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# An Analysis of Violating Grice's Maxims and Politeness Maxims by the Characters in the Movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)"

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**Abstract:** This present study aimed at investigating the violation of Grice's Maxims and Politeness Maxims in one of American adolescent movies namely Mean Girls 2 (2011). This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach by which the researcher mainly conducted the research by identifying and classifying the data according to the concept of cooperative principles proposed by Grice and politeness maxims proposed by Leech. The plausible explanation was also provided to investigate the reasons in doing the violation. The data was taken from the video-movie and movie script in Mean Girls 2 (2011) that focused on the utterances expressed by the characters. The result showed that there were 80 violations of Grice's maxim and 48 violations of politeness maxims found in the movie. The reasons underlying the violation of Grice's maxims were mostly considered to please others, avoid the discussion, save face, and communicate self-interest. Besides, different social status, different power, setting of the situation, and kinship relationship also influenced the characters to violate politeness maxims. This present study is largely extended to provide deeper understanding on how Grice's maxims and politeness maxims do exist and work precisely in maintaining such a good communication.

**Keywords:** American adolescent movies, Cooperative Principle, Mean Girls 2 (2011), Grice's Maxims, Politeness Maxims

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# I. INTRODUCTION

Communication means as the way to deliver message via written or verbal language. In verbal communication, people must adhere to some basic rules in conversation. This effort implies that both of speaker and listener who involved in communication are to achieve a good communication by cooperating at each other (Yang, 2008:64). The cooperation between speaker and listener is about to provide the utterances and respond to the utterances accordingly. The responses given by the listener indicates that the listener have already recognized the intended meaning produced by the speaker (Davies, 2000:6). However, the expected idea on how cooperation may work in communication is somehow broke by any other intentions. People usually violate the rules to convey meaning which is not as the original one. The meaning is beyond rather than is said. There must be something left behind the lines of the speaker's speech act by breaking the rules namely implicature (Yule, 1996:35). The implicature is done by the speaker whenever he or she has expected the communication to go beyond than is said, such as: maintaining good social relationship, pleasing the interlocutors, avoiding the discussion, and being polite.

In case of being polite, people not only behave for pleasing others by applying appropriate attitude, but it also talks about how people produce polite language verbally (Watts, 2003:10). Generally, being polite is intended to consider others' feeling in one particular situation. Thus, in communication, raising the awareness of being polite is a key to achieve a meaningful context of interaction. Therefore, understanding the phenomenon of language in daily interaction can be done by considering the criteria on how to use language appropriately and effectively. This term comes to the notion of interpersonal rhetoric ability that employs the sense on how to use both Grice's maxims in term of cooperative principles and politeness maxims in daily conversation (Watts, 2003:64). However, in daily conversation, people do not always fulfill the requirement for those two principles. The violation is somehow emerged. This emergence of violation can be seen in any other forms of human conversation such as in the dialogues of movie. Movie seems very beneficial since it has the ability to represent on how people act daily in their conversation and the values within (Graham, 2005:117).

Many studies have been conducted to investigate the violation of Grice's maxims and politeness maxims in the movie. A study conducted by Dewi et al. (2016) shows that the violation of politeness principles in the movie *White House Down* is made up by the characters in six types: tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim. The characters violate the principles because there is evidence that the social distance really matters to affect the choice of speakers'

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utterances in producing language impolitely. Another study is also in line with the previous study. The study conducted by Romadhona (2016) investigated the cooperative principles and politeness principles occurred on the movie "Monsters University". The result showed that the most common violation occurs in quality maxim and agreement maxim. The reason underlying the violation is mostly caused by several factors, such as: social distance, culture, and characters' different background knowledge. Moreover, Purnomo (2017) also found that violating Grice's maxims is done by the characters in the "The Boy" movie. Most of the characters violated the maxim of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. In this case, they have the intention while doing the violation, such as: for saving face, protracting the answer, avoiding the discussion, pleasing the interlocutors, being polite, communicating self-interest, and misleading the counterparts. However, the previous study did not really mention on how cooperative principles and politeness maxims are violated in daily conversation of adolescents' life. It seems that cooperative principles and politeness maxims may exist in the different setting of one particular social relationship, such as the life of Senior High School students. Thus, this present study aimed at identifying the violation of cooperative principles and politeness maxims in daily conversation of adolescent's life and the reasons underlying the violation through the movie entitled "Mean Girls 2 (2011)". This present study is largely extended to provide deeper understanding on how cooperation principles and politeness maxims do exist and work precisely in maintaining such a good communication. Therefore, the research questions of this present study are formulated, as follows:

