

# 1 Structural Ambiguity Interpretation: A Case Study of Arab 2 Learners of English

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6

## 7 **Abstract**

8 The aim of this paper is to investigate how Arabic native speakers (non-native speakers of  
9 English) interpret English ambiguous sentences. It has been recognized that Arabic native  
10 speakers encounter problems with English sentences which involve structural ambiguity. Sixty  
11 subjects participated in the experiment. All were university students specialized in English.  
12 The subjects were given ambiguous sentences contain prepositional phrases, relative clauses,  
13 etc. For instance, prepositional phrases like ?the girl hit the boy with the book? in which the  
14 prepositional phrase (PP) can be attached either to the verb phrase (VP) or to the preceding  
15 noun phrase (NP). It has been recognized that the students face difficulty in interpreting  
16 ambiguous structure and generally take the general meaning which can be understood from  
17 the sequence of words.

18

19 **Index terms**— Ambiguity, Arabic, translation, structural ambiguity, lexical ambiguity.

## 20 **1 INTRODUCTION**

21 Ambiguity is, strictly speaking, used to describe a word, phrase, or sentence when it has more than one  
22 interpretation. Generally, two types of ambiguity are distinguished, lexical and structural ambiguity. Lexical  
23 ambiguity, which is so common, indicates that the word itself has more than one meaning. The word 'hard',  
24 for example, can mean 'not soft' or 'difficult'. Structural ambiguity, on the other hand, occurs when a phrase  
25 or a sentence has more than one underlying structure, such as the phrases 'English history teacher', 'short men  
26 and women', 'The girl hit the boy with a book', etc. These ambiguities are said to be structural because each  
27 such phrase can be represented in two structurally different ways, e.g., '[English history] teacher' and 'English  
28 [history teacher]'. Indeed, the existence of such ambiguities provides strong evidence for a level of underlying  
29 syntactic structure. Consider the structurally ambiguous sentence 'The chicken is ready to eat' which could be  
30 used to describe either a hungry chicken or a broiled chicken. It is arguable that the operative reading depends  
31 on whether or not the implicit subject of the infinitive clause 'to eat' is tied anaphorically to the subject 'the  
32 chicken' of the main clause (see Quirk, et al., 1985 and Radford, 2008, among others).

33 In certain cases it is not clear whether we have a case of structural ambiguity. For example 'Jane likes her new  
34 dress and so does Emily'. This can be used to say either 'Jane likes Jane's new dress and Emily likes Emily's new  
35 dress' or 'Jane likes Jane's new dress and Emily likes Jane's new dress'. In the above case, ambiguity is not clear  
36 or even one might say that there is no ambiguity at all and the clause 'so does Emily' can be read unequivocally  
37 as saying in the context that Emily does the same thing that Jane does, and although there are two alternatives  
38 to explain the clause 'so does Emily', these alternatives are not fixed semantically. Hence the ambiguity is merely  
39 apparent and better described as semantic underdetermination.

40 Although ambiguity is fundamentally a property of linguistic expressions, people are also said to be ambiguous  
41 on occasion in how they use language. This can occur if, even when their words are unambiguous, their words  
42 do not make what they mean uniquely determinable. Strictly speaking, however, ambiguity is a semantic  
43 phenomenon, involving linguistic meaning rather than speaker meaning (see Sturt et al., 2003 among others).

### 3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

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44 Generally when one uses ambiguous words or sentences, one does not consciously entertain their unintended  
45 meanings, although there is psycholinguistic evidence that when one hears ambiguous words one momentarily  
46 accesses and then rules out their irrelevant senses. When people use ambiguous language, generally its ambiguity  
47 is not intended.

48 One of the most significant problems in processing natural language is the problem of ambiguity. Most  
49 ambiguities escape our notice because we are very good at resolving them using context and our knowledge of  
50 the world. Many works (as we will see below) have been carried out either to check how people paraphrase  
51 ambiguous sentences or to find out the reasons behind the way we understand these sentences. However, most of  
52 the previous works emphasize one type of ambiguous sentences, for instance, sentences with prepositional phrases,  
53 with wh-clauses, etc.

54 Our work here is distinguished from the previous works in that it deals with different types of ambiguous  
55 sentences (7 types according to the source of ambiguity). Moreover, it tackles the interpretation of ambiguous  
56 sentences by non-native speakers.

## 57 2 II.

### 58 3 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

59 Natural languages are vastly ambiguous, and our apparently effortless ability to account for this phenomenon  
60 is one of the central problems of modern cognitive science (Sturz, et. al., 2003). However, each language has  
61 its peculiarity to express ambiguity. It seems that it is not necessary for the native speakers to be aware of  
62 all the possible interpretations associated with the sentence. (Gibson and Pearlmuter, 1998) point out that  
63 sentence comprehension involves integration of multiple different cues to interpretation, including morphological,  
64 syntactic, semantic, discourse-level and probabilistic ones. If it is not easy for the native speakers to account for  
65 all the possible readings of certain sentences, the situation will be more complicated for the non-native speakers.  
66 It should be pointed out that some studies (Clahsen and Felser, 2006) indicate that learners' ability to use  
67 sentence-internal semantic cues to interpretation may be similar to native speakers'. They add that non-native  
68 speakers might be able to compensate for their grammatical processing problems by making efficient use of non-  
69 grammatical cues to interpretation. Guo et al. (2008) points out that L2 learners apply non-grammatical cues  
70 (i.e. semantic cues) more than native speakers do. A survey of different types of structural ambiguity shows  
71 that there are many sources of ambiguity. For instance, structural ambiguity could result from ellipsis, usage of  
72 adverbial clauses, prepositional phrases, etc. All the types which we will review below were included in our test  
73 for our subjects (Arabic native speakers) to find out how do they interpret them.

74 In the case of ellipsis, the problem is that sometimes we cannot decide whether the remaining NP is a subject  
75 or an object, for instance, a sentence like 'She loves me more than you' is ambiguous and has two interpretations  
76 which can be paraphrased as 'She loves me more than she loves you', in which 'you' is an object, and 'She loves me  
77 more than you love me', in which 'you' is a subject ??Radford, 2008: 13). He adds "it is important to emphasize  
78 that this grammatical knowledge of how to form and interpret expressions in your native language is tacit (i.e.  
79 subconscious) rather than explicit (i.e. conscious): so, it's no good asking a native speaker of English a question  
80 such as 'How do you form negative sentences in English?' since human beings have no conscious awareness of the  
81 processes involved in speaking and understanding their native language. To introduce a technical term devised  
82 by Chomsky, we can say that native speakers have grammatical competence in their native" (ibid.).

83 The usage of adverbial clauses in complex sentences could cause ambiguity. The adverbial could be attached  
84 to the main verb or the embedded verb. For instance, 'I told him to leave before you came'. The adverbial  
85 clause 'before you came' can be attached to the main verb 'told' to have the meaning that the time of telling  
86 was 'before you came' or it can be attached to the embedded verb leave to have the meaning that leaving 'should  
87 be before you came'. Generally, it has been found out that adverbs are preferentially attached to the lower verb  
88 (Kimball, 1973 and Altmann, et al. 1998). For example, in the following sentence, the preference is for the adverb  
89 'miserably' to modify 'failed' rather than 'said': 'John said that he failed miserably'.

90 Another source of syntactic ambiguity is where whole phrases, typically prepositional phrases (PPs) can attach  
91 themselves, normally in a constituent-final position, to constituents of almost any syntactic category -sentences,  
92 verb phrases, noun phrases, etc. For instance, 'She hit the boy with the book'. 'with the book' can be attached  
93 to the NP (the boy) to mean 'the boy who has a book' or it can be attached to the verb 'hit' to mean that 'the  
94 book' is the instrument by which the boy was hit. The two interpretations can be represented respectively in (a  
95 & b). a) NP VP [NP PP] b) NP [VP [NP ] [PP]]

96 This type of ambiguity has received much attention in the literature. Rayner, et al. (1983) examine sentences  
97 such as the above and find that there is initial preference for the verb phrase attachment. That is, the subjects  
98 attach the prepositional phrase with the verb rather than the NP ('the boy'). Since that time, a number of  
99 studies have pointed out that the interpretation of sentences which include PP can be modified by some factors  
100 such as the type of verb involved (Konieczny, Hemforth, Scheepers, & Strube, 1997; Spivey-Knowlton & Sedivy,  
101 1995) and the argument status of the prepositional phrase (Schuetze & Gibson, 1999) or the choice of preposition  
102 (Katsika, 2009). Jurafsky (1996), for instance, discusses how the type of the verb affects prepositional phrase  
103 attachment preferences. The PP in a sentence like 'They discuss the dogs on the beach' can attach either to the  
104 noun phrase or the verb phrase. The situation is different if the verb discuss is replaced by the verb 'keep' as

105 in 'they keep the dogs on the beach'. In this case the sentence has one and only one interpretation. ??uirk, et  
106 al.(1985:518) points out that the occurrence of PP final position in sentences like 'Did you drive the car near the  
107 police station?' causes more than one interpretations. For instance, the PP 'near the police station' could be  
108 interpreted as either 'directional' (towards the police station) or 'positional' (which describes the car).

109 Pan and Felser (2011) investigate the resolution of prepositional phrase (PP) ambiguities in sentences such  
110 as 'The policeman watched the spy with binoculars'. The PP 'with binoculars' can either be interpreted as  
111 modifying the verb (watched) to be 'The policeman [VP watched [NP the spy] [PP with binoculars]]' or the post  
112 verbal noun phrase (the spy) as in ??The policeman [VP watched [NP the spy [PP with binoculars]]]. The study  
113 shows that when sentences such as the one above presented in isolation, native speakers of English tend to prefer  
114 the VP modification over the NP modification reading. That is, grammatical constraints (Crocker, 1996;Phillips,  
115 1996) and other factors may affect the attachment preference of PP. For instance, the PP in a sentence like 'Bill  
116 glanced at the customer with strong suspicion' is attached to the verb, whereas the PP in 'Bill glanced at the  
117 customer with ripped jeans' is attached to the preceding NP.

118 Wh-relative clause has its role in structural ambiguity. The main structure is usually assumed to be NP-PP-  
119 RC (relative clause), where NP dominates PP, and RC. The RC could be immediately dominated either by the  
120 first NP, or by the second NP (which is embedded inside the PP). In some sentences, it is not clear where to  
121 attach the relative clause. According to Cuetos and Mitchell (1988), English native speakers prefer to attach the  
122 relative clause to the closest NP although the relative clause could modify either of the two noun phrases. For  
123 instance, 'The driver of the manager who lived there died.' The relative clause 'who lived there' is attached to  
124 the manager rather than the driver. That is, 'it is the manager who lived there' not the driver. That is, the  
125 structure in (c) is more frequent than the structure in (d).

#### 126 **4 c) [NP ? [PP [NP ? RC]]] d) [NP? [PP NP] RC],**

127 Some other scholars (Gilboy, et al., 1995 andTraxler et al., 1998) state that WH-preference appears to vary  
128 according to various factors, such as the type of the preposition used in the complex noun phrase.

129 Whenever there is more than one possibility for how a sentence can be read, difficulty arises. Much of this  
130 is because we don't know how a person sorts out the differences between ambiguous statements. Consider the  
131 following: e) 'I saw the river walking over the bridge today.' f)

132 'I saw my friend walking over the bridge today.' In the first sentence, it's obvious to us that the speaker is  
133 walking over the bridge, and saw the river as he passed over it. In the second sentence, it's probable that both  
134 the speaker and his friend were walking across the bridge and they saw each other in passing. But it's also  
135 possible that the speaker was riding in a car across the bridge and saw his friend walking across. Or perhaps the  
136 friend was in a car while the speaker was walking. All three are valid conclusions one could draw from reading  
137 the second sentence. If they wanted to know exactly what happened and remove all ambiguity, the reader of the  
138 sentence would ask the speaker to clarify exactly who was walking where. But there is no ambiguity in the first  
139 sentence at all. The reading that 'the river is walking over the bridge' is of course eliminated since rivers cannot  
140 walk. The sentence is truly unambiguous. However, in the second sentence, both characters are equally likely to  
141 be walking, so there is valid ambiguity there. Mitchell et al. (1995) investigate how his participants understand  
142 ambiguous sentences. They support the claim that there is a purely configurational, non-lexical component to  
143 disambiguation preferences. They apply sentence completion experiment like 'The satirist ridiculed the lawyer  
144 of the firm who?' and the participants had to complete the sentences. He finds out that in addition to low  
145 attachment preference, the subjects tend to attach the relative clause to a particular configurational position,  
146 rather than to use the relative clause to modify a particular lexical item.

147 Negation can be a source of ambiguity. Generally, ambiguity arises as a result of what is called in grammar  
148 the scope of negation ??Bresnan, 2003:30-31). For instance, in a sentence like 'all of you won't pass', either we  
149 negate the verb 'pass' to mean 'no passing'. In this case, the sentence has the interpretation 'no one will pass (all  
150 of you will fail)'. Or we negate 'all' to arrive at the interpretation that 'not all of you will pass (some will pass  
151 and some will fail). (see ??uirk, et.al., 1985). ??adford (2008: 171) points to this type of ambiguity and states  
152 that a sentence like 'everyone hasn't finished the assignment yet' is ambiguous according to scope of negation.  
153 If the scope of 'not' is not the subject 'everyone' the sentence has the reading 'everyone is in the position of not  
154 having finished the assignment yet', and if the scope of 'not' is 'everyone', the sentence will have the reading 'not  
155 everyone is yet in the position of having finished the assignment'.

156 Ambiguity resolution involves syntactic and nonsyntactic factors, such as lexical, semantic plausibility and  
157 even non linguistic factors. According to the Tuning Hypothesis, these non-syntactic factors play a role in later  
158 processes (Frazier, 1987). Lexical semantic and all other factors must be taken into consideration to complete  
159 the process of ambiguity resolution.

### 160 **5 III.**

## 161 **6 SUBJECTS AND METHODOLOGY**

162 Sixty Arabic native speakers participated in the experiment. All were university students majoring in English.  
163 They were given 18 ambiguous sentences. Sentences include different sources of ambiguity such as, prepositional  
164 phrases, adverbial clauses, ellipsis, etc. The subjects were asked to translate the sentences. Unlike most of

## 7 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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165 previous studies, the authors prefer to use translation to find out how the subjects interpret the English ambiguous  
166 sentences for two reasons, the first is to avoid any problem which could result from how to express the meaning  
167 in English. The second, each reading of the English ambiguous sentences has a different translation in Arabic.  
168 Accordingly, we know exactly how the Arabic native speakers interpret English ambiguous sentences. For instance,  
169 the English sentence 'she hit the boy with the book' has two different translations in Arabic: g) Albintu Dharabit  
170 alwalada bilkitaa 'The girl hit the boy by the book.' h) Albintu Dharabit alwalada allathii yahmil lkitaab. 'The  
171 girl hit the boy who has the book. ?? Accordingly, the first translation in (g) means that the book is the  
172 instrument used by the girl. The usage of the prefix {bi-} in Arabic means that the book is the instrument  
173 by which the boy was hit. That is, the PP is connected with the verb. Whereas, the second interpretation in  
174 (h) indicates that the prepositional phrase describes the NP (the boy). So, each of the possible readings of the  
175 sentence has a different translation. The sentences in which the Arabic translation could be ambiguous were  
176 avoided.

177 The sentences can be classified as follows:

178 a) Sentences with coordinated clauses or noun phrases.  
179 1. He said lies and hurt his friends. IV.

## 180 7 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

181 In the first group of sentences, ambiguity results from whether we look at the coordinated clauses or NPs as one  
182 entity or two entities with ellipsis. For instance, the sentence 'he told lies and hurt his friends' could mean that  
183 'he told lies and as a result of his lies he hurt his friends', That is he did one thing. The second interpretation  
184 is that he did two things, 'he told lies' and 'he hurt his friends'. All our subjects (60 participants) understood  
185 the sentence according to the second interpretation in which he did two things. The first interpretation is not  
186 available for our subjects.

187 The second sentence in the first group means either 'Bill and Mary married each other' or 'Bill married another  
188 girl (not Mary) and Mary married someone else.' All the subjects took the first interpretation and understand  
189 the sentence as 'Bill and Mary married each other.' Ellipsis has no room in the interpretation of the sentences.

190 The source of ambiguity in the third sentence is similar to the first two sentences. The sentence means either  
191 'not to eat fish and meat at the same time' or 'eating fish is forbidden, moreover, eating meat is forbidden.' Most  
192 of our subjects (54 or 90%) followed the first interpretation in which 'eating fish and meat with each other is  
193 forbidden'. The rest (6 subjects or 10%) gave ambiguous Arabic sentences. It seems that our participants translate  
194 the English 'and' into Arabic 'wa' which has the same syntactic and semantic behavior as 'and'. However, the  
195 Arabic word which means at the same time is 'ma9' (with) which was used by most of the subjects.

196 Accordingly, in their interpretations, our subjects took 'and' as a coordinator to connect what is before to what  
197 is after. Ellipsis was ignored by our subjects. So, when we say 'Bill and Mary got married', they coordinated the  
198 two NPs without thinking of the possibility of ellipsis and the sentence could mean 'Bill got married and Mary  
199 got married'.

200 The source of ambiguity in the second group is the usage of the adverb which could be attached to the main  
201 verb or the embedded verb. For instance, the first sentence of this group 'I told him to run again' means either  
202 'I told him again' or 'to run again'. All the subjects (60 subjects) preferred the second reading in which 'again'  
203 is attached to the verb 'run'. None of the subjects attached 'again' to the verb 'told'. 'last week' in the second  
204 sentence of this group could be interpreted either the time of saying or the time of meeting. 58 subjects took  
205 'last week' as the time of meeting whereas two subjects understood 'last week' to be the time of saying. The  
206 adverbial clause 'when she left' in (6) can be taken to describe 'the time of saying' or 'the time of seeing'. All  
207 the subjects interpreted the adverbial clause as 'the time of seeing'. As can be noted, our subjects preferred  
208 to attach the final adverb to the closest verb or the embedded verb. Our results here go on line with many  
209 previous studies ??Kimball, 1973 and Altmann, et The presence of the prepositional phrase in a final position  
210 is the source of ambiguity in the third group. The reading of the sentence depends on where we attach the  
211 prepositional phrase. For instance, in the first sentence 'he saw the man with the binoculars', the prepositional  
212 phrase 'with the binoculars' can be attached to the NP 'the man' to mean 'the man who has binoculars', and  
213 it can be attached to the verb 'saw' to mean the way by which 'he saw the man'. Fifty one subjects attached  
214 the prepositional phrase to the verb. Two subjects attached the prepositional phrase to the NP 'the man'. The  
215 other subjects (7) gave literal translation to the preposition 'with'. They translated it erroneously into the Arabic  
216 preposition 'ma9', so their sentences are not clear. All the subjects attached the prepositional phrase 'with the  
217 book' in (8) to the verb 'hit'. That is, they interpreted the book as the instrument by which the girl hit the boy.  
218 In the third sentence (9), 46 subjects attached the prepositional phrase 'on the table' to the verb 'want'. The  
219 rest (16 subjects) attached it to the NP 'the book'. So, to attach the prepositional phrase to the main verb is the  
220 preferable reading for our subjects. The results of our subjects (non-native speakers of English) match previous  
221 studies (Pan and Felser, 2011 among others) in which it is preferable to attach the prepositional phrase to the  
222 verb. Other factors which could affect the attachment of the PP like the type of the verb are ignored in our  
223 study.

224 The occurrence of the non-finite clause without a subject is the source of ambiguity in the fourth group. In the  
225 first sentence (10), 6 subjects selected the main subject (he) to be the subject of the non-finite clause 'crossing  
226 the street'. In this case, the sentence has the following reading 'he killed the cat while he was crossing the street'.

227 Fifty four subjects preferred the 'cat' to be the subject of the non-finite clause 'while the cat was crossing the  
228 street' or 'the cat which was crossing the street'.

229 The non-finite clause in the second sentence ( ??1) is a to-infinitive clause. The subject of this clause could be  
230 'the horse' or 'someone'. All the subjects preferred the 'someone' to be the subject of this clause. Accordingly,  
231 the reading of the sentence goes like this 'the horse is ready for someone to ride'.

232 Accordingly, the first NP was preferred by our subjects to be the subject of the non-finite clause.

233 In the fifth group, negation is the source of ambiguity. That is, what do we negate in the sentence. For instance,  
234 in the first sentence (12), the scope of negation could be 'pass', that is, we negate 'passing'. Accordingly, the  
235 sentence means 'no body will pass'. The scope of negation could be 'all'; in this case, the sentence could be  
236 interpreted as 'not all of you will pass (some of you). All of our subjects preferred the first reading in which  
237 'passing' is negated (no passing). Again, the negative particle in the second sentence (13) could be interpreted  
238 to negate the verb 'close' or to negate the reason 'because he left'. In this case, the sentence is interpreted as  
239 follows: 'the reason for not closing the door is not because he left but because?' That is there is another reason  
240 for not closing the door. All the subject selected the first reading which is 'not closing the door' and the reason  
241 for that is 'his leaving'. For our subjects, the preferable reading is to take 'not' as a negative particle for the verb  
242 which directly follows it.

243 The sentences in (group 6) include relative clauses. This relative clause could be attached to one of the NPs  
244 in the sentence. One of these NPs is masculine the other one is feminine since in Arabic there is a difference  
245 between masculine and feminine relative words (i.e.'allathi' masculan and 'allati' feminan). The relative clause  
246 'who lived there' in (14) can be attached to 'the driver' or to 'my sister'. All the subjects attached the relative  
247 clause to 'the driver'. None of our subjects attached the relative clause to the NP 'my sister'. In the second  
248 sentence (15), 'who bought the house' could be attached to the 'mother' or to the 'friend'. Most of our subjects  
249 (53) attached it to 'the mother' whereas seven subjects attached it to 'my friend'.

250 The subjects preferred to attach the relative clause to the first NP rather than the closest one. It seems  
251 that there is a strong association between relative clauses and prepositional phrases. In both cases, the subjects  
252 preferred not to attach them to the closest NP. Our results contradict with what is mentioned by some scholars  
253 (Cuetos and Mitchell, 1988). They state that their subjects prefer the attachment of the RC to the lower NP,  
254 where as our subjects prefer to attach the RC to the higher NP. It seems that the subjects are affected by Arabic.  
255 The usage of prepositional phrase as NP is absent in Arabic. For instance, 'the driver of my sister' is equivalent  
256 to 'sa'q ukhti' (diver sister) and in such case the 'the driver' is the topic and the predicate talks about or describe  
257 it.

258 The last group of sentences (group 7) exhibits ellipsis in the second clause which results in leaving an NP  
259 which could be interpreted as an object or subject. For example, in the sentence (17), 'she likes her dog more  
260 than her friend.' 'Her friend' could be a subject for the elliptic clause to have the following interpretation: 'she  
261 likes her dog more than her friend [likes her dog]'. A gain, 'her friend' could be the object, 'she likes her dog  
262 more than [she likes] her friend. The second example of ellipsis is the sentence 'Bill knows a richer man than  
263 John' which has two meanings, that 'Bill knows a man who is richer than John' and that 'Bill knows a man who  
264 is richer than any man John knows'. In both sentences, our subjects interpreted the NPs (her friend in the first  
265 and John in the second as objects). They were not aware of the possibility of the interpretation of these NPs as  
266 subjects. That is, the first second sentence is understood to mean 'Bill knows a man who is richer than John'.

267 V.

## 268 8 CONCLUSION

269 The above discussion shows that our participants who are not native speakers of English exhibited difficulty in  
270 processing all the given types of ambiguous sentences. Unlike previous studies, we applied sentence translation  
271 approach to find out the preferable reading of ambiguous sentences. The use of Arabic translation of the  
272 ambiguous English sentences allows us to know exactly how our participants understand these sentences. Except  
273 in the case of relative clauses, high attachment was preferred by our subjects unlike some previous studies about  
274 native speakers, our results are consistent with most of the previous studies about ambiguous sentences and the  
275 preferable reading. Prepositional phrases were attached to the verb rather than the lower NP. It seems that in  
276 their interpretations, our subjects paraphrased the sentences according to the string of words which is taken as  
277 the main clue. This is why in the case of negation the scope of negation is the verb. The same thing is applied

## 8 CONCLUSION

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278 when the sentences exhibit ellipsis in the second clause; they took the remaining NP as an object. Adverbial  
279 clauses were preferable to be attached to the embedded verb.<sup>1 2 3 4 5 6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> M arch 2012Structural Ambiguity Interpretation: A Case Study of Arab Learners of English

<sup>2</sup> © 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US) al. 1998) which indicate that the subjects prefer to attach the adverbial clause to the lower verb.

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<sup>4</sup> © 2012 Global Journals Inc. (US) sentence was understood by our subjects as 'she likes her dog more than [she likes] her friend' whereas the

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