

VIOLETION OF MAXIM OF CONVERSATION IN BILL WATTERSON'S *CALVIN AND HOBBS*

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Abstract

This research discusses violation of maxims of conversation in the strip comics entitled Calvin and Hobbes. The comic is a daily serial comic which tells about the main character named Calvin and his imagination tiger doll named Hobbes. The comic provides daily conversations among Calvin, Hobbes and people surrounding him. The research focuses on the kinds of violation of maxim of conversation and the purpose of the violation. Generally, this research is included in descriptive study. The steps in conducting the research are collecting, classifying, and analyzing the data. The entire data of this research are taken from the strip comics entitled Calvin and Hobbes July 1st 2014 to July 31st 2016 edition written by Bill Watterson. Then, the unit of analysis of this research is the whole conversations which represents violation of maxim of conversation. Furthermore, total sampling is applied to obtain the required data. Consequently, the data are analyzed one by one. To analyze the data, referential equivalent method is used to classify the kinds of violated maxim of conversation and pragmatic equivalent method is applied to reveal the purposes. Based on the analysis, the highest violation of maxim of conversation is the violation of maxim of relevance by 11 data. Furthermore, violation of maxim of quality and quantity are in the lowest position by 7 data only. Meanwhile, based on the purpose of the violation of maxims, representatives are the most frequent purpose of the violation by 15 data. Then, directives purpose is the smallest by only 3 data.

Keywords: *pragmatics, maxim of conversation, violation, purpose of violation of maxim of conversation*

A. INTRODUCTION

Language is the main characteristic that distinguishes human beings from other creatures. Falk stated that language is always there, and we make use of it automatically, often without any conscious effort (1985: 3). It shows that language cannot be separated from human life. Human beings use language in daily life in order to communicate to each other. It is used to transfer the idea and share information. Language is discussed in scientific study called linguistics. It has several branches such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and etcetera. Furthermore, Levinson defined that pragmatics is the study of the relation between language and context as the basis to an account of language understanding (1983:21). Pragmatics and semantics are the study of meaning. Semantics studies meaning internally while pragmatics studies meaning externally.

This research deals with one of the linguistics branches that is pragmatics. Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics which studies how people comprehend and produce a communicative act or speech act in a concrete speech situation which is usually a conversation. It distinguishes two intents or meanings in each utterance or communicative act of verbal communication. Levinson pointed that pragmatics is the study of language usage (1983:5). Pragmatics studies not only the formal structure, but also the functional structure concerning the way how the formal structure functions in the communication. Communication can run well if the participants apply the rule which is called as maxims of

conversation. However, communication does not always run well if one of the participants breaks the maxims of conversation.

Breaking the rule of conversation is generally called as violation of maxims adheres to the implicature. There is an implied meaning when the speakers violate the maxims of conversation. Implicature, as defined by Gazdar, is anything that is inferred from an utterance (1979:49). It can be understood that implicature conveys meaning which is implied in an utterance.

Based on the fact, the purpose of the research is to describe the kinds of violation of maxim of conversation in Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes* and to explain the purposes of violation of maxim of conversation in the comics.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

Based on the characteristics, this research is known as descriptive research. Descriptive research is a kind of research which describes the characteristics of the data based on the fact. Consequently, descriptive method is applied in this research to solve the problems of the research by using descriptive method, the researcher tries to figure out the kinds of violation of maxims of conversation and the purpose in violating the maxims of conversation.

In order to observe the data of research, population is used in data analysis. The population of this research is all of the conversations in Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*. To obtain the sample, total sampling technique was applied. Total sampling is used as the fact that the entire number of population in this research is not so great. In other words, all data are analyzed one by one.

The next step is analyzing the data. The data analysis includes some steps as follows:

1. Determining the kinds of maxims of conversation uttered by the characters in Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*. The method which is used here is referential equivalent method. It is a method of analysis that compares verbal language and the reference (Djajasudarma, 1991:58).
2. Describing the purpose in violating the maxims of conversation. The method which is used here is pragmatic equivalent method. It is used to determine the pragmatic meaning based on the context (Djajasudarma, 1991:58).

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis intended is conducted in order to identify the kinds of violation of maxims of conversation in the conversation among the characters found in Bill Watterson's *Calvin and Hobbes*. The detail of the analysis is presented in the following parts.