- What are the types of Grice's maxims and politeness maxims that violated by the characters in their utterances?
- Why do the characters violate Grice's maxims and politeness maxims in their utterances?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 The Concept of Grice's Maxims

In communication, people may deliver and express their message via language either in verbal or written form. In verbal communication, people may engage themselves with others by interacting face-to-face communication. This comes to the notion that maintaining a daily communication of verbal language is directed to follow some rules or maxims in conversation. Generally, the term of Grice's Maxims or Grice's Cooperative Principle is used to refer some basic rules to maintain a good communication (Davies, 2000:2). According to Grice, there are four maxims in a conversation namely: Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Relevance and Maxim of Manner. Those maxims ruled the people to react appropriately in a conversation: be informative as desired, be truthful, be relevant, and be clear (Grice, 1975:45). However, sometime people do not always adhere to the Cooperative Principle in producing the utterances. There must be something beyond than is said. Thus, people may violate the maxims by having certain intention. The violation implies that the speaker do not say something as the way it is. There are some factors that may affect people to violate the Cooperative Principles, such as: to save face (Goffman, 2008: 17), to show politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 62), to communicate their self-interest (Dornerus, 2005:16), to avoid discussion and to please others (Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi, 2011:122). However, the violation of Cooperative Principle may also be influenced by the consideration on how one particular really works to determine the term of politeness. Therefore, the more indirect an utterance is articulated, the more polite it will be considered (Grebe, 2009:3).

## 2.2 The Concept of Politeness Maxims

Politeness, in the study of Pragmatics, is concerned to the use of polite language expressed to others (Watts, 2000:10). Rather than being impolite, people may follow some maxims of politeness to show the expression of polite beliefs by the aim at establishing the social relationship with others. The expression chosen by the speaker may indicate that the level of politeness is affected by social distance, norms or a set of cultural rules (Yule, 1996:60). Therefore, there are six Politeness Maxims or Politeness Principles proposed by Leech (1983:132) namely: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim. In order to identify the underlying reasons of being polite, the researcher adopted the concept of politeness proposed by Geertz (1960:257). Some factors that may affect the degree of politeness are: age, sex, kinship relationship, occupation, wealth, education, and family background.

#### III. METHOD

#### 3.1 Type of Research

This present study employed a descriptive qualitative approach. According to Ary et al. (2010:381), a descriptive qualitative approach is a design of research that aims at obtaining information concerning to the phenomena under investigation. The research analyzed and described the violation of Grice's maxims by adopting the theory of cooperative principle proposed by Grice (1975) and the theory proposed by Leech (1983)

to describe the language phenomena of violating politeness maxims. In this case, the researcher focused on the utterances expressed by the characters in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)".

#### 3.2 Data Source

This research was done by considering the data taken from the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)". The movie is chosen since it represents the American adolescent lives of their daily conversation. In collecting the data, the researcher used the form of the utterances written in the movie script. The video-movie was also considered to help the researcher understand the context of the utterances produced by the characters. Some characters were employed in this movie, they are: Jo Mitchell, Rod Mitchell, Mandi Weatherly, Abby Hanover, Sidney Hanover, Chastity Meyer, Hope Plotkin, Tyler Adams, Nick Zimmer, Elliot Gold, Quinn Shinn, Principal Duvall, Mr. Winkle and Mr. Giamatti. This movie tells about the pride of being a "Plastic Gang" that is famous among the students. The members of the Plastic Gang are Mandi Weatherly, Chastity Meyer and Hope Plotkin. They are likely to be a dictator rather than humble people. Thus, they will defeat everyone who betrays their rule. Jo Mitchell and Abby Hanover are the extraordinary people who betray the Plastic Gang's rules. Thus, the story is ended up by making the Plastic Gang go down.

#### 3.3 Data Analysis

After obtaining the data from the script and video-movie, the researcher further analyzed the data and classified the data according to the theory of Grice's maxims and politeness maxims. This effort was done to answer the first research question. Meanwhile, in order to answer the second research question, the researcher employed some theories, such as: the theory of saving face proposed by Goffman (2008), being polite by Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1987), protracting the answer, pleasing the interlocutors, avoiding the discussion and misleading by Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011), communicating self-interest by Donerus (2005), and politeness factors by Geertz (2008).

#### IV. RESULTS

In accordance to answer the first research question, the researcher provided the results on the tables below. There are two tables provided by the researcher to describe the findings of this present study.

