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THE ROLE OF FLOUTING MAXIM IN ANTI-PERSUASION: A CASE STUDY OF KURZGESAGT – IN A NUTSHELL YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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Abstract

This study analyzes the types and strategies of flouting maxims used by Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell YouTube channel to educate the audience about smoking and vaping and to persuade people not to smoke and vape. In this research, the researcher analyzed the flouting maxim in Kurzgesagt videos using a qualitative approach. The technique of data collection consists of four steps, which are watching the videos multiple times, discovering utterances that contain flouting maxim, taking note, and giving codes to the utterances that contain flouting maxim uttered by the narrator. The researcher used the theory proposed by Cutting and Fordyce (2021) to explain the types and strategies used, and applied Spradley's (1980) method as a technique of data analysis. From two videos, 38 data were found. The most frequently used type is flouting the maxim of quality (irony, hyperbole, metaphor), followed by the maxim of manner (being obscure), maxim of quantity (too much and too little information), and the least is maxim of relation (being irrelevant). The narrator flouts the maxims to criticize the smoking and vaping trend, create a dramatic effect, and strengthen the message. The use of flouting maxims is considered effective, but further research is suggested by analyzing audience responses through comments, interviews, or questionnaires.

Keywords: flouting maxim, kurzgesagt - in a nutshell, smoking, vaping, youtube

Introduction

The trend of smoking cigarettes and vaping has become a global concern due to its impact on health. Vellios et al., (2025) argue that, the harmful effects of smoking cigarettes have long been widely recognized so it is not debatable anymore. Then vaping became a new trend as an alternative to cigarettes. Vaping, or e-cigarettes, involves the process of inhaling and exhaling nicotine containing vapor through modern devices however, both smoking and vaping still have potential risks to health (Simanjuntak et al., 2023). Therefore, every effort is taken to educate the society about the dangers of smoking and vaping and persuade them to not use smoke and vape.

Johansson (2017) in a book entitled Pragmatics of social media argues that, YouTube is recognized as one of the most influential social media platforms in contemporary digital culture, offering immediate access to emerging phenomena in popular culture, professional media, and user-generated content. The delivery strategies in these videos usually involve the use of animation, graphics, variety of delivery techniques including flouting maxims to explain

complex concepts in a more understandable way and also to attract attention and keep the audiences engaged in the subject matter. This makes the message in the video easily accessible to a wider audience.

One YouTube channel that featuring education videos about smoking and vaping is Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube channel. Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell is a channel featuring videos that explain complex topics such as space, technology, biology, society, and education about smoking and vaping in an understandable way, the videos are based on strict research and use lively and fun vector illustrations and animations to deliver impactful messages (Kurzgesagt, 2024). Kurzgesagt applies a creative approach by deliberately flouting maxims, resulting in fresh, interesting, and understandable content, making it one of the most popular educational channels on the internet.

Related to the flouting maxim, there are several previous studies that also discuss YouTube videos as research objects. Damiri et al., (2020) analyzed a BBC Radio 1 YouTube video entitled 'Kids Ask Ryan Reynolds', this study focused on analyzing the types and functions of flouting maxim in the conversation. Lorenza et al., (2023) studied flouting maxim in classroom interaction on YouTube, this research focuses on finding the types of flouting maxim and how often male and female students flouted the maxims in classroom interaction videos on YouTube. Sasi (2022) examines the flouting maxim that occurs in The Late Late Show with James Corden talk show program in the Spill Your Guts or Fill Your Guts session on YouTube, this research only focuses on implied meaning in flouting maxim quality and maxim quantity, and the reason for the flouting maxim in the talk show session.

This research aims to analyze the types and strategies used by Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube channel that was created to educate the audience about smoking and vaping, and also to persuade them to not smoke and vape in an indirect way, where it relates to public health issues that have high urgency. That is why this research not only expands the scope of the study of flouting maxim but also makes an important contribution to understanding how flouting maxim is used strategically to support the message of public health campaigns, especially anti-smoking campaigns. This research is important because the researcher focuses on discussing flouting the maxim in animation videos that are created specifically to persuade the audience to not smoke and vape, and also to educate the audience related to smoking and vaping. Previous studies discuss the flouting maxim in talk shows and classroom interaction, which is a common social interaction, while this research analyzes how flouting the maxim is used to build a persuasive message in a health campaign. The selection of specific contexts in animation video that have a clear purpose make this research creates a new point of view. The novelty of this

research is to see how the flouting maxim is not just used as a common form of communication, but also as a language strategy that influences the attitudes and mindset of the audience.

