
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Relevance Maxim Violation in 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' Episode 1

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ABSTRACT

This study analyses the violation on the maxim of relevance uttered within the conversation between the characters on the television miniseries 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' season 1 episode 1. This study aims to collect the data of how maxim of relevance is violated and determine the factors of violating the maxim of relevance. The method used in this study is the descriptive qualitative method. This study is based on the theory of Grice (1975). The results showed that the 26 violations found on the maxim of relevance occurred under 13 reasons, namely; ignoring the message (3,85%), disbelieving (15,38%), prohibiting (3,85%), being distracted (3,85%), hiding the truth (19,23%), correcting the wrong (7,68%), showing anger (7,68%), feeling shy (3,85%), disagreeing (19,23%), convincing the hearer (3,85%), agreeing (3,85%), teasing (3,85%), and giving reason (3,85%). This result showed that the most reasons for violating the maxim of relevance are to hide the truth and to disagree, as both happened equally 5 times out of 26, and these violations were intended by the speaker. The result is proof that violating the maxim of relevance can be done for several reasons as long as the speakers have a different assumption or goals with the interlocutors.

KEYWORDS

Maxim, Maxim Violation, Relevance Maxim, Cooperative Principle, Pragmatics, TV miniseries.

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1. Introduction

Language is an essential part of human life as it is used to communicate. People deliver their intention as well as their thought and feelings by expressing them through communication. People communicate with each other by talking, writing, gesturing or even through drawing symbols and signs. As a two-way communication, language should be relevant by the speaker and hearer to be comprehended by each other; thus, the intention of the speaker is successfully delivered to the hearer, and the function of language is well achieved. To get this done, both speaker and hearer need to cooperate in the conversation. Thus the principles of cooperation should be carried away in their interaction. A principle of cooperation that deals with the relevance of utterances are identified as the maxim of relevance. Nonetheless, a conversation is not always cooperated in a good way. People may change the topic or give an irrelevant answer to respond to an utterance. There are so many factors that could motive it. When people do this, they disobey the rules of relevance maxim. The researchers are interested in investigating the relevance maxim violation that occurs in the conversation of television miniseries 'Falcon and The Winter Soldier' season 1 episode 1 and the factors that motivate the violations.

Some previous researchers have studied relevant research with this study. Andy and Ambalegin (2020) conducted research that described the violation of the maxim in the 'Night at The Museum' movie, while Albiansyah, Didin and Alek (2021) conducted research that described the maxims violation in 'Tilik' Indonesian's short film. In their research, they described all of the maxim violations, namely maxim of quality, quantity, manner and relevance. Andy and Ambalegin showed up that in their research, the maxim of manner was being the most frequent violation, whereas Albiansyah, Didin and Alek showed up that in their research, the maxim of quantity and quality were the dominating the violation. Drawing a line from their research, the researchers wonder about the maxim of relevance that is nevertheless important to make the conversation comprehensible for the speaker and hearer.

Therefore, this research focuses only on the violation of the maxim of relevance that occurs between the characters. This research discusses and analyses how the violation of maxim of relevance falls out in the conversation. Consequently, this research aims at collecting the data of how maxim of relevance is violated and figuring out the factors of violating the maxim of relevance. The Falcon and The Winter Soldier is a series under the genre of science fiction, action fiction and superhero fiction. It is hoped that the findings will give a contribution to the theories of pragmatics study, especially the implicature interpretation and the cooperative principle.

2. Literature Review

The works of Yule (2010) simply defined pragmatics as the study of what speakers mean, or "speaker meaning". But to look deeper on it, he explained that "In many ways, pragmatics is the study of "invisible" meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said or written" (p. 128). In order for the hearer or the interlocutor to recognize the invisible meaning beyond the speaker's utterance, the speaker must be able to rely on how many assumptions and expectations are shared between them when they try to communicate with each other. This study of meaning is a different deal with semantic meaning. As Griffiths (2006) clarified, "If you are dealing with meaning and there is no context to consider, then you are doing semantics, but if there is a context to be brought into consideration, then you are engaged in pragmatics" (p. 6). Thus what lies between semantics and pragmatics is 'the context'. This is in line with Levinson's (1983) statement "...the term pragmatics covers both context-dependent aspects of language structure and principles of language usage and understanding that have nothing or little to do with linguistic structure" (p. 9). Context provides disambiguation within the utterance. Therefore, the same context must be shared by the speaker and hearer to reach mutual understanding.