L	table 1. The violation of Grice's maxims in the movie Weah Girls 2 (2011)					
	No.	Maxims	Frequency	Percentage		
	1	Quantity	36	45%		
	2	Quality	19	23.75%		
	3	Relevance	15	18.75%		
	4	Manner	10	12.50%		
		Total	80	100%		

Table 1. The violation of Grice's maxims in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)"

Based on the Table 1, it can be seen that there were 80 violations of Grice's maxims occurred in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)". The result showed that maxim of quantity is the most common maxim to be violated by the characters. The violation of quantity maxim is 36 with the percentage of 45%. Moreover, the violation of quality maxim seems less occurred rather than the maxim of quantity by the frequency of 19 violations or 23.75%. In accordance to the maxim of relevance, the total frequency of violation is 15 or 18.75%. Finally, the lowest number of violation found in the movie is maxim of manner by the frequency of 10 violations or 12.50%. By showing this result, it can be further concluded that the violation of Grice's maxims in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)" occurred in four categories of maxims, namely: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner. However, there is a trend that some of characters preferred to violate the maxim of quantity since they do not adhere to the requirement of being informative as required.

Another table was also provided to describe the results on investigating the violation of politeness maxims in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)".

Table 2. The violation of politeness maxims in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)"

No.	Maxims	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tact	4	8.33%
2	Generosity	7	14.58%
3	Approbation	17	35.42%
4	Modesty	11	22.92%
5	Agreement	4	8.33%
6	Sympathy	5	10.42%
	Total	48	100%

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According to the Table 2, there were 47 violations of politeness maxims occurred in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)". Both of tact maxim and agreement maxim are occurred fairly by the number of 4 violations or 8.33%. In another case, maxim of sympathy, generosity and modesty are also found in the movie by the numbers of frequency sequentially are 5 (10.42%), 7 (14.58%), and 11 (22.92%). Finally, approbation maxim was also found by the number of 16 violations or 35.42%. In short, there is a trend that the violation of approbation maxim is done by some characters in the movie "Mean Girls 2".

## V. DISCUSSION

Based on the Table 1, it is clear that the violation of Grice's maxims is occurred in four maxims, namely: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner. Each violation of the maxim is already done by the characters in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)" by having a particular intention. Therefore, the need of understanding the context of situation is verily pivotal to have a better interpretation. In doing so, the researcher further validated the data found in the script with the video-movie. According to the context where the conversation took place, some examples of the utterances expressed by the characters in violating Grice's Maxims were also provided, as follows:

#### 1. The Violation of Quantity Maxim

This maxim deals with the amount of information that must be given by the speaker as the response to the previous speaker's utterance. In short, this maxim demands the speaker to be informative as required. Here is the example of the violation of quantity maxim.

The dialogue between Principal Duvall and Jo Mitchell:

Context: The dialogue takes place in the Principle Duvall's office. Jo Mitchell is a new student of North Shore High School. She is invited to come to the Principal Duvall's office before she goes to her classroom. At the office, Principal Duvall gives the information about the school and asks some questions to Jo Mitchell. One of Principal Duvall's questions is about asking Jo Mitchell whether she wants to be the member of drama department or not.

Principal Duvall : Hey, did I mention we have an excellent drama department?

Jo Mitchell : I'm not really into drama, but I do know you have an advanced shop class.

The response given by Jo Mitchell to Principle Duvall's question indicates that Jo Mitchell fails to fulfill the maxim of quantity. Rather than answering the Principle Duvall's question by saying "Yes or No", Jo Mitchell gives the response than is said. In this context, the violation of Jo Mitchell's utterance is intended to communicating self-interest (Dornerus, 2005:16). Jo Mitchell wants to express herself that she does not really interest with being the member of drama department.

#### 2. The Violation of Quality Maxim

This maxim deals with the true information given by the speaker in accordance to respond the previous speaker's utterance. This maxim demands the speaker to not telling lies. Thus, the speaker must say something as honest as possible. Here is the example of the violation of quality maxim:

The dialogue between Mandi Weatherly and Hope Plotkin:

Context: The dialogue takes place in the cafeteria. Mandi Weatherly tries to show her newest limited edition bag to her friends, Chastity Meyer and Hope Plotkin. However, Chastity Meyer claims that Mandi's bag is not good enough since she knew that Mandi has waited the "Fringe" bag for six months but she could not get one of them. It is such unfortunate truth for Mandi.

Mandi Weatherly: Hello! Fringe is so out and I'm at the top of the wait list for the new patent leather Prada satchel.

Hope Plotkin : Of course, Mandi. Fringe is so past tense.

The response given by Hope Plotkin is intended to please Mandi for not being anger of hearing unfortunate truth from Chastity Meyer (Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi, 2011:122). Even Hope Plotkin agrees with Chastity Meyer's opinion, but she chooses to lie with Mandi. In this case, Hope Plotkin violates the maxim of quality in which demands her to say something true. However, pleasing others by violating the quality maxim is already considered by Hope Plotkin.

