

Non-Observance of the Maxims in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*

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Abstract

The purpose of this research to discover non-observance of the maxim in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. The data is taken from *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* movie. In collecting the data, the writer uses non-participatory method. In analyzing data, the writer applies the pragmatic identity method. The main theory proposed by Grice as cited in Thomas (1995, p. 64) and supported by other theories related in analyzing the non-observance of the maxims, whether it is flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, infringing a maxim, opting out of a maxim, and suspending a maxim. In reporting the result of the analysis, the writer uses formal and informal method of presentation. The findings shows that non-observances of the maxim mostly happens between the characters that have close relation and according to goal and it is depend on the context of the situation.

Keywords: *non-observance, maxim, flouting maxim and violating maxim*

1. Introduction

Language plays important role in human life. Human needs language to interact, share and communicate their ideas with others in their life. It is related to what mentioned by Fromkin and Rodman (1996, p. 28) that language is “merely as a system of communication”. It can be said that language is a media of communication. In daily life people can express and convey their thought through language. Conversation is one medium for communication which uses language as its media and it involves at least one speaker and one hearer who talk about something. The conversation will be success if the hearer can catch the message of what speaker said. Speaker and hearer must be cooperative each other to build good conversation. Grice (as cited in Thomas, 1995, p. 62) proposed the “Cooperative Principle” which says that in order to have a successful conversation, we have to give proper contribution, at the stage at which it occurs and by the accepted to purpose or direction of talk in which we are engaged. To fulfill this principle, Grice states that four maxims to be obeyed. They are; Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relevance and Maxim of Manner.

Non-observance of maxims could be found in *Diary of a Wimpy Kid Movie*. The writer chooses this movie because this is an interesting movie about the life of a teenager in middle school period. There are many complicated problems about friendship in middle school. Sometimes in facing those problems, the characters tend to use non-observance of the maxims in this movie.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975) proposed the general principle which participants will be expected to observe. He called this principle as “Cooperative Principle” which is said “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.” This principle must be observed by all the participants, either speaker or hearer.

Cooperative Principle is realized through conversational maxims. Maxims help us to understand the implicit meaning of an utterance. According to Grice (as cited in Thomas, 1995, p. 63) the maxims are divided into four, they are:

- **The maxim of quantity**

The maxim says:

1. Make your contributions as informative as is required for current purposes of the exchange
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The observance of the maxim of quantity is exemplified in the following example (Thomas, 1995, p. 64).

Brother: Where are the car keys?
Sister : They are on the table in the hall.

Thomas (1995, p. 64) further explains, sister obeys maxim of quantity by giving contribution as informative as required, no more and no less. When someone obeys maxim of quantity, he/she also obeys all other maxims; maxim of quality, maxim of relation and maxim of manner.

- **The maxim of quality**

Try to make your contribution one that is true.

1. Do not say what you believe to be false
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

Thomas (1995, p. 63)

The maxim of quality says that the speaker should not say something that is believed to be false, in other word; the maxim requires the speaker should not say something that is being believed to be false.

For example:

This book made of papers

(<http://yswan.staff.uns.ac.id/2009/>)

Here, speaker obeys the maxim of quality which he does not say what he believe to be false and may not say which he lack adequate evidence.

- **The maxim of relevance**

The maxim of relevance is used when the participant to convey in information relevant or make your contributions relevant.

For example:

Teacher: What time is it now?

Student: It is three o'clock

(<http://yswan.staff.uns.ac.id/2009/>)

Here, student gives relevant answer with teacher's question.

- **The maxim of manner**

The participants have to be perspicuous

1. Avoid obscurity.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief.
4. Be orderly.

For example:

Father: Where was Alfred yesterday?

Mother: Alfred went to the store and bought some whiskey

(Levinson, 1983: 108)

Here, mother obeys maxim of manner, because she is being orderly since she gives a clear explanation where Alfred was.

2.2. Non-observance of the maxims

According to Grice as cited in Thomas (1995, p. 64), there are many occasions when people fail to observe the maxims. There are five ways of failing to observe the maxims. They are flouting, violating, infringing, opting out and suspending a maxim.

- **Flouting a maxim** : a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the speaker wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from the expressed meaning (Thomas, 1995, p. 65). Flouting of the maxim of quantity occurs when a speaker gives more or less information than the situation requires (Thomas, 1995, p. 65). Flouting maxim of quantity can be seen as follows:

AJ : *Well, how do I look?*
Andrew : *Your shoes are nice...*

(Cutting, 1995:37)

Andrew does not say that the sweatshirt and jeans do not look nice, but he knows that AJ will understand that implication, because AJ asks about his whole appearance only gets told a part of it (Cutting, 1995:37).

