

AN ANALYSIS OF MAXIM VIOLATIONS IN A MOVIE AND THEIR IMPACTS ON EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Diana Fauzia Sari, Lidya Nuraini & Kismullah Abdul Muthalib

Department of English Education, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas
Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: thisislidya@gmail.com

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Abstract

This research analyzes the occurrences of maxim violations produced by the characters in the movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* and their impacts on the effectiveness of communication. The objects are the maxim violations found in the utterances of the characters, the reasons behind those violations, and their impacts on effective communication. Those data were taken from a movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* which was released in 2009. This is a qualitative research using content analysis as the method. Data were analyzed using the framework of Cooperative Principle and the Effective Communication theory. The research findings show that there are 40 utterances containing maxim violations which produces by all characters: 19 times violated maxim manner (47.5%), 9 times violated maxim quantity (22.5%), 9 times violated maxim quality (22.5%), and 3 times violated maxim relation (7.5%). The characters violated the maxims with different reasons and contexts. Moreover, maxim violation that affect the effectiveness of communication the most is violation of maxim relation, followed by violation of maxim quantity, manner, and quality. It is implied that maxim violation holds an important role in maintaining the effectiveness of communication. It seems that the less of maxim violations occur, the more effective communication is ensued.

Keywords: Cooperative principle, maxim violations, communication.

1. Introduction

Communication will run smoothly if the speaker and the hearer cooperate with each other. Cooperation means that each party must contribute to each communication by providing information that is appropriate to what the speaker is expected to hear (Sari, 2015). The information provided must be factual, relevant, concise, and orderly. If the information is unclear, the speaker will not be able to comprehend it. If the information is given excessively, the hearer may be able to understand but it will take time to know the main points of the discussion. Communication that runs like this is classified as inefficient. Therefore, to make the communication process runs well and effective, participants must

pay attention to the rules that applied in communication. As related to this problem, Paul Grice (1989) proposed a principle named the Cooperative Principle. There are four maxims in Cooperative Principle: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Although the principles have been clearly explained, unfortunately, the violations of this principles still occur in some conversations.

The researchers were interested in examining the violations of maxims because unconsciously, this has become a serious problem in real life. People need to know how important the principle of cooperation is in a conversation i.e. to get the goal of the conversation they are doing and not to cause a misunderstanding with the interlocutors. The movie was used as a means of research because in the movie we can see the interactions between people in various contexts and situations. It is like the representation of communication that occurs in real life. The researchers took data from the movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* because there are many types of speeches occurred such as lies, exaggerations, jokes, etc. made by characters which violated the maxims of Cooperative Principles. This movie has a tendency to appear violations maximally enough so that the data obtained were enough to understand the violations of maxims in a conversation. Nevertheless, the violations of maxims found in this research can be considered as a reflection of how people communicate in their daily lives.

There were many linguistic investigations elaborated the topic of violating the Cooperative Principle. Among them are the work by Tupan & Natalia (2008), Azizah (2016), Junaedi (2017), among others. The findings of these studies varied. Thus, the similarity between the previous researches and the current research is the use of Grice's theory of Cooperative Principle as the framework of analysis. Both also pointed out about the violation of maxims occurring within conversation in the movie. However, the current researchers did not only analyze the violation of maxims and its reasons as in the other researchers did, but also scrutinized which maxim has the most influential role in effective communication. Thus, it hoped to bring different and more specific result of research findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Implicature

Thomas (1995) explained that an implicature is deliberately produced by the speaker. Implicatures sometimes can be understood by the hearer, but often ignored because the hearer barely understand them. Therefore, language user can make conversation with implicit meaning and the hearer must consider the intended meaning of the speaker. Thus, implicature was Grice's term for the things a speaker means but does not say.

