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TO GENERATE LAUGHTER IN STAND-UP COMEDY
BY JIM GAFFIGAN**

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**The Use of Non-Verbal Communication and
Exploiting Flouting Maxim of Conversation
to Generate Laughter in Stand-Up Comedy by Jim Gaffigan**

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the types of non-verbal communication and strategies in flouting maxim of conversation which used by Jim Gaffigan in his stand-up comedy shows namely *Cinco* (2017) and *Noble Ape* (2018). The data used in this research were taken from two sources, from the two stand-up comedy videos performed by Jim Gaffigan's, and from documents containing transcripts of the stand-up comedy material. The data analysed by using content analysis. The results showed that Jim Gaffigan used facial expressions, gestures and postures as non-verbal communication. The second result shows that Jim Gaffigan flouted the maxim of the conversation by using different strategies in breaking each maxim. In flouting maxim quantity, Jim uses understatement, and overstatement; to flout the maxim of quality, done by using sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, banter, and metaphor; for the maxim of relations performed by abruptly changed the topic of the discussion, and the last was the maxim of the manner by used ambiguous or convoluted language.

Key terms: pragmatics, flouting maxim, semiotics, non-verbal

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tipe komunikasi non-verbal dan strategi dalam melakukan flout pada maxim percakapan yang digunakan oleh Jim Gaffigan dalam dua pertunjukan stand-up comedy nya yaitu *Cinco* (2017) dan *Noble Ape* (2018). Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini diambil dari dua video penampilan stand-up comedy dari Jim Gaffigan, serta dari dokumen berupa transkrip dari kedua pertunjukan tersebut, lalu data yang sudah terkumpul dianalisa menggunakan tehnik analisa konten. Hasil yang didapat menunjukkan bahwa Jim Gaffigan menggunakan facial expression, gesture dan posture sebagai komunikasi non-verbal. Hasil penelitian yang ke dua menunjukkan Jim melakukan tindakan flout pada empat maxim percakapan dengan menggunakan strategi yang berbeda. Dalam melakukan tindakan flout pada maxim kuantitas, Jim menggunakan strategi understatement dan overstatement; Jim menggunakan sarkasme, ironi, hiperbola, banter, and metapora sebagai strategi untuk melanggar maxim kualitas; untuk maksim relasi Jim merubah alur percakapan secara sengaja untuk melanggar maxim relasi; dan untuk maxim sikap dilanggar dengan menggunakan bahasa ambigu.

Kata kunci : pragmatik, flouting maxim, semiotika, non-verbal

Introduction

Stand-up comedy is a form of public speaking or on-stage performances which in this show occurs the phenomenon of the use of language which is not only as a communication tool, but also used to create humorous situation based on the speaker's ideas, opinions and criticisms about something. Through this research, the researcher wants to convey that in delivering jokes or humor does not have to always use an offensive language that has the possibility to be able to offend the audience or certain party, as done by Jim Gaffigan in his stand-up comedy shows, he almost never used offensive language even he refuses to use them and can still make the audience laugh and based on that reason Jim Gaffigan was nominated as *The King of (Clean) Comedy* by *The Wall Street Journal* in 2013. The researcher is interested to find out the form of non-verbal communication (NVC) which is in the realm of semiotic study, and flouting maxim of conversation that related to the pragmatic study as basic strategies to deliver the humor used by Jim Gaffigan in his stand-up comedy without using offensive language.

Non-verbal communication is one of semiotic studies that deals about signs that produces by human especially human's body during interaction, also known as body language. According to Knapp and Hall (2013:8) nonverbal communication refers to communication effected by means other than words, assuming words are the verbal element. It means that nonverbal communication is a way of communication that is not conveyed through words but use sign language or body language as a means of communication with other people. There are some categories of body language that can be used as non-verbal communication proposed by Jappy (2013:35). The first one is facial expression, which is mostly use part of human face to communicate or express their feeling, such as happiness, angry, contempt, disgust, sadness, surprise, and. Gestures is the second non-verbal communication which mostly use hand or head movement. Gestures divided into three types; illustrators which the purpose of the gesture is mostly to reinforce the verbal language; emblems are gestures that can stand alone because the sign or the movement has certain meaning; and for manipulators have to do with manipulating parts of our faces, bodies, or pieces of clothing. And the

last is postures which is certain body movements that can indicate about someone's feelings during interaction. There are two kinds of postures namely, dynamic postures (how you hold yourself when you are moving, such as walking, running, or bending over to pick something); and static posture (the way you hold yourself when you are not moving, such as sitting, standing, or sleeping).

