
Lexical Ambiguity in The Movie Ford V Ferrari (2019) By James Mangold : a Semantics Study

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Abstract

This study investigates the phenomenon of lexical ambiguity in the film Ford v Ferrari (2019) through the lens of semantics. Lexical ambiguity, which occurs when a single word have more than one meaning, plays a significant role in both everyday communication and cinematic dialogues. The research aims to identify the types of lexical ambiguity found in the movie and analyze the meanings conveyed through those ambiguities. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through several techniques, including watching the movie repeatedly, transcribing selected dialogues, identifying ambiguous words or utterances, and note-taking. By applying the theories semantics from George Yule (2010), Hurford et al. (2007), and Leech (1981). The data analysis technique involves classifying the ambiguous expressions into types of lexical ambiguity (polysemy and homonymy) and interpreting their meanings based on contextual usage, particularly affective and connotative meanings. To assure data validity, the researcher used theoretical triangulation, which involves comparing several semantic theories and rechecking the data to preserve consistency and accuracy. By highlighting how language ambiguity functions within the film's context, this study contributes to the broader understanding of semantics in audiovisual media and underlines the significance of interpreting meaning in cinematic discourse.

Keywords: *Lexical ambiguity, Semantics, Polysemy, Homonymy, Movie*

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental human ability that enables communication, thought, and the conveyance of cultural values. In daily life, language is not only used to convey information but also to express emotions, shape identity, and influence others (Sunubi, 2016). One branch of linguistics that focuses on meaning in language is semantics. Semantics studies how words, phrases, and sentences convey meaning, and how that meaning is understood by speakers and listeners in various contexts.

In films, language becomes a powerful tool for building narratives, creating emotions, and conveying cultural values. As explained by Bordwell & Thompson (2004), language in film is designed in such a way as to support the storyline and influence the audience on various levels. One of the films that is interesting to study from a semantic perspective is Ford v Ferrari (2019) directed by James Mangold. This film tells the story of the rivalry between Ford Motor Company and Ferrari in the 1966 24 Hours of Le Mans race. The movie centers on the efforts of automotive

designer Carroll Shelby and driver Ken Miles as they strive to build a revolutionary race car capable of defeating Ferrari at the competition of 24 Hours of Le Mans race. In addition to showcasing thrilling racing action and strong characters, this film also presents dynamic, emotional conversations, and sometimes double meanings. In the process of communication, ambiguity becomes one of the phenomena that is interesting to analyze because it can give rise to more than one meaning for a statement.

One linguistic phenomenon frequently found in films is ambiguity, where words, phrases, or sentences have more than one possible interpretation. Ambiguity in films can create humor, dramatic tension, emotional nuance, or even miscommunication between characters, leading to plot twists and deeper audience engagement. The importance of studying ambiguity in film scripts has been highlighted by several previous researchers. For instance, a study by Faina et al. (2021) explored lexical ambiguity in the film *Coco*, demonstrating that movies are rich sources of ambiguous expressions used by screenwriters to enhance storytelling. Similarly, Ekarisna (2022) investigated the series *Emily in Paris*, confirming that lexical ambiguity frequently dominates over structural ambiguity in cinematic scripts. Other notable works include the analysis of homonymy in *Stand By Me* by Arfiawati and Alamsyah (2022) and polysemic studies in *Avengers: End Game* by Agustri and Nalurytha (2019). These studies collectively underscore that lexical ambiguity is a vital element in creating dynamic communication within audiovisual media.

The theoretical framework for this study is semantics, Semantics is the branch of linguistics concerned with the study of meaning in language, however, this clearly basic concept leads to a comprehensive and methodical investigation of the nature, structure, and role of meaning in human verbal communication. Hurford, J. R., Heasley, B., & Smith, M. B. (2007) describes semantics is the theory and analytical study of how languages encode meaning and how this meaning is understood by speakers and listeners in different conditions. According to George Yule (2010), semantics focuses on what words conventionally mean rather than on what individual speakers might intend them to mean in particular contexts. Semantics examines the relationship between signifiers such as words, phrases, and symbols and what they stand for, Yule highlights that understanding semantics involves looking at how linguistic elements relate to things in the real world (referents), how they interact with each other, and how they are interpreted by language users. Kreidler (2002) highlights that semantic analysis needs to consider for how context influences the meaning and he say “Semantics is concerned with the systematic ways in which languages structure meaning, especially in words and sentences”.

