



## Flouting and hedging maxims in graduate students' classroom discussion context

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**Info Artikel :**

Received :

Mei 17<sup>th</sup> 2022

Revised :

Mei 20<sup>th</sup> 2022

Accepted :

Mei 25<sup>th</sup> 2022

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**ABSTRACT**

Effective communication is importance in avoiding misunderstanding and misinterpretation in our daily life including a discussion in classroom activity. Some flouting and hedging can be happened in a discussion. Hence, this research concerns to investigate how the conversational implicatures especially flouting and hedging maxim are being formed in students dialog during discussion class. This research is designed as descriptive research. The participants are students of LRM'S class which consist of 18 students that chosen by purposive sampling. The data was collected through tape recorder and interview. The data are being transcribed and analyzed by categorizing utterances based on the flouting of maxim and hedging maxim theory. Based on the data analysis, it has been discovered that during the conversation, whether they are presenters or participant in the discussion, they do flouting and hedging. Flouting maxim is frequently done than hedging maxim. Then, it happens for some reasons including want to give a right information, do not understand with the question, want to give a clear and relevance answer and want to build good relationship among students and lecturer. This study is wanted to raise people awareness toward flouting and hedging maxim in order to have an effective communication in life.

**Keywords:** flouting, hedging, maxims, discussion, conversational implicature

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### INTRODUCTION

Effective communication is important to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation toward each other. In communication there is a theory known as the “co-operative principle” which states by Grice (1975) as “make your conversational contribution such as is required, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.” As stated by Yule (2010) supporting this principle are the four conversational maxims or often called as the Grice's Maxims. First, maxim of quantity which tells speakers to make the contribution as informative as required and not more informative than is required. Second, maxim of quality, which tells speakers to make the contribution true: not to say what they believe to be false or that for which they lack evidence. Third, maxim of relation, which tells speakers to be relevant; and the last type is maxim of manner, which tells speakers to be perspicuous; to avoid obscurity of expression, to avoid ambiguity, to be brief and to be orderly.

In communicating, sometimes people break the rules of conversation or often called as flout the maxims. Maxims are flouted when the speaker seems not to hold on the maxims but expect the hearers to get the meaning implied. The speaker says an indirect speech act that implies a different function of the literal meaning of the word forms and the speaker supposes the hearer knows that their words should not be taken at the direct meaning that they can expect the implicit meaning of the words. Yule (2010) states that the flouting maxims are determined on the basis of these criteria: (1) A speaker flouts the maxim of quantity when his contribution is not as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange and more informative than is required. (2) A speaker flouts the maxim of quality when his contribution is not true and he says something for which lacks adequate of evidence. (3) A speaker flouts the maxim of relation if his contribution is not relevant. Lastly, (4) a speaker flouts the maxim of manner if his contribution is not perspicuous, obscure, ambiguous, and disorderly.

On the other hand, hedging maxims, according to Yule (2010) are words or phrases used to indicate that when someone is not really sure what he is saying is sufficiently correct or complete or it is hedged when the information is not totally accurate or unclearly stated but seems informative and relevant. The examples of the expressions that usually use are:

As far as I know ...,

Now, correct me if I'm wrong, but ...

I'm not absolutely sure, but ....

According to Brown & Levinson (1987) particular hedges are used to flout a particular maxim. The hedging maxim of quality indicate that the speaker does not take full responsibility for the provided statements by using the hedges such as I think, I believe, it seems, etc. Quantity hedges include words that provide the hint about the amount of the information which is true or false, for example, more or less, approximately, to some extent, in short, basically and others. Relevance hedges might be treated as the shift in the topic, in order to lessen the impositions on the hearer's or speaker's face, by using the words such as by the way, anyway, while I remember, this may not seem relevant, but.. and similar utterances followed by the change of the topic either completely or only slightly. Lastly, manner hedges are used to clear misunderstandings if it seems that someone could have taken the statement in the wrong way – what I meant was, you see, OK? Is that clear? To put it more simply, etc.

Some research have been conducted in this focus. Farida (2018) presents her research which aims to describe the types of cooperative principles that used in English teaching and learning process of SMK Batik I Surakarta. Based on the data findings, maxim of quantity is the most frequently type of maxim that occurs in the English teaching and learning process. Meanwhile, relation maxim is the least type of maxim that she finds.

Moreover, Betti and Yaseen (2020) in their research about conversational maxims. The subject of this research is university students. Then, it is found that the subjects have a difficulty in utilizing the maxims altogether, they flout all the conversational maxims in relatively different degrees, and the learners are mostly abided by the maxim of relation more than the other three ones.