Different with most of stand-up comedian who use offensive language, Jim Gaffigan uses certain pragmatic strategy. According to Yule (1996: 3) pragmatics is the study of how listeners can make inferences about what is said in order to arrive at an interpretation of speakers' intended meaning. Pragmatics covers a large board of field deals with meaning, one of the fields is flouting maxim of conversation. According to Grace in Thomas (1995:65) flouting is when a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the speaker wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is in different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning. To perform this act, the speaker can use certain strategy to flout the four maxims of conversation. To perform flout maxim of quantity the speaker can use overstatement (by give too much information that the situation actually needed); understatement (by giving too little information); and tautology (by using meaningless expression). In performing the flout maxim of quality, we can use one of the five strategies namely sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, banter and metaphor. The third maxim that can be flout by abruptly changed the discussion topic is the flouting maxim of relation. The last is maxim of manner that can be flouted by using obscure language or ambiguous language in delivering information.

Research Method

This research conducted by the researcher using qualitative design by applying qualitative content analysis as a set of techniques for the systematic analysis of *texts of many kinds*, addressing not only manifest content but also the themes and core ideas found in texts as primary content. To identify the types of non-verbal communication the data was in the form of captured picture contains about facial expression, gestures and postures which taken from the two videos containing the performance of stand-up comedy by Jim Gaffigan with title *Cinco* (2017) and *Noble Ape* (2018) and related to the flouting maxim of conversation,

the data was in the form of sentences which taken from document in the form of transcripts of the material from the two performances by Jim Gaffigan. The researcher used himself as the main instrument to collect the data with using two different tables as supporting instrument that has function to identifying what category the datum belongs to. The data collection done by using mining data from documents. After the data successfully collected, the data analyzed through three stages, namely; data reduction; data analysis; and verification.

Results

The types of Non-Verbal Communication

The findings of the research show that Jim Gaffigan often to use non-verbal communication, namely facial expression, postures and gestures. The most prominent category of non-verbal communication performed by Jim Gaffigan in *Cinco (2017) and Noble Ape (2018)* is the facial expression with findings 55 out of 91 data. Facial expressions appear when speakers represent how they feel about the topic they are talking about in the form of facial movement. There are seven facial expression, namely happiness, disgust, anger, fear, surprise, sadness, and contempt. The most often used of facial expression by Jim is surprised expression by applied horizontal wrinkles across the forehead, his eyes are narrow, jaw drops open and teeth are parted but there is no tension or stretching of the mouth. The use of this expression, one of which is when he imagines himself as someone who just got his first job and he has to work in the summer. This surprised him because before he got his special job especially when he was still a student, the summer season was a season for vacation from school activities, but now it is different, instead of going on vacation, he had to work.

The second most used non-verbal communication by Jim Gaffigan is gestures, which here are divided again into three types namely illustrators, emblems and manipulators. The most used kind of gesture by Jim Gaffigan is illustrators which occurred 25 times. One of the illustrators used by Jim is when he using his palm to act like he is holding a document containing test results. When he is doing this gesture, Jim is demonstrating a doctor who is reading a test result from his patients. The use of this type of gesture is very important when doing public speaking such as stand-up comedy because this type of gesture can

keep the audience's attention so that their attention is focused on our performance while also making the audience not easily bored.

For the emblems type, the researcher only found 2 data in which Jim Gaffigan used this type of gesture in his two stand-up comedy performances, in which Jim used head and also hand movements to express himself without the need for verbal language. One of which when Jim used emblems is when he touched his forehead using his palm, he used this kind of gesture to show that he is confused when he thinks of the reasons why the English do not use "the" before the word hospital. The researcher concludes the reason why Jim's use of emblems is rarely compared to illustrators, this is because stand-up comedy is a comedy show that relies on verbal language, so the use of gesture emblems is rarely used because of it has minimum effectiveness compared to illustrator, and if a comedian is too often using emblem, they can lead the audience to have miss interpretation.