The influence of the context is substantial within the communication. According to Yule (2010), there are two kinds of contexts, namely linguistics context (known as co-text) and physical context. Further, he explained that the context of a word is the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence while people know how to interpret words on the basis of physical context. He gave an example of the word 'bank', which is identified as a homonym, a single form with more than one meaning. To know which meaning is intended in a particular sentence is done on the basis of linguistic context. In the text, if the word 'bank' is used in a sentence together with words like steep or overgrown, of course, it will be known that the word 'bank' used is differently intended within the context when someone says that she has to get to the bank to withdraw some cash. For the other type of context, he said that when someone sees the word 'Bank' on the wall of a building in a city, the physical location will influence the interpretation. It is not the actual physical situation "out there" that constitutes "the context" for interpreting words or sentences, but it is the relevant context in the mental representation of those aspects of what is physically out there that is used in an interpretation. The understanding of what is read and heard is tied to this processing of aspects of the physical context by the time and place in which linguistic expressions are encountered. (Yule, 2010, p. 129-130).

According to Curse (2000), "The proper context for the interpretation of an utterance is not given in advance; it is chosen by the hearer" (p. 370). Further, he explained that the speaker has two prime responsibilities in communication: assuming certain facts about the hearer's knowledge and its organization, in particular, the relative accessibility of facts, producing an utterance that will enable the hearer to make the correct inferences with minimum expenditure of cognitive effort. It shows the active role of the speaker while the hearer's role here is quite passive as to try possible contexts in order of accessibility, and the first one to yield relevant inferences commensurate with the effort expended up to that point is the one intended by the speaker.

To fully understand the speaker's intention, the hearer must be able to make an interpretation. There are three stages of interpretation, according to Griffiths (2006); literal meaning – the semantics of sentences in the abstract; explicature – the pragmatics of reference and disambiguation; and implicature – the pragmatics of hints (p. 7). This study will focus on the pragmatic interpretation to analyze the conversation.

Griffiths (2006) pointed out that "An explicature is a basic interpretation of an utterance, using contextual information and world knowledge to work out what is being referred to and which way to understand ambiguous expressions..." (p. 6). This goes beyond the literal meaning of the utterance. The interpretation is based on linguistic context and non-linguistic context when it provides reference and disambiguation. When interpreting implicature as a pragmatic hint, Griffiths said to "...go further and ask what is hinted at by an utterance in its particular context, what the sender's "agenda" is" (p. 7).

What draws the researchers' interest is this kind of interpretation. Implicature conveys the additional intention of the speaker that the hearer sometimes successfully acquire or, most of the time, fails to get the hints that lie within the sentences. Griffiths added that "Conversational implicatures are inferences that depend on the existence of norms for the use of language, such as the widespread agreement that communicators should aim to tell the truth" (p. 134). Yule (2010) also believed that "an additional meaning conveyed by a speaker adhering to the cooperative principle" (p. 287). The cooperative principle was proposed by Grice

in 1975. It is also discussed in Grice (2000) that "one of the most influential accounts of implicature is that of Grice" (p. 355). Grice in Yule (2010) stated that "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (p. 147). Grice supported this principle with four maxims that are often called the "Gricean maxims".

Talking about the maxims, Griffiths stated that "A maxim is a pithy piece of widely-applicable advice.." (p. 135). He also explained the maxims in brief:

Quality – try to be truthful when communicating.

Quantity – give appropriate amounts of information, not too little and not too much.