Understanding ambiguity is an important problem in semantics because it gives light on the difficulties of meaning representation and interpretation. Hurford, J. R., Heasley, B., & Smith, M. B. (2007) define ambiguity as a situation in which a sentence, phrase, or word has more than one possible interpretation or meaning. George Yule (2010) lexical ambiguity is refers to a situation in which a single word has more than one meaning. This type of ambiguity occurs at the word level, not because of sentence structure, but because the lexical item itself allows multiple interpretations. Several previous studies have examined ambiguity in media texts. Faina et al. (2021) studied lexical ambiguity in *Coco*. These studies demonstrate that films are rich sources of ambiguous expressions, as scriptwriters often employ wordplay and multiple meanings to enhance storytelling. Similarly, Ekarisna (2022) investigated ambiguity in *Emily in Paris*, confirming that lexical ambiguity frequently dominates compared to structural ambiguity in cinematic scripts.

Rodd (2018) defines a lexical ambiguity occurs when a single word has more than one meaning, this type ambiguity also can appear when the word can be interpreted in different ways. In the film, lexical ambiguity can arise in dialogues where words take on figurative, idiomatic, or contextual

meanings, allowing multiple interpretations. The lexical ambiguity theory proposed by George Yule (2010) categorizes lexical ambiguity into two types and Kreidler (1998) also same categorizes the types of lexical ambiguity into two types there are polysemy and homonymy.

George Yule (2010) and Kreidler (1998) defines polysemy as a phenomenon where a single word form has multiple related meanings. The term originates from the Greek words poly- meaning "many" and sema meaning "sign" or "meaning". Polysemy is a fundamental feature of natural language, allowing for semantic richness and flexibility in communication. Polysemy is a productive process in language. It shows how words adapt and extend their meanings to new situations. This process, often called semantic extension or shift, is a fundamental way languages evolve. For instance, the word "mouse" originally referred to the animal, but its meaning was extended to a computer device because of a perceived similarity in shape and function (a small object with a "tail").

Kreidler (1998) and George Yule (2010) defines homonymy refers to two or more completely unrelated words that happen to have the same form (either the same pronunciation, spelling, or both), The term is derived from Greek homo- (same) and -onym (name), meaning "same name, different meaning." Homonymy is a primary source of ambiguity in language. Without context, a sentence like "I went to the bank" is truly ambiguous. The listener needs more information to know whether you were heading to a financial institution or the side of a river. This is in contrast to polysemy, where the context often provides a strong clue, making the ambiguity less problematic in a natural conversation.

The meaning of ambiguity refers to how an ambiguous word, phrase, or sentence is interpreted within a particular context. The meaning of ambiguity in film dialogues is important because it influences how audiences perceive characters' intentions, emotions, and the storyline. For instance, an ambiguous sentence can add humor, tension, or complexity to a conversation, depending on which interpretation is activated by the audience. Leech (1981) meaning can be broken down into several categories that explain the communicative force of an utterance. In this research, the researcher focuses on two specific types of meaning to analyze lexical ambiguity there is affective meaning and connotative meaning.

Affective meaning, on the other hand, concerns the emotional, attitudinal, or expressive dimension of language. It reflects the speaker's personal feelings, attitudes, or emotional stance toward the subject matter or the listener. Affective meaning is subjective, not primarily concerned with conveying factual information, but rather with expressing how the speaker feels or what their emotional intent is during communication. For example "Don't be such a chicken!" the word "Chicken" is ambiguous and can mean mocking or shows the speaker's emotional stance.