Grice (1989) differed implicature into two types: conventional and conversational implicature. The similarity between them is they both convey an additional level of meaning, beyond the semantic meaning of the words uttered. However, both of them are slightly different in the relation between implicature itself and the context. Thomas (1995) inferred that in conventional implicature, the same implicature is always conveyed regardless of context, whereas in conversational implicature, what is implied varies based on the context of utterance. Grundy (2000) clarified that statement by saying the conversational maxim is a way to explain the link between the utterances and what is understood from the hearer. According to Grice (1989), conversational implicature is essentially connected with certain general features of discourse, which is the Cooperative Principle.

2.2 Cooperative Principle

In a conversation, the speaker can convey his idea in case his opponent is cooperating. There are occasional misunderstandings, but most speakers and opponents can understand each other's intentions. The formulation of the use of language is proposed by Grice and the term is Cooperative Principle. Grice (1989) implied that in communication we are engaged, our portion of contribution should be as much as it is required so the goal of the conversation can be reached and accepted.

2.2.1 Gricean Conversational Maxim

Grice considered a maxim as rule of conversation (Aitchison, 2010). Palupi (2006) noted that the maxim stated by Grice are norms to maintain the purpose of conversation. Grice elaborated that Cooperative Principle has four kinds of maxim: quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

In fulfilling maxim quantity, your contribution should be in accordance with what is needed, not less or more (Grice, 1989). It means you should say something as much as needed and do not extend the answer or response. Moreover, in fulfilling maxim quality, you should not lie or reveal something that do not have strong evidence (Grice, 1989). Basically, the speakers said the very common use of speech with an intent that is not accompanied by clear evidence while communicating. Speaking without further ado with accompanied by accurate evidence will make it to be rude and disrespectful. In other words, to speak politely, the maxim of quality is often not followed. Furthermore, in fulfilling maxim of relation, your contribution should in accordance with what is being discussed (Grice, 1989, p. 27). For a specific purpose, for example, to show politeness, the provisions in this maxim are often not met by speakers. It's just that in conveying certain purposes that are of a special nature, the maxim relation does not always have to be fulfilled and adhered to in real speech. Finally, in fulfilling maxim manner, your contribution should be clear, avoid vagueness, avoid dubiety, be succinct, and be well-ordered (Grice, 1989). This maxim requires the interlocutors to talk directly, no exaggeration, no giving information disorderly or disorganized (Grice, 1989).

2.2.2 Violation of Gricean Conversational Maxim

Violation of conversational maxim is defined as the unostentatious or "quiet" non-observance of a maxim. It is also the condition where the speaker do not maximize their contribution in using maxim usage while doing conversation. Grice (1989) explained that a speaker who violates a maxim will be liable to misled. The speaker or the listener considered to 'violate' the maxim when they are sure the interlocutor will not know the fact and will only fathom the literal meaning of the words. They consciously produce outwitting implicature (Thomas, 1995).

The maxim violation according to Thomas (1995) differs from flouting. In maxim violation, someone does not realize that he/she has been deceived, whereas flouting of maxims are meant to be noticed. On the other hand, breaking a maxim happens when a speaker with no intention of generating an implicature fails to observe a maxim. The reason for this is imperfect linguistic performance which can be due to, for example: an imperfect command of the language, or because the speaker's performance of the language is somehow impaired, or because of some cognitive impairment or because the speaker is incapable of speaking clearly, and so on (Thomas, 1995).

In maxim quantity, the speaker should provide information which is sufficiently informative. The speaker considered violating the maxim quantity if she/he did not deliver

enough information regarding the topic that was being discussed. Cutting (2002) claimed the speaker becomes frugal while stating the truth. An example about this matters:

• Husband : How much did the new dress cost, darling?

Wife : Less than the last one.

Here, the wife covers up the price of the dress by not saying how much less than her last dress. She intentionally did not give him enough information (Cutting, 2002, p. 40).

In maxim quality, the speaker should convey something tangible and factual. That statement should be supported and based on clear evidence. If the statement is untrue, it means the speaker violates the maxim quality. Not all violations of the maxim quality are blameworthy. In many cultures, it is perfectly acceptable to say a child of five, 'Mummy's gone away in a little holiday because she needs a rest' rather than 'Mommy's gone away to decide whether she wants a divorce or not.' A lie that protects is a lie with good intentions, what we call a white lie (Cutting, 2002). Related to the previous conversation between a husband and his wife, the wife could have violated the maxim quality if she was not being honest and telling the wrong information about the price of her new dress: either it was less or more expensive than it should be.

