

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the research, research questions, aims of the research, significance of the research, and scope of the research. It also provides a brief discussion of the methods, clarification of related terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background

Communication is a means of social interactions, with general purposes such as conveying messages, apologizing, requesting, suggesting, establishing and maintaining relationships. In communication, there are unspoken rules that speakers need to follow or pay attention to, such as turn-taking and maxims. Turn-taking, in its nature, as stated by Wiemann and Knapp (1975) is open, nonverbal, and subconscious. Therefore, when people communicate, they do not always realize that they are giving and taking turns to speak. Wiemann and Knapp (1975, p. 76) also state that “unlike other societal rules (e.g., criminal laws), interaction rules are seldom specified, and consequently the actions they govern are usually carried out unthinkingly.” This implies that rules in turn-taking have never been fixed or specified.

Besides turn-taking, Grice (1975) states that there are also maxims that need to be respected in order to create a successful communication. These maxims, as the focus of the study, consist of *maxim of quality*, *maxim of quantity*, *maxim of relation*, and *maxim of manner*. Those four maxims require speakers to provide true, relevant, and unambiguous information, which is not too much nor too less (Grice, 1975). However, people generally do not always observe all the maxims, in which they do it either intentionally or unintentionally. A simple example from Grice (1975, p. 55) is when A says to B, “Mrs. X in an old bag” and B responds with “the weather has been quite delightful this summer, hasn’t it?” In the example, B does not observe one of

the maxims, which is maxim of relation. There are many more examples of observance and non-observance of maxims, especially in everyday conversation, which are discussed further in chapter two.

Studies on Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) have been conducted by many researchers, such as studies by Engelhardt, Bailey, and Ferreira (2006), Dornerus (2005), and Rundquist (1992) which involve people in general. Engelhardt et al., (2006) focused only on maxim of quantity and discovered that ten undergraduate students often provide over-descriptions, implying that they frequently break maxim of quantity. A study by Dornerus (2005) examined how maxims are broken in a comedy show and a drama show. It shows that in comedy show, maxim of relation, maxim of quantity, and maxim of manner are commonly flouted for reasons such as creating humorous and comical effects. Meanwhile, in drama show, the most frequently broken maxims are maxim of quality and maxim of quantity, which is related with the typical characteristic of drama show: to create misleading utterances. A gender study by Rundquist (1992) involved both men and women and focused only on *flouting* of maxims. It discovers that males are more prone to flouting maxims than women, suggesting that men are more likely to express indirectness. Those previous studies are discussed further in the next chapter which is literature review.

As the application of Gricean maxims by people in general is interesting to study, a number of studies have also been conducted on a more specific area. More specifically, these studies are conducted by involving people with disorders, such as studies by Surian, Baron-Cohen, and van der Lely (1996), de Villiers, Myers, and Stainton (2010), and Surian, Tedoldi, and Siegal (2010). A quantitative study by Surian et al., (1996) focused on communicative impairment of children with autism, normally developing children, and children with specific language impairment (SLI). It has found that compared to children with SLI and normally developing children, children with autism have difficulties in detecting utterances which violate maxims. Meanwhile, a study by de Villiers et al., (2010) has found that there are frequent

cases of violations of maxim of relation by children with ASD. Lastly, a study by Surian et al., (2010) which involves deaf and hearing children has found that deaf children are able to sense maxim violations.

Based on findings of the previous studies which involve people in general, it is discovered that people frequently break maxim of quantity, men have more intentions to flout maxims than women, and maxims are broken for reasons such as creating misleading and cracking jokes. Meanwhile, a number of other studies which investigate people with disorders have discovered that children with ASD often break maxim of relation, they have difficulties in detecting violations of maxims (compared to children with specific language impairment and normally developing children), and deaf children manage to sense maxim violations. These cases of maxims by both people in general and people with disorders becomes an interesting phenomenon, therefore, this study attempts to discover specific features of the applications *and* violations of maxims by children with ASD along with the characteristics of children with ASD which may influence or take place.

Studies of Gricean maxims involving both people in general and people with disorders have been conducted by many researchers; however, studies which examine holistic application of the four maxims are still rare. As seen from the aforementioned studies, they do not examine maxims as a whole; they rather focus either on non-observance of maxims only (excluding observance of maxims), detection of maxim violations, or the type of non-observance, e.g. flouting. Therefore, to fill the gap, this study which examines both observance and non-observance of maxims along with its types of non-observance by individuals with disorder, in this case, children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is conducted. It is interesting to be investigated since it deals with real life situations, i.e. their daily conversations. It also helps to discover how children with ASD respect or break the maxims. Individuals with ASD are generally known to have difficulties in several skills, including skills in communication. Mulligan, MacCulloch, Roberts and Steel (2009) add that ASD lasts a lifetime. Thus, it becomes essential for people, especially for those who have close

relation with people with ASD, to understand the utterances they produce in communication.