Connotative meaning is what a word makes people feel or imagine the cultural, emotional, ideological, or symbolic associations a word has beyond its dictionary meaning. In other words, connotative meaning includes the associative and emotional overtones attached to a word, which go beyond its basic, literal meaning. For instance, the word "home" may have the conceptual meaning of a place where one lives, but its connotative meaning might include feelings of warmth, safety, comfort, and family.

B. METHOD

Based on the problem, the researcher use a qualitative descriptive research method to analyze the data. The qualitative study examines Ambiguity in movie Ford v Ferrari. This study takes a qualitative approach, as described by Creswell (2016), who defines qualitative research as a way for examining and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social or

human situation. Qualitative research is ideal for investigations that require a deep, contextual understanding that cannot be fully captured by numerical or statistical analysis.

Qualitative descriptive research allows researchers to explore language in its natural setting, concentrating on the richness, depth, and variety of meanings that appear in actual conversation. In the context of movie Ford V Ferrari, this technique allows for an in depth investigation of how the characters employ ambiguous language and how it contributes to the film's narrative, character development, thematic complexity.

Research Object

The primary data for this analysis came from the 2019 movie Ford v Ferrari directed by James Mangold. The film was chosen for its rich and varied conversation, which gives many opportunities for investigating ambiguity in realistic, high stakes communication. The movie focus on rivalry, innovation, and personal relationships that creates a situation in which ambiguous language is likely to appear. The data selection will be selected from the characters conversation dialogue and utterances of the characters in this movie.

Research Steps

In conducting this research, the researcher will follow systematic steps to ensure the clarity, validity, and relevance of the results, the process of data collection and analysis involves several steps, as follows:

1. Selecting the Topic Research

The researcher chose ambiguity analysis in the Ford v Ferrari movie as the topic. The choice was based on personal interest and its relevance to semantics studies, especially in analyzing meaning and structure in natural language use within audiovisual media.

2. Conducting Preliminary Study

The researcher conducted a literature review of previous studies, journals, books, and theories related to semantics and ambiguity. This stage helped clarify the research problem, identify theoretical gaps, and strengthen the foundation of the study.

3. Formulating Research Problem

Based on the preliminary study, the researcher formulated two main research questions:

- a) What are the types of lexical ambiguity used in Ford V Ferrari movie ?
- b) What are meanings of lexical ambiguity in Ford V Ferrari movie ?

4. Choosing Research Method

After formulating the research problems, the researcher chose the qualitative descriptive method as the primary approach in this study. Qualitative research was selected because it allows the researcher to explore and interpret meaning within natural contexts deeply and comprehensively. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative research seeks to understand how individuals interpret their experiences and the meanings they attribute to them, which aligns with the purpose of this study in analyzing lexical ambiguity in film dialogues.

5. Collecting Data

Data were collected from the Ford v Ferrari movie script by watching the movie thoroughly, transcribing selected dialogues, identifying ambiguous utterances/words, note taking, and verifying their accuracy based on theories of semantics .

6. Classifying Data

After data collection, the ambiguous dialogues were classified into two categories of lexical ambiguity there is polysemy and homonymy. This classification facilitated structured analysis aligned with the research questions.

7. Analyzing Data

Each classified data was analyzed using semantic theory to identify the type of lexical ambiguity and interpret its meaning based on situation and intended meaning in the dialogue. And also classified too into a meaning (Affective and Connotative).

8. Drawing Conclusion

In the final stage, the researcher will summarize the findings from the data analysis to answer the research questions. This involves synthesizing the identified types of lexical ambiguity (polysemy and homonymy) and interpreting their meanings (affective and connotative) within the film's dialogue. The conclusions will highlight how these ambiguities contribute to character development, thematic depth, and audience interpretation in Ford v Ferrari.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the analysis to answer the two research questions established in this study. The first section identifies and categorizes the types of lexical ambiguity found in the dialogues of the film Ford v Ferrari based on the classifications of polysemy and homonymy. In the second section, the meanings of these ambiguities are examined to understand how they function as affective or connotative meanings within the cinematic discourse. It is important to note that this analysis is based on selected data examples, which serve as representative samples to illustrate how ambiguous language contributes to character development and narrative intensity in the film.

