in the forms of cohesive and coherent words.

In consonance with the fourth standard of textuality: acceptability, the text is acceptable from the point of view of the receiver because the producer has built and presented information which enables the receiver to acquire knowledge about how to obtain pieces of land on credit.

The fifth standard of textuality is informativity which is, according to Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 8), 'concerned with the extent to which the occurrences of the presented text are expected vs. unexpected of known vs. unknown/certain.' Viewed from this notion, the first elliptical sentence '**Kredit Kavling**' is unknown/new from the point of view of the receivers since it is just presented at the beginning of the text. The second and the rest of the elliptical sentences are to a greater extent quite expected because without that information the text will be completely uninformative. It is very much expected that the offer of '**kredit kavling**' will be followed by the presence of relevant information about the credit, such as location, price, and the procedure of being able to make a deal with the producer of the advertisement.

Situationality is the sixth standard of textuality which refers to factors making 'a text

RELEVANT to a SITUATION of occurrence.' The text shows the feature of situationality with the following reasons. It is displayed at a strategic place where a lot of people passing by can readily see and automatically read it. It contains information about one of the basic needs (land to set up settlement) for human beings (in this case, readers/receivers of the text), so some readers may be interested in and finally make a deal. Social demand prevalent in the Indonesian society which requires someone to have a permanent dwelling instead of just rented one serves as another relevant factor. Therefore, considering the above factors, the text definitely meets the notion of textuality.

Talking about intertextuality, of course, the above text fulfills the last standard of textuality. The argument is that texts of similar type can also be seen in different parts of the city. As a result, in order to understand the text, the receivers can rely on the knowledge they have previously seen in other similar texts.

After briefly analyzing the text from the aspect of its textuality, it can be summarized that the stretches of language use conform with the standards of being a communicative text, though some problems of felicity are still present.

The third issue concerning the advertisement text I would like to address is the question whether or not the text conveys truthful information to the reader/receivers or potential buyers. Among the four elliptical sentences forming the text above, in my opinion, the most problematic one is the second elliptical sentence: **DEKAT UNNES DAN DEKAT AKPER UNGARAN**. The truthfulness of this information will later influence the next ellipsis: **100 M = 20 JUTA**.

In order to find out the real intention of the second ellipsis, we have got to draw on the

Grice's maxim and Clark and Wege's (2001) *'Imagination in Discourse'*.

This elliptical construction: **'Dekat UNNES dan dekat Akper Ungaran'** (Close to UNNES and Ungaran Nursing Academy/UNA) is quite problematic for potential buyers in a number of ways.

a. Reading this sentence (elliptical), one can get confused for two reasons. On the one hand, one can interpret that there is only a plot of land for sale on credit situated in between UNNES and UNA. On the other, one can also arrive at an interpretation that there are more than one piece of land to sell. The plots of land may be located at two different places: some are close to UNNES and others close to UNA or another possibility; all pieces of land offered are located between UNNES and UNA. This problem seems to be difficult to solve since in bahasa Indonesia, for the previous elliptical sentence: **'Kredit Kavling'**, suffers a lack of plural marker. However, some of the ambiguities can be easily removed if this sentence is written in English, for the plurality is obviously demonstrated. So, in English, the sentence can loosely be translated: *'Plots of land are available on credit.'* The second ambiguity remains problematic. Whether the pieces of land being sold on a installment basis are located at separate places or at one place, is difficult to be deambiguated; only the advertisement maker knows. Normally, however, the pieces of land for sale are situated in one location.

b. When we read the second elliptical sentence: **'Close to UNNES and close to UNA'**, another problem arises. The problem is triggered with the use of 'dekat/close to'.

According to Clark and Wege (in Schiffrin et al., 2001), 'Taking part in discourse often

demands a vivid imagination'. This is in line with Bradford et al. (1972) who claim that under their investigation 'People appear to create visual or spacial representations as they understand many utterances.' Referring to this, when reading the advertisement, given the discription of a location, a hearer or in this case a reader will use his imagination as to where the place is. The lexical choice of 'close to' or 'near' is quite relative. The relativity of the meaning of these words bring about difficulty in determining the location of the place being offered in the ad. In my imagination in trying to locate the place, I would raise a number questions: (1) how near is the location of the land for sale from UNNES, (2) how near is it from UNA?, (3) Are the land properties equally near UNNES and UNA? Still another question comes up: How far (many meters or kilometer) is UNNES from UNA? These spacial questions are salient things that lead our imagination in determining the location of the offered land.

In turn, location of a place, especially land for sale, is an essential thing in someone's interestedness in the land which may lead him to buy it. Location of a place involves various conditions; among others easy access to the main road, closeness to an already existing place, spot, or building, such as railway/bus station, market, or university which contribute to the stategicness of the the location (land). In the case of the ad above, if the place described matches with the spacial imagination of the reader, the ad presents not only important but also effective information in attracting potential buyers.

Of course, the hope of interested readers is that the information they read is truthful. Viewed from Gricean (in Mey, 1993) maxims, the second elliptical sentence, 'Close to UNNES and close to UNA', seems quite problematic in at least two ways. First, in my opinion, the use of the lexis

'*dekat*' or 'near/close to' does not fulfil the maxim of manner: *avoid obscurity* and *ambiguity*. It is obscure because the word 'near/close to' produces obscuriry in the readers' imagination in their attempt to locate the place. The word 'near' is an approximant. To eliminate the obscurity, the maker should replace it with a more definite measurement (quantifier), for example: 500 m from UNNES and 1 kilometer from UNA. If this is done, the obscurity will be removed.

The second elliptical sentence also violates the maxim of *quantity*: '*Do not make your contribution more informative than required.*' The addition to 'close to UNA' from 'close to UNNES' is more than necessary. 'Close to UNNES' will be quite informative since UNNES is widely known. Almost everybody knows where UNNES is, whereas the notion of 'close to UNA' has the effect of cheating the readers. The majority of people passing along under the advertisement banner including myself do not know where UNA is or even worse this campus does not exist at all. Therefore, the second elliptical sentence, to some extent, violates the maxim of quantity. The problem will be erased if the words 'close to UNA' is dropped.

If the problems faced by this second elliptical sentence is removed, the third elliptical sentence: '100 M = 20 JUTA' will be relevant, because the price of the offered pieces of land can be appreciated whether it is reasonable or too expensive. As a consequence, the text as a whole will be quite informative, communicative and effective in persuading the readers to be potential buyers.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, the answers to the questions put forward at the beginning of this paper which serve as the conclusions can be presented. First, the sequences NP in the

advertisement banner are elliptical sentences. Second, these elliptical sentences function as a text. Third, when the ambiguities of the text can be sorted out and removed, the text will be truthful and communicative.

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