

HUMOROUS EFFECT OF BARBIE: LIFE IN THE DREAMHOUSE SERIES’ THROUGH GRICE’S IMPLICATURE

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Abstract

The violation of the maxims usually generates humor. To ensure the humor can create happiness instead of dullness, insult, or anger, the speakers can follow what so called Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975). Four maxims from Grice were used to explain the conversational implicature in Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse series. This series present the parody as the imitation of popular events, ideas, and people. Qualitative approach was applied to study the conversational implicature in the series. Sampling technique is used to describe the violation of the maxims. The object of the study is four episodes of Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse series, Season 6. There were twenty three utterances which violated the maxims; six violation of maxim of quality; four utterances which violates maxim of quantity; nine utterances violated maxim of relevance; and three utterances violated maxim of manner. The violation of the maxim of relevance is mostly used in this series to produce humors effect. Grice’s maxim is helpful to recognize how people produce humor through language. Further research on pragmatic humor is recommended.

Key Words: *humor, violation, Grice’s Maxim, Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse series*

Introduction

There is no exact rationale to explain the laugh. People can laugh on a misfortune event, funny mimic, or funny utterances. According to Attardo in Scarpetta and Spagnolli (2009: 3) humor is the consequence of an inferential process which is only limited by the context. Thus, the speaker and the listener should have synchronized presupposition about the use of language to create the laughter. Misunderstanding may occur whereas the listener cannot fully understand the speaker’s intentional meaning.

Uttering humor can be tricky especially to L2 learners. Learning humor though pragmatic can increase the students’ communicative, linguistics, and sociolinguistic competence (Fernández and Fontecha, 2008). They can use the target language to make their communication more effective. Effective communication is certainly assured the increase of social communication. As conversational implicature generally occurs in humor (Nanda, Sukyadi, and Sudarsono, 2012:121), this article uses the Cooperative Principle proposed by Grice (1975) to describe the manner of humor in a popular web series Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse. The humor is then described though the occurrence of violation of four maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner). Maxim of quality is related with the degree of certainty of the given information, maxim of quantity deals with the specific length of given information by the speaker, maxim of relevance deals with whether the speakers’ provide relevant information related to the context. Manner maxim deals with the way how participants convey their message clearly and execute their performance with reasonable dispatch. The violation of the

maxims usually generates humor. Therefore, this article aims to describe the violation of the maxims in *Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse* series.

Theoretical Framework and Method

According to Fernández and Fontecha (2008:33) humor is a kind of communicating events in which language and culture blended to create joyful atmosphere. People use language to create humor. The effect of the humorous utterances can be varied; from frown to hilarious laugh. Even though culture also takes part in creating effective humor, the use of language is also central. According to Scarpetta dan Spagnolli (2009:2) context plays important parts to produce laughter. To ensure the humor can create happiness instead of dullness, insult, or anger, the speakers can follow what so called Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975). The Cooperative Principle is as follow: "*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.*" (Grice 1975, cited in Sperber and Wilson, 1995: 33). There are four maxims as the sub-principles of the Cooperative Principle; maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner. Those maxims as are generally used to explain the conversational implicature.

As conversational implicatures generally occurs in humor (Nanda, Sukyadi, and Sudarsono, 2012:121) this article uses maxims to describe the manner of humor in a popular web series *Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse*. Furthermore, Fernández and Fontecha (2008:40) proposed that Gricean model provides helpful instrument to identify the way language generates humour, the way the speakers demonstrates and applied advanced communication strategy, and the way the language strategies help to convey the speakers' intended meaning. Hu's reseach (2012:1190) concluded that Grice's cooperative principle and relevance theory are effective in explaining the humor in a popular situation comedy series. Thus, it can be used to explain the use of language to create humor within the dialogs of *Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse*.

Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse series is a-web-based-animated-parody. According to Paakinen (2010:24) parody is a form of literary expression to create humorous effect based on the familiar context. Berger in Anastasya (2013:7) states that parody is a technique of humor in which the speakers copy particular distinguishes style of a person, quotes, or other familiar setting. This series, set in a fictional version of Malibu, California, present the parody as the imitation of popular events, ideas, and people. The life of Barbie, the iconic doll from Mattel is the center of the story. This series shows the daily interaction among Barbie, her friends, siblings and her boyfriend Ken. This series is a-web-based-animated-parody. It is centered on the daily interaction among Barbie, her friends, siblings and her boyfriend Ken.

This study employed qualitative approach to study the conversational implicature in the series. Sampling technique was used to describe the violation of the maxims. The steps for data collection were as follow, (1) selecting the episodes, (2) close reading and highlighting the characters, (3) choosing the relevant utterances, and (4) identifying and classifying the data. There were four steps employed for the data analysis; (1) classifying the data into category of the relevant maxim, (2) finding the types of maxims violation, (3) interpreting what the speakers actually try to convey, and (4) drawing the inference about the implicit meaning which creates parody. The data were selected based on the criteria of maxims violation, as proposed by Grice. The object of the study is four episodes of *Barbie: Life in the Dreamhouse* series, Season 6. The titles are Style

Supersquad Part 1, Style Supersquad Part 2, Little Bad Dress, and Going to the Dogs. This study only took the utterances which considered violating Grice's maxim and causing humor (parody).