Manner – utterances should be clear: brief, orderly and not obscure.²

Relevance – contributions should be relevant to the assumed current goals of the people involved. (Griffiths, 2010, p. 134-135)

Griffiths added that "Grice's maxims play an as-if role: he was not putting forward the maxims as advice on how to talk; he was saying that communication proceeds as if speakers are generally guided by these maxims" (p. 135). He could state that utterance is based on a speaker's willingness. Kroeger (2018) stated that "A speaker may communicate either by obeying the maxims or by breaking them, as long as the hearer is able to recognize which strategy is being employed (p.143). It means that everyone may not follow all the principles proposed. If the speaker does not fulfil this principle, it means that the speaker violates the maxim (Levinson, 1983).

Cutting (2002) explained that "A speaker can be said to 'violate' a maxim when they know that the hearer will *not* know the truth and will only understand the surface meaning of the words" (p.40). The speaker tends to make an implicature that is misleading. The violation of maxim of relevance then sets to be any answers that are irrelevant and out of topic to the previous speaker. When people are changing the topic or being irrelevant to the conversation, they may have certain implicature that motivates them to violate. The reasons for violating the maxim relevance are various based on their motives. To know the reason, the implicature must be thoroughly analyzed.

3. Methodology

In this study, the researchers used a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the utterance of the characters in the television miniseries of 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' that was aired on streaming device Disney Plus Hotstar. Hotstar is an Indian subscription video-on-demand streaming service owned and operated by Star India, a subsidiary of The Walt Disney Company India. 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' was set in Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU), and it shared continuity with the films of the franchise and takes place after the events of the film Avengers: Endgame. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) proposed that descriptive research describes the attitudes and behaviours observed during the observation. The researcher used the first episode of 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' season 1 only as the series had been still ongoing by the time the author conducted this study. In conducting this study, the researchers collected the data by doing these several techniques chronologically as follow: (1) watching episode 1 of television miniseries 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier'; (2) note-taking the dialogues of the characters; (3) writing all of the dialogues that show violation on the maxim of relevance; and (4) doing translation for other languages spoken by the characters. The techniques that researchers used in this study for analyzing the data were as follow: (1) identifying every dialogue which shows the violation on the maxim of relevance based on the theory; (2) listing the utterances, which contained violation on maxims of relevance; (3) identifying the reasons of the speakers for violating the Cooperative Principle maxims of relevance from the contexts of dialogues; and (4) making the conclusion from the results of the analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The problems that led the author to conduct this study were how the maxim of relevance was being violated in the television miniseries 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' and what the most reason for violating the maxim was. The author had investigated one episode that was the first episode of the series and found there was 26 violation on the maxim of the relevance in that first episode. The violation occurred due to the different assumptions between the speakers and the hearers that caused the hearers to violate the maxim and intended an implicature which was being the reason for the violation. The finding of this study is presented in the following table.

Table 1 Violation on Maxim of Relevance

No	Reason of Violation	Frequency	%
1	Ignoring the message	1	3,85
2	Disbelieving	4	15, 38
3	Prohibiting	1	3,85
4	Being distracted	1	3,85
5	Hiding the truth	5	19,23
6	Correcting Wrong	2	7,68
7	Showing anger	2	7,68
8	Feeling shy	1	3,85
9	Disagreeing	5	19,23
10	Convincing the hearer	1	3,85
11	Agreeing	1	3,85
12	Teasing	1	3,85
13	Giving reason	1	3,85
TOTAL VIOLATION		26	100

Based on the findings, the 26 violations found on the maxim of relevance occurred under 13 reasons, namely Ignoring the message (1), disbelieving (4), prohibiting (1), being distracted (1), hiding the truth (5), correcting the wrong (2), showing anger (2), feeling shy (1), disagreeing (5), convincing the hearer (1), agreeing (1), teasing (1), and giving reason (1). Here the author provided some sample data for each reason along with an analysis of the implicature interpretation within the utterances.

