

Humor in the Gricean Maxim Non-observance of Animated Sitcom Show “Family Guy”

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Abstract--This article aimed to find out how the non-observance of Gricean maxims was affecting the humor of the sitcom “Family Guy”. This article used a qualitative method where the data was taken from animated sitcom show “Family Guy” in a form of question-and-answer adjacency pair. This article used the observation method in collecting the data. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using content analysis method based on Grice’s cooperative principle theory which focused more on the maxim non-observance aspect. From the data collection, it showed that there were 33 maxim non-observance found, containing 19 violations of maxim, 10 flouts of maxim, 3 maxims opt out, and 1 clash of maxim. Based on the analysis, it was revealed that violation of maxim was the most used maxim non-observance due to how easy it was to create humorous situation when ones have the intention to disobey the maxim. On the other hand, the occurrences of the flout of maxim were on the second most occurred maxim non observance. The last two were opt out and clash which were not suitable when both were used for the humor aspect.

Keywords: *non-observance, maxim, humor*

Abstrak-- ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana ketidakpatuhan terhadap maksim oleh Grice mempengaruhi humor dalam sitkom “Family Guy”. Artikel ini menggunakan metode kualitatif di mana data diambil dari tayangan animasi “Family Guy” dalam bentuk wacana pasangan berdampingan tipe tanya-jawab. Artikel ini menggunakan metode observasi dalam pengumpulan data. Selanjutnya data dianalisis menggunakan metode Analisis konten berdasarkan teori prinsip kooperatif oleh Grice yang lebih menitikberatkan pada aspek ketidakpatuhan maksim. Dari keseluruhan data, ditemukan 33 pelanggaran maksim yang terdiri dari 19 pelanggaran maksim yang disengaja, 10 pelanggaran maksim yang tidak disengaja, 3 pengabaian maksim, dan 1 pertentangan maksim. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa pelanggaran maksim yang disengaja adalah ketidakpatuhan maksim yang paling banyak digunakan karena mudah untuk menciptakan situasi lucu ketika seseorang memiliki niat untuk melanggar maksim. Di sisi lain, pelanggaran maksim yang tidak disengaja berada di urutan kedua. Dua yang terakhir adalah pengabaian dan pertentangan maksim yang tidak cocok bila keduanya digunakan untuk aspek humor.

Kata Kunci: *ketidakpatuhan, maksim, humor*

1. Introduction

For a variety of reasons, people constantly communicate with one another whether it is for preserving relationships, disseminating knowledge, disputing a point, and so forth. According to Leech (2014), communication concerned with the speaker's aim and goals as well as the hearer's inferences of the speaker's intention and goals. It is very obvious that when people are speaking to one another, they have a tendency to have a pleasant conversation. One hypothesis that explains how people might behave in having a discussion with others and helps to develop effective conversations is the cooperative principle. According to Grice (1975), we might be able to develop a broad general guideline that participants would be expected to follow, which is to make your talk as helpful as possible, taking into account the context and the reason or goal the conversation is based on.

However, not every typical event in people's conversations fully applies the cooperative principle. People would come into a different understanding of an utterance due to lacks of context, a matter of the conversation's situation and even a culture of certain place that preventing an act of cooperative principle could not be performed.

It is also really fascinating. The Cooperative Principle, although the parties may follow them to have a better discourse, it may also be disregarded owing to a lack of situational awareness or purposely broken in order to communicate anything other than what is literally meant to be spoken. According to Kaufer (1981), when a speaker deviates from a maxim, such as using irony or sarcasm, the outcome is an unfavorable pragmatic result. This statement allowed individuals to understand that anytime a maxim was purposefully broken, the listener would experience a surprise reaction that occasionally might cause them to laugh. This is particularly fascinating because as it is mentioned by McCulloch (2014), the Gricean maxims are being often broken on purpose by comedians and authors, who might just conceal the complete truth and pick their words for the story's effect and the reader's or

listener's enjoyment. Additionally, Attardo (1993) makes a similar effort to define humor and reveals how the breach of Grice's Cooperative Principle leads to the development of humor. Looking at the prior remarks, it can be seen that the non-observance of Grice's cooperative principle is crucial to the development of humor and is easily identifiable. The motivation in performing this article stems from the effect that one of the cooperative principle maxims can cause comedy just by not being followed.

