

## Maxim violation in pretty little liars TV series

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**Abstract** – This research was conducted due to the importance of cooperative principle in daily conversation, as Grice's theory explained about cooperative principle which has been divided into four maxims; 1) maxim of quantity, 2) maxim of quality, 3) maxim of relation and 4) maxim of manner, these four maxims are the rules that have to be obeyed by the speaker and the interlocutors during interactions. This research is focusing in maxim violation occurred in Pretty Little Liars TV Series. The method used in this analysis is descriptive qualitative. Object of the research are the types of the violation and also the implied meaning behind the violation. This research used the observation method using non-participatory technique in collecting the data, and pragmatics identity method in analyzing the data. In presenting the data, this research used informal method. The result of this research found out that there were fifteen violations happened in Pretty Little Liars, all of the maxims are violated during this show. The violation of maxim relation was the most dominant violation.

**Keywords:** Cooperative principle; Maxim; Maxim violation; TV series

## 1. Introduction

It is undeniable that communication has been a crucial aspect in our daily activity. In order to fulfill the aim of communication, it is a must for the speaker and hearer to create an effective interaction. As one of the most common activity in our lives, communication becomes one of the interesting objects to be analyzed.

As the common aspect in our life, there are no doubts that some experts tried to find out the way to make sure that communication occurred as it is expected. As we all know, during communication, speaker and hearer are asking and delivering information, and it has to be relevant. So that cooperative principle was created, in order to make sure that our conversational activity happens as required (Grice, 1975).

With that being said, the speaker could deliver the right amount of information needed by the hearer, provide the information that can be proven by evidence, give a respond that is relatable with the context of conversation, and avoid ambiguity or multiple meaning during conversation.

Even when communication is common, somehow the researchers find it hard to collect the data, since the real-life communication is not a repeatable event, especially verbal utterances. To collect the data, researchers will need recording tools to record the specific conversational activity to make it repeatable and make it easier to collect and analyze the data.

In this modern era with the large variety of technology, there are a lot of simulations for daily conversational event that can be used as the alternative of data source for the research in the form of audiovisual. Some of them are movies and TV series. TV series with several episodes for each season, wide storyline and the amount of utterances inside it is more than enough to fulfill the amount of data to conduct a research.

Maxim violation is a very common thing in daily life. It happens every day. One of the examples is the conversation that usually happens at school such as:

Rini : "How's my drawing?"  
Mery : "**Oh, I think it's good.**"

On the conversation above, Rini as the speaker asked Mery whose happen to be the hearer. The hearer answered the speaker's question with the opposite information. The hearer found that the speaker's drawing is far from good, but in order to protect the speaker's feeling, to make her happy and not embarrassed, the hearer decided to give the opposite information in order to save the speaker's face.

Just like real-life communication, the conversation happened in the movie and TV series is not always reaching the aim of communication. At some point, there is a situation when the character needs to put aside the cooperative principle and break the rule of communication. One of the examples of the phenomenon is shown in this conversation.

Melissa : "Who are you talking to?"  
Wren : "**No one.**"

The conversation above is quoted from the first episode in season one of *Pretty Little Liars*, occurred in the minute of 24:12. If we take a look right before the conversation happen, Wren is actually talking to Melissa's sister. But in this case, Wren didn't provide the actual information and choose to lie instead. Wren's act is against the aim of communication, it considered as the violation of maxim quality, he did not provide the actual information.

However, Wren's act does not happen for no reason. As human, he was protecting himself from the negative assumption, he tried to protect himself from being accused of seducing Melissa's sister for helping her with her back pain. On the other hand, he tried to protect Melissa's feeling from thinking about the probability that Wren might be into her sister, since they were already engaged.

The explanation above showed that in communication, there are several rules that we need to follow during the conversation in order to reach the aim of communication itself. Because in conversation, the speaker and hearer need to be cooperative.

Related with the violation of maxim, it can be associated with several statements in order to figure out the implied meaning behind the action. As Grice (1975) said, the violation of maxim mainly aimed to mislead the hearer. But aside from that, there are also other reasons behind the violation. Goffman (1967) said that maxim violation can be done by the intention of saving other's face. Leech (1983) also stated that the cooperative principle is created to associates with politeness principle. It can also be done in order to protract the answer (Browm & Yule, 1983), to avoid discussion (Khosravizadeh & Sadehvandi, 2011), or pleasing interlocutors (Browm & Yule, 1983).