Review of Literature

Pragmatics is a sub-discipline of linguistics that studies the influence of context on meaning, helping to understand the hidden messages behind spoken words through intonation, gesture, and word choice. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of the meaning intended by the speaker or writer and interpreted by the listener or reader, in other words, it emphasizes the intent behind the utterance rather than the literal meaning of words. Pragmatics is a sub-discipline of linguistics that focuses on meaning in specific contexts, including how speakers organize their utterances based on the situation, audience, time, and conditions, it also examines how listeners reach conclusions to understand the speaker's intent, including aspects of communication that are not directly expressed but are considered important, thus, pragmatics includes the analysis of hidden meanings and communication that is more than what is actually said, in other words, pragmatics studies how language forms are used and how people decide what needs to be conveyed directly or left implied (Yule, 1996).

Cutting (2002) argues that, flouting maxim is when speakers assume that listeners understand the words being spoken cannot be taken for granted and listeners can find the hidden meaning behind the speaker's utterance. Types of flouting maxim divided into four types; those are:

a. Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

Flouting maxim quantity occurs when a speaker flouts a communication principle where the speaker provides information that does not fulfill the needs of the conversation. The speaker who flouts the maxim of quantity tends to provide either too little or too much information (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). When too much information is conveyed, the listener may feel overwhelmed or confused due to irrelevant details. Otherwise, if too little information is given, the listener may misunderstand or feel the conversation is not enough.

b. Flouting the Maxim of Quality

The speaker flouts the maxim of quality and may do it in several ways. The maxim of quality can be flouted through exaggeration (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). Flouting maxim quality occurs when a speaker deliberately provides information that is incorrect or information that lacks accurate evidence

c. Flouting the Maxim of Relation

According to Cutting and Fordyce (2021), if a speaker deliberately flouts the maxim of relation, they usually trust on the listener's ability to interpret the hidden meaning and relate the utterance to the context or previous statements. Flouting maxim relation happens when speakers deliberately give responses that are irrelevant or inappropriate to the topic of conversation.

d. Flouting the Maxim of Manner

Cutting and Fordyce (2021) argue that, people who flout the maxim of manner usually speak ambiguously because they want to avoid third parties from understanding the conversation. Flouting maxim manner happens when the speaker deliberately speaks in obscure, ambiguous, or convoluted ways that are difficult for the listener to understand.

According to Cutting and Fordyce (2021), the strategies of flouting maxim consist of nine strategies, those are:

1. Strategies of Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

a. Giving Too Much Information

The first strategy of flouting the maxim of quantity is providing more information than necessary. Cutting and Fordyce (2021) stated that, some speakers like to show that they have a lot of information that the listener probably requires. This strategy happens when a speaker conveys additional details that are excessive or unnecessary in a conversation.

b. Giving Too Little Information

According to Cutting and Fordyce (2021), a speaker who flouts the maxim of quantity tends to provide either too little or too much information. The second strategy in flouting maxim quantity is to provide too little information, not enough to answer the listener's questions or needs. Too little information can make the hearer misunderstand or even be confused.

2. Strategies of Flouting the Maxim of Quality

a. Using a Hyperbole

Speakers can flout the maxim by exaggerating, as in the use of hyperbole (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). Hyperbole is a statement that is exaggerated for the purpose of emphasis or dramatic effect.

b. Using a Metaphor

Cutting and Fordyce (2021) argue that, a speaker can flout the maxim of quality by using a metaphor. A metaphor contains a statement that compares two different things implicitly.

