

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the present study. It describes background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, limitation of the study, research method, clarification of the terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1. Background

Recently, there has been a considerable interest in pragmatic accounts of Cooperative Principle (henceforth CP), particularly maxim flouts. Within the CP, maxim flout and subsequent implicature are relevant to any type of communication with different communicative goals (see Lindblom, 2006 and Dynel, 2008) such as commercial advertisement (e.g. Kusumarasdiyati, 2003 and Apriyantini, 2008), psychology (e.g. Jia, 2008), political debate (e.g. Smith, 1999), informal communication (e.g. Brumark, 2004), and verbal humor (e.g. Antoni, 2005 and Dornerus, 2005).

As mentioned above, maxim flout in verbal humor is the one that has given rise to extensive pragmatics research such as ones conducted by Dornerus (2005) and Antoni (2005). Dornerus (2005) focused on the types of maxim most frequently broken and the reasons the maxims were broken. It was found that the characters not only flouted but also violated the maxims, though the occurrence of maxim violations were insignificant compared to that of maxim flouts. The study also found that the Relevance maxim was mostly flouted so as to create humor. Antoni (2005), however, excluded maxim violations but focused solely on maxim flout to produce verbal fun. The study explored the types of maxim flouted and the ways the maxims

were flouted in a romantic comedy movie. The study revealed that the exploitation of the CP maxims was “so attempted” so as to create verbal fun, while the Relevance maxim occurred to be the most commonly flouted (Antoni, 2005: 30).

Both previous studies above (i.e. Antoni, 2005 and Dornerus, 2005) have only covered the types of maxim flouted and the ways the speakers flout the maxims so as to create humorous situation. This leaves a potential for further analysis as to what types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout and how they relate one another, which the present study concerns.

The inquiry becomes a focus of the study based on the assumption that maxim flout is pertinent not only to humor as found by the previous studies (Antoni, 2005 and Dornerus, 2005), but also to types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout. As Grice (in Lindblom, 2006) points out, the first type of Quality maxim is deliberately flouted to generate implicature by means of figures of speech such as irony, metaphor, and exaggeration (see also MacMahon, 2006 and Meibauer, 2006). In humorous discourse, these figures of speech commonly coincide with humor (see Norrick, 2006).

The types of verbal humor to be explored refer to the types of conversational humor recurring in linguistic literature introduced and developed by Dynel (2009), who terms conversational humor as a blanket category to characterize several pragmatic and semantic types of verbal humor recurring in interpersonal communication, whether real life or fictional (Dynel, 2009).

Based on consideration above, the present study hence continues what the previous studies revealed by expanding the research problems into types of verbal humor. In addition to the two research problems that the previous studies explored, i.e. the types of maxim flouted and

the ways the speakers flout the maxim, the present study specifically aims to reveal the types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout.

1.2. Research questions

This study is conducted to answer the problems formulated in the following questions:

1. What types of conversational maxims are flouted?
2. How do the speakers flout the conversational maxims?
3. What types of verbal humor are particular to each maxim flout?

1.3. Aims of the study

Based on the research questions formulated above, the study aims to:

1. find the types of maxims flouted,
2. find the ways the speakers flout the maxims, and
3. find the types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout.

1.4. Limitation of study

The study focuses on the flouting of CP maxims in conversational exchanges in a comedy movie entitled *Meet the Parents*. It includes the types and the ways the speakers flout the maxims as well as the types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout.

1.5. Research method

This study is largely qualitative. Every occurrence of humor due to maxim flouts is identified qualitatively. In addition, the study is supported by some quantification to reveal trends in maxim flouts with regard to creation of humor.

The main data source is a comedy movie entitled *Meet the Parents*. The movie is purposively chosen as it contains many funny scenes resulting from the characters' witty remarks which generate a comical situation, supposedly exploiting Grice's CP maxims. The data of conversational exchanges are acquired by transcribing the whole exchanges exposing humor which occur in the movie. The transcription includes the conversational exchanges produced by the movie characters which center on Greg, Pam, Jack, Larry and Dina. These characters are selected for their considerable contributions to the production of humor resulting from maxim flouts.

The conversational exchanges are analyzed as to find the possible exploitation of maxims in the light of Grice's theory of CP. Firstly, the exchanges which potentially flout the maxims are identified. Secondly, the exchanges are classified with regard to the maxims being flouted as well as the ways the maxims are flouted. Thirdly, the exchanges are further analyzed as to find the relevant types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout in accordance with Alexander (1997) and Dynel (2009). Finally, the exchanges are quantified in accordance with each type of maxim flouted.

1.6. Clarification of the terms

The study concerns about the CP maxims in conversational humor which includes the following terms:

- Cooperative Principle is a general principle governing conversation “whereby anyone who has a rational interest in participating in talk exchange is expected to be cooperative, to make his or her contribution as required” (Mao, 2006: 798).
- Conversational maxims are the further details of Cooperative Principle which subsumes the maxim of Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner (Mao, 2006: 798).
- Conversational humor is a blanket category “covering a variety of semantic types of humor, which recur in interpersonal communication, whether real life or fictional” (Dynel, 2009: 1284).
- Implicature is something meant or implied, i.e. “conveyed indirectly or through hints, and understood implicitly without ever being explicitly stated” (Grundy, 1996:73).
- Maxim flout is a category of maxim non-observance in which the speaker does not intend to mislead the hearer but wants the hearer to look for the conversational implicature (Thomas, 1995).
- Verbal humor is defined as humor which is produced by means of language or text (Dynel, 2009).

1.7. Organization of the paper

This paper is organized into five chapters. Chapter I consists of background of the study, research questions, aims of the study, limitation of the study, research method, clarification of the terms, and organization of the paper. Chapter II mainly explores the theoretical foundation of Grice’s CP and its four subordinate maxims, further detailed by Thomas (1995). Chapter III describes the research design which serves details of research method employed in the study as well as data source, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter IV elaborates the research

findings and their corresponding discussions in relation to the research problems, i.e. the types of maxim flouted, the ways the speakers flout the maxims, and the types of verbal humor particular to each maxim flout. Finally, Chapter V presents the conclusion drawn from the research findings and discussion. In addition, suggestions for further research are offered.