# 3. The Violation of Relevance Maxim

This maxim deals with the responses given by the speaker that must be related to the previous speaker's talk. In brief, this maxim demands the speaker to be relevant in giving the response. Here is the example of the violation of relevance maxim:

The dialogue between Rod Mitchell and Mr. Winkle:

Context: The dialogue takes place in Rod Mitchell's yard and Mr. Winkle's yard. They are talking by screaming at each other. At first, Rod Mitchell does not have any intentions to speak with Mr. Winkle. However, when Rod Mitchell ends up his conversation with Jo Mitchell, Rod Mitchell sees Mr. Winkle is standing up in front of her own house. Rather than being impolite, Rod Mitchell tries to greet Mr. Winkle.

Rod Mitchell : Hello, Mr. Winkle!

Mr. Winkle : Are those illegal parts? I'll bet you're running a chop shop over there. Well,

I've installed security cameras and I'll be watching you. You hear?

Rod Mitchell : Goodbye, Mr. Winkle.

In the dialogue above, Rod Mitchell seems to initiate the conversation with Mr. Winkle. Instead of responding to Rod Mitchell's greeting, Mr. Winkle screams to Rod Mitchell and treats him with some impolite words. After saying impolite words, Mr. Winkle left Rod Mitchel. However, Rod Mitchell does not respond any comment to Mr. Winkle's threat and he decides to keep silent and say goodbye to Mr. Winkle. This act indicates that both of them are not engaged in a conversation since both of them violate the maxim of relevant. They prefer to avoid any discussion by saying irrelevant utterances at each other (Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi, 2011:122).

# 4. The Violation of Manner Maxim

This maxim deals with giving the information as clear as possible. This demands the speaker to not say something ambiguously. Here is the example of the violation of manner maxim:

The dialogue between Tyler Adams and Jo Mitchell:

Context: At school, both Tyler and Jo have fought at each other since Jo feels so hurt after knowing that Tyler only messed with her. However, both Jo and Tyler are being trapped by Mandi and Nick. Thus, Jo had wrong understanding about the love of Tyler and also being humiliated by Mandi. After Tyler proves himself to Jo that he is right, he asks Jo for forgiveness.

Tyler Adams : Does this mean I'm forgiven?

Jo Mitchell : Well, it's not your fault that your dad married Mandi's mom.

In the dialogue above, Jo uttered an ambiguous utterance. She does not say clearly whether she forgives Tyler or not. However, the utterance produced by Jo can be assumed that she has already forgiven Tyler. In doing so, Jo violates the maxim of manner to save her own face and other's face (Goffman, 2008: 17).

Besides of investigating the reasons underlying the violation of Grice's maxims, the researcher also provided some plausible explanation on why some of the characters in the movie did a violation of politeness maxims. Some examples of the violation in the utterances are further described, as follows:

#### 1. The Violation of Tact Maxim

Tact maxim deals with the belief on how to minimize cost to others and maximize benefit to others. Here is the example of the violation of tact maxim:

The dialogue between Quinn Shinn and Mandi Weatherly:

Context: At school, Quinn Shinn is a journalist of North Shore. She tries to ask Mandi for any quote about the school play.

Quinn Shinn : Mandi, can I get a quote from you on the school play, or the across team, or just like, anything, really?

Mandi Weatherly: God, I am not up for the paparazzi this morning.

In the dialogue above, Mandi refuses to help Quinn. Instead of giving any quote for Quinn, Mandi tries to avoid the topic of discussion and leaves Quinn alone. However, the avoidance done by Mandi is caused by the context of situation in which they are not engaged at each other in a conversation. In this situation, Mandi violates the tact maxim by not giving any benefit to others.

## 2. The Violation of Generosity Maxim

Generosity maxim deals with the belief on how to minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self. Here is the example of the violation of generosity maxim:

The dialogue between Mandi Weatherly and her football team:

Context: At school, Mandi will have a football match with Jo Mitchell. Mandi recruits some of famous students at school. She gives them a brief explanation about the match's costume.

Mandi Weatherly: So remember, you can't wear red or pink to the dance. Those are my colors and I'm wearing my hair up 'cause it's best for the crown, so wear yours down!

Quinn Shinn : Yes, absolutely. Hair down.

In the dialogue above, Mandi violates the maxim of generosity. She puts herself at the first list of being the priority than others. She does not give any benefit to others because she just focuses on how to give much benefit to herself. The reason underlying the violation of generosity maxim done by Mandi is because Mandi has much power to rule others. She is the most famous student at school and it seems that power difference does exist between Mandi and other students.