Here are the research results on the types of lexical ambiguity and the meanings of lexical ambiguity found in the film Ford v Ferrari:

Results

a. Polysemy

Data 1

Shelby : "Am i **on fire** ?"
Pit Crew : "You're not on fire !!!"
(Timestamp : 01:58 – 02:03)

The phrase "on fire" is a polysemy. In this case, "on fire" literally refers to someone being engulfed in flames. However, this can mean being in a highly successful or unstoppable spirit. Both meanings can be related to convey intensity, either of physical risk or of performance. In this intense pit-stop scene, Shelby, having just escaped a fire during the race, screams in confusion and panic, asking if he is still on fire. The pit crew responds that he is not burned by fire.

This phrase "on fire" is a affective meaning, affective meaning refers to the emotional connotation or reaction evoked in the hearer. In this scene, Shelby's panicked repetition "Am I on fire?" carries not just a literal query but reflects fear, urgency, and psychological distress. The pit crew's equally frantic "You're not on fire!" is meant to reassure and calm him down. The emotional tone panic, intensity, and urgency conveys affective meaning.

Data 2

Dr. Granger : "You're **lucky** to be sitting here today"
Shelby : "Well, I feel real lucky. Luckiest guy on earth."
(Timestamp : 03:16 – 03:25)

The lexical ambiguity in this dialogue is found in the word 'lucky.' It is categorized as a polysemy. The term is ambiguous because it can describe genuine good fortune or be used ironically to express dissatisfaction or frustration. While both meanings are connected to the core concept of luck, they are applied differently based on the speaker's intent.

The word “lucky” carries affective meaning, particularly in Carroll’s response, where he expresses emotional nuance through sarcasm. His tone indicates that he does not truly feel fortunate but uses the word to emphasize his disappointment or disbelief. This creates a tension in interpretation and shows how a single word can reflect different attitudes within the same conversation.

Data 3

Miles : “Too much fuel, not enough **spark**. That’s what’s making her misfire.”

Wayne : “You wanna run that by me in English?”

(Timestamp: 05:20 – 05:24)

The lexical ambiguity in this dialogue centers on the word “spark.” The word “spark” is a polysemy because it has several related meanings. Literally, it refers to the electrical spark produced by the spark plug that ignites fuel in an engine. Figuratively, spark can also mean energy, liveliness, or inspiration. Although Ken intends the technical meaning, Wayne’s confusion opens space for an alternative interpretation, as the term can be understood beyond its mechanical sense. Because these meanings are conceptually related through the idea of ignition or initiation, the ambiguity is classified as polysemy. This dialogue occurs when Ken Miles is inspecting and explaining the mechanical problem of Wayne’s car. Ken uses technical automotive terminology to diagnose the issue, describing the imbalance between fuel and ignition. Wayne, who does not fully understand the mechanical explanation, responds humorously and with mild frustration by asking Ken to repeat the explanation “in English,” meaning in simpler, non-technical language. The exchange highlights the contrast between expert knowledge and lay understanding.

The word “spark” also categorizes as a connotative meaning because beyond its technical definition, spark commonly suggests energy, liveliness, or vitality. This broader association makes the term feel figurative and technical at the same time, which contributes to Wayne’s confusion. Therefore, while the primary meaning is literal and technical, the word “spark” evokes additional associations that go beyond its strict mechanical sense, making its overall meaning connotative rather than purely literal.

Data 4

Miles : “Mine's the wood-paneled country Squire... across the street. A real **hot** rod.”

Mollie : “Oh yeah? Is it fast ?”