Metaphors are often used to convey deeper or more complex meanings without saying something directly.

c. Using an Irony

Irony is a common strategy in flouting the maxim of quality to convey criticism in a polite manner. The speaker applies irony by using a positive utterance on the surface but actually intends to imply something negative (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). Irony takes place when a speaker says something that contradicts reality or their true meaning.

d. Using a Banter

According to Cutting and Fordyce (2021), as opposed to irony, on the other hand, banter expresses negative feelings explicitly but has a positive implied meaning, making it sound like a mild attack. Sometimes, banter comes in the form of a satirical joke, while other times it becomes a flirtatious expression (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021). In the use of banter, the speaker deliberately provides information that is not entirely true but aims to entertain or build intimacy with the hearer.

e. Using a Sarcasm

Cutting and Fordyce (2021) stated that, Sarcasm is a type of irony that tends to be less friendly and is often used to hurt other people's feelings. In the usage of sarcasm, the speaker deliberately conveys a statement that is incorrect in order to convey an implied meaning. Sarcasm is often used to emphasize dissatisfaction or disagreement in a harsh but not direct way.

3. Strategies of Flouting the Maxim of Relation

a. Being Irrelevant

According to Cutting and Fordyce (2021), if speakers flout maxim relation, they usually expect the hearers to be able to understand the meaning that is not explicitly expressed and find a connection with the previous conversation. When the speaker gives an irrelevant answer, the hearer needs to find out the meaning or reason behind the speaker's attempt to change the direction of the conversation.

4. Strategies of Flouting the Maxim of Manner

a. Being Obscure

Cutting and Fordyce (2021) stated that, people who flout the maxim of manner usually speak ambiguously because they want to avoid third parties from understanding the conversation. The speaker deliberately uses phrases that are confusing or difficult to understand to create uncertainty so that the listener needs to think more deeply.

Methodology

5 In this research, the researcher will examine the flouting maxim in kurzgesagt videos using a qualitative approach to process descriptive information presented in the form of written words. Oranga and Matere (2023) stated that, the qualitative approach is effective in capturing information about the behavior, opinions, and social context of a particular population. The data sources used in this research are two videos from Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube Channel entitled Vaping Is Too Good To Be True released on 19 November 2024 and Smoking is Awesome released on 7 May 2024. Therefore, the research data in this research are in the form of utterances that contain flouting maxim uttered by the narrator in the videos of Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube Channel.

4 In this research, the researcher will be the main instrument in order to analyze the data. The researcher analyses the flouting maxim uttered by the narrator in the Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell video. This research involves data sheets as a supporting tool to facilitate the data analysis process. In collecting the data, the researchers used four steps, which are:

1. Watching the videos multiple times to understand the context.
2. Discovering utterances that contain flouting maxim uttered by the narrator in the video in Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube Channel.
- 4 Taking note of the utterances that contain types of flouting maxim uttered by the narrator in the video in Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube Channel.
- 1 Giving codes to the utterances that contain flouting maxim uttered by the narrator in the video in Kurzgesagt - In a Nutshell YouTube Channel.

4 The researcher applied Spradley (1980) method as technique of data analysis. Spradley proposed four steps in analyzing the research, which are: Domain analysis, Taxonomic analysis, Componential analysis, and Cultural theme analysis.

Findings

1. Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

“Vaping has already hooked a significant portion of the younger generations to nicotine and that is really bad news. It is kind of unfair to expect young people to resist vaping by providing information about how bad it is or might be. Scaring people straight is a bad strategy.” (36-VP-09:58)

In this utterance, the narrator talk about the effectivity of a preventive strategy towards the use of vapes in the younger generation where the scare method is considered unfair or

17 ineffective to prevent young people from vaping. In the bold utterance, the narrator **flouts the maxim of quantity** by providing **too little information** than is required without giving further explanation about why this approach is considered unfair and how to prevent the young generation from using vapes effectively. In this utterance, the narrator wants to criticize the strategy that just scared the teenagers, making them feel pressured and judged, so they become stressed and use vapes more often.

2. Flouting the Maxim of Quality

“The problem with smoking is that it’s kind of amazing.” (1-SK-00:01)

14 This is the first opening utterance that discusses smoking and begins with shocking impressions, so the audience becomes curious immediately. In this utterance, the narrator wants to begin the discussion about the bad effects of smoking without saying it explicitly. Utterance one **flouts the maxim of quality** because the narrator **is** saying something untrue or inaccurate. By saying something untrue, the narrator intends to criticize smoking habits in a provocative and eye-catching way, so that the audience is forced to reflect on the true meaning of this utterance. In this utterance, the narrator uses **irony** as a strategy by emphasizing the contrast between **the word “amazing,” which has a positive connotation**, and **the word “problem,” which has a negative connotation**, to highlight how smoking considerate as an amazing thing for some people, even though smoking actually is a dangerous thing.