There are studies related with this research. Nur (2018) focusing on the maxim violation happen in the dialogue of *The Wild Duck* by Henrik Ibsen. The analysis used Grice's theory of cooperative principle, the method used was descriptive qualitative. The result of this research showed the violation of maxim quantity as the most dominant violation happen in the script.

Radfar, Sudana, & Gunawan (2020) did a research about maxim violations happened in murder case done by Jamal Kashoggi. This is a descriptive qualitative research, the data was taken from the recording tapes of the case. The result of this research shows some actions related to the violations which are to save face, to mislead the hearer and skipping the question.

Compared to the previous studies, the similarity of the previous and recent research is in the theory and the method, while the difference is in the data source to be analyzed. As in this research, the researchers used *Pretty Little Liars* as the data source in analyzing maxim violation.

### **Maxim of Quantity**

Maxim quality is when the speaker gives too much or too little information (Grice, 1975). While in the violation of maxim quantity, the speaker is delivering not enough information (Cutting, 2002). With that being said, the speaker has the intention to not give the complete information. It is because the speaker doesn't want the hearer to know more about the related information, or the speaker has a tendency to mislead the hearer by providing only a little information.

Example:

Lecturer : "Did you submit proposals on time?"

Student : "**I just got home from the hospital. These days I have been busy taking my mother to the doctor.**"

### **Maxim of Quality**

Maxim of quality is about the truth of information that is being delivered (Grice, 1975). Violation of maxim quantity happens when the speaker intentionally provides information that is not supported by the evidence (Cutting, 2002). It can also be considered as telling a lie. This violation happens because the speaker intentionally does so with the intention of misleading the hearer.

Example was taken from Ayu, Widiadnya & Winarta (2021).

Lecturer : "How far is the progress of your thesis?"

Student : "**Almost gave up, sir.**"

### **Maxim of Relation**

Maxim of relation is when the information is relevant to the topic that is being discussed (Grice, 1975). The violation of maxim is when the speakers are trying to change the topic of discussion with the intention of distracting the hearer (Cutting, 2002). This thing happens when the speakers feel uncomfortable with the topic of the conversation, it can also happen when the speaker is hiding something, in order to avoid some question, and the speakers are trying to distract the hearer.

Example was taken from Ayu, Widiadnya, & Winarta (2021).

Lecturer : "Is the writing of this thesis in accordance with the guidebook?"

Student : "I have adjusted the title and theory according to your direction."

### Maxim of Manner

Maxim of manner is related with avoiding too much unimportant information that can caused ambiguity (Grice, 1975). Violation of maxim of manner happen when the speaker are giving so many information with too much unimportant details, and none of the information being delivered is related to the topic of discussion (Cutting, 2002). Every information delivered is not the information that the hearer wants to know.

Example from Radfar, Sudana & Gunawan (2020):

Jamal : “Release my arm! What do you think you are doing?”

Accused : “**Traitor! You will be brought to account!**”

Jamal : “You can’t do that, people are waiting outside.”

## 2. Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative research by (Sudaryanto, 2015). The researchers using observation method in collecting the data, the technique used in this research is a non-participatory technique. In the process of collecting the data, the researchers watch the TV Series, marking the maxim violation done through the conversation, then take notes from the data found related to the maxim violation.

This research is using pragmatics identity method as the method of analyzing the data, as this research is using the data produced by interaction occur between the speaker and its interlocutor. And the method used is combined with pragmatics competence-in-dividing technique. The method used to analyze the utterances throughout and Grice’s theory of cooperative principle is applied in this research to figure out the type of maxim violation that is being violated by the character in the show. For the process of analyzing the data, the researchers interpret the data that has been found based on its context, classify the data based on its types, analyze the data based that has been classified based on the reason of violation, and make a discussion related to the types and reason of the violation.

## 3. Results and Discussion

This research found out that there were fifteen maxim violations in *Pretty Little Liars*. The violation was done by the characters throughout the episodes. All the maxims were violated in this TV Series, and maxim of relation was the most violated maxim. The result of this analysis is displayed in the table below.

Table 1 The quantity of the violation happened in *Pretty Little Liars* TV-Series

Types	Qty
The violation of maxim quantity	1
The violation of maxim quality	5
The violation of maxim relation	7
The violation of maxim of manner	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

### Data 1

The conversation happened in first episode in the minute of 00:19:04:

Spencer : “Does my sister know you smoke?”