Nowadays, comedy becomes one of the most consumed types of entertainment. Regarding to the Cooperative Principle, the type of comedy that will be full of non-observance of maxims would be a comedy that has a lot of conversations in it which is a series of situation comedy or we can call it a sitcom. It is usually a narrative-based comedy series containing 20 minutes long episode with characters and setting. Being one of them is an animated sitcom show named Family Guy.

Previous researches conducting similar studies was also covering the occurrences of the flouting of Grice's cooperative principle in the context of making humorous utterances. Amiana & Putranti (2017) in their analysis aiming for conversational analysis on a situation comedy, also covers the flouting of Grice's cooperative principle. It leads to the statement that the flouts are created because the characters in the situation comedy intentionally mislead and deceive the interlocutors by generating misleading implicatures in a conversation. In addition, Jiaosheng Qiu (2019) also analyses the occurrences of verbal humor in a situational comedy and pertains them to the application of the Grice's maxim which shows that each type of humor is containing an entanglement of Grice's maxim. These previous researches are the reasons of why this research is conducted.

This article took an interest in analyzing the humor found in the sitcom show and how it is related to the maxim non-observance of Grice's Cooperative Principle. The combination of humor which is very familiar within people and pragmatic theory which analyze the utterances is interesting

because most people does not see the linguistic perspective of a humor when it is uttered. When someone delivers utterance in a conversation, it creates implicature that could be interpreted differently by the interlocutor due to some circumstances. In this case, those circumstances are depending on the non-observance of cooperative principal and it has the possibility to create a humorous conversation. Thus, the fact that such maxim non-observance could affect someone to laugh is the main reason of why this study is conducted.

Therefore, the research problem of this article arose as “How the non-observance of Gricean maxims is affecting the humor of the sitcom “Family Guy”.

2. Methods

This article is a qualitative study where the data was collected using the observation method. Observation method gathers qualitative data by observing people and their behavior at events or in their natural setting. The data was taken from the sitcom Family Guy season 19 that contained 20 episodes.

In analyzing the data, content analysis was used in this article. Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen (2009) state that the goal of content analysis is to learn about human behavior by studying and interpreting recorded material. Public records, textbooks, letters, films, cassettes, journals, topics, reports, and other documents may be used. The researcher usually starts with a question that he or she believes can best be answered by reviewing the materials available. In order to answer the problem of this article, each of the maxim non-observance was analyzed along with the matching data found in the data source. It analyzed how the maxim non-observance could create such humor within the conversation in the sitcom show.

The analysis was presented using descriptive method. It was used to summarize points that appear within the data and analysis according to the requirements of the research.

3. Result and Discussion

The analysis was classified according to the maxim non-observance types which are maxim violation, maxim flouting, maxim opt out and lastly clash of maxim. There are thirty-three data that consisted of nineteen violations of maxim, ten flout of maxim, three maxim opt outs, and one clash of maxim. Each of the data produces humor that has the involvement of non-observance of maxim. However, the data presentation was limited to only one for each type in due to some data that has the same type. Thus, the analysis was presented as follows.

Maxim Violation

The indication of this type occurred when one of the participants intentionally disobeys the maxim. From the thirty-three data, maxim violation was the most commonly used type in order to produce humor. There are nineteen violations of maxim found from the data. There are four violations of quantity maxim, nine violation of quality maxim, six violations of maxim of relation. There is no violation on the maxim of manner.

Case in maxim of quantity

CASE [1]

The conversation showed Peter and Lois were arguing on who is the best to be a mayor for their town. Then Peter argued that his candidate is the best because he is a man.

Lois : “What does that have to do with anything?”