From the research above, only a few of them bother to analyze the flouting and hedging maxims in the educational setting. There is a research related to this topic which conducted by Nastiti (2012). However, in her research, she did it for analyzing flouting and hedging in a movie. To fill this gap, this research will try to find how does the flouting of maxims occur in the graduate at discussion context, how does the hedging of maxims occur in the graduate at discussion context and find the reasons why do flouting and hedging occur in graduate at discussion context in Universitas Negeri Padang including lecturer and students.

#### 1. Pragmatics

Language uses for our communication where it has meaning. Meaning can be explicit and implicit. One of branch of linguistic that focus on meaning is pragmatic. 'Pragmatics is the study of "invisible" meaning or how we recognize what is meant even when it is not actually said or written' (Yule, 2010). It means that pragmatic is an a branch of linguistic which studied about implicit meaning which the speaker does not said it in his/her utterances. Hence, In order for that to understand that, speakers (or writers) must be able to depend on a lot of shared assumptions and expectations when they try to communicate. The investigation of those assumptions and expectations provides us with some insights into how more is always being communicated than is said. In addition, he states that an underlying assumption in most conversational exchanges seems to be that the participants are co-operating with each other.

#### 2. Cooperative Principle

The conversation can be succesfull if the various speakers approach to the interaction. The way in which people try to make conversation is called Cooperative Principle. The Cooperative principle is an indispensable assumption made by speaker and hearer when they speak to one another. In that particular conversation, we are attempting to collaborate with one another to assemble evocative and meaningful exchanges. Grice (1975) offers the Cooperative Principle which states "make your conversational contribution such is required, as the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or the direction of the talk exchange which you are en- gaged". It can be said that the speakers need to supply meaningful, fruitful utterance to extend and maintain the conversation. Furthermore, listener needs to assume that his or her conversational partneris doing the equivalent principle. This principle together with four maxims that we expect our

conversational partners to obey is first described by the philosopher Paul Grice. The cooperative principle is stated in the following way: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required" (Grice, 1975: 45). In addition, Cutting, (2000) Cooperative principle is a mean of the effective communication of speaker and hearer. It includes the right proposition of information that is given, the relevance of the answer and what is being asked and the truthful and clear. Cooperative has some maxim as stated below:

a) Flouting maxim

The maxims are flouted when the speaker breaks some conversational maxims when using utterances. According to Grice (1975), there are four kinds of flouting maxims as stated below:

1) Flouting maxim of quantity

Flouting maxim of quantity is showed when a speaker blatantly gives more or less information than required. It can be said that during the conversation someone trying to explain about an information but it is assessed directly that the maxim is happened. For example:

A: Do you have school tomorrow?

B: I have classes all day but I must go to the doctor when I'm finished.

In the example, B flouts the maxim of quantity because he shares too much information, rather than providing a yes or no answer.

2) Flouting maxim of quality

Flouting maxim of quality occur when the speaker says something that need to be perceived as blatantly untrue. Speakers may flout maxim of quality by exaggerating as in the hyperbole, metaphor and irony.

3) Flouting maxim of relation

Flouting maxim of relation tend to occur when the response is obviously irrelevant to the topic. It can be said that the respond is out of the topic.

A: Where is my pen?

B: Mine is missing too.

In the conversation above, B does not provide a relevant answer to A's question, instead something completely unrelated is said.

4) Flouting maxim of manner

Flouting maxim of manner involve unclear, obscure and ambiguous information. For example;

A: Where was the professor when class ended?

B: She is at the usual place.

In the example, B flouts the maxim of manner by responding with a statement that is ambiguous.

(Examples are adapted from LingNet website)

In this study, these four kinds if maxim is the scope how the result is classified.

There are some ways of maxim flouting used by the speaker in a conversation based on Cutting (2002). They are:

1) Overstatement

This way of maxim flouting is often used by the speaker to flout the maxim of quantity. This phenomenon is called as overstatement or hyperbole. It is used to exaggerate the importance of the speaker's utterances. It can be said that the speaker trying to add some information that she/he thinks that is important but actually not.

2) Understatement

It is a kind of maxim flouting in which the speaker gives too little information than the hearer needs to know.

3) Metaphor

It is kind of way in using maxim flouting in which the speaker says something with some kinds of expression which have the same characteristics with the one he/she is referring to.

4) Irony

Irony refers to an expression that has a negative meaning of a positive utterance. It is often used to express politeness in an unkind way (Leech in Cutting, 2002).