In short, this study involves children with ASD and uses theory of Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) as the main theory. Subsequently, the study uses theory of non-observance of maxims by Grice (1975) which has also been explained further by Thomas (2013) to analyze the types of non-observance of maxims. Concerning the possible reasons behind cases of non-observance of maxims, the study discusses them by referring to theory of maxims non-observance by Thomas (2013) by which Thomas discusses several reasons. Also, the possible reasons are attempted to be discovered by relating and referring to knowledge of characteristics of children with ASD. By employing a descriptive method and analyzing textual data, this study aims at presenting in-depth descriptions of application of Gricean maxims by children with ASD.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions have been formulated as guidance in conducting the research, which are:

1. What maxims are observed by children with ASD?
2. What maxims are *not* observed by children with ASD and what types of non-observance of maxims are committed?
3. What are the possible reasons underlying the non-observance of maxims?

1.3 Purposes of the Research

Given the aforementioned research questions, this study aims to:

1. Examine whether or not children with ASD manage to create successful communication;
2. Examine occurrences of non-observance of maxims as well as the types of non-observance of maxims;

3. Discover the possible reasons which contribute to the occurrences non-observance of maxims.

1.4 Significance of the Research

The result of this research is expected to give contributions theoretically and practically. Theoretically, it attempts to enrich literature on pragmatics, especially on studies of Gricean maxims which involve children with ASD. Practically, this research is expected to be useful for people who study language, especially to give insights and understandings about children with ASD in terms of their utterances.

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research is conducted in Indonesian context and focuses only on utterances produced by children with ASD as the participants. The utterances are obtained from conversations between the children with ASD and their teachers, as well as their friends and the researcher.

1.6 Research Methods

This study uses a descriptive qualitative method because it attempts to describe and interpret real life situations, particularly situations which involve children with ASD. In this case, it examines whether they produce utterances which do or do not respect Gricean maxims. As a descriptive qualitative study, this study aims to describe, to explain, and to study whether or not children with ASD adhere to Gricean maxims. This is in line with Williams (2007) who suggests that a qualitative research consists of several procedures which are describing, explaining, and interpreting data.

Furthermore, this present research is a case study because it aims to gain natural data and have an in-depth study of individuals. More specifically, as a case study, this research focuses on two participants and aims to thoroughly examine the conversations by the participants. This is in line with Creswell (as cited in Williams,

2007) who states that in a case study, activities, processes, or individuals are explored by the researcher.

The participants of this research are two children with ASD, who are students at schools for special needs in Bandung. The two participants are a male and a female and they are purposively selected to investigate and learn more about children with special needs.

Techniques used in gathering the data are audio recording, observation and interview. The type of observation used is non-participant observation. It is selected as it helps to gain as natural data as possible; data that consist of conversations or occurrences that normally occur in participants' real life without involvements from the researcher. In addition, interview is also used to personally gain data from the participants as they answer or respond to questions being asked. More specifically, the type of interview that is used is an open-ended interview. During the observation and interview, utterances or responses that the participants produce are recorded to be transcribed to be used in data analysis.

Finally, the collected data are analyzed by using theory of Cooperative Principle by Grice (1975). In addition, this study also uses theory of non-observance of maxims by Grice (1975) and Thomas (2013) to analyze the types of non-observance of maxims.

1.7 Clarification of Related Terms

There are several terms in the research which need to be clarified in order to avoid misunderstandings, which are: *Grice's Cooperative Principle*, *maxim of quality*, *maxim of quantity*, *maxim of relation*, *maxim of manner*, *non-observance of maxims*, and *people with Autism Spectrum Disorder*.

Grice's Cooperative Principle is principles which are proposed by Grice to be used by speakers when communicating. They consist of maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner (Grice, 1975).

Maxim of quality refers to maxim that requires speakers to say things which are true (Ibid., p. 46).

Maxim of quantity refers to maxim that requires speakers to provide enough information, not more or less than what is required (Ibid., p. 45).

Maxim of relation refers to maxim that requires speakers to make contribution which is relevant to the conversation or what is being talked about (Ibid., p. 46).

Maxim of manner refers to maxim that requires speakers to be brief, clear and unambiguous when speaking (Ibid., p. 46).

Non-observance of maxims is situations when speakers fail to observe maxims. Five types of non-observance of maxims are *flouting*, *infringing*, *violating*, *opting out*, and *suspending* (Thomas, 2013).

People with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) refer to people who encounter problems in communication, behavioral, and social skills. To be noted, two people with ASD may differ greatly in terms of their abilities and behaviors (Smith, 2015).

1.8 Organization of the Paper

The present research is organized into five chapters as follows:

1. Chapter I

This chapter consists of background of the research, research questions, purposes of the research, significance of the research, scope of the research, research methods, clarification of related terms, and the organization of the paper.

2. Chapter II

This chapter presents the theoretical framework in which it comprises related theories and previous studies which have been conducted earlier.

3. Chapter III

This chapter elaborates the methodology used in the research. It presents the research method, participants of the study, and the procedures of data collection and data analysis.

4. Chapter IV

This chapter presents the findings and discussions of the research. It discusses the analysis of the data which have been collected.

5. Chapter V

This chapter draws the conclusions of the research and suggestions for further research.