Peter : “Because this is America, Lois. Men have always run things and there have never been any problems whatsoever. And don't say the economy or Iraq or income inequality or racism or Brett Kavanaugh or air pollution or Vietnam or slavery or Watergate or capitalism or #MeToo or homelessness or police brutality or homophobia or Monica Lewinsky or school shootings or Native American genocide or Fox News or Tim Allen or climate change.”

In the conversation, Peter obviously violated the maxim of quantity. Lois was asking on why being a man has something to do with being a mayor. Although in his answer, Peter said “Because this is America, Lois. Men have always run things and there have never been any problems whatsoever” which was already enough to answer Lois question. However, Peter then added more information than he was supposed to say which was also not relevant to the question he was asked.

It became humorous because in his answer, Peter gave too much information. The first thing was that he stated that men have always run things and there were never been any problems. However, he added a statement that he did not want to be countered with the problem about the economy, Iraq, income inequality, racism, Brett Kavanaugh, air pollution, Vietnam, slavery, Watergate, capitalism, #MeToo, homelessness, police brutality, homophobia, Monica Lewinsky, school shootings, Native American genocide, Fox News, Tim Allen, and climate change which all of them was mostly done by men.

Case in maxim of quality

CASE [2]

The conversation showed Brian and Stewie who were in a pursuit with the terminator robot. While on the run, they decided to rent a motel as their hiding place.

Brian : You're sure all the rooms only have one bed?

Stewie : Yeah, motel rules. Man, it sucks. You have no idea how pissed I am about this.

In the conversation, Stewie did a violation on the maxim of quality. Brian was asking whether if all the rooms in the motel only has one bed. In his answer, Stewie violated the maxim of quality by reassuring Brian that it was the motel rules. In fact, it was Stewie who combine the original two beds into one bed in their room. Thus, Stewie was lying to Brian about the motel only has one bed in their rooms.

It became humorous because Stewie violated the maxim of quality. Stewie tried to fool Brian by indicating that there was only one bed in the motel room. Stewie who has the tendency to be gay, of course wanted to sleep in one bed with Brian. However, Brian knew what Stewie was plotting and the fact that it was a two-bed combined into one.

Case in maxim of relevance

CASE [3]

Prior to the conversation below, Peter met The Great Sebastian, a magician who happened to meet him at the bar. The magician then showed Peter magic tricks and left his vest after leaving. Looking at the vest that the magician left, Peter took the vest and wore it everywhere. Next, he met Chris at home while still wearing the vest.

Chris : Dad, where are you going?

Peter : Wearing a vest means I'm a failed actor who teaches acting in a city that's not New York or L. A

In the conversation, it is shown that Peter did a violation to the maxim of relevance. Chris was asking Peter on where he is going. However, instead of answering Chris on where he was going, he answered him with the explanation of who he is resemblance to with him wearing a vest which was not the right answer according to the question's relevancy.

The conversation became humorous because of the violation that Peter did to the maxim of relevance. When he was asked by Chris, he rather answered the question by saying what he is by wearing a vest. His description is the one that made it funny, by explaining that wearing a vest means that he is a failed actor who teaches acting in a city that is not New York or L. A. The description simply reminds us of the number of acting teachers who wear vest when they are teaching. He explained as if every acting teacher who teach in the city which are not New York and Los Angeles are failed actors.

Maxim Flouting

A flouting of maxim occurred when one of the conversation's participants obviously failed to comprehend the other person and accidentally broke the maxim. There are ten flouts of maxim found in the data. There is only one flout of quality maxim, two flouts of maxim of relation, and seven flouts of maxim of manner. There is no flout on the maxim of quantity.

Case in maxim of quality

CASE [4]

Prior to the conversation, Peter got both of hands ripped off his body. While he was in the hospital, after he woke up from his surgery, the doctor told him that his hand has been replanted and needed time to grow back to normal. Thus, now Peter has tiny hands. Later he went to the swimming pool and attempted to swim.

Pool Life Guard : Whoa, whoa, whoa. Are you okay to swim like that?

Peter : (CHUCKLES) Am I okay to swim?