1. Ignoring the Message (Datum 01)

Major : Vasant's plane has already entered Tunisian airspace. US military can not be seen operating out there.

Sam : I got it. You guys fly low, drop me off, I fly up to intercept. No treaties were violated.

Major : First Lieutenant Torres, our intel officer, will be helping on the ground. And, Sam. This has to be subtle.

This conversation happened when Sam, as the Falcon (one of the superheroes that can fly using mechanical wings), was going to do a US Air Force mission on saving Captain Vasant from LAF. After Sam understood what he needed to do, he told the Major and the crews to fly the plane low to drop him off so he could start flying to do intercepting mission. He even promised that there would be no treats violated. Instead of replying to Sam's utterance, Major's utterance implicated that Sam's utterance was not important to him so that he ignored it instead and kept loaded Sam with information about the mission; that the First Lieutenant Torres would be helping him on the ground and told him that his mission should be subtle. Therefore, the Major violated the maxim of relevance.

2. Disbelieving (Datum 02) (in French)

Plane Hijacker 1 : Tu as vu ça, je viens de voir un homme dans le pare-brise.

(Did you see that? I just saw a man on the windshield.)

The Hijacker Boss : **Louie, Je moi te tuer. (Louie, I'm gonna kill you.)**

In this conversation, Plane Hijacker 1 saw the Falcon peeking on the windshield and then he flew up again and disappeared from his view. Because he was shocked, he yelled, and the Boss was checking on him, but the Falcon had disappeared, so the Boss did not see the Falcon. When the Plance Hijacker 1 told his boss what he saw, the Boss said he was going to kill him. This utterance violated the maxim of relevance, although he was not really going to kill him. The boss' utterance implicated the disbelief of his subordinate's word.

3. Prohibiting (Datum 03)

Torres :You could try to reroute that to the other...

Sam : **Could you not- I've been working with the Air Force for six months now. Every time the Ops touches him, he gets all glitchy.**

This conversation happened between Torres and Sam. Torres was the lieutenant that helped Sam on his previous mission. Torres was trying to help Sam fix his device after being damaged in the mission. But when he was about to touch Sam's device, Sam spontaneously snapped at Torres by saying, "Could you not-" violating the maxim of relevance. This utterance was not fully said, but this implicated his prohibition of touching on his device. But later, he regretted his rudeness by giving an explanation. The explanation implied that if Torres touched it, it would be all glitchy.

4. Being Distracted (Datum 04)

Torres : You see these guys? They're guys you gotta worry about. I've been stumbling in their manifestos on message boards. They're called the Flag Smashers.

Sam : **Is that a new thing? Bad guys give themselves bad names.**

Torres : That's a lot worse names than that one.

This conversation happened when Torres had successfully detected the malicious syndicate that he had been investigated as intel from some application on his phone, and he was showing it to Sam. Torres' utterance focused on the guys Sam got to worry about, but Sam violated the maxim of relevance as instead of observing the syndicate, he asked about whether it is a new thing about the bad guys giving themselves bad names. This implicated that Sam's violation was due to the distraction of the syndicate's name.

5. Hiding the Truth (Datum 07)

dr. Raynor : You don't have ten numbers on this thing. Oh, and you've been ignoring the texts from Sam. Look, you've gotta nurture friendships. I am the only person you have called all week. That is so sad. You're alone. You're a hundred years old. You have no history, no family...

Bucky : **Are you lashing out at me, Doc? Because that's really unprofessional, you know.**

This conversation took place between Dr. Raynor, a psychiatrist, and Bucky the Winter Soldier. Bucky was no longer the Winter Soldier (World War II veteran, a former officer of the 107th Infantry Regiment that was best friends with Captain America since childhood) because he chose to be an ordinary civilian. He was trying to make amends to be forgiven for being the villain (in the previous movies). That was why he consulted with dr. Raynor frequently. Bucky was not being honest during the consultation session. It made dr. Raynor felt irritated, especially when he said that he trusted people but after dr. Raynor checked his phone; it showed the other way round. Dr. Raynor told him her analysis with a raising tone of voice. Bucky felt insecure about the facts that had been spilt by her, and he considered that she was angry at him for not being honest. That's why Bucky's utterance violated the maxim of relevance by saying the confrontation of what dr. Raynor had said. His utterance implied that he did not want the truth about him being revealed, so he chose to violate the maxim.

6. Correcting Wrong (Datum 09)

Unique : you don't gotta body me, Yori.

Yori : **It's Mr. Nakajima!**

This conversation took place between Unique and Yori, who were neighbours. Yori was elderly, and he was a Japanese that lived and Unique was an African-American young man. Yori was mad because Unique was putting up the trash into his trash can. Yori even pushed his body. When Unique complained to Yori that pushed his body by calling his name, which was considered rude for Japanese people calling someone older without honorifics, Yori yelled at Unique about how Unique should call him. His implicature was correcting the wrong done by Unique, so Yori was violating the maxim of relevance.

7. Showing Anger (Datum 10)

Yori : Unique is putting his trash into my trash.

Unique : Its trash.

Yori : **and it's time for me to smack...**

Bucky : Woah

Unique : It's just trash!

Bucky : Hang on!

Still, in the same scene with datum 09, this datum shows another violation of the maxim. At this moment, Bucky joined the conversation as he was about to visit Yori, spontaneously breaking up the fight. Yori was explaining the reason for his being mad, but Unique was still on his assumption that it was only trash and they had to share the trash can as neighbours. The maxim of

relevance was violated by Yori when he wanted to hit Unique, and he said, "it's time for me to smack..". His utterance implied his anger towards Unique.

8. Feeling Shy (Datum 13)

- Yori : He would like to take you out on a date. Maybe to bingo or a night of pinochle. Pinochle.
 Bucky : **I'm really sorry about him.**
 Woman : Why are you sorry? I'm game.
 Bucky : wow

This conversation took place between Yori, Bucky and a woman who worked in the restaurant. Yori was trying to be cupid for Bucky and the woman as he arranged a date for them. But Bucky violated the maxim of relevance by saying sorry for what Yori had said. This violation implied his shyness.

9. Disagreeing (Datum 16)

- Sam : You gotta marvel at it. Baby being held together by duct tape and prayers.
 Sarah : It'll be fine. It just needs to float long enough for me to sell it.
 Sam : I thought we were gonna discuss if we were selling it.
 Sarah : We did. And then you were off fighting Doctor Space Cape or whatever while I was holdin' it together for five long years. Now that the world's going back to normal, this thing gotta go.
 Sam : **We grew up on this thing. It's not just Mom and Dad's name on it, Sarah. This thing is a part of our family.**

This conversation occurred between Sam and his sister, Sarah, when Sam just came back again to his hometown. Sarah wanted to sell their parent legacy's boat due to a family crisis, but Sam still wanted to discuss it first. When Sarah insisted on selling it, Sam reminded her that they grew on that boat, so it was part of their family. His utterance violated the maxim of relevance because Sarah was first talked about selling the boat, but Sam suddenly talked about their memories. His utterance implied his disagreement on selling the boat.

10. Convincing the Hearer (Datum 19)

- Sarah : You think I didn't try the banks? They're all for big business.
 Sam : **Yeah. But now you have me.**

This conversation was still on the same scene on datum 16. Sam suggested Sarah get a loan from the bank instead of selling the boat. Sarah's utterance implicated that she had tried to get a loan, but all the banks refused it. This implied in her utterance that they (the banks) were all for big business. Sam agreed at first, but then he said that now Sarah had him. His utterance violated the maxim of relevance, but this implied that Sarah should not be worried because Sam as the Falcon that had a contract with the government, could be her guarantee. His implicature tried to convince her that they would get the loan.

11. Agreeing (Datum 20)

- Sarah : Maybe it is time for us to move on.
 Sam : Either way, just let me help. I'll set the appointment. Look, I won't let you down. We can turn this shit around. Trust me.
 Sarah : **To the rescue, huh?**
 Sam : Always.