3. Flouting the Maxim of Relation

“Your lips are one of the most sensitive parts of your body and putting something between them is deeply satisfying.” (8-SK-00:45)

11 The previous utterance discusses smoking as a fun social activity to build friendship, meanwhile, utterance one discusses lip sensitivity and the experience of “putting something between the lips,” but the relevance to the previous topic becomes blurred. So, that is why in utterance one, the narrator is **flouting the maxim of relation** because **he saying something irrelevant to the previous topic**. Utterance one intends to make the audience think about the indirect connection between smoking and physical pleasure.

4. Flouting the Maxim of Manner

“This is an irresponsible thing to say, but if we’re going to talk about it, we might as well do so honestly.” (2-SK-00:04)

This is the second opening utterance that discusses a sensitive topic about smoking. Utterance one flouted the maxim of manner because the narrator provided an ambiguous and unclear statement by admitting that his statement may be considered irresponsible, but still emphasized the importance of discussing this topic honestly. Utterance one aims to highlight the importance of discussing a sensitive topic honestly, that is, smoking.

1. Componential analysis

Table 1 Componential Analysis of Types and Strategies of Flouting Maxim

Types	Strategies									Total
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	
MQt	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
MQl	-	-	6	1	12	-	-	-	-	19
MR	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	4
MM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	10
Total										38

Based on the table above, the total data is thirty-eight. There are four types of flouting maxim, which are, flouting the maxim of quantity found as much as five data, flouting the maxim of quality found as much as nineteen data, flouting the maxim of relation found as much as four data, and flouting the maxim of manner found as much as ten data. There are seven strategies found, which are, too much information as much as three data, too little information as much as two data, hyperbole as much as six data, metaphor as much as one data, irony as much as twelve data, being irrelevant as much as four data, and being obscure as much as ten data.

2. Cultural Theme

The most frequently used type is flouting the maxim of quality with a total of nineteen data, consist of three strategies which are, twelve data in irony, six data in hyperbole, and one data in metaphor. This has happened because the narrator wants to criticize the smoking and vaping trend that has become widespread, creating a dramatic effect, strengthen the overall message, and persuading the audience to not smoke and vape. The second dominant type is flouting the maxim of manner with a total of ten data that consist of one strategy which is being obscure, this is aims to give indirect criticism, avoid provocative or judgmental impressions, and because the audience may be people who smoke or vape, create doubt about the safety of vapes, and raise awareness of the dangers of vaping and smoking. Five data contain flouting the maxim of quantity that consist of two strategies which are too much information with a total of three data,

and too little information with a total of two data. This is happened because the narrator wants to explain a complex problem about nicotine addiction. The least data is flouting the maxim of relation with a total of four data that contains with only one strategy which is being irrelevant, this is happened because the narrator wants to create humor, strengthen the statement, and create a more casual emotional connection with the audience.

8 Banter is absent because the characteristic of banter is in contrast with Kurzgesagt's concept videos, where the narrator wants to provide education and persuade the audience to not smoke and vape. Sarcasm is absent because the kurzgesagt audience target is everyone, from kids to adults, people who are not smoking and vaping, people who smoke and vape, and people who have just quit smoking and vaping. Kurzgesagt wants to give indirect education and persuasion in a fun way, so that the audience becomes interested and watches the video until the end without feeling judged or cornered.

Discussion

21 Damiri et al., (2020) analyzed a BBC Radio 1 YouTube video entitled 'Kids Ask Ryan Reynolds'. Damiri uses this show as a research object that focuses on analyzing the types and reasons of flouting the maxim in the conversation. Damiri research findings are different from this research findings because the dominant type in Damiri research, is flouting the maxim of manner, that happens because its direct and orderly nature contrasts with Ryan Reynolds public persona, which is characterized by humor, sarcasm, irony, and a conversational style that is rarely straightforward. While the dominant type that appear in this research is flouting the maxim of quality, that happens because the narrator wants to criticize the smoking and vaping trend that has become widespread, creating a dramatic effect, strengthen the overall message, and persuading the audience to not smoke and vape.

7
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5 The second previous studies is Lorenza et al. (2023), that studied flouting maxims in classroom interaction on YouTube. This research focuses on finding the types of flouting the maxim and how often male and female students flouted the maxims in classroom interaction videos on YouTube. Dominant type that appears in Lorenza research is flouting the maxim of quantity, which happens because the speaker wants to build trust and cheer the hearer. The second finding of Lorenza research is that males become the dominant gender who flout the maxim. This is because the teacher is a woman, so male students are more motivated and enthusiastic when studying. Lorenza research findings have differences from this research because the dominant type that appear in Lorenza research is flouting the maxim of quantity,

which happens because the speaker wants to build trust and cheer the hearer. While the dominant type in this research is flouting the maxim of quality, that happens because the narrator wants to criticize the smoking and vaping trend that has become widespread, creating a dramatic effect, strengthen the overall message, and persuading the audience to not smoke and vape.

The last previous studies is Sasi (2022), which examines the flouting maxim that occurs in The Late Late Show with James Corden talk show program in the Spill Your Guts or Fill Your Guts session on YouTube. Sasi chose this show as her research object that only focuses on implied meaning in flouting the maxim quality and maxim quantity, and the reason for the flouting maxim in the talk show session. Sasi research findings is different from this research findings because the dominant type that appear in Sasi findings is flouting the maxim of quantity that happens because it has a joking effect that can make others feel comfortable and keep the conversation going, this humorous atmosphere also makes others feel interested in watching Spill Your Guts or Fill Your Guts sessions. While the dominant types in this research is flouting the maxim of quality that happens because the narrator wants to criticize the smoking and vaping trend that has become widespread, creating a dramatic effect, strengthen the overall message, and persuading the audience to not smoke and vape.

From the findings of this research and the findings of previous studies, it can be seen that there is a big difference because even though the object is similar, YouTube videos, but types and purpose of the video in this research and previous studies are different. The type of video in Damiri et al., (2020) is a talk show that intends to entertain the audience. The type of video in Lorenza et al., (2023) is classroom interaction that aims to educate. The type of video in Sasi (2022) is a talk show that aims to entertain the audience. While type of video in this research is an animation video that aims to educate about the dangers of smoking and vaping and persuading the audience to not smoke and vape. From the previous explanation, it can be seen that the use of flouting maxim in YouTube videos can have a different purpose depending on the type, communicative purpose of the video, the context of the conversation, and target audience.

Conclusion

This research shows that the dominant type of flouting the maxim in YouTube videos is influenced by communicative purpose and audience target. Different from previous studies, this research resulted different dominant type, which emphasizes that variation can be shaped by

context, purpose, and delivery style in each video. It can be concluded that flouting the maxim in YouTube videos can happen for different reasons, and is used deliberately to support certain communicative purposes, such as to entertain, to educate, or to persuade the audience.

Kurzgesagt uses flouting maxim as a strategy, especially flouting the maxim of quality, to persuade the audience not to smoke and vape. The most frequently used strategy is irony, because it is considered effective to criticize the smoking and vaping trend indirectly, creating a dramatic effect, and to strengthen the overall message without being judgmental. From the five strategies in flouting the maxim of quality, just three strategies appear in the video, which are irony, hyperbole, and metaphor. Banter and sarcasm are not used because they are considered inappropriate for educational and persuasive purposes that emphasize a positive approach that target all groups, from kids to adults, people who are not smoking and vaping, people who smoke and vape, and people who have just quit smoking and vaping. So, the message is conveyed in a casual, persuasive, and interesting way so that people can accept it without feeling blamed or offended.

Suggestion

The use of flouting maxim to persuade people to not smoke and vape is considered effective, but to ensure the effectiveness, further research is needed by paying more attention to the audience, such as focusing on analyzing the comment section, doing interviews, or giving questionnaires to the audience. In addition, the researcher also suggests content creators on YouTube to make a lot of educational and persuasive content related to the dangers of smoking and vaping by using indirect persuasion. For example, combining flouting the maxim with animation, such as performed by kurzgesagt YouTube channel. Finally, the researcher hopes this research can be useful for the readers and can be a reference for future researchers.

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