## 3. The Violation of Approbation Maxim

Approbation maxim deals with the belief on how to minimize dispraise of others and maximize praise of others. Here is the example of the violation of approbation maxim:

The dialogue between Chastity Meyer and Mandi Weatherly:

Context: When Mandi and Hope walk down the street into Jo Mitchell's house, Chastity comes to join them. However, Chastity does not wear the cloth such as directed by Mandi. Rather than using incognito uniform, Chastity looks like wearing a flamingo cloth.

Chastity Meyer : Hey, guys, I'm here!

Mandi Weatherly: Seriousy, Chastity? I said "incognito" not "like a flamingo".

In the dialogue above, Mandi more looks like a bad-tempered character. She always tries to complain others about anything that is trivial. She violates the maxim of approbation since she dispraises others for only wearing inappropriate uniform. The reason underlying the violation of approbation maxim done by Mandi is because kinship relationship. Since Chastity and Hope are the member of Mandi's Plastic Gang, so Mandi wants them to act like what she told them to do so.

## 4. The Violation of Modesty Maxim

Modesty maxim deals with the belief on how to minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self. Here is the example of the violation of modesty maxim:

The dialogue between Chastity Meyer and Mandi Weatherly:

Context: When Mandi, Chastity and Hope are going to have their lunch at the cafeteria, Chastity talks about the Homecoming website to Mandi. Chastity says that there must be something different about the website.

Chastity Meyer : I was just looking at the Homecoming website, and everybody's talking about the hot new couple.

## Mandi Weatherly: Nick and I are the hottest couple in school.

In the dialogue above, it can be seen that Mandi tries to show her own pride in front of her friends. She already violates modesty maxim since she maximizes the praise of herself. The reason of the violation is because Mandi feels that she has the highest social status among the other students. She thinks that nobody can compare her. Thus, she convinces her friends about her own popularity.

## 5. The Violation of Agreement Maxim

Agreement maxim deals with the belief on how to minimize disagreement between self and others and maximize agreement between self and others. Here is the example of the violation of agreement maxim:

The dialogue betweenMandi Weatherly and Hope Plotkin:

Context: When Mandi talks about her popularity for being the hottest couple in the school, Hope says that there is also another hottest couple.

Mandi Weatherly: Nick and I are the hottest couple in school.

Hope Plotkin : Not anymore.

In the dialogue above, Hope does not agree with Mandi's opinion. She violates the agreement maxim that demands her to maximize agreement with others. However, the reason of the violation is because the context of situation that forces Hope to tell Mandi about the truth.

## 6. The Violation of Sympathy Maxim

Sympathy maxim deals with the belief on how to minimize antipathy between self and others and maximize sympathy between self and others. Here is the example of the violation of sympathy maxim:

The dialogue between Jo Mitchell and Mandi Weatherly:

Context: Jo Mitchell comes to the cafeteria to see Mandi. She screams and blames Mandi for destroying her father's race car.

Jo Mitchell : Is that all you got? Going after my dad, you spoiled, narcissistic woman! That's his job, not some play-toy for you!

Mandi Weatherly: But it was so much fun.

In the dialogue above, Mandi does not have any little sympathy for Jo Mitchell's father. She violates the maxim of sympathy by maximizing antipathy towards Jo Mitchell's condition. The violation is emerged since Mandi feels that she has the power to humiliate others. The different social status between Jo and Mandi makes Mandi want some respect from others.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

In order to establish a good communication, the speakers who involved in the interaction must give their contributions by cooperating at each other. In doing so, the speakers must follow some basic rules in communication, namely Grice's maxims or Cooperative Principle. However, sometimes people do a violation in their conversation by uttering indirect utterances. It is hard to interpret the meaning lies within the lines if the listener or another speaker does not understand the context. Moreover, the violation occurred in the conversation is sometimes considered as the effort to create politeness. Thus, in order to uphold the idea of being polite, the speaker also should maintain some principles in politeness. As suggested by Leech (1992:82) that politeness principles coexist with Grice's maxims. Thus, those two principles work together in maintain a good communication.

However, in this present study, the researcher found that some characters in the movie "Mean Girls 2 (2011)" violate Grice's maxim and politeness maxims. The results show that there are 80 violations of Grice's maxims and 48 violations of politeness maxims found in the movie. The intentions of violating Grice's maxims are mostly caused by some considerations, such as: to please others, to avoid the discussion, to save face, and to communicate self-interest. In case of violating politeness maxims, the reasons underlying the violation done by some of characters are because of the different social status, different power, setting of the situation, and kinship relationship.

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