(Timestamp : 07:04- 07 – 07:16)

The lexical ambiguity found in a word “hot”, and the word “hot” is a polysemy, in a general sense, “hot” refers to having a high temperature, but in this dialogue used here, it can refer to something that is high-performance, stolen, or visually exciting. This dialogue occurs during a lighthearted exchange between Ken Miles and his wife, Mollie. Ken refers to his family station wagon a "country Squire" ironically as a “hot rod”. This creates a humorous contrast because a "hot rod" is typically a car rebuilt for high speed, whereas his car is a slow, wood-paneled family vehicle

The word “hot” in this data carries a connotative meaning. Beyond its literal temperature or technical definition, it connotes speed, power, and a "cool" factor that Miles knows his station wagon lacks. By using this term, Miles is being self-deprecating and sarcastic, using the "hot" association to highlight how un-sporty the car actually is. Mollie plays along by asking if it is “fast,” acknowledging the ironic connotation Ken has introduced. This use of lexical ambiguity enriches the character development by showcasing the couple's shared sense of humor and Miles's obsession with performance, even when discussing his everyday vehicle.

Data 5

Remington : “Shelby, you’re up bright and early.”
Shelby : “Well, early bird get the **worm**, pops”
(Timestamp : 10:43 – 10:48)

The word “worm” is a polysemy since it has more than one related meaning. This dialogue occurs when Carroll Shelby wakes up inside his trailer and is greeted by Remington, who tells him that he is up early. Shelby then responds by saying, “early bird gets the worm,” using a common English idiom to express optimism and advantage for being early. The scene happens before the race, where Shelby and his team are preparing and evaluating competitors. Literally, a worm is a small animal usually eaten by birds. However, in everyday usage, especially when used inside the idiom “early bird gets the worm,” the word “worm” refers to an advantage or reward that someone obtains for being early.

The word “worm” carries connotative meaning because it represents an imagined reward or benefit, not a literal creature. Shelby uses this expression to imply that waking up early will result in profit or strategic advantage. Thus, the connotative meaning emphasizes preparedness and motivation rather than actual eating. This also contributes to Shelby’s confident tone, showing optimism before competition.

Data 6

Shelby : “How about Bondurant?”
Remington : “Driving for Washburn. Number 614.”
Shelby : “Relax Pops. We’ll **eat** the ‘vettes for breakfast.”
(Timestamp : 11:00 – 11:10)

The ambiguity in the word “eat” is a polysemy. In this case, “eat” typically refers to consuming food, but in race context it can also mean to easily defeat or overpower someone or something. The moment takes place at the race paddock as Shelby and his crew are sizing up the competition. Shelby is trying to ease Remington’s concern about rival driver Bob Bondurant, who is racing in a Corvette. By saying “we’ll eat the ‘vettes for breakfast,” Shelby is expressing confidence in his team’s superiority in this race competitions.

This word “eat” is a connotative meaning, Shelby’s choice of words is not neutral or technical it is intentionally expressive and informal, aiming to convey the confidence and arrogance. The expression “eat the ‘vettes for breakfast” connotes effortless superiority, and competitive aggression, painting the Corvettes (and their drivers) as weak or insignificant obstacles. It carries confrontational tone typical of competitive racing culture, enhancing the emotional atmosphere of the moment.

Data 7

Miles : “Happy bill ?”
Shelby : “I’ll **handle** it. I’ll talk to him, You just go and have a great day.”
(Timestamp 13:59 – 14:07)

In this dialogue, the lexical ambiguity is found in the word “handle,” which is categorized as polysemy because it has multiple related meanings. Literally, “handle” means to touch or hold something with the hands. However, in a broader and more figurative sense, it means to manage, deal with, or take responsibility for a situation or a person. In this scene, when Shelby says, “I’ll handle it. I’ll talk to him,” he does not mean physically holding something, but rather managing the situation or resolving a potential problem involving Bill. The related meanings share the core concept of control, which makes it an example of polysemy rather than homonymy.