In maxim relation, both speaker and hearer ought to make a relatable contribution about something being discussed. If they discuss something that unmatched with the topic, it means they violate the maxim of relation. In answer to 'How much that new dress cost, darling?' the wife could have violated the maxim of relation to distract him and change the topic: 'I know, let's go out tonight. Now, where would you like to go?' (Cutting, 2002, p. 40).

In fulfilling maxim manner, the speaker avoid obscurity, ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly or he/she may be said to violate the maxim. Similar to the previous one, in answer to 'How much that new dress cost, darling?' the wife could have violated the maxim of manner by saying, 'A tiny of my salary, though probably a bigger fraction of the salary of the woman that sold it to me.' In the hope that could be taken as an answer and the matter could be dropped.

2.3 Context

The term "context" is visualized by Widdowson (2000) as the elements of the actual state of the use of language which are considered to be related to the meaning. In discourse, context concerns to the things like who made the utterance, who they were speaking to, when they uttered it, and what topic of conversation was about. Therefore, the context is necessary to understand the situation portrayed when the conversation happens because through the context, the interlocutors can take which meaning conveyed in the utterance. In broader sense, context cannot be seen only as something given to the conversation or something imposed from outside. Context basically can be made or even changed by the participants through their use of language (Hymes, 1962, as cited in Thomas, 1995).

Cutting (2002) divided the context into three types namely the situational context, the background knowledge context, and co-textual context. Situational context refers to the thing that the speakers know about what they can see around them. This context also means the speaker and hearer know what things that they are talking about. Background knowledge context encompasses the thing that the speakers know about each other and the world. This context divided into two kinds: cultural which refer to general fact or issue that most people in certain group knowing about and interpersonal language which refer to particular knowledge in individual's minds. Co-textual context focuses on the thing that the speakers know about what they have been saying. This context can be observed from text; we can adjust the meaning from the text itself.

2.4 Effective Communication

In doing conversation, it is necessary to make the communication becomes effective by giving the proper contribution in using language. The function is indeed to avoid misunderstanding. McCroskey, Larson, and Knapp (1971) stated that effective communication can be achieved by seeking the highest degree of accuracy between the communicator and communicant in every communication. Effective communication occurs when communicators and communicants have similarities in understanding, attitude and language. Communication can be said to be effective if the communication carried out meets the following criteria: 1) Messages can be accepted and understood as intended by the sender, 2) The message conveyed by the sender can be approved by the recipient and followed up with acts of interest by the sender, 3) There are no significant obstacles to do what should be done to follow up on messages sent.

3. Research Method

The method used in this research is qualitative research method because it concentrates on solid and clear explanation about a certain context and often arises from problem occurred in the field (Tracy, 2013). The design of the research is content analysis because it analyzed about human behavior presented through recorded material such as tapes, films, public records, textbooks, or other documentaries (Ary, Jacobs & Sorensen, 2010).

The objects observed in this research are the violations of maxims produced by the characters within the conversations, the reasons for those violations, and the impact occurred on effective communication which were taken from the movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic*. In data collection, the researchers did note-taking to record information and/or to aid reflection (Boch & Piolat, 2005) while watching, studying, and learning the context of the movie. Excerpts of utterances that contain the maxim violations were noted.