- 5) Banter  
Banter expresses a positive meaning using negative utterance (Leech in Cutting, 2002). It is usually used to show the intimacy of the speaker and the hearer using a negative utterance.
- 6) Sarcasm  
Sarcasm is a kind of irony that implies a more ironic and negative meaning towards the hearer. It is often used to openly hurt
- 7) Irrelevant statement  
It is a way of using maxim flouting of relation. This way is used by the speaker with expectation that the hearer will relate the speaker's utterance with the previous utterance.
- 8) Ambiguous statement  
It happens when the speaker is trying to make his/her utterance to be unclear to the third party that maybe exists in a conversation. This is usually used in maxim flouting of manner that the speaker does not want to include the third party in the conversation. (p.37-39)

It can be said that there are 8 ways of flouting maxim happen in a conversational. These ways chosen as the way in classified the flouting maxim in this research.

b) Hedging Maxims

Hedging maxims are words or phrases used to indicate that when someone is not really sure what he is saying is sufficiently correct or complete or it is hedged when the information is not totally accurate or unclearly stated but seems informative and relevant (Yule, 2010) In addition, Brown & Levinson (1988) particular hedges are used to flout a particular maxim. Quality hedges allow the speaker to either fully commit the speaker to the truthfulness of his/her statement or on the opposite, indicate that the speaker does not take full responsibility for the provided statements by using the hedges such as I think, I believe, it seems, etc. Quantity hedges include words that provide the hint about the amount of the information which is true or false, for example, more or less, approximately, to some extent, in short, basically and others. Relation hedges might be treated as the shift in the topic, in order to lessen the impositions on the hearer's or speaker's face, by using the words such as by the way, anyway, while I remember, this may not seem relevant, but.. and similar utterances followed by the change of the topic either completely, or only slightly. Finally, Manner hedges are used to clear misunderstandings if it seems that someone could have taken the statement in the wrong way – what I meant was, you see, OK? Is that clear? To put it more simply, etc.

**Implicature**

This term is proposed by Herbert Paul Grice (1967). He explains that implicature deals with something beyond what is said by particular speaker. This theory means that the hearer is trying to understand what the speaker mean. How a hearer tries to understand particular utterance form the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning. Levinson (1983) adds implicature is a part of pragmatic which provide some meaning. The meaning can be more than what it said. Moreover he adds that implicature makes some simplified including the structure and the content of semantic. In short, it can be said that implicature is something that the hearer suggested about what the speaker say which is different with what actually said in order to make the conversation more cooperative and be understood.

Grice categorizes implicature into conventional implicature and nonconventional implicature (conversational implicature). Along to this theory Moeschler (2012) suggests that both of them have an additional meaning related to semantic meaning of the word uttered. Furthermore, he adds that conversational and conventional implicature are different referring to the context. In conversational implicature, what is implied can be in various but the hearer can be understood it related to the context of what the conversational started by. On the other hand, what is implied in conventional implicature is just the same but in contextually, it is

different because it may be referred to general context. However, in this research, it only focuses on conversational implicature since the context is in a discussion.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research purposes to investigate how the conversational implicatures especially flouting maxim and hedging maxim are being happened in students' interaction during discussion at classroom, the present study employs the theory of implicature offered by Grice. It is using qualitative research. Holloway and Wheeler (2010) state "qualitative research is a form of social inquiry focusing on the interpretation of experience and the world in which they live "(p.3). It means that qualitative research is done for getting information about social life such as about people perspective, feeling and their behavior. hedging maxim in discussion class of graduate students in academic year 2018/2019 and find the reason why this happens.

In this research, there are two kinds of instruments that are used. First is the researchers which take a role as the primary instrument of the research. Lincoln and Guba in Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) argue that human is the best instrument for qualitative inquiry. In addition, a data sheet was used as the secondary instrument of the research. The data in this research were in the form of utterances uttered at discussion that were collected by using tape recorder. In addition, in order to answer the last research question, the researcher did an interview in order to know the reason about why hedging and flouting happen. Then, in analyzing the data, the researchers use descriptive analysis since the researcher wants to describe the flouting and The participants on this research consists of graduate students at Universitas Negeri Padang academic year 2018/2019 who are taken apart in linguistic research method (LRM) class at 13.20 pm which consists of 18 students. This class is chosen by purposive sampling since the discussion is so attractive students to deliver their ideas. The data is taken for 3 meetings while interview was done after the researcher analyze the data from tape recorder.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the research findings and discussions. The analysis of the data is in line with the formulated research question. The data are analyzed based on Grice's theory of Cooperative principle which contains four maxims; maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relevance and maxim of manner. To answer the problems, the data are classified into flouting and hedging maxims.