Manipulator also has two occurrences. Manipulators are gestures produced by the hand when unconsciously touching certain parts of the face. One of the examples is when Jim touched his cheek with the palm of his hand as he demonstrated the TSA officer who found a donut box on Jim's suitcase, the officer touched his cheek indicating that he was surprised by Jim's unusual behavior, but when Jim produced the gesture, he deliberately did it because Jim was only demonstrating the TSA officer.

The last type of non-verbal communication is postures. Jim using certain postures during his performances in *Cinco* (2017) and *Noble Ape* (2018), which is 7 out of 91. In this research the postures are divided into two types based on the body state, namely dynamic postures and static postures. For dynamic postures, one of the examples is when he walked with footsteps that are slightly bent with the shoulders down, this posture shows that Jim is cheerful as if he had no burden of thought. Jim did this posture deliberately with a purpose to illustrate someone who had a pick-up truck but never used it to transport anything like someone walking around carrying a large suitcase that was not loaded, Jim felt it was such a waste. For the static postures, one of which is when Jim stands with one foot as a support and the other foot makes movements such as touching the ground using the tips of the feet, with a gaze downward or looking at his feet that move touches

the ground. This posture shows Jim's attitude that is being shy like someone who is doing a blind date. This posture is used by Jim when he likens himself who will start to watch a new tv show.

The types of strategy to performed flouting maxim

The second objective of this research is to uncover the strategy for flouting the maxim of conversation conducted by Jim during his performances on *Cinco* (2017) and *Noble Ape* (2018). To perform the flouting maxim of quantity, the strategies that can be used are tautology, overstatement, and understatement. Furthermore, speakers can use metaphor, hyperbole, Irony, banter, and sarcasm as strategies to perform flouting the maxim of quality. Changing the topic strategy can be used to flout the maxim of relevance and the last strategy is using obscure or ambiguous language that can be used to flout the maxim of manner.

Jim used overstatement strategy in his performance was very dominant compared to other strategies, with a frequency of finding that is 21 out of 70 data. Jim has flouted the maxim of quantity using the overstatement strategy by conveying too much information to make the contribution made by Jim is too informative than is actually needed, for example.

I've noticed that a lot of hospitals in the U.S. are either named after Saints or ancient places in Israel which is not that reassuring when you think about it. It's like, **"Hi, welcome to our hospital. We're all about science which is why our building is named after the place God talked to Moses as a burning bush. Over here's our Casper the Ghost wing... next to our Astrology Center. Do you like UFOs? We love those. We're all about science."**

(D2/V2/T26/50)

The statement contained about Jim's wonder about a large number of hospitals in the United States that used names taken from certain Saints or places, because Jim did not have an answer to his surprise, he also issued a statement based on his opinion about it. when Jim expressed his opinion, Jim failed to observe maxim of quantity, besides he did not provide information based on facts, Jim also conveyed information that was excessive than was actually needed.

In contrast to overstatement, understatement strategy is a strategy used when the speaker fails to observe the maxim of quantity by giving too little information than is needed. The frequency with which Jim uses this strategy during his

performance is 12 out of 70 data. Here is the example taken when Jim tells about him returning to his hometown by driving a car, which in fact Jim is a person who does not really understand about cars.

When I go home to Indiana, I always rent a car. My brother Mitch is like, "What kind of car you renting?" I'm like,
"It's blue."
"Is that four or six cylinders?"
"Blue."

D2/V1/T06/22

When Jim answering his brother's question, the answer implied that he doesn't understand about the car, so when his brother asked what kind of car Jim just answered it by telling his brother the color of the car. This is an act of flouting maxim of quantity by using an understatement strategy because Jim did not provide the amount of required information in order to answer the question.

In order to perform flouting the maxim of quality, the strategy that most frequently used by Jim is Sarcasm. It is a strategy in the form of expression that has the opposite meaning of what is appropriate. Based on the number of findings related to the sarcasm, this strategy became the most frequently used by Jim during his performance with a total of 13 out of 70 times. The following example shows the used of sarcasm strategy to flout maxim of quality.

You leave a Japanese public restroom cleaner than when you walked in. You leave an American public restroom with PTSD.