In analyzing the data, the researchers applied the stage of data analysis proposed by Dornyei (2007). First is transcribing the data. Here the researchers transformed the movie into a textual form. As for linguistics investigation, the researchers wrote many details about the situation. Second is pre-coding and coding. In pre-coding, the researchers re-read the transcript, reflected on them, and wrote down the thoughts regarding maxim violation. In coding, after reduced the irrelevant data and highlighted the conversations which contain the maxim violation, the researchers gathered the similar categories of data and represented them in code. The coding system were listed below:

DN-01 [00.03.54 – 00.03.00] → DN (data number)
01 (number of occurrence)
00.03.54 – 00.03.00 (duration of utterance)
QN / QL / RL / MN → QN (quantity)
QL (quality)
RL (relation)
MN (manner)

The third step is growing ideas. Here the researchers took a note of all the ideas that came to mind regarding the violation of maxims then presented and summarized them by creating the table of four columns: the conversations contained the maxim violations, the four maxim violations, the implicatures that occurred as the result of maxim violation, and explanation about the maxim violation. The column that contains four maxims was checked based on the type of maxim violations in the segment, while the implicatures column was filled by any hidden meaning that can be implied as a result of the violation. Lastly, the last step is interpreting the data and drawing conclusion. Here the researchers identified the

context and the reasons behind the violations and also examined whether the violation gave a significant effect on communication. After all the data has been interpreted, the researchers drew a conclusion by informing the percentage of each violated maxims and their correlation with effective communication in the movie.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on Grice's framework about conversational maxims in Cooperative Principle, the researchers found 40 violations occurred within conversations in the movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic*. There are four types of maxim violations performed by the characters in the story. The researchers created a table to compile all data.

Table 1. The number of maxim violation in conversation.

Types of Violation	Occurrences in Conversations	Percentage
Maxim Quantity	9 times	22.5%
Maxim Quality	9 times	22.5%
Maxim Relation	3 times	7.5%
Maxim Manner	19 times	47.5%
Total	40 times	100%

4.1 Types of Maxim Violations

The followings are examples of each maxim violation mentioned earlier found in the movie which is the answer to the first research question. All utterances are based on the script of movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* cited from Script O Rama website.

4.1.1 Violation of Maxim Quantity

According to Grice (1975, as cited in Cutting, 2002), the violation of maxim quantity appeared when the speaker does not give enough information to the hearer regarding the topic. The following excerpts show that the speaker can commit violation of maxim quantity intentionally by being economical with the truth that she/he should elaborate as can be seen in the excerpt 2. A speaker can also commit violation of maxim quantity unintentionally as indicated in excerpt 1.

Excerpt 1

DN-33 [01.01.04 – 01.01.26]

Chef : Hey! What are you doing?

Rebecca : Oh. I need a gin and tonic and some champagne, please.

Chef : What are you, a drunk? Put that back! On your feet, Goldilocks. Do you know how short-staffed we are? I need food on tables now. Go!

Rebecca : No, no, no. I need to get...

Chef : Six more, please!

Rebecca: Oh! I'm not a waitress.

Chef : I know you're not, honey. You're an actress. I get it. I do. Now go, go, go, go, go!

The conversation in excerpt 1 above is a chunk from the conversation in the movie that took place in restaurant. Rebecca's party dress was accidentally ruined by someone while attending a party. She decided to go to another room to fix her dress. There she accidentally met a woman who was drunk. All of sudden, the woman asked Rebecca to get something to reduce her dizziness. Rebecca immediately went straight to the kitchen and decided to take what she needed herself because the kitchen staffs were busy. Because there was an

unexpected person opening the kitchen refrigerator without warning, the head chef immediately shook Rebecca's body. The head chef thought Rebecca was one of the waitress and immediately told her to do the things hurriedly without listening to Rebecca's explanation.

Violations of quantity maxim occurred because of the absence of clear information between the two parties. If only Rebecca had called one of the kitchen staffs from the start and explained the intention of her presence, the misunderstanding surely would not happened. The head chef won't tell her to bring a tray full of food to the guests and Rebecca could fulfill the desire of a drunk woman she had met. This scene was classified as unintentional violation of maxim quantity since Rebecca did not intent to hide the truth. She only did not want to interrupt the kitchen staffs so she chose to do the job by herself. In the sentence "No, no, no. I need to get..." we can clearly see that Rebecca tried to explain her intention but the head chef cut her off and ordered her to do the waitress' job.