1.1 Violation of Maxims of Conversation

There is a rule that should be fulfilled in order to create a good conversation, that is, maxims of conversation. In other words, as the doer of conversation, speakers should try to contribute meaningful, productive utterance to conduct the conversation. As conversational partners, listeners should do the same thing. However, sometimes a good communication can be built by breaking maxims of conversation. Sometimes, the maxim is ignored as long as the communicative conversation can be achieved. This chapter discusses how the characters imply the meanings by violating maxims of conversation for certain purposes. There are four kinds of violation of maxims of conversation found in this comic.

1.1.1 Violation of Maxim of Quality

In order to build a communicative conversation, maxims of conversation becomes the significant part that should be fulfilled. In maxim of quality, the speakers should deliver the

utterance based on the real fact. Otherwise, maxim of quality is violated. The following example may clarify the statement:

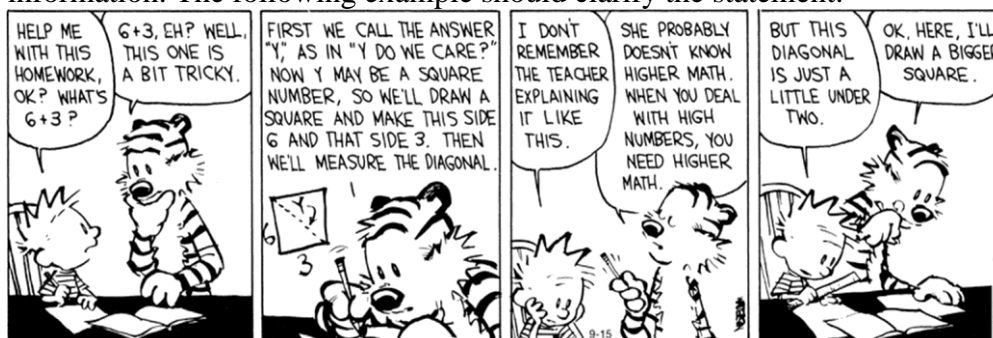


(11/QL) Calvin : I need help on my homework. What’s a pronoun?
 Hobbes: *A noun that lost amateur status.*
 Calvin : Maybe I can get a point of originality.

The conversation happens when Calvin has difficulties to finish his homework and he asks Hobbes. Calvin asks what a pronoun is and Hobbes answers by saying that a pronoun is *a noun that lost amateur status*. Hobbes thinks that pronoun is not one word, then, he separates it into two words becomes “pro” and “noun”. Hobbes assumes that “pro” is a professional status in such a sport. It makes him sure that pronoun is a noun which has professional status. As a result, Hobbes delivers what he believes to be true without evidence that a pronoun is a noun that lost amateur status. Hence, it is not acceptable because Hobbes does not tell the truth based on the real fact. Here, Hobbes has violated maxim of quality because what Hobbes delivers is not the requirements of Calvin’s question. However, besides saying something obviously untrue, Hobbes may imply that he does not know the exact definition of pronoun.

1.1.2 Violation of Maxims of Quantity

In maxim of quantity, the speakers should utter something which is appropriate based on the needed information. In other words, the speakers are prohibited to deliver too much information. The following example should clarify the statement:



(13/QN) Calvin : Help me with this homework, ok? What’s 6+3?
 Hobbes : 6+3, eh? *Well, this one is a bit tricky. First we call the answer “Y” as in “Y do we care?” now Y may be a square number, so we’ll draw a square and make this side 6 and that side 3. Then we’ll measure the diagonal.*
 Calvin : I don’t remember the teacher explaining it like this.

Hobbes : She probably doesn't know higher math. When you deal with high numbers, you need higher math.

Calvin : But this diagonal is just a little under two.

Hobbes : Ok, here, I'll draw a bigger square.

Calvin is a student who always gets difficulty in studying math. He usually asks Hobbes when he gets confused to finish math homework. A piece of story above proves that he finds the difficulty in counting numbers. He asks Hobbes what $6 + 3$ is and Hobbes replies with a very long answer. The answer is very confusing because it is too long than is required. Hobbes contributes too much information, so that is categorized as violation of maxim of quantity. Here, Hobbes, who breaks this maxim, may imply that he actually does not know the math exactly. Hence, Hobbes delivers statements to make Calvin believe in Hobbes that Hobbes understands the math well, but actually Hobbes does not know anything about math. Hobbes acts well as if Hobbes is smart in math. Calvin who does not suspect just listens to what Hobbes says and follows what Hobbes does.

1.1.3 Violation of Maxims of Relevance

Relevancy is the essential element of maxim of relevance. The speakers and listeners should be relevant in discussing a topic. In maxim of relevance, the speakers and listeners are prohibited to change the topic of conversation. However, if one of the participants change the topic, it means that maxim of relevance is violated. Consider the example:



(19/MR)

Mother : Time for bed, Calvin.