D2/V2/T30/57

The statement was in the form of sarcasm when Jim criticized Americans for not keeping the environment clean especially the public restroom so that diseases could easily arise. This form of sarcasm has flouted maxim of quality because in the last sentence Jim mentioned that PTSD can be easily infected only by using the American public restroom once or twice, which is actually not true because most cases of PTSD are contracted due to direct body contact with people who crave the disease, such as having sex or sharing bodily fluids. In this case, Jim has failed to observe the maxim of quality by giving statements that do not have sufficient grounds or evidence, so Jim fails to contribute as a speaker in providing the information needed.

Irony is the next strategy carried out by Jim during his performances to perform flouting the maxim of quality. The data findings related to this strategy are 10 out of 70. When Jim uses the irony strategy, he intends to express his ideas or opinions on something using sentences that have meanings that are contrary to what he intended.

**Kids love to dress like pirates. The murderers and rapists that pirates were. And we think it's adorable. "It's so cute. He looks just like one of those sociopaths who terrorized the Caribbean."
We let our kids dress like murderers.**

D2/V1/T09/30

The example is when Jim expressed his surprise feeling about parents who like to dress their children with makeup like a pirate. Everyone knows that the pirates of their time were a group of vile criminals who robbed, raped and killed for their pleasure and today parents with that knowledge still dress their children like pirates. Here Jim's entire statement contains irony because in his statement Jim compares children who actually don't know anything that dresses up like pirates with the real pirates who have cruel characteristics.

The third strategy is metaphors. This strategy uses phrases that have meanings that are different from the real meaning. In his performance at *Cinco* (2017) and *Noble Ape* (2018) he only applied metaphors as strategy to flout maxim of quality 3 times, and the following are one of the examples.

Wherever you go, there are good people and **there are Russians.**

D2/V1/T14/37

Here Jim uses the word 'Russian' when describing people who have bad traits. This happens because Jim is a citizen of the United States of America where the country has a bad relationship with Russia. He thinks that Russians have bad traits toward Americans, which is not necessarily true, so when Jim issued this statement Jim flouted the maxim of quality because he had no evidence to show that all Russians had bad traits.

The next strategy to flout maxim of quality is hyperbole (deliberately uses exaggerating phrases). During Jim's performance, he used hyperbole only 3 times, the following are one of them.

there's pressure to enjoy summer. Right? I'm from the Midwest. It's almost a panic.

"Go out there. Have fun. **Winter's coming to kill us.** Go! Get skin cancer now!"

D2/V1/T03/07

In the above statement, Jim has performed flouting the maxim of quality using hyperbole. Here he exaggerates the consequences of the coming of winter by saying that winter can kill people with their will, but in reality, a winter is a natural event that has no awareness let alone the desire or purpose to kill people. Here Jim violates the maxim of quality which requires him to say that based on adequate evidence.

The last strategy used by Jim to perform flouting the maxim of quality is banter which is a strategy used by Jim by using teasing remarks when talking to people who are already familiar with him. Jim used this strategy about three times. The following data is a statement or exchange that is told by Jim who uses banter to do flouting the maxim of quality.

We all have the friend or relative with the flip phone. You're like, "Where'd you get that? **Do you use that to call the past?**"

D2/V1/T07/25

As shown in the datum, Jim also uses teasing remarks in the form of questions to represent his surprise when he learns that one of his friends or family is still using a flip phone. Jim's question has flouted the maxim of quality because he considers that a flip phone can be used to call back in time, while in fact, it is not true, because of that Jim fails to contribute by not giving enough evidence to support his question.

The next maxim of conversation which was also flouted when Jim deliver his stand-up comedy material is flouting the maxim of relations. Flouting maxim of relations occurs when the speaker, in this case, Jim, deliberately changes the topic of the conversation, which is not appropriate or has no correlation with the previous discussion. The findings obtained from Jim's appearance when delivering his stand-up comedy material in which Jim flouted the maxim of relations, amounted to 5 findings, one of the examples is when Jim gave response to the offer from the instructor has no correlation. The respond gave by Jim instead said that he was married and there was a gap between the instructor's question and Jim's answer. This was done by Jim to indirectly reject the offer given to him by

responding with an answer that was not in line with the instructor's expectations. In this case, Jim has flouted the maxim of relations by deliberately changing the topic of conversation that does not have the information desired by the instructor.