The word “handle” in this context carries a connotative meaning because it implies authority, responsibility, and problem-solving ability beyond its literal sense. Shelby’s statement suggests

confidence and leadership, showing that he is willing to take control of the situation and protect Miles from potential conflict. The expression reinforces Shelby's role as a mediator and decision-maker within the team. Thus, the ambiguity of the word "handle" contributes to character development by highlighting Shelby's responsibility and calm authority in managing tense situations.

Data 8

Iacocca : "Money can buy **speed**."

Shelby : "It isn't about speed, Lee."

(Timestamp : 36:27 – 36:32)

The word "speed" is a polysemy. Which the word "speed" can be mean the physical measurement of how fast a car moves or progress or success achieved quickly in a competitive environment. Both meanings relate to movement and performance, so they are conceptually connected. Iacocca uses it in a more abstract, corporate sense (as in "progress or competitive advantage"), while Shelby refers to the literal velocity in the context of a 24-hour race where raw speed alone doesn't win.

The word "speed" is a connotative meaning, "speed" illustrates connotative meaning as the associative, cultural, or emotional implications of a word beyond its literal meaning. Iacocca's "speed" connotes power, money, and technological superiority, while Shelby's rejection of that meaning points to human endurance, expertise, and grit. His tone implies that speed alone doesn't define greatness in racing. The word becomes loaded with deeper philosophical contrast: corporate ambition against racing passion.

b. Homonymy

Data 9

Miles : "Try changing up at 5,000 rpm not two. **Drive** like you mean it, hard and tight, she'll run clean."

Wayne : "Wait. Are you telling me i don't know how to drive my own car?"

(Timestamp : 05:42 – 05:53)

The word "drive" is a homonymy. So the word "drive" in this dialogue can mean the technical sense of operating a vehicle effectively at proper RPM or to mean possessing authority, control, or intimate knowledge of one's own car. Wayne, the car owner, is offended when Miles gives technical advice about how to operate the vehicle. The clash is not only mechanical but also ego-driven, revealing tension between expertise and ownership.

The word "drive" is a affective meaning, because the affective meaning deals with the attitude and emotion conveyed by the speaker. Wayne feels personally insulted, interpreting Miles's mechanical advice as an attack on his competence and masculinity. His tone is defensive and emotional. Meanwhile, Miles's matter of fact delivery may sound arrogant or dismissive. The affective load in this dialogue reveals power dynamics and pride, beyond the literal content about "how to drive."

Data 10

Bill : "And I'm just doing my job."

Shelby : "I understand you are. You know how he gets on a race day. You know that. All right? But you're not gonna DQ us over a **trunk**."

(Timestamp 13:35 – 13:41)

The lexical ambiguity in this dialogue is found in the word "trunk." The word "trunk" is a homonymy because it has multiple meanings that are not conceptually related. In general, trunk can refer to the main stem of a tree or the long nose of an elephant. It can also refer to a large

storage box. However, in the automotive context, trunk refers to the rear storage compartment of a car. This dialogue occurs when Shelby argues with a race official who intends to disqualify their car due to a technical issue related to the vehicle's trunk area. Shelby tries to persuade the official not to sent off the team over what he considers a minor technical matter.

The word "trunk" in this dialogue contains a connotative meaning, beyond its literal meaning as a part of the car, it implies a minor or insignificant issue compared to the team's overall performance and effort. Shelby's use of the word emphasizes his frustration with strict regulations and highlights the tension between racing passion and bureaucratic control of the competition.

Data 11

Shelby : "Yeah, it doesn't track."

Miles : "You know, the third **gear** is too high."

(Timestamp : 50:38 – 50:42)

The word "gear" is a homonymy, because it has several meanings that are completely unrelated to one another despite sharing the same form. In the automotive context of this dialogue, "gear" refers to a specific set of toothed wheels in the transmission that determines the speed and torque of the car. However, "gear" also refers to equipment or clothing used for a particular activity (like "camping gear") or even a set of clothes.

Word "gear" in this data carries a connotative meaning, in this conversation dialogue between Shelby and Miles, the phrase "third gear is too high" refers to a lack of harmony between the driver's needs and the machine's capabilities. It represents the duo's pursuit of technical "perfection" as well as the importance of their engineering mission. To the audience, it represents the professional knowledge and precise attention to detail required to construct a world-class race car.