Findings/Discussion

There were twenty three utterances which violated the maxims. There were six violation of maxim of quality. There were four utterances which violates maxim of quantity. Nine utterances violated maxim of relevance and three utterances violated maxim of manner. In the episode of Style Supersquad Part 1, there were three violation of relevance maxim and one violation of quantity maxim. In Style Supersquad Part 2, there were two violation of relevance maxim, two violations of manner maxim, two violation of quantity maxim. Three violation of relevance maxim, one of quantity maxim, two of quality maxim, and one of manner maxim were found in the episode of Little Bad Dress. The episode of Going to the Dogs consisted of five quality maxim and one relevance maxim's violation.

Here are two examples of maxim of relevance was found in the episode of Style Supersquad Part 1.

Datum 1

00:41-00:55

Skipper: It's the prime minister of Sensiblonia! She wants to know how to accessorize a brown velour pantsuit! Do they still make those?

Barbie: All these fashion emergencies! And only one of me! If only someone could come up with an ingenious, high-tech solution!

In this dialogue Skipper is telling Barbie that the minister of Sensiblonia is calling to ask for Barbie's fashion advice. Barbie expressed her overwhelming feeling to Skipper instead of giving advice on what should the prime minister have to wear with her brown velour pantsuit. It means that Barbie violate the maxim of relevance, because she did not provide relevant information for Skipper to answer the prime minister's question.

Datum 2

01:23-01:28

Skipper: There's also a rockstar in Beijing having an accessory meltdown!

Barbie: It's not about what you wear, but how you wear it.

This dialog began when Skipper told Barbie that there is a rock singer from Beijing who was weeping because she could not found the suitable accessories for her show. Barbie's reply showed the violation of the maxim of relevance, because Barbie wanted to soothe the rockstar's feeling, instead of giving an advice on the best accessories she should wear.

Two examples of maxim of manner's can be shown as follow:

Datum 3

04:03-04:09

Male Director: Cut! Sorry, Raquelle. We need to reset the lights.

Raquelle: (angrily stamping her foot) Oh, please! As if I had time for this!

The male director stopped Raquelle's dialogue to reset the light, but it made her angry. She was angry because she did not want anything to interrupt her film shot. Instead of asking when the shot would start again, she grumbled to herself. She thought that it was unfair for her that the director had to reset the light in the middle of her shot.

Datum4

04:17-04:22

(Ryan does photography as Raquelle tries to strike a pose)

Ryan: That's it. To the left. Perfect! That's the one.

In this scene Ryan was supposed to take Raquelle's picture. Raquelle did all of his command. It turned out that Ryan's commands were not for Raquelle. Those commands were for Ryan himself. Ryan was violating maxim of manner, because Ryan who have high self adoration, gave ambiguous command to Raquelle.

Two examples of maxim of quantity violation can be described as follow:

Datum 5

04:58-04:59

Barbie: I get the picture, but we need more help.

Ken: I don't think I can fit into the uniform.

Barbie did not give sufficient information for Ken to identify who or what kind of help that she wanted to have. Her utterances made him thought that she wanted Ken to help her to give fashion advices to all women in the world. Barbie's violation on maxim of quantity made Ken assumed that he had to help Barbie as the part of Barbie's Fashion squad. He also assumed that he had to wear the same uniform as the girls in the squad wore.

Datum 6

06:51-07:03

Barbie: I'm sure Raquelle has something you can wear.

Raquelle: Um, totes! 'Kay, I've got a towel, a fashion magazine, and a shower curtain!
You put your arms through the shower-ring. Ta-dah! Instant glam.

Barbie asked Raquelle to lend one of her clothes for Teresa (Barbie's friend) whose clothes were dirty. Raquelle's answer was violating maxim of quantity because she provided too much information about what Teresa had to do to fix her appearance.

Violation of maxim of quality are described as follow

Datum7

09:32-09:39

Teresa: Oh! Wait for us! Bananas is super excited to be at the big dog show. --holds Bananas, showing him to Ken and Barbie-- Show 'em how it's done, Bananas!

Ken: But he's a sock-mon--

Barbie: (put her hand over his mouth): Best of luck, Teresa!

Teresa violated the maxim of quality, because they did not say the truth. Teresa was fantasizing that her monkey doll was alive and able to win the contest.

Datum 8

11:57-12:12

Raquelle: (snatches the 1st place ribbon) I like to thank myself for this honour. Since behind every champion is great moi. (the announcer takes the ribbon of Raquelle's hands) Whaaat?

Teresa: I like to thank my nanna who gave me bananas. --kisses Bananas-- Uh, and gravity who made him a champ and pizza just because it's so tasty.

Teresa and Raquelle violated the maxim of quality, because they both did not say the truth. Teresa made a speech in the behalf of her monkey-doll, Banana, as if it was a living being which won the dog's competition. Whereas Raquelle who always wanted to be number one, thought that she got the first place in the competition, so she made speech for her dog. Raquelle's dog actually did not win, so she should not gave a winner speech for her dog.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the data above, the violation of the maxim of relevance are the highest in number. The violation of the maxim of manner is the lowest in number. It means that the series produces its humorous effect mostly through the violation of the maxim of relevance. It also shows that Grice's maxim can be helpful to recognize how people produce humor through language. Further research on the politeness strategy, speech act, and Leech's principle can help to get fully understanding on how humor are shaped though the use of language.

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