Excerpt 2

DN-34 [01.10.07 – 01.10.12]

Suze : How much did it cost?

Rebecca : Alette gets an incredible discount.

This scene happened when Suze, her family and Rebecca were in a boutique and prepared Suze's wedding clothes. When Suze asked Rebecca's opinion about what clothes were good and worth wearing during her wedding, she accidentally saw the groceries brought by Rebecca. Inside the bag, she saw a fancy and beautiful dress from a well-known boutique. Suze did not hesitate to ask the price of that dress to Rebecca.

Violations of quantity maxim occurred because Rebecca did not answer Suze's questions honestly and straightforwardly. Instead of mentioning the nominal price, Rebecca chose to lie and say that Alette, the woman who took her to the famous shop, got a huge discount. She did it because if she told Suze the truth, then her best friend would be very disappointed at her because she was wasting money again and again. Here Rebecca did not provide clear information while tried not to disappoint Suze. This excerpt was categorized as intentional violation since the speaker tried to be economical with the truth, while she knew the hearer might expect the opposite of her answer.

4.1.2 Violation of Maxim Quality

Based on Grice's theory, the speaker considered violating the maxim quality if she/he gave a statement which is untrue then if she was being dishonest and insincere in delivering something (Grice, 1989, as cited in Cutting, 2002).

Excerpt 3

DN-05 [00.12.27 – 00.12.30]

Rebecca : Did you just scrub my name off?

Luke : Oh, no. Routine.

This scene took place in Successful Savings office, precisely in Luke's room. At first, Luke was surprised to see someone he had met before. He even did not know that the interview that she meant before was the interview held by his company. While getting to know her through her resume, one of his workers knocked the door and saying that Rebecca has dropped her scarf. Another surprising moment for Luke within a day. Then Luke scrubbed Rebecca's name off of the candidate list after knowing that she had been lying about the scarf that had connected them before the interview.

Here Luke violated the maxim of quantity because he had been dishonest about what he has done when Rebecca asked him whether he really scrubbed her name off or not. He did

the white-lie only to cover up the truth to be kind since he knew that his action is quite obvious; he wanted to immediately reject her.

4.1.3 Violation of Maxim Relation

Cooperative Principle determined the violation of maxim relation as a case when speaker did not make a relatable contribution about the topic that has been discussed. Speaker also considered doing this violation if she/he tried to switch the topic abruptly (Grice, 1989, as cited in Cutting, 2002).

Excerpt 4

DN-03 [00.10.52 – 00.10.55]

Luke : That's interesting. Why Finnish?

Rebecca : What's behind you?

This scene took place in Luke's office where Luke was interviewing the candidate for his new employee. While Rebecca, as one of the candidates, elaborated her resume, Luke's eyes were glued to the description that she was fluent in Finnish. The ability was quite rare so it caught his attention and made him composed a question.

Rebecca violated the maxim of relation since she gave a very contradictory answer to the given question. Rebecca did it because she did not want Luke to ask about her resume regarding The Finnish since she was being a liar about it. Thus, she chose to distract him.

4.1.4 Violation of Maxim Manner

The speaker violated maxim manner if she/he gave an obscure reference, gave a vague answer, said everything except the thing that was expected to hear, or stated something that was not brief nor orderly (Grice, 1989, as cited in Cutting, 2002).

Excerpt 5

DN-16 [00.25.51 – 00.25.53]

Rebecca : Am I fired?

Luke : Get your coat.

This scene happened in the Successful Savings office. After knowing that Rebecca Googled something that she was supposed to know as a journalist who has interest in savings, Luke showed her that he was furious. Rebecca got the message that she made a fatal mistake and might get fired. Later, she decided to ask for a confirmation regarding her worry, but Luke did not give her a decent answer.

Luke violated the maxim of manner since he was being difficult and did not give a proper answer to Rebecca. Instead, he said something that is vague; either she should get out of the office forever or something else. By observing the situation, Luke seemed too tired to handle Rebecca's fault but he needed her to go somewhere with him, so he just asked her to do something without answering her question.

4.2 The Impact of Maxim Violation on Effective Communication

Based on theory of McCroskey, Larson, and Knapp (1971), communication can be said to be effective if it meets the following criteria: 1) Messages can be accepted and understood as intended by the sender, 2) The message conveyed by the sender can be approved by the recipient and followed up with acts of interest by the sender, 3) There are no significant obstacles to do what should be done to follow up on messages sent.

From the explanation, the researchers found that the degree of maxim violation could be revealed as follow: 1) violation of maxim relation, 2) the violation of maxim quantity, 3) violation of maxim manner, 4) violation of maxim quality.

The violation of maxim relation placed first because the message that speaker delivered or tried to convey sometimes not in line with the message that the hearer received. Then, the interlocutor did not give the proper answer and instead gave the unmatched response. As the result, the feedback became unsuitable and much different from the expectation. Thus, the communication considered fully ineffective. The second one is violation of maxim quantity. Here the message that the speaker delivered was well-received by the hearer. However, in this case the interlocutor did not give proper amount of information that the speaker needs. The interlocutor chooses to be economical with the truth. As the effect, the feedback that was expected by the speaker from the hearer is not fulfilled. Thus, the communication also considered ineffective although it was better than communication occurred within violation of maxim relation. The third one is violation of maxim manner because the message that has been delivered was well-received by the hearer and the hearer gave a suitable response even though the given answer was clouded with obscurity and ambiguity. The feedback is suitable with the expectation and the conversation was considered quite effective. To end with, the violation of maxim quality placed last because it did not give much impact on effective communication. The message delivered by the speaker was well-received by the hearer and the feedback was suitable with the expectation. Despite the response might contain the lie, it did not affect the communication as much as other violations did.

From the research discussion, almost all characters of movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* performed all types of violations even though the intensities were different. The explanation of the research findings also slightly different with the previous studies since the context of conversations are not the same. Furthermore, the discussion also showed that the violation that affect the effectiveness of communication the most is violation of maxim relation. It means most of the conversations are still considered effective since the violation of maxim relation only occurred 3 times (7.5%) among all occurrences.

5. Conclusion

After presenting the results, the researchers concluded that the characters in the movie *Confessions of a Shopaholic* violated all four maxims proposed by Grice namely maxim quantity, quality, relation, and manner. From the total 40 violations, the researchers found that each maxim provides different frequency of occurrences. The most occurrence is violation of maxim manner which appeared 19 times (47.5%), followed by violation of maxim quantity and quality which appeared 9 times for each violation (22.5%), then the least is violation of maxim relation which appeared 3 times (7.5%).

Based on the result, the violations occurred because the characters did not cooperate while communicating. The characters gave a little information as they thought others could read their intentions that causing the violation of maxim quantity. If the expectation is not achieved, they became frustrated. They also told lies to hide the truth or save face that causing the violation of maxim quality. The purpose of those actions might be nice, for example not to hurt feelings. However if the interlocutors know the truth, they might be disappointed. Then, the characters changed topic all of sudden to avoid the questions that causing the violation of maxim relation. This action caused the interlocutors to be confused. As for the last, the characters did not give a brief explanation regarding the topic and made the violation of maxim manner occurred. Most of the characters loved to give obscure and ambiguous references. Those reasons and context became the foundation of each implicature that occurred in conversations.

Additionally, the researchers found that violation of maxims that affected the communication to be ineffective the most is violation of maxim relation, followed by violation of maxim quantity, manner, and quality. Fortunately, most of the conversations in the movie are still considered effective since the violation of maxim relation only held 7.5% among all violations occurred. Hence, after analyzing this topic, we could conclude that violations often occur in conversation. The maxim violations could happen depend on the context in which or when the conversation took place. In addition, maxim violations would also affect the effectiveness of communication: the less of maxim violation occur, the more effective communication would be ensued. Thus, we must be careful in interacting with others so the purpose of communication can be fulfilled completely.

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