Calvin : *It's free country. I can do what I want.*

Mother : Good night.

Calvin : Communist!

The datum is one of the examples that changing the topic can be the way to show disagreement of the speaker's statement. Here, Calvin is asked to go to bed because it is time to sleep. Otherwise, Calvin who is still playing his toy does not want to go to bed. Maxim of relevance is violated when Calvin responds his mother's statement. His mother asks Calvin to sleep but Calvin responses by discussing about free country. There is a switching of the topic between Calvin and his mother. In this case, actually Calvin may imply that he does not want to go to bed because he wants to play his toy or he wants to say that he will sleep after he finished playing his toy. It can be proven from the last statement when he screams "communist" because he wants to express how bad his mother treats him. He wants to get his own right but his mother ignores it. It is such a kind of a compulsion for him.

1.1.4 Violation of Maxims of Manner

The obscurity and ambiguity is the indication that speakers violate the maxim of manner. It is simply understood if the speakers want to obey the principle of maxim of

manner, the speakers should deliver the statement briefly and orderly. In other words, the speakers should have enough competence to deliver the utterance orderly and briefly. Observe the example:



(5/M) Calvin : Do you know where the babies come from?
 Hobbes : Nope
 Calvin : Well, I wonder how one finds out!
 Hobbes : *Here, let me see the back of your shirt.*
You came from Taiwan.

This is the example how the listener violates the maxim of manner by answering such a confusing sentence because when Calvin asks Hobbes where the babies come from, Hobbes answers by mentioning something which is confusing, that is by looking at the back of Calvin's shirt. In this case, Hobbes delivers an obscurity answer. It is not acceptable because the the answer makes Calvin confused.

2.1 The Purposes of Violation of Maxims of Conversation

In order to reveal the implied meaning inserted in violation of maxims of conversation, the theory of speech act is applied to analyze the problem.

2.1.1 Expressives

Expressives are the kind of speech acts that focuses on the human psychological condition. In certain cases, the condition of human psychology may influence how the speakers deliver an utterance. Further information can be seen in the following example:



(33/QN) Susie : Did you see we have a substitute teacher today?
 Calvin : *Oh, No ! That can only mean our real teacher rocketed back to saturn to report to her superiors ! They're trying to subvert us little kids with subliminal messages in our textbooks, telling us to turn in our parents*

**when the saturnians attack ! Earth will
be rendered helpless !**

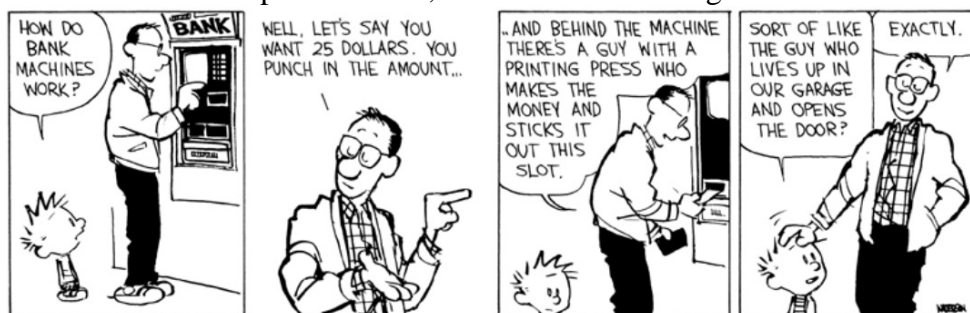
Susie : I think one of us has been eating too much paste in art class

Calvin : I'm too smart for 'em though! I don't read my assignments

The example shows that the condition of human's psychology can influence the speaker's utterance. It happens when Susie asks Calvin about the substitute teacher. In answering the question, Calvin delivers an expressive statement by stating *Oh, No!*. It means that actually he does not like the other teacher substitutes his real teacher. In this conversation, Calvin underestimates the substitute teacher by bragging himself that he is smarter than the substitute teacher. He thinks that nobody can substitute his real teacher.

2.1.2 Representatives

Representatives are closely related to the people's subjective. Representatives can be defined as the speech acts that refers to what the speakers believe to be true. There are many forms of representatives including fact, assertion, conclusion and description. To gain clear elaboration about representatives, observe the following conversation:



(26/QL)

Calvin: How do the bank machines work?