Wren : “**Does she have to know everything?**”

The conversation above is the act of violation for maxim of relation. Spencer as the speaker asked the hearer whether her sister knows he smokes or not, but the hearer didn’t answer the question as it’s supposed to. The question asked is the type of question which needs to be answered with yes or no, but the hearer answered it with another question. From that point, the conversation above is not related between the question and the answer. The reason

of the hearer to violate the maxim is because the hearer tried to avoid the discussion by refusing to answer the question with the right answer and asked another question to the speaker instead.

#### **Data 2**

The conversation happened in first episode in the minute of 00:22:39:

Spencer : "Emily, is everything all right?"

Emily : "**Why wouldn't it be?**"

In the conversation above, Spencer as the speaker noticed something unusual on Emily's expression while she was reading a piece of paper, so the speaker asked the hearer whether everything is okay. Emily as the hearer then responded to the speaker's question, but the respond can be considered as the violation of maxim quality, as the hearer was not okay, she was shocked to read what's on the paper. But she didn't want the speaker to know about it, so the hearer tried to mislead the speaker by giving the wrong information.

#### **Data 3**

The conversation happen in first episode in the minute of 00:25:04:

Baron : "It's just easy for stuff to get in the way."

Ella : "What do you mean? What kind of stuff? What kind of stuff you get in the way about?"

Baron : "**No, nothing. Like, you know me, I just get a little overly obsessed about work, that's all.**"

The conversation above contains the violation of maxim quality. The speaker said that because he doesn't want the hearer to know the reason of the speaker worrying of something that is get in the way. On the flashback clip, before they were going to Iceland, the speaker's daughter found him cheating with his own student. The speaker was thinking about that moment when he said about something that is get in the way. The aim of the violation is to mislead the counterparts.

#### **Data 4**

The data was taken from the second episode, which occurs in the minute of 00:39:11:

Aria : "Were you in love with her?"

Baron : "**I had very strong feeling for Meredith, and my attraction to her took me completely by surprise. I had no intention of being unfaithful to your mother. And you're too young to understand this, but the truth is I gave in to my emotions.**"

Conversation above consists of the violation of maxim of manner. Baron as the hearer gave too much information in answering the speaker's question. However, despite of the hearer's long answer, none of the information seemed to give literal answer to the question. The hearer did the violation in order protract the answer because the hearer didn't want to admit his feeling. In the act of refusing to answer the question, the hearer tried to explain more about what was going on and how sorry he was for what he did in the past. But at the end, despite of the hearer's long answer, the question asked by the speaker is remain unanswered.

#### **Data 5**

The conversation was taken from the third episode, in the minute of 00:04:15:

Hanna : "So, what, he lives here now?"

Ashley : "**Take out the milk.**"

The conversation above contains the violation of maxim of relation. The speaker doesn't provide the information needed by the hearer. Instead of answering the question, the speaker changed the topic of the conversation. The reason of the speaker to do so is to avoid the discussion, because the speaker doesn't feel comfortable to talk about the related topic.

#### **Data 6**

The conversation was taken from the third episode, in the minute of 00:04:20:

Hanna : "Is this a permanent thing?"

Ashley : "**Would you keep your voice down, please?**"

The conversation above contains the violation of maxim of relation. The hearer wanted to know more about the information related to the previous question, so the hearer asked another question related about the topic. But again, the speaker refused to answer the question by stating the statement outside the topic. The reason is because the speaker wants to avoid the discussion related with the topic.

#### **Data 7**

The conversation was taken from the fourth episode, in the minute of 00:33:33:

- Emily : "Did you see them? Before I closed my book, did you see what they were?"  
Toby : "**I don't think you wanted anybody to see them. I'm cool with that.**"

The conversation above consists of the violation of maxim of relation. The speaker doesn't answer the question whether the speaker saw something inside the listener's book or not, and the speaker then add the statement that the speaker was cool with whatever it was inside the book. The speaker says that to save the face of the listener. The speaker doesn't want the hearer to be embarrassed.