In the conversation, it showed that Peter flouted the maxim of quality. The pool life guard was worried about whether if Peter could swim with his hands like that. Peter answered the question by belittling the pool guard's worries by saying "Am I okay to swim?" with confidence as if he could swim with his current hands state which implied that he could swim well. However, later scene showed that Peter was struggling to swim and needed help.

The conversation became humorous because of Peter flouted the maxim of quality. He was really confident in his answer believing that he could swim with his current state of hands. He also chuckled before answering the pool life guard's question indicating that he did not want the life guard to underestimate him. The conversation itself was already hinting everyone that Peter will not be able to swim with his hands which made it funny.

Case in maxim of relevance

CASE [5]

It showed Stewie and Brian were watching a surveillance video of Chris and his teddy bear. They watched this because Stewie felt a jealousy towards Chris and his teddy bear. Stewie thought that Chris's teddy bear was his. In the video, it was a scene where Chris talks to the teddy bear in a romantic way as if they were a couple which make Stewie mad.

Stewie : (gasps) Are you seeing what I'm seeing?

Brian : Is Chris wearing a nicotine patch?

The conversation showed Brian flouted the maxim of relevance. In the conversation, Stewie asked Brian whether he saw what Stewie see on the screen, which was Chris talking romantically to the teddy bear. However, Brian with his focus on other thing in the video answered Stewie's question by asking Stewie back if Chris was wearing a nicotine patch, cluelessly. Brian's answer to Stewie's question did not have any relevancies to the current situation and Stewie's reference.

The humorous effect in this conversation occurred because Brian unintentionally flouted the maxim of relevance in answering Stewie's question. It was already clear that the surveillance video showed that Chris was talking and acting all romantically towards the teddy bear's point of view. Stewie expected Brian to have the same thought as he was. However, surprisingly Brian was more focused on the nicotine patch that Chris has on. Although it is flouting the relevance maxim, Chris who was portrayed as a dumb child could possibly has it on him which make it even funnier.

Case in maxim of manner

CASE [6]

Prior to the conversation, Stewie and Brian found out the truth about the local hero of their

town, Pawtucket Pat, was stealing the recipe of his well-known beer from the Native American. Later, Brian made an article about it and drove the locals mad to the point that they decided to destroy the statue of the hero. Peter, as the admirer of the hero, felt mad about his hero being accused. Then, he tried to confront Brian at home, but Chris answered it instead.

Peter : Where do you get off?!

Chris : In my bedroom, mostly. Sometimes the bathroom. Or wherever I see a lady seal an envelope.

In this conversation, Chris in his answer obviously flouted the maxim of manner. Peter in his intention to confront Brian, asked "Where do you get off?!". His question was containing an ambiguous meaning. The first one was an idiom to show disagreement that means "What gives you the right". The second one was a slang from North America of the phrase "Get off" which means getting aroused by something. The ambiguity made a confusion in Peter's question; thus, Chris answered the question instead by understanding it from the second meaning.

The conversation became humorous because Peter made Chris flouted the maxim by answering innocently of where he usually gets aroused. It became funny because how innocent Chris was answering the ambiguous question in a detailed way.

Maxim Opt Out

When one of the participants declined to continue the conversation, there was a maximum opt out. Due to one participant's refusal to continue the conversation, any maxim that may have arisen was prevented. Throughout the data, there were three maxim opt outs found in the data source. The use of maxim opt out occurred because the situation was already funny from the beginning. A case of maxim opt out could be seen as follows.

CASE [7]

The context is that Peter just found a strange ball out of the landfills. He believed that the ball has some kind of power to tell the truth about everything he asked. Peter then proceeds to introduce his new ball to his family while having breakfast.

Meg : Why is it filled with the blue liquid from tampon commercials?

Peter : That's a very gross question, Meg. You may take your breakfast in the attic.

The conversation showed a non-observance of maxim which was conducted by Peter. Peter opted out the conversation he and Meg conducted. Meg was asking the reason on why the ball is filled with the blue liquid from a tampon commercials and Peter immediately stated that Meg was asking a gross question. It showed that Peter did not want to continue the conversation by hearing Meg's question. Instead of proceeding the conversation, after rejecting the question directly, Peter told Meg to eat her breakfast in the attic.

The conversation became humorous because of the way Meg asked about Peter's new ball that filled with blue liquid from tampons commercials. Meg asked the gross question in an innocent way that made it funny for people. It was also because Meg referring the blue liquid inside the ball to have a resemblance with the one in a tampon commercial which was relatable to whoever that watch the tampon commercial. In his reaction, Peter who opted out the conversation which is in a form of the non-observance of Grice's maxim created a humorous effect. Because his new ball that he really proud of was reacted by Meg with such a gross question, his maxim non-observance is causing a funny utterance. Moreover, he told Meg to eat her breakfast in the attic which is cruel for just a question being asked but ended up creating a very humorous conversation.

Clash of Maxim

When two maxims met in a conversation, it is called a clash of maxims. To observe another maxim, one must violate another. The use of clash of maxim is rather complicated in order to produce a humor out of it. Hence, its occurrence is very low. Such case of this non-observance would be as follows.

CASE [8]

In this conversation, Peter has already become mobster for a while to the point that the mafia has already noticed him. While he was talking to his friends, Peter stated that other mafia family loves him because they sent him a wrapped-up fish which means a threat by the mafia. However, Peter misunderstood, thinking it as a gift.

Joe : Peter, do you know what this means?

Peter : Yeah, that they're nice guys. Yesterday, one of them even drove by my house to say I had a beautiful family and it would be a shame if anything happened to them. And that's a compliment and empathy. When's the last time you guys said something like that?

In this conversation, Peter who acted very gullible did a clash of maxims. Joe who was worrying Peter asked if Peter really know what it meant by the fish that the mafia gave to Peter. Peter who are very gullible then answered it with an honest answer. He believed that the mafia is a nice guy. Peter then gave an addition of "Yesterday, one of them even drove by my house to say I had a beautiful family and it would be a shame if anything happened to them. And that's a compliment and empathy. When's the last time you guys said something like that?" which is not necessary. However, the addition became a clear explanation to why he trusted the mafia. This situation made that Peter violated the maxim of quantity by adding too much information to his friends in order to follow the maxim of quality which is in the form of how Peter expressing his trust to the mafia.

The conversation became humorous because of the way Meg asked about Peter's new ball that filled with blue liquid from tampons commercials. Meg asked the gross question in an innocent way that made it funny for people. It was also because Meg was referring the blue liquid inside the ball to have a resemblance with the one in a tampon commercial which was relatable to whoever that watch the tampon commercial. In his reaction, Peter who opted out the conversation which is in a form of the non-observance of Grice's maxim created a humorous effect. Because his new ball that he really proud of was reacted by Meg with such a gross question, his maxim non-observance is causing a funny utterance. Moreover, he told Meg to eat her breakfast in the attic which is cruel for just a question being asked but ended up creating a very humorous conversation.

4. Conclusions

Based on the problem, the violation of the maxim was frequently used to create humorous circumstances and dialogue. People could realize that the intention-driven dialogue was the simplest and most straightforward to make hilarious moment. The maxim of quality was found to be the most frequently broken rule in the maxim violation. It was simple to entertain people just by purposefully breaking the quality maxim. Simply speaking, lying. The relevance principle was the second most frequently broken maxim. Throughout the entire series, the violations of the relevance maxim consisted essentially of responding to any sarcastic comment with something unflattering about the interlocutor.

In the flout of maxim, it was revealed that the flout on the maxim of manner has the most occurrences in the series. It was pretty convincing by people saying ambiguous thing would make others laugh and create a humorous situation. In the series, there were frequent misunderstandings between two participants on one of their topics of conversation because there were no same references between them. The two participants had no aim of creating a funny setting or dialogue, but it became funny.

In the maxim opt out, the humorous aspect of this maxim non-observance was pretty low as it has only three occurrences. It was only funny because the situation that has already become funny from the first place. On the other side, the last type of maxim non-observance, the clash of maxim only had one occurrence. Clash of maxim was already complicated from the first place which made any attempt on producing humor using this maxim non-observance was poor.

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