

Cooperative Principles of Indonesian Stand-up Comedy

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Abstract— Recently stand-up comedy is popular in Indonesia. One of national TV channels runs a program called SUCI (Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia) from season 1 until 6. This program means to find the best stand-up comedian from a number of participants. Lately, Indra Jegel was nominated as the first winner of SUCI Season 6. This paper aims to study Grice's maxims of cooperative principles in stand-up comedy performed by Indra Jegel in grand final of SUCI Season 6. Before the analysis, the components of linguistic interaction were identified and labeled according to SPEAKING model by Hymes in order to determine the context in which words are used. The study found that mostly Grice's maxims violated are Quality and Relevance. Stand-up comedy generally starts with set up as the background of the story and followed by act out or punches line (or both) as the funny part of the story. Act out is delivered in dramatized facial expression or body movement in order to be funny.

Keywords—stand-up comedy, cooperative principles, quality, relevance.

I. INTRODUCTION

I went window shopping today! I bought four windows. – Tommy Coopers

A short and simple quotation by Cooper above might give such a silent moment to think for a while and get the meaning implied by what Cooper said as 'window shopping'. The phrase 'window shopping' is generally used as an expression of walking around the mall or shopping centre without purchasing any items. But then the next text surprises the reader or listener with what the speaker means by his 'window shopping' which exactly refers to shopping some windows. This kind of text is mostly found in comedy with the intention to entertain the reader and/or listener by surprising them with unexpected and irrational flow of a story.

Recently stand-up comedy is popular in Indonesia. One of national TV channels runs a program called SUCI (Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia) from season 1 until 6 recently. This program means to find the best stand-up comedian from a number of participants. The performances are judged by national best stand-up comedian such as Raditya Dika, Panji, Cak Lontong etc. Lately, Indra Jegel was nominated as the first winner of SUCI Season 6 and Ardit Erwanda as the second winner. This paper aims to study Grice's maxims of cooperative principles in stand-up comedy performed by Indra Jegel with Ramadhan as the theme.

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II. STAND-UP COMEDY

Comedy is defined as an entertainment such as film, play etc. which is funny (Cambridge School Dictionary). Particularly, stand-up comedy is a funny style in which a comedian performs in front of live audiences and usually speaks directly to them (Fisher in Wikipedia). Stand-up performer is commonly known as a stand-up comic or comedian. Usually stand-up comedian recites a group of humorous stories, jokes and one-liners which is usually called as monologue. Some stand-up comedians support their performances by using music or magic tricks. The content of the story generally based on comedian's personal observation or opinion regarding to social issues around the society in funny way. Further, the phrase of 'stand-up' in stand-up comedy does not merely mean to stand up but more than that is to 'stand up for what is right according to his point of view.'

There are several terminologies are used in stand-up comedy such as the following:

- **Act-out:** body movement or facial expression by the comic in his performance
- **Catch phrase:** phrase or statement uttered in particular style as the comic's trademark
- **Closing line:** the last joke of a performance which causes laughs over load
- **Delivery:** the way how the comic delivers what he wants to say
- **Hack:** a comic who performs unoriginal jokes
- **Hook:** special characteristic
- **Impressionist:** a comic who specifies himself to imitate the style or behavior of famous people
- **Inside joke:** the joke which is understood only by specific group of people
- **Punch line:** the funny part of a joke
- **Set up:** an explanation of a joke as the background of story
- **Street jokes:** common jokes which are frequently told
- **Tag/tagline:** a brief sentence said by the comic after punch line
- **Take:** the reaction of a comic by being silent for a while to raise a laugh
- **Timing:** the use of tempo, rhythm and juncture to improve the humor

(Taken from <http://hajingfai.blogspot.co.id/2013/02/istilah-istilah-dalam-stand-up-comedy.html#ixzz4ChHjCtjG>)

III. COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLES

Cooperative principles refer to principles to make one's 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 one is engaged (Yule, 1996). Maxims are rules or principles which interlocutors should observe in conversation and which can give rise to implicatures. Grice defined maxim as a principle that motivates an agent to act, a reason for acting in a certain way (Allott, 2010). In a conversation, a normal speaker will try to be cooperative and obey the maxims. Therefore, the hearer expects the speaker to obey the maxims unless there is a good reason for not doing so. The violations of the maxims can be used to indicate that speaker means more than what he said to convey an implicature. The hearer can be worked out by the hearer on the assumption that the maxims or at least the cooperative principles are being observed at some level. In conversation, it is important to be aware that who communicate meaning via implicature is speakers and who recognize those communicated meanings via inference is listeners (Allott, 2010). The inferences picked are which will carry on the assumption of cooperation. In brief, these maxim specify what participants have to do in order to converse in a maximally efficient, rational, cooperative way: they should speak sincerely, relevantly and clearly, while providing sufficient information (Levinson, 1983). Grice grouped the maxims of cooperative principles in four categories (Grice in Yule, 1996):