### A. The flouting of maxims occurs in the graduate students at discussion context

There are some data obtained from the utterances in discussion

X : *is it possible to use another research design such as library research in doing a conversation analysis and text styles research?*

Y : *"Before we come to the emm another research design that maybe suitable or possible, we have to know that conversation is one of the discourse, and if we want to research a conversation and we have to transcribe the conversation first, right?....."*

In this case, Y student flouts the maxim of quantity by giving more information than is required. She can just directly answer the question, but she decides to give more explanation before giving the exact answer of the question. In this case, it implicates that Y students do flouting in the reason of overstatement. She gives explain the information that she thinks it is important but not with others.

Next, it happens in the same day

A : *is it possible to use interview as technique of data collection for conversation analysis?*

B: *we can study about students' perception about the teachers talk. I think it's an example of interview in conversation analysis.*

In order to collect the data about conversation analysis, the conversation must be included. So, doing interview with the students is not a part of conversation analysis because there is no conversation that is analyzed. It is just asking about student's perception. In this case, A student flouts the maxim of relation because his answer is not relevant to the topic. Therefore, in this case, the speaker do flouting maxim referring to the reason of irrelevant information

Furthermore, on other discussion

R : *the use of initialization in Indonesia such as NKRI which can't be read, is it also used in English?*

D: *Do you means ....*

It can be seen that the R students is trying to ask a question to the presenter while the presenter is response it by asking back the question to R students. In this case, D students has been flouted the maxim specially maxim of manner. As stated above, Flouting maxim of manner involve unclear, obscure and ambiguous information. The phrase “do you means..” shows that the presenter get unclear information related to the question that is given to them so that she asked back.

A. The hedging of maxims occurs in the graduate students at discussion context

Among the three meetings, there are two hedging that found. First, on march, 26th 2019 at 14.40pm, the 3rd presenter did a hedging maxim by saying ‘if I’m not mistaken....’ This implicate that the presenter do not want to be blamed if the information that she gave is not right. The second, on April, 23th 2019, the first presenter using ‘based on my reading’. It implicates that she wants to be informative although she was not sure about people will have the same understanding with her and did not want to be blamed. The last is done by the lecturer, who said that ‘correct me if I am wrong’. It implicates that he wants to give some information but if there is any students who have different information with it, he is welcome the students to correct him.

B. The reason of why flouting and hedging occur in graduate at discussion context

In order to answer the next research question, the researchers try to analyze the implicature in each utterance while it is also supported by interview result in order to make it worth. It found some reasons why flouting and hedging happen during the discussion are including:

- a. Want to give a right information
- b. Do not understand with the question
- c. Want to give a clear and relevance answer
- d. Want to build good relationship among students and lecturer

Based on the explanation above, it found that the maxim flouts when they are delivering and maintaining their opinion such as in producing the utterance, in the form of ambiguous statement, overstatement, and irrelevant information. In addition, it also found that the maxims hedges when the utterance produced is not totally accurate but it seems informative. In this case, the maxim make your contribution as informative as is required hedged by the speaker when they produce the information that is not as much or not as precise as it might be expected.

C. The frequency of flouting and hedging maxim happen during the discussion

In this study, this study also want to answer the question about the frequency of flouting and hedging found during the class. During the discussion, there are 3 flouts made by the correspondent. The flouts of quantity maxim are indicated by overstatement, understatement, and hedging. The flouts of relation are indicated by irrelevance answer and hedging. Moreover, the flouts 2 of manner maxim is indicated by hedging. Then the flouts of the quality maxim is only indicated by inaccurate answer. In short, it can be seen on the graph below:

From the graph above, It can be said that flouting maxim is more frequently happend than hedging maxim. However, the difference is not really significant.

## CONCLUSION

Related to the explanation above, the researcher presents the conclusion at the last part of this paper. The conclusion is drawn based on the formulated research question. Firstly, during the discussion whether presenter and audience, both are doing flout the conversational maxims when they broke the utterance in delivering their opinion with others by using the utterances in the form of ambiguous statement, overstatement, and irrelevant information. Secondly, during the discussion whether presenter and audience also hedge the conversational maxims in their conversations. They hedge the maxim of quantity and the maxim of relevant when the information in their utterance is not as much or as precise as it might be expected and it is not as relevant at the stage at which it occur. However, hedging maxim is rarely happened in discussion context while flouting is more frequently happened. Both hedging and flouting maxim happen for some reason are want to give a right information, do not understand with the question, want to give a clear and relevance answer and want to build good relationship among students and lecturer. Although, flouting and hedging happen during the conversation during the discussion is still ran by understanding the implicature.

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