Data 12

Miles : "Steering's loose because the front end gets **light**. And over 140, it thinks it's a..."

Shelby : "Airplane..."

(Timestamp : 50:46 – 50:53)

The word "light" in this dialogue is a lexical ambiguity and this word is classified as homonymy, because, light can mean "not heavy" or "having little weight," which is the intended technical meaning in the racing context. On the other hand, light can also mean "illumination" or "brightness," a meaning that is completely unrelated to weight or mass.

This word "light" is a connotative meaning. Ken uses the word light to describe a mechanical condition affecting the car's stability, while Shelby's response, "Airplane,". The homonymous nature of the word allows the dialogue to be vivid and expressive, helping the audience visualize the car's loss of downforce.

Data 13

Miles : "The car wants to go faster. I feel it"

Remington : "Any lighter, we're getting **fragile**."

(Timestamp : 56:31 – 56:41)

The word "fragile" in this data is homonym. In one sense, it means physically delicate or easily broken. In this dialogue, "fragile" refers to the physical property of the car part becoming delicate as its weight decreases or it means that the car is reliable under extreme racing circumstances. This dialogue takes place during a technical discussion regarding the car's weight and durability, demonstrating the tension between speed and toughness for preparing the race in Le Mans 24 Hour competition.

In this dialogue the word “fragile” included in affective meaning, since the word evokes concern and caution, highlighting the risk that the car might break down if pushed too far. It conveys the precarious balance the team must manage between maximizing speed and ensuring mechanical endurance, adding tension to the narrative.

Data 14

Remington : “What's the **lap** here, Burt?”
 Burt : “1.50”
 (Timestamp 58:54 – 58:59)

The lexical ambiguity found in this dialogue is word “lap”, word “lap” is a type of lexical ambiguity homonymy. The word “lap” is classified as homonymy because it has completely unrelated meanings despite having the same form. In general English, “lap” can refer to the upper part of a person’s thighs when sitting (for example, “a child sits on her mother’s lap”). However, in the context of racing, “lap” refers to one complete circuit around the track. These meanings are not conceptually related, which makes the word a homonym. In this scene, Remington is asking about the lap time, meaning the duration required for the car to complete one full circuit of the track. Burt’s response, “1.50,” indicates the recorded time for that lap, emphasizing performance measurement during the race.

The word “lap” in this dialogue carries a connotative meaning because, within the racing context, it represents more than just a physical rotation around the track. It connotes speed, competitiveness, and technical achievement. In motorsport culture, lap time symbolizes precision, progress, and the car’s overall performance capability. Therefore, although “lap” literally refers to a circuit, in this scene it also implies the team’s pursuit of excellence and their constant evaluation of speed and efficiency, reinforcing the intense competitive atmosphere of the Le Mans race.

No	Data	Types	Meaning
1.	“Am i on fire ?”	Polysemy	Affective
2.	“You're lucky to be sitting here today”	Polysemy	Affective
3.	“Too much fuel, not enough spark . That’s what’s making her misfire.”	Polysemy	Connotative
4.	“Mine's the wood-paneled country Squire... across the street. A real hot rod.”	Polysemy	Connotative
5.	“Well, early bird get the worm , pops”	Polysemy	Connotative
6.	“We’ll eat the ‘vettes for breakfast.”	Polysemy	Connotative
7.	“I’ll handle it. I’ll talk to him, You just go and have a great day.”	Polysemy	Connotative
8.	“Money can buy speed .”	Polysemy	Connotative

9.	“Drive like you mean it, hard and tight, she'll run clean.”	Homonymy	Affective
10.	“But you're not gonna DQ us over a trunk .”	Homonymy	Connotative
11.	“You know, the third gear is too high.”	Homonymy	Connotative
12.	“Steering's loose because the front end gets light .”	Homonymy	Connotative
13.	“Any lighter, we're getting fragile .”	Homonymy	Affective
14.	“What's the lap here, Burt?”	Homonymy	Connotative