- **Violating a maxim** : when violating maxim the speaker intends to mislead the hearer and the speaker knows that the hearer does not know that she/he tell something lie or not true. The speaker can be said violating a maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth (Cutting, 2000, p. 40). Speaker wants to mislead the listener intentionally (Thomas, 1995 p. 73). For example:

AJ : *how many children do you have?*
Andrew : *I have four*

(Andrew actually has six children and AJ is not aware of that fact)

(Cutting, 2000:40)

In this case, Andrew violates maxim of quality because he lie about the children that he has. AJ is not aware of that fact. The speaker can be said violating a maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth (Cutting, 2000:40).

- **Infringing a maxim** : a speaker who, with no intention of generating an implicature and with no intention of deceiving, fails to observe a maxim is said to 'infringe' the maxim. In other words, the non-observance stems from imperfect linguistics performance rather than from any desire on the part of the speakers to generate a conversational implicature. This type of non-observance could occur because the speaker has an imperfect command of the language (a young child or a foreign learner), because the speaker's performance is impaired in some way (nervousness, drunkenness, excitement), because of some cognitive impairment, or simply because the speaker is constitutionally incapable of speaking clearly, to the point (Thomas, 1995, p. 74). Not observing the maxim because of lack of linguistic knowledge. (e.g. Conversation between English speaker and non-English speaker). For example:

English Speaker : *Would you like burger or sandwich?*
Non-English speaker : *Yes*

In this case, Non-English speaker is infringing maxim because he fails to observe a maxim because of lack of linguistic knowledge. Here, Non-English speaker knows word 'Yes' only.

- **Opting out of a maxim** : a speaker opts out of observing a maxim by indicating unwillingness to cooperate in the way maxim requires (Thomas, 1995:74). Examples of opting out occur frequently in public life, when the speaker cannot, perhaps for legal or ethical reasons, reply in the way normally expected. For example someone refusing to provide information because it will hurt someone or for legal reasons. For example:

Joni : *What about his condition doctor?*
Doctor : *I'm sorry but I can't tell you anything.*

In this case, the doctor opts out of the maxim of quantity when he unwilling to cooperate gives less information than is required.

*June : What is the problem sir?
Police officer : I will explain in the office.*

In this conversation, police officer opts out of a maxim when he unwilling to cooperate in the way maxim requires.

- **Suspending a maxim :** it is understood that what is said is not completely true or that there are things the speaker ought not to say. For instance taboo words. It may do to cultural differences that a speaker suspends a maxim or to nature of certain event or situation (Thomas, 1995, p. 77). For example not mentioning the name of the dead or something taboo. Here is an example taken from a novel set on a Navajo reservation, which make explicit reference to the suspension of a maxim. The speaker in this example and the next is the daughter of a murdered man, she is talking to officer Jim Chee of the Navajo tribal police.

Last time you were with that FBI man- asking about the one, who got killed,' she said, respecting the Navajo taboo of not speaking the name of the dead. 'You find out who killed that man?'

'...they told him he could not be cured,' Bistie's Daughter said in a shaky voice. She cleared her throat, wiped the back of her hand across her eyes. 'That man was strong,' he continued. 'His spirit was strong. He didn't give up on things. He didn't want to die. He didn't hardly say anything at all. I asked him. I said, "My father, why----"'She stopped

Never speak the name of the dead, Chee thought. Never Summon the Chindi to you, even if the name of the ghost is father.

(Thomas, 1995:77)

According to the theory above, flouting maxim happen when speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the speaker wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from the expressed meaning, violating maxim happens if speaker intends to mislead the hearer. Infringing maxim happen if does not master the language enough. Opting out maxim happens if speaker unwillingness

to cooperate in the way maxim requires and suspending maxim it is understood that what is said is not completely true or that there are things the speaker ought not to say.

2.3. Context

In communication, context is very influential. Yule (1996, p. 3) has defined pragmatics as the study of contextual meaning, it means context plays important role in interpreting what people mean through their utterance. As Levinson (1983) also stated “pragmatic is a study of the relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding.”

Leech (1983, p. 13) said context is any background knowledge assumed to be shared by speaker and hearer and which contributes to hearers interpreted of what speaker means by a given utterance. Dealing with this Bonvillain (1997, p. 78) proposed four aspects of context:

- **Setting**
It means the area for action or space of language for the speech events. Settings for communication can be classified along a continuum of formality or informality although people in all societies make distinctions about relative formality/informality. Formal setting, for example, is in school, in office, etc, while Informal setting such as in a house or in a family.
- **Participant**
Participants in the speech event include the speaker, the addressees and audiences. Individuals usually change role during a given event. In two party conversations, each person is alternatively speakers or addressee as they exchange speaking turns.
- **Topics**
It is communicative event about something. As what Bonvillain said that, people choose topic based on contribution of personal interest and preference of co-participants to understand the meaning of an utterance,

the participants should know the topic of the conversation that being talked.