Quantity

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

Quality – try to make your contribution one that is true

1. Do not say what you believe to be false
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

Relation – be relevant

Manner – be perspicuous

1. Avoid obscurity of expression
2. Avoid ambiguity
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
4. Be orderly

There are at least three different ways that the maxims can give rise to implicatures (Allott, 2010):

1. **Conformance to the maxims**, including apparent violations. An implicature may arise when the speaker does not violate any maxim, although perhaps seems to do so at the level of what is said.
2. **Clash between maxims**. Two or three maxims may clash in that they recommend different courses of behavior.
3. **Flouting**. Blatant, overt violations of one or more maxims are known as flouting. Flouting gives rise to implicatures by mean of exploitation. Although a maxim is violated at the level of what is sai, the Cooperative Principle is assumed to be in operation as usual (and

perhaps some maxims too). If the speaker is trying to be cooperative then (the hearer may reason) he must have a reason for the maxim-violation, namely to convey a certain implicature.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. SPEAKING Model

Before analyzing the language used in the chosen Indonesian stand-up comedy performance by Indra Jegel, the components of linguistic interaction are identified and labeled according to SPEAKING model by Hymes in order to determine the context in which words are used.

- **Setting or scene**. The setting was in a hall with a stage for the stand-up comedian. It was grand finale to decide the first and second best stand-up comic of SUCI Season 6. There are three judges sitting opposite the stage to give comments for performers, they are Panji, Nirina Zubir and Indro Warkop. Hundreds of audiences are watching this event in the hall. As well, this event is broadcasted live to all around Indonesia. Ardit Arwanda is the competitor.
- **Participants**. The stand-up comic is as the single speaker with audiences and judges as the hearers.
- **Ends**. Indra Jegel performed stand-up comedy to entertain the audiences as well as to show his best performance to be the best stand-up comic in this occasion.
- **Act sequence**. The story told by Indra Jegel in one performance is in Ramadhan theme covering some issues in sub-stories within. Each story or set up must cover at least one punch line of the joke which raises laughter of the audience.
- **Keys**. Since Indra Jegel is the single speaker, he takes some characters and roles in his story by providing the character background in set up every time he starts a story.
- **Instrumentalities**. The speech of comedy was told in casual and informal registers with the facial expressions and body movements to represent the feeling of the story. The stand-up comic usually has his own script of the story before performing on the stage and memorizes the content of the story to be told.
- **Norms**. There is no specific rule for this performance but the performer has about 6 minutes to perform. It needs to bear in mind that all contents of the story are meant to entertain so it is not supposed to be taken personally by the audience or whoever.
- **Genre**. This performance is a stand-up comedy performed by a single comedian for entertainment purposes.

B. Grices's Maxims

Since stand-up comedy is performed by single comedian or comic, there are some situations when the comic involve

audience into his talk.

Petir bukan sembarang petir. Petir menyambar, <i>rumah pak indro mau kesamber petir?</i> (Audience laughs) Oh gk ya? Oya, oke. Oke gak ya?	[HOOK] [PUNCH LINE] [TAG]
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The verse above is always told by the performer to attract audience's attention in his opening as a hook. The comic usually change the second line in rhyming. However, in the joke above unexpectedly the comic directs a question to one of the judges instead of providing the content. Here Grice's maxim of manner is flouting (be orderly) in which the comic does not continue his talk in the order as how it commonly is.

Sebelum Ramadhan, biasa kita semua ziarah ke kuburan. Cuman kuburan sekarang itu udah padet. Udah banyak gitu. Kadang nih ya kita ziarah nih, gak nemu kuburan keluarga kita itu gak nemu. (Audience laugh) Iya, nyari manaaa ni yaa (while acting to look for the place of specific grave) (Audience laughs) Ck... kemaren disini... (Audience laughs) dimanaa yaaa... (still keep on looking for the grave) <i>Dari ujung mayatnya keluar "Ndra sini Ndra!"</i> (Audience laughs and gives applause)	[SET UP] [ACT-OUT] [ACT-OUT] [PUNCH LINE]
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Next, the comic starts his joke by providing the background of the story in set up. Here a little laughs happen in set up even though there is no any violations of the maxims. However, once the audience listen this statement, it is such their agreement with what the comic is telling them. The joke shows that punch line is not the single part to raise laughