CLARITY IN BUSINESS CONTRACT: AN ANALYSIS OF AMAZON'S INFLUENCER TERMS AND CONDITIONS

[1]*MULTHAHADA RAMADHANI SIREGAR*, [2]*DWI TIARA KURNILASARI*, [3]*SYAFRI NALDI*
[1,2,3]*State Polytechnic of Batam (First Author)*
[1]*multhahada@polibatam.ac.id*, [2]dwitiara@polibatam.ac.id, [3]syafrinaldi@polibatam.ac.id

Abstract
This study will examine the accessibility of the Amazon Influencer Terms and Conditions by analyzing some of the semantic ambiguities in the document and how those ambiguities influence the influencer's awareness of rights and obligations. Digital marketing, or influencer marketing in particular, has become a regular way of conducting business in an online world, but the language in those contracts is often still unclear and complicated, especially for someone without a legal background. This study employs qualitative textual analysis, based on semantic theory, in order to uncover lexical, modal, syntactic, and referential ambiguities in the contract. The study found many examples of ambiguity, including vague terms such as "reasonable" and the unexpected use of modal verbs "may" in politically important a phrase, which leaves the influencer confused about their duties and the authority of the platform. These uncertainties could make the transparency worse, and consequently can destroy the balance in the relationship between Amazon and its partners. The investigation also emphasizes the need for the usage of clear and simple language and one terminology due to the high level of influence and fair precision in influencer contracts. It is recommended to enhance the functionality of providing full explanations to help readers to be able easier to understand some of the concepts, identical or similar occurrences of modal verbs in legal documents that were intended to act as a legally binding document, and usability testing to identify the readability problems of non-legal readers.

Keywords**:** semantics; linguistics; business; contractual language

INTRODUCTION

Digital marketing is popular in worldwide society nowadays. This phenomenon makes influencers have become one of the most vital assets for engagement and visibility through online business. Joshi, Y., et al. (2023) highlights key themes such as para social interactions, authenticity, sponsorship, and engagement. The study underscores how influencers have transitioned into professional marketing agents, influencing consumer behavior and brand strategies. Ahmed, A. and Rathore, T. (2024) trace the historical development of influencer marketing, comparing traditional celebrity endorsements with modern influencer collaborations. It discusses the maturation of the influencer industry. They found that the evolution of influencer marketing demands strategic, data-driven approaches that consider influencer types, audience engagement, and platform dynamics to maximize effectiveness in today's digital landscape. In addition, it proves in Sajili, M., et. al. (2024) in their research that focused on Shopee, examines how social media influencers affect consumer preferences through brand awareness and trust.

In this study, focused Amazon, which one of the popular marketplaces, has begun to more formally structure their partnerships with influencers using contracts like the Influencer Terms and Conditions for sponsored content. Terms and Conditions determine the rights and obligations of each party. However, contracts which have such an important role in the functioning of business relationships are often too complex in their language regarding the

logic and structure of the text and more general domains of politics and law, quite disconnected from what clear and straightforward. Coupette, C. et.al (2021) found law smells or problematic patterns in legal drafting which has ambiguous syntax and duplicated phrases that threaten comprehensibility. In addition, Ződi (2020) proved in his research which found the challenges of achieving comprehensibility in legal texts, noting that even linguistically simple texts can pose significant understanding problems. The paper argues for considering the pragmatics of law to truly enhance legal text comprehensibility. However, due to fairness of involved parties, business language should concern the logic and clarity issues, especially for someone who lacks of such knowledge.

Current research is still limited of semantic ambiguity with legal linguistics. It focuses on terms and conditions between marketplace and influencer contract. Previous literature, Chen et al, (2020) on modal verbs and Solan (1993) on judicial interpretation have not directly addressed how semantic ambiguity in contractual terms impacts influencers' understanding of their rights and obligations. Moreover, even though Coupette et al. (2021) and Ződi (2020) identified vague patterns in legal letter, there is still a lack of focused on investigation on how patterns manage within digital platform agreements like Amazon's, which imply imbalanced power relationship in the gig economy. So, this study fills that gap by applying semantic theory to Amazon's Influencer Terms and Conditions, classifying ambiguities, and emphasizing how linguistic opacity may disadvantage non-expert contractual parties such as influencers.

This study proposes the novelty of research in its interdisciplinary approach which combines legal linguistics and semantic analysis to examine a terms and condition between marketplace and influencer. This research analyzes terms and conditions between Amazon and influencer to identify the ambiguities and categorize the sentence based on following types lexical, modal, syntactic, and referential ambiguities that affect the clarity meaning of contractual letter. This paper emphasizes ambiguities as media of interpretation in influencer contracts which often shows the platform at the potential expense of the influencer. By applying linguistics theory to the language of digital contracts, this research offers a new framework for determining equality and transparency in platform dominated relations.

Waltenrath (2024) discusses consumer reactions to advertising disclosures launched in influencer marketing and their effects on social media short- and long-term behavior. The study shows that when the sponsored content disclosure practice is unclear i.e., confusing labelling or minimalist messaging trust relationships decline, and user interaction with the advertisement deteriorates. However, disclosures rated as honest and transparent boost ad awareness but do not damage user interaction significantly.

Han, Ceross, and Bergmann (2024) provide an exhaustive review of literature regarding the use of readability metrics to conceptualize legal documents across diverse fields. The currently available metrics including Flesch-Kincaid and Gunning Fog Index have been classified and the relationship between these indices vis-a-vis clarity of legal document has been laid down in this research paper. The inescapable conclusion drawn out of this research was that such tools provide great estimation of textual complexity but they miss out on the many complexities experienced in legal vernacular like syntactic vagueness, terminologies that are highly technical to the field or maybe meanings dependent context. Thus, ultimately deriving requisite means was, however, stipulated-an even advanced interdisciplinary one-synthesizing into quantitative readability metrics with also linguistic and legal theoretical

methods for enhancing clarity and comprehensibility in the reading of legal documents to all readers, regardless of their expertise level.

Xu and Casal (2023) conducted a longitudinal study that aimed at analyzing the evolution of syntactic and lexical complexity in second language (L2) legal writing with the overall objective of providing insight into the challenges of non-native English writers in achieving clarity in legal texts. The study revealed that although L2 legal writers use more intricate sentence structures and lexis over time, rising complexity does not always mean higher readability or clarity. In fact, the researchers found that excessive syntactic embedding and complex lexical choice actually reduced comprehensibility and created vagueness. The research posits that L2 legal writing pedagogy must foreground communicative clarity and legal efficacy at the cost of linguistic sophistication, fostering an equilibrium that balances exactitude with lucidity.

Chen et al. (2020) conducted a corpus analysis of core modal verbs, such as shall, may, must, and will, in the context of legal English to examine the contribution these core modal verbs make to expressing legal obligations, permissions, and possibilities. The results indicated that shall remained the most dominant modal verb, often showing ambiguity as both a directive and a declarative, depending on the contextual elements. Meanwhile, may and must were employed non-systematically, with the result that one is sometimes confronted with ambiguity regarding obligatory or discretionary character of some act. It was revealed by the researchers that the absence of systematic terminology in legal texts robs the legal language of clarity and that greater uniformity and adherence to plain language principles are needed in order to minimize interpretative uncertainty in legal writing.

Wies, Bleier, and Edeling (2022) investigate the relationship between the size of an influencer's following on social media and the engagement of that audience, seeking the optimal "Goldilocks zone" for enhancing influencer impact. They determine that the connection is not linear: both influencers with small followings and those with extremely large followings experience less interaction, with those falling in between usually categorized as mid- or micro-influencers enjoying the highest user interaction rates. This balance is initiated by the feeling of authenticity and emotional proximity, which are likely to diminish as the number of followers increases disproportionately. The study predicts that the brands will consciously collaborate with influencers in this optimum range to attain the optimum engagement and campaign performance levels, rather than merely focusing on follower count.

Wang et al. (2022) discuss the impact of sponsorship disclosure on consumer responses to positive online reviews, with a focus on the moderating roles of emotional intensity and the closeness of the reviewer's relationship to the audience and the reviewer audience closeness. The findings of the study indicate that on average, sponsorship disclosure reduces the effectiveness of positive reviews, especially when emotional intensity is high and the reviewer is perceived to be socially distant. Yet, when emotional intensity is moderate and relationship strength is high depicted in parasocial relationships between influencers and audiences which the adverse effect of disclosure is mitigated. The authors assert that both influencers and brands need to closely regulate the transparency of their disclosures and emotional framing of their content to increase trust and engagement in sponsored content.

Saternus, Boerman, and Van Reijmersdal (2022) examine the impact of various forms and placements of influencer marketing disclosures on YouTube on children's recognition of advertising, attitudes toward brands, and purchase intentions. The results show that

disclosures that are shown early and clearly are more effective in increasing children's recognition of advertising than disclosures that are embedded during or after the content. Nevertheless, though heightened awareness fosters heightened scrutiny against the brand, it also decreases children's purchase intentions. Scholars assert that transparency in influencer marketing is needed in order to foster advertising literacy among youths. However this comes at the expense of decreased commercial impact which creates a dilemma for marketers who target child consumers.

Clear contractual language is crucial to guarantee that both parties comprehend and perform their roles without misunderstanding or disputes. In business settings, especially those with individual influencers who might not have legal knowledge, vague, or ambiguous words can result in misunderstandings, unequal power relations, and potential legal conflicts. Studies in legal linguistics and applied linguistics have indicated that vague terminology, modal verbs, and complex syntactic structures frequently diminish clarity in legal documents.

This research purposes to examine the clarity of Amazon's influencer agreement from a linguistic perspective. This research emphasizes current discussions regarding clear language in business contracts and the protecting digital labor's rights in platform work by identifying and classifying ambiguity sentences, such as lexical ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity, modal ambiguity, and referential ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity is a single word possesses multiple meanings, leading to potential confusion in interpretation. Leech (1981) defined lexical ambiguity reflected more than one meaning surfaces at the same time. Syntactic ambiguity occurs when a sentence can be parsed in multiple ways due to its structure, leading to different interpretations. Chomsky (1965) stated internalized grammar provides at least three structural descriptions for this sentence." Modal ambiguity involves uncertainty arising from the use of modal verbs (e.g., may, shall, must) that can convey different degrees of necessity, possibility, or permission. Solan (1993) expressed Judges often describe our use of language poorly because there is no clear relationship between the principles of linguistics and the jurisprudential goals that the judge wishes to promote. Referential ambiguity occurs when it is unclear to which entity a word or phrase refers, often due to vague pronouns or descriptors. Leech (1981) found the interpretation of pronouns can interfere with compliance and create legal loopholes.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative textual analysis approach grounded in semantic theory on terms and condition between Amazon and influencer. The primary data source is the publicly available document titled "Amazon Influencer Terms & Conditions for Sponsored Content." Amazon was chosen for this research because it is one of the largest and most powerful global e-commerce platforms, and its Influencer Program is pivotal to defining the social commerce and digital endorsement context. In contrast to conventional endorsement contracts, Amazon's influencer contracts are standardized, drafted unilaterally, and part of a platform-based ecosystem—making it a particularly appropriate object of analysis of linguistic characteristics and power imbalances. In addition, Amazon's terms and condition to influencer is publicly accessible, legally binding, and more relevant to the creator dominance, where transparency and equality in contracts are not prioritized. In this analysis, it answers a highly common case that can be utilized as a representative example for describing how large digital platforms construct rights and responsibilities in influencer-partner collaborations.

The variable which analyzed clarity of the contractual language as the dependent variable and lexical, modal, syntactic, referential ambiguity sentences as the independent variable.
1. The analytical framework involves:
2. Identifying and extracting ambiguous phrases from the document.
3. Classifying each instance based on semantic ambiguity type: lexical, syntactic, or modal.
4. Interpreting how each ambiguous term could be understood in multiple ways.

The analysis is enriched by references to semantic theory and legal interpretive frameworks. By combining linguistic analysis with legal commentary, the study aims to categorize and understand the types of ambiguity present in Amazon's contractual language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research found multiple semantic ambiguities regarding the clarity and understanding of Amazon Influencer Terms and Conditions. The found ambiguity sentences are classified based on four types of semantic ambiguities: lexical ambiguity, modal ambiguity, syntactic ambiguity, and referential ambiguity. Following data are the details of the sentence which found ambiguity and classified based on semantic ambiguities types:

Table 1 Ambiguity sentence in Terms and Conditions between Amazon and Influencers

No.	Types of Ambiguity	Sentence	Description
1	Lexical Ambiguity	"Amazon reserves the right to approve or reject content at its reasonable discretion."	The term "reasonable" is subjective and lacks clarification. What Amazon deems reasonable may differ from what the influencer expects, creating a space for one-sided interpretation.
2	Modal Ambiguity	"Amazon may terminate this agreement at any time."	The use of "may" is ambiguous. It explains verbs unclear whether a statement is optional, mandatory, or conditional.
3	Syntactic Ambiguity	"All content must be removed immediately if found to violate the terms."	It is unclear who is responsible for removing the content Amazon, the influencer, or a third party? The sentence lacks a defined subject for the action.
4	Referential Ambiguity	"Such content must comply with all applicable policies."	The phrase "such content" is undefined. Without knowing precisely which content is referenced, the obligation becomes unclear and open to dispute.

Based on the data above illustrate Amazon's contract language contains several forms of semantic ambiguity which may affect the readers' understanding especially the influencers to fully comprehend their responsibilities and rights. The ambiguity of the sentences produces unclear message and may ultimately disempower the influencer. So that, influencers who may not possess the legal or linguistic tools to interpret such unclear language clearly.

Lexical ambiguity can be found in the sentence, *"Amazon reserves the right to approve or reject content at its reasonable discretion."* The term *"reasonable"* is subjective and lacks a concrete definition within the contract. So, it allows for multiple interpretations which depends on context or the party involved. Taking Solan's (1993) argument that legal contracts have a tendency to employ strategic ambiguity to the benefit of the drafter, it is evident that Amazon's use of ambiguous terms such as "reasonable" and "sole discretion" leaves room for interpretive flexibility that disproportionately benefits the platform. This lack of specific term can lead to imbalanced power relations, as Amazon retains the interpretive authority.

Modal ambiguity identified in the statement, *"Amazon may terminate this agreement at any time."* The modal verb *"may"* reflects uncertainty meaning in case of the nature of the action whether it is simply a possibility, a conditional clause, or an expression of discretion. Solan (1993) stated that the modal often blurs the line between obligation and permission. In this case, the phrase "Amazon may terminate" does not clearly indicate whether termination is likely, merely possible, or entirely discretionary. Such ambiguity can obscure the actual rights and risks faced by the influencer.

Syntactic ambiguity also analyzed in sentence *"All content must be removed immediately if found to violate the terms."* The sentence construction has uncleared subject responsible for the action, it presents uncertainty whether the obligation to remove content involved with Amazon, the influencer, or a third party. This kind of ambiguity, as noted by Chomsky (1965), can confuse readers and lead to compliance challenges or legal flaw, particularly when a contract does not assign clear responsibilities.

The last ambiguity found is referential ambiguity which appears in the phrase, *"Such content must comply with all applicable policies."* The referent *"such content"* is not clearly refers to which, it makes it difficult for the reader to direct which specific content is being discussed. This vagueness hinders accurate compliance and may lead to misinterpretation. Leech (1981) noted that unclear referents, especially pronouns or general terms, create space for legal misinterpretation and difficulty in enforcement.

Discussion

Based on the analysis above in Amazon's influencer terms and conditions, illustrates how such ambiguity commonly affect clarity in legal and business language. As with this analysis, adjectives such as "reasonable," indefinite modal verbs such as "may," syntactically ambiguous clauses, and referentially ambiguous referents track the patterns of recent scholarly work. Xu and Casal (2023) found that increased syntactic embedding and advanced lexical choices can reduce comprehensibility in legal writing, reflects with this study's finding, dense clauses in Amazon's terms impede understanding. The use of modal influence the context of the consistency rule between both parties, which also found by Chen et al. (2020) point out that the inconsistent application of modal verbs like shall, must, and may in legal contracts leads to interpretive uncertainty, a key feature of the modal uncertainty found in Amazon's text. Moreover, Wang et al. (2022) and Saternus et al. (2022) highlight

transparency in influencer-brand communication since ambiguous communication either via disclosure or contract terms undermines trust along with legal certainty. Ződi (2020) also presented in his research about the obstacles to understand the legal texts. He argues to examine the pragmatics of law to truly enhance legal text comprehensibility. However, due to fairness of involved parties, business language should concern the logic and clarity issues, especially for someone who lacks of law knowledge. It can be understood, these previous studies confirm the observation that semantic vagueness in Amazon's influencer agreement is not random but rather demonstrates overall systemic tendencies in legal and platform based communication towards flexibility on the part of the drafter at the expense of the reader.

Overall, these findings validate the hypothesis that the document violates plain language guidelines. Instead, it carries a sophisticated and multi-layered linguistic structure that privileges corporate and legal interests above communicative ease. This resonates with the call for change in platform-based influencer agreements, wherein terms should emphasize clear definitions, frequent use of modalities, and basic syntax to uphold equity and consenting awareness.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research aimed to identify and examine the different types of semantic ambiguity found in Amazon's Influencer Terms and Conditions, especially their effects on the clarity of the contract. The results demonstrate that different kinds of ambiguity, such as lexical, modal, syntactic, and referential are inherent in the document, which results in poorer transparency and a higher interpretation burden for influencers.

The employment of ambiguous terms, such as "reasonable", discretionary terms such as "Amazon's sole discretion," and inconsistent modal verbs generates a situation where influencers might lack comprehensive understanding of their obligations and rights. Such ambiguities establish asymmetrical power dynamics, where the platform retains control over interpretation and enforcement, whereas influencers are legally obligated but denied essential information.

To enhance fairness and improve clarity in such agreements, this study recommends to create business contractual letter to adopt straightforward language principles in drafting influencer contracts, including simple vocabulary and legal words. The letter should be defined key terms literally, especially those related to performance expectations, rights, and consequences. Beware of using modal verbs, such as shall, may, must which is crucial to reduce interpretive uncertainty regarding obligations and rights, It also important to make clear the reference of the nouns and pronouns phrases to avoid the mistakable reference point to. The letter should be passed proofreading test so the contract is understandable to non-legal audiences.

By filling in these gaps in language, platforms such as Amazon can get closer to more transparent, equitable, and legally, prudent influencer deals. Additional study could broaden this review by comparing similar documents from multiple platforms or by studying the working familiarity with such contracts through readability based research aimed at end users.

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