- Goal

The goal of participants is vary according to their role in the proceeding. Speakers choose words, tone of voice, facial expression, gesture and so on, to accomplish their purpose.

3. Methodology

The method used in this small research was a movie observation (the dialogues/conversations in the movie). The title of the movie is “The Diary of a Wimpy Kid” which tells about a kid named Greg Heffley. Greg was a middle-school student who aspired to join the popular kids in his school. The movie told about his failed yet hilarious efforts and his friendship with Rowley, another boy with low popularity.

4. Findings

4.1. Violates Maxim of Quality

Rodrick : Greg! (Whisperring)
Greg : Huh? What?
Rodrick : What are you doing? Get up! **Mom and Dad have been calling you for an hour. You're about to be late for your first day of middle school.**
Greg : Oh, geez!
Rodrick : Go, go, go! **Mom's about to flip out! She sent me to get you while she waits in the car!**

(Greg gets ready for school in hurry and makes some noise and woke up mom n dad)

Frank (Dad) : What are you doing? What's going on?
Greg : Getting ready for.....school.
Frank : Are you insane? School doesn't start till next week. And, FYI, School doesn't start at 4:00 in the morning! You woke up Manny. And if he doesn't go back down... Good morning!
Susan (Mom) : There is no way he is going back down. I just wanted to sleep till 6:00.
Frank : Go to bed. I got him
Susan : Greg, what are you doing up making all this noise?

Greg : It was Rodrick! He woke me up! He changed my clock!

Greg is a new middle school student. He has a brother named Rodrick. Rodrick is a senior high school student. Rodrick and Greg have no good relationship as brothers. As a middle school student, Greg does not want to be late for his first day of middle school and school starts at 08:00 am. In making interpretation, context is very important. In analyzing these utterances context such as; setting, participant, topic and goal are elaborated as follows. This conversation takes place in Greg's room at 04:00 am. Rodrick wake him up and asked Greg, his little brother to get ready for school. Rodrick convinced that Mom and Dad had been calling him for an hour. Greg was not realizing about the fact. He got ready for school in hurry, he ran to the kitchen and drank milk for breakfast and made some noise then wake up his parents. His parents were angry to him and asked Greg what he was doing up making all this noise. He said that was because of Rodrick, and they check to Rodrick's room, Rodrick is sleeping. Here, in this conversation Rodrick **violates Maxim of Quality**. Violating Maxim occurs when the speaker can be said to violate a maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth and Greg is not aware of that fact. Rodrick wants to mislead Greg intentionally. Here, **Rodrick's goal** is to violate Maxim of Quality in order to deceive and to mislead his little brother.

4.2. Flouts the Maxim of Quantity

Greg : I found it.
Rowley : Found what?
Greg : Rodrick's middle school yearbook. **This thing holds all the answers. Rowley, this thing is like a bible. See this? This is where a person like me needs to be. The class favorites. They're the best in their class.**

In the conversation, Rowley asked Greg "what is he looking for?". Greg only needs to say "*Rodrick's middle school yearbook.*" But he failed to observe a maxim quantity by saying more information than is required. Greg **flouts the Maxim of Quantity** because he gives more information than is required to Rowley as his close friend about Rodrick's middle school yearbook by saying "*This thing holds all the answers. Rowley, this thing is like a bible. See this? This*

is where a person like me needs to be. The class favorites. They're the best in their class". In here, **goal and participant** becomes a reason why he flouts maxim of quantity. Greg gives more information than is required to his close friend, Rowley.

The findings shows that non-observances of the maxim mostly happens between the characters that have close relation and according to goal, for instance between as a siblings and as a close friend. It seems that their closeness make them understand each other and easy for them to catch what the reasons not to observe the maxim.

The speaker has to flout maxim because the speaker doesn't want to mislead, but wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from the expressed meaning, the speaker has to violate maxim because the speaker intends to mislead the hearer and the speaker knows that the hearer will not understand that the utterance is not true. The speaker can be said to violate a maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth.

5. Conclusion

In this research the writer only finds two types of non-observance of the maxims, they are flouting maxim and violating maxim, but in fact there are five types of non-observance of the maxims. The writer found that in middle school students tends to use two types of non-observance of the maxims such as flouting maxim and violating maxim for certain reasons. For example, speaker is lying about his/her bad experience in the first of middle school in order to cover fact. Here, he/she violates maxim of quality. Another circumstance is when someone gives more information than is required. Here, he/she flouts maxim of quantity.

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