Father: *Well, let's say you want 25 dollars. You punch in the amount and behind the machine, there's a guy with a printing press who makes the money and sticks it out this slot.*

Calvin: sort of like the guy who lives up in our garage and opens the door?

Father: Exactly

The datum numbered (26) proves that everyone has their own perspective about everything in the world. The conversation is started when Calvin asks his father how the bank machine works. His father has his own perspective that there is a guy behind the bank machines who prints the money and sticks it out to the slot. Absolutely, it cannot be accepted since actually there is no guy behind the bank machines. The operation of bank machines is not like what Calvin's father says. He just wants to explain easily to his son in order to make Calvin understand well. If his father explains the actual operation of bank machines, he is sure that Calvin will not clearly understand and the answer may stimulate another question. There is another implication from Calvin's father statement. It may imply that his father does not really know about how the ATM operates. Therefore, he just answers what he believes to be true. All of the implicatures reveal the same purpose.

2.1.3 Commissives

Commissives are the speech acts that declare speaker's commitment to some future action. Commissives can be in the form of promises, threats, refusals and pledges. An additional knowledge leads the speaker to use commissives to convey the implied meaning such as in the following example:



(18/QN) Calvin: hey dad, how does a carburetor work?

Dad: *I can't tell you*

Calvin: why not?

Dad: *it's a secret*

Calvin: no it isn't you just don't know!

The utterance of commissives is illustrated by Calvin's father in the conversation with Calvin. In this comic, Calvin is a kid who wants to know everything. In the datum numbered (18) Calvin wants to know how a carburetor works but his father refuses to answer the question. His father delivers such a refusal to avoid the further question. He may be bored with Calvin who asks a lot or he implies that he does not want to be disturbed because he is busy fixing his car. He wants Calvin to leave him by refusing to answer the question. He even delivers the second utterance to emphasize a refusal by saying *it's a secret*.

2.1.4 Declarations

Commonly, declarations are used to describe speaker's influential statement or utterance. Hence, declarations can be a huge influence in changing a particular thing. Specifically, declaration has an impact among hearers to do something. Sometimes, it comes from people in higher position. The following conversation can be the proper example of declarations. Take a look at the conversation here:



(37/MR) Calvin : What's wrong with your snowman?

Susie : *It's a snow woman.*

Mother: I don't care we're not having an anatomically correct snowman in the front yard

The conversation between Calvin and Susie becomes one of the examples of declarations. It happens when they make a figure from snow. It is generally called a snowman. However,

Susie makes her own figure that is different from the others. Calvin is very surprised and asks Susie about her figure. Here, Susie declares that her figure is called as snow woman because she modifies it. Susie tries to influence Calvin about her figure. She assures Calvin that snow woman exists. She aims to declare emancipation and equals rights between man and woman.

2.1.5 Directives

Another type of speech act is namely directives. Directives can be defined as type of speech act which asks someone to do something. The expressions of directives are in the form of direct command, order, request, and even suggestion. Furthermore, directive's statement is not always in the form of affirmative since it also appears in negative utterances or statements. Consider the example:



(27/MR)

Calvin: Dad, will you put a bell on my bike?

Father: *I think you should learn how to ride before you worry about having a bell to ring.*

Calvin: Not that kind of bell! I want one that'll warn me when the darn bikes sneaking up on me!

In the preceding example, the communicative conversation still can be accomplished although one of the speakers violates the maxim by changing the topic of conversation. The datum shows that his father violates the maxim of relevance by asking Calvin to learn how to ride a bike before he worries about the bell. The father's statement contains directives since what he utters is categorized as a suggestion. His father may imply that he does not want to put the bell on Calvin's bike because he is busy washing his car or he may imply that he will put the bell on Calvin's bike after he finishes his work.

D. CONCLUSION

The research entitled *Violation of Maxims of Conversation in Bill Watterson's Calvin and Hobbes* aims to solve the problems of the study which include the kinds of violation of maxims of conversation and the purpose in violating the maxims of conversation which are expressed among the characters in the comics.

Based on the analysis, the maxims which are violated are maxim of quality, quantity, relevance and manner. In other words, most of the characters violate all maxims of conversation. Then, the purposes which are found in the comics are expressives, representatives, directives, commissives and declarations. It means that most of the characters have certain purposes in violating the maxims of conversation.

This research may motivate other researchers to conduct further research about maxim of conversation in order to gain a proper knowledge and understanding. Eventually, the further research is hoped to figure out and present further topic of violation of maxim of conversation related to various fields like in advertisement, television program, and many more. Therefore, the result will lead to the whole new things which are essential to support the improvement of current topic.

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