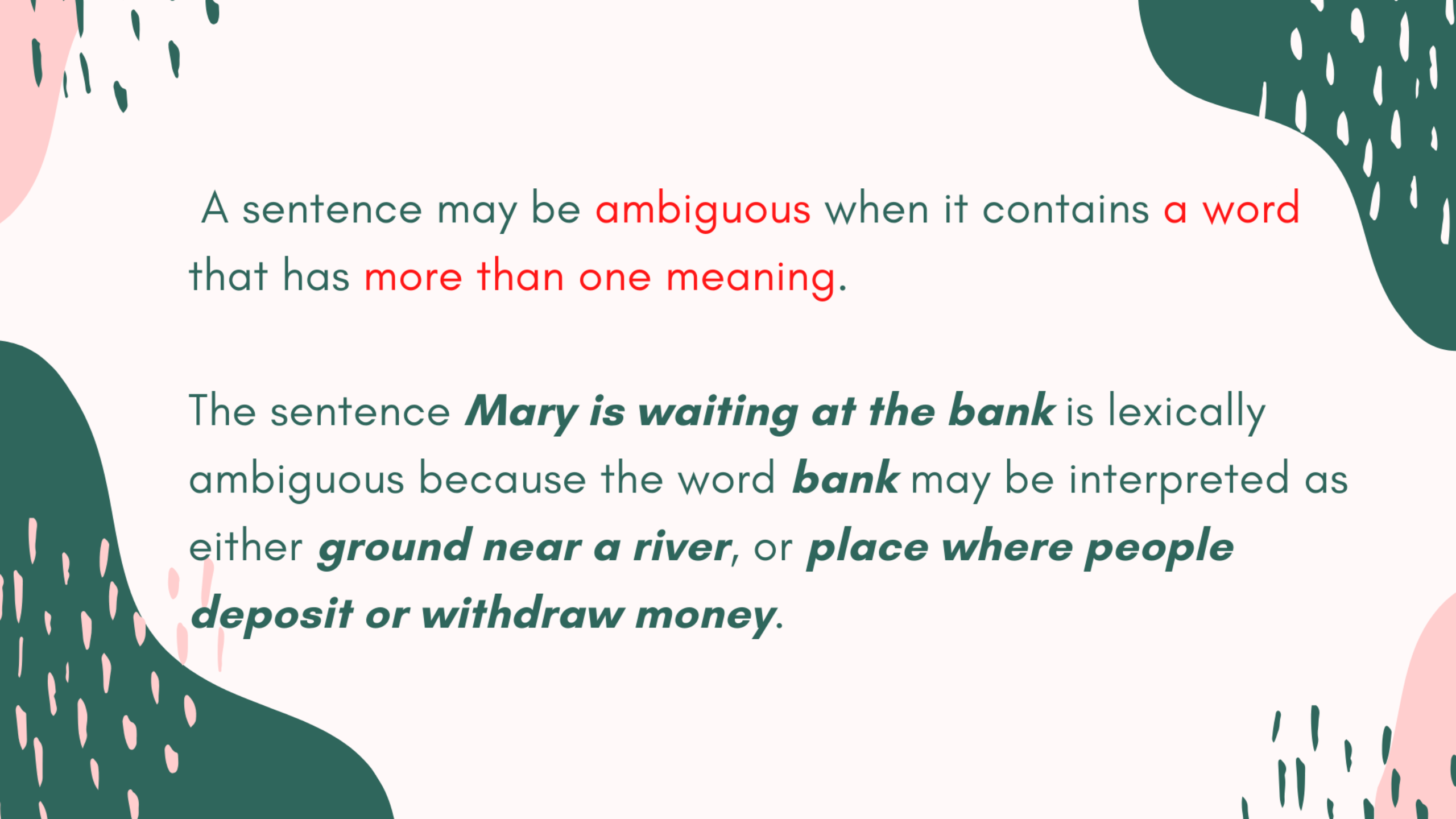


Lexical Ambiguity

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A sentence may be **ambiguous** when it contains **a word** that has **more than one meaning**.

The sentence ***Mary is waiting at the bank*** is lexically ambiguous because the word ***bank*** may be interpreted as either ***ground near a river***, or ***place where people deposit or withdraw money***.

This drawing below shows how this sentence can be interpreted.






The English language has numerous words which have more than one meaning. In this part, examples of such words are put in sentences and possible meanings are given.

Following are sentences which are ***lexically unclear***.

The ambiguous words in each sentence are underlined and different meanings are listed.



Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

Bill accompanied his mother on the bus.

1. traveled with (somebody) as a companion

2. played an accompaniment for (somebody) when singing, dancing, etc.

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

Fred beat his colleague.

1. hit (somebody) repeatedly,
especially with a stick

2. defeated; won against
(somebody)

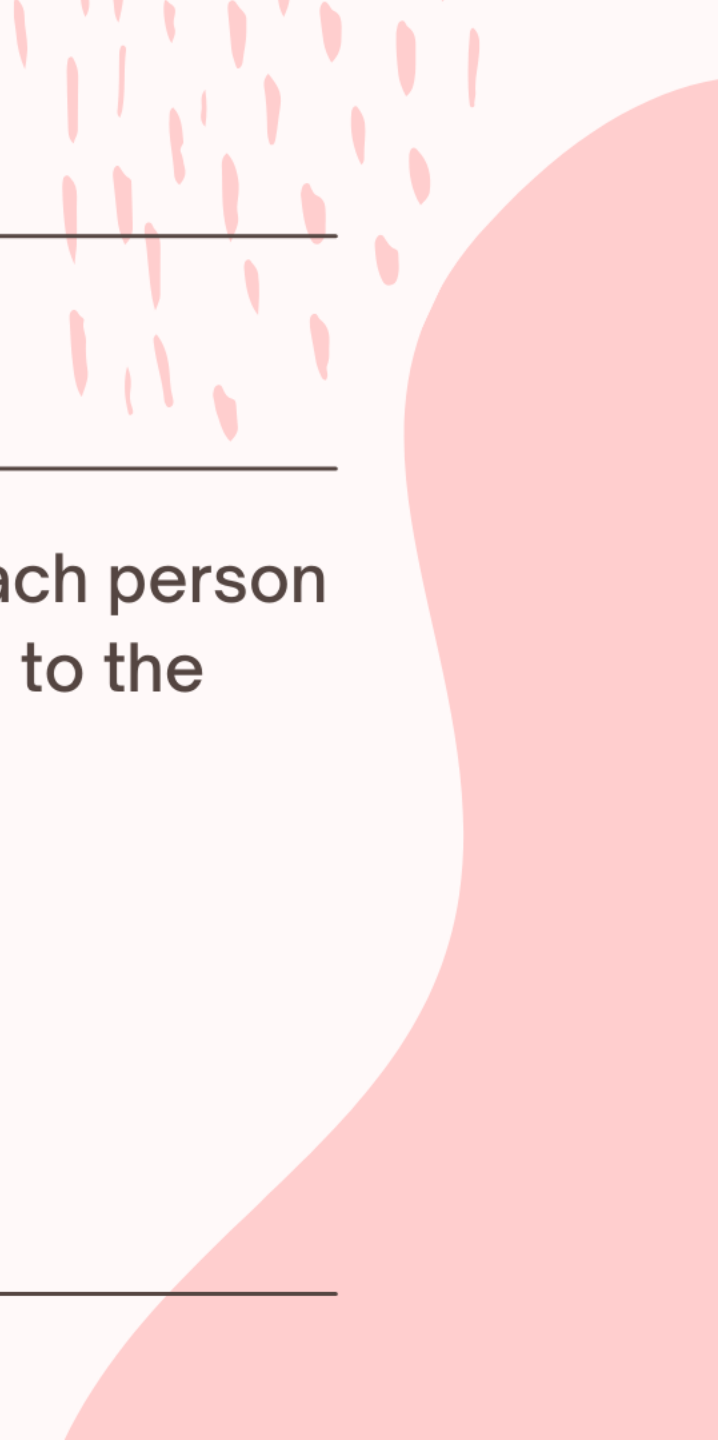
Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

The circulation is being studied.

1. movement of blood round the body from and back to the heart
2. passing of something from one person or place to another
3. number of copies of a newspaper, magazine, etc. sold to the public

Ambiguous Sentences	Meanings
<p>To those students, the young teacher seemed rather <u>fair</u>.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. impartial; treating each person equally and according to the rules<li>2. pale in complexion



Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

The horns are in the display case.

1. animal horns
2. musical instrument

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings


The farmer drove the boys all the way to the field.

1. took (somebody) (somewhere) in a vehicle, etc.

2. caused (people) to move in some direction by shouts, threats, etc.



Ambiguous Sentences	Meanings
Peter usually gets up and does some <u>exercises</u> for 15 minutes.	1. physical exercises 2. assignments

1. physical exercises
 2. assignments
- 

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

She finally wrote a letter.

1. letter of the alphabet

2. message addressed to a person, usually in an envelope, and sent by post

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

Please note this well.

1. observe

2. write (something) down

Ambiguous Sentences


Meanings

Jim saw something strange inside the plant.

1. flower
2. factory



Ambiguous Sentences	Meanings
The boss did not care much about the <u>present</u> .	1. present time 2. gift

1. present time
 2. gift
- 

Ambiguous Sentences	Meanings
That lady <u>ran down</u> her relative.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. criticize (somebody) unkindly<li>2. found (somebody) after looking for (him) for a long time

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

The lion was still in its cage.

1. not moving, quiet and calm (adj.)
2. yet (adv.)

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

Professor Amnuay is
talking to our new
French teacher.

1. teacher who teaches French
2. teacher whose nationality is French

Ambiguous Sentences

Meanings

The tablet was yellow.

1. flat pad of paper
2. flat plaque
3. pill



Reference

Jotikasthira, P. (2014). Introduction to the English Language : System and Structure. Bangkok: Faculty of Arts, Chulalongkorn University.