#### **Data 8**

This conversation was taken from the 5th episode in the minute of 00:01:55:

- Aria : "You think he's gonna leave?"  
Emily : "**Look, whatever it is, we're here for you.**"

The conversation above consists the violation of maxim relation. The speaker tried to change the topic and refuse to answer the question. The reason of the speaker doing that because the speaker didn't want the hearer to worry about the discussed topic. The speaker tried to please the hearer, so that the hearer didn't have to overthink about it, because everything will be okay.

#### **Data 9**

This conversation was taken from the 5th episode in the minute of 00:04:33

- Mike : "Look, um... are mom and dad acting weird with each other?"  
Aria : "**What do you mean?**"

In the conversation above, Mike as the speaker felt there was something different between their mom and dad, so he knew something was up. In order to confirm it, he went to ask about that to his sister Aria, which happen to be the hearer in the conversation. The hearer responded the question with another question. In this case, the hearer did a violation of maxim relation as the respond is not related to the question, and the reason for the hearer is to please the interlocutor. The hearer knew something was up, but in order to make the speaker feel okay, the hearer tried to cover the truth by acting that the hearer didn't know anything that's happen.

#### **Data 10**

This conversation was taken from the fifth episode in the minute of 00:32:13:

- Mike : "Can you hear them?"  
Aria : "**Look, whatever it is, it's not about us.**"

The conversation above consists the violation of maxim of manner. The speaker tried to change the topic of the conversation. In this violation, the speaker tried to please the hearer, that whatever happens behind their parent's argument, it has nothing to do with both of them as their children.

#### **Data 11**

The conversation was taken from the sixth episode in the minute of 00:17:04:

- Hanna : "It's time to say good-bye to your Viking and move on. You're in two different places right now."  
Aria : "Maybe you're right."  
Hanna : "**Of course I am.**"

The conversation above consists of the violation of maxim quality. The speaker didn't provide the honest respond, the speaker tried to concince the hearer that the spekaer was seeing

someone when she was in Iceland. The aim of the speaker to violate the maxim was because she was trying to mislead the hearer.

#### **Data 12**

The conversation was taken from the sixth episode in the minute of 00:23:03:

Ezra : "Aria, why would someone want to mess with you?"

Aria : "**Because last summer... I don't know. It's complicated.**"

The conversation above consists the violation of maxim quantity. The speaker couldn't decide whether it is okay to tell the hearer about the story or not, so the speaker only gave a statement to indicate that the speaker wanted to let the hearer know, but she couldn't. The aim of the violation is to mislead the hearer related to the real information.

#### **Data 13**

This conversation was taken from the seventh episode in the minute of 00:11:25:

Jenna : "How are you feeling?"

Emily : "**Why are you here?**"

The conversation above consists the violation of maxim relation. The speaker didn't give the answer related to the hearer's question because the speaker was not interested in the topic of the conversation. The speaker did the violation to change the topic of the conversation.

#### **Data 14**

This conversation was taken from the eighth episode in the minute of 00:28:56:

Sean : "What's he doing, coming to your house?"

Hanna : "**Uh, nothing. Year book stuff.**"

In the conversation above, Sean as the speaker asked a question to the hearer what was Lucas doing coming to her house at night. Hanna as the speaker responded to the question by no telling the truth about what actually Lucas doing at that time. The hearer's act can be considered as the violation of maxim quality because the information that the hearer provide was untrue. The hearer did that in order to mislead her speech partner. Because the hearer did not want the speaker to know the truth that the hearer was having financial distress, and was trying to get some extra cash by selling the stuff online.

#### **Data 15**

This conversation was taken from the tenth episode in the minute of 00:03:23:

Hanna : "Is everything all right?"

Ashley : "**Uh, yeah.**"

In the conversation above, Hanna as the speaker heard her mother Ashley as the hearer was pissed while talking over the phone. The speaker asked the hearer whether everything's all right, and the hearer responded as if everything was okay, the hearer lied while answering the speaker's question. This act is considered as the violation of maxim quality. The purpose of the hearer's act was to mislead the interlocutor.

## **4. Conclusion**

Cooperative principle is a common phenomenon happen in conversational activity. It can be found in real life, and also literary works which contain activity related with social interaction. Maxim violation often to happen because of several reasons, as the theory of cooperative principle explained, one of the most common intentions of violation maxims is to mislead the interlocutors. But in some cases, it can also have a relation to pleasing interlocutors, being polite, avoiding the discussion, saving face, and protracting the answer. The knowledge related to the cooperative principle is important during conversation in order to know the implied meaning behind each of the violation.

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