Table 1. Types of lexical ambiguity and meaning in Ford v Ferrari (2019) film.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that lexical ambiguity in Ford v Ferrari (2019) is predominantly realized through polysemy rather than homonymy. This result aligns with previous studies which suggest that polysemy tends to occur more frequently in natural discourse, particularly in films where context helps guide interpretation. For instance, Faina et al. (2021) found that polysemy dominates in animated film dialogues, as scriptwriters intentionally employ words with related meanings to enrich communication. Similarly, Ekarisna (2022) confirmed that lexical ambiguity especially polysemy is more common than structural ambiguity in cinematic texts. These findings support the present study, where 8 of the data are categorized as polysemy.

The dominance of polysemy can be explained by its functional flexibility in communication. As stated by Yule (2010), polysemy allows a single lexical item to carry multiple related meanings, making it highly effective in dynamic and context-dependent interactions. In this film, polysemous words such as “speed,” “handle,” and “hot” are not only used in their literal sense but also extended to express technical expertise, sarcasm, and competitive attitude. This supports Kreidler (1998) view that polysemy reflects semantic extension, where meanings evolve based on contextual usage.

On the other hand, homonymy appears less frequently with 6 data, but it still plays a significant role in creating misunderstanding, tension, and expressive nuance in the dialogue. Words such as “drive,” “trunk,” and “lap” demonstrate how unrelated meanings can coexist within the same lexical form. According to Hurford et al. (2007), homonymy often requires greater contextual support to avoid misinterpretation, which is evident in scenes where characters respond emotionally due to different interpretations of the same word. This finding is consistent with Arfiawati and Alamsyah (2022), who argue that homonymy in film dialogues often contributes to conflict or dramatic interaction.

In terms of meaning, the findings indicate that connotative meaning is more dominant than affective meaning. This result suggests that most ambiguous expressions in the film carry implied, associative meanings rather than purely emotional ones. Leech (1981) explains that connotative meaning involves cultural, symbolic, and contextual associations beyond literal definitions. In this study, expressions like “eat the ‘vettes for breakfast” and “money can buy speed” demonstrate how language conveys competitiveness, power, and ideology within racing culture. These connotations enrich the narrative by reflecting the values and mindset of the characters.

Meanwhile, affective meaning appears in fewer instances but plays a crucial role in expressing emotional intensity. Dialogues such as “Am I on fire?” and “You’re lucky to be sitting here today” highlight how ambiguity can reflect fear, sarcasm, or frustration. This supports Leech (1981) notion that affective meaning is closely related to the speaker’s emotional state and attitude. In this film, affective meaning is often used in high-pressure situations, emphasizing tension and character relationships.

D. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that lexical ambiguity plays a significant role in shaping meaning and communication in the film *Ford v Ferrari*. Based on the analysis, two main types of lexical ambiguity were identified, there is polysemy and homonymy. Among these, polysemy was found to be more dominant, indicating that words with multiple related meanings are more frequently used in cinematic dialogue due to their flexibility and adaptability to context. Furthermore, in terms of meaning interpretation, connotative meaning appeared more frequently than affective meaning. This suggests that ambiguous expressions in the film tend to carry implied, associative, and cultural meanings rather than purely emotional ones. However, affective meaning still plays an important role, particularly in emotionally intense scenes, where ambiguity helps express characters’ feelings such as fear, sarcasm, and frustration.

These findings confirm that lexical ambiguity is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a stylistic and communicative strategy in film. It contributes to character development, enhances dramatic effect, and enriches narrative complexity by allowing multiple layers of interpretation. Therefore, this study highlights the importance of semantic analysis in understanding film dialogue. It also suggests that future research can explore other types of ambiguity, such as structural ambiguity or structural ambiguity, in different film genres or media forms to gain a broader understanding of meaning in audiovisual communication.

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