The last Maxim Jim flouted was the maxim of manner. Flouting the maxim of manner is done by Jim when he deliberately uses convoluted language or ambiguous language to explain something. In his performances, Jim only performed flouting the maxim of manner twice, one of them is when Jim explaining how he adopted a dog. There Jim used too many sentences that are not needed just to convey his point, namely that he adopts a dog by buying it. When using this statement Jim has violated the maxim of the manner by using obscure language.

Discussion

The researcher used non-verbal communication theory proposed by Jappy (2013) to identify the kind of non-verbal communication done by Jim Gaffigan in his performance with title *Cinco* (2017) and *Noble Ape* (2018). Based on the findings, Jim Gaffigan used the three categories of non-verbal communication namely facial expressions, gestures, and postures during his performance. Jim Gaffigan used facial expression during his performance to express his feeling namely happiness, angry, fear, disgust, contempt, sadness or surprise through facial movement such as lips, eyebrows, cheek, etc. He also used facial expression to make a good impression about himself and to arouse the audience's attention to his performance so the audience not easily feel bored. As well as gestures, Jim used this kind of non-verbal communication by applied three types of gestures namely emblems, illustrator and manipulator to reinforced his speech and to clarify his message toward something that he discussed. For postures, Jim utilize his body state that divided into two categories which are dynamic posture (such as walking and running) and static posture (such as standing, sitting and sleeping) to demonstrate a certain activity or people, so the audience have the bigger picture of situation Jim wanted to explain.

Beside using non-verbal communication, to avoid using offensive language Jim Gaffigan also used certain language strategy to deliver his stand-up comedy material by performed the flouting maxim of conversation. Based on the

result of the data analysed Jim Gaffigan has successfully performed the flouting act to the four maxims of conversation by applied different strategies to each maxim. The most frequently maxim that broke by Jim is the maxim of quantity by using overstatement to give more understanding about the situation, opinion, or his feeling about the topic that he delivered during his performance to the audience and understatement strategy by omitting the important point.

Jim also performed flouting the maxim of quality by using sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, banter, and metaphor. When Jim used sarcasm strategy, he deliberately using statement that has an opposite meaning to what he meant. The different between using offensive language and sarcasm is lies on how the utterances delivered. In using offensive language, the utterances delivered in frontal or direct way, different with sarcasm, it delivered in indirect way by using implicated meaning. Mostly this strategy used by Jim was to criticized some party or even himself that according to him what the party or he usually done is not appropriate. This thing became funny and could make the audience laughed because Jim brought a simple topic that everybody can find in their daily life, but delivered it with the point of view of a stand-up comedian. The purpose of Jim used the sarcasm strategy is similar to the purpose of the rest of the strategies, which is to criticized certain party or he himself, but he delivered it in a different way.

The third maxim that Jim flouted during his performances is maxim of relation, in order to flout this maxim Jim used a strategy by abruptly changing the discussion with the initial topic. This done by Jim because he does not want the other participant of the conversation to pursue further about something he does not want to discuss. For the last maxim that rarely flouted by Jim in his performance is the maxim of manner. Jim flouted this maxim by used obscure language or ambiguous statement to express his opinion.

By performing non-verbal communication and flouting maxim of conversation Jim successfully deliver his stand-up comedy material with almost not use any offensive language and he still could entertain the audience with his performance without feeling offended.

Conclusions

During his performance, Jim Gaffigan used three categories of non-verbal communication. The first is facial expression that can be used to express certain feelings like happiness, surprise, fear, anger, sadness, disgust, and contempt, the next there are gestures which divided into illustrators, emblems and manipulators which can be applied to reinforce the verbal language, and the last there are postures which possess two types namely dynamic posture and static posture as a medium to demonstrate someone or an activity, but in the form of interpersonal attitude.

Related to how Jim Gaffigan organized to break the maxim of conversation which is by performed the strategy that used to perform flouting maxim of conversation. In his performance Jim Gaffigan almost used all types of strategy except tautology. Jim Gaffigan used understatement strategy by gave too little information that the situation actually needed, and overstatement strategy by giving too much information that the situation required to flouted the maxim of quantity. He also performed the flouting maxim of quality by using sarcasm, irony, hyperbole, banter and metaphor. The flouting maxim of relation happens when Jim Gaffigan as a speaker becomes irrelevant with the topic being discussed by abruptly changed the discussion topic, this is the only strategy that Jim used to flout the maxim of relation. For the flouting the maxim of manner Jim used obscure language or ambiguous language.

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