This conversation was still part of the conversation of the previous datum. This time Sam insisted on helping Sarah, and seeing how her brother was trying to make things right softened her strong mind on selling the boat to finally agree on taking a loan with his help. But instead of saying yes or no about his idea, she playfully satirized his brother, who was a superhero, by saying "to the rescue, huh?". She violated the maxim of relevance by doing this, and her implicature showed her agreement to take her brother's help.

12. Teasing (Datum 21)

- Bucky : It's pretty crazy. A lot of weird pictures.
 Woman : What kind of weird?
 Bucky : I mean, tiger photos? Half the time, I don't even know what I'm looking at. It's...a lot.

Woman : **You sound like my dad.**

This conversation occurred when Bucky and the Woman had the date. They were talking about Bucky's experience of playing dating application, and Bucky told his displeasure of the application. The woman chuckled, hearing how funny it was and then told Bucky that he sounded like her father. She violated the maxim of relevance when she suddenly stated that utterance. Her implicature showed that she was just teasing Bucky for feeling that way about the application.

13. Giving Reason (Datum 22)

Sam : We gotta go.

Sarah : **Wait, the appointment's in an hour.**

Sam : **There's no such thing as on time. You're either early or late. Pick one.**

This conversation took place before Sam and Sarah wanted to go to the bank to get a loan. Sam asked Sarah to go to the bank, but she said that the appointment was still in one hour. Sarah violated the maxim of relevance, and her implicature showed disagreement that implied they did not need to hurry. Sam got her point, and he explained that there was no such thing as being on time. It was just early or late. Sam violated the maxim when giving the explanation. His implicature shows the reason why they needed to go now. He preferred to be early than late.

All of this sample data had shown that the violation of the maxim of relevance occurred when the hearers had a different assumption or goals with the speakers. In their implicature, they tended to change the topic or were either distracted by other things in their conversation. The findings of this study had revealed that the violation of the maxim of relevance could be intended to ignore the message, disbelieve the hearer, hide the truth, show anger, feel shy, disagree, convince the hearer, tease, and give a reason. The violation of the maxim could also be unintended or spontaneous to prohibit the hearer, be distracted, and correct the wrong.

5. Conclusion

This study aims at collecting the data of how maxim of relevance was violated in the television miniseries 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' and figuring out the most reason for violating the maxim. Based on the findings, the author found 26 data of maxim of relevance violation and had analyzed and discussed the sample data. It could be concluded that the 26 violations on the maxim of relevance that occurred in the television miniseries 'The Falcon and The Winter Soldier' could be intended or unintended. The speaker intended to violate the maxim of relevance to ignore the message, disbelieve the hearer, hide the truth, show anger, feel shy, disagree, convince the hearer, tease, and give a reason. While the unintended violation of the maxim could be spontaneous to prohibit the hearer, be distracted, and correct the wrong.

The 26 violation found on the maxim of relevance occurred under 13 reasons, namely; ignoring the message (3,85%), disbelieving (15,38%), prohibiting (3,85%), being distracted (3,85%), hiding the truth (19,23%), correcting the wrong (7,68%), showing anger (7,68%), feeling shy (3,85%), disagreeing (19,23%), convincing the hearer (3,85%), agreeing (3,85%), teasing (3,85%), and giving reason (3,85%). This result showed that the most reason for violating the maxim of relevance is to hide the truth and disagree as both happened equally 5 times out of 26, and these violations were intended by the speaker. The results are proof that violating the maxim of relevance can be done for several reasons as long as the speakers have a different assumption or goals with the interlocutors.

There are some suggestions from the author for the other authors who will conduct the next study on the same topic. The violation on the maxim of relevance can be investigated not only in comedy is still newly developed, and not so many authors have used series outside the genre of comedy. So the author proposed the next author analyze the violation on the maxim of relevance in another genre to see whether this cooperative principle is well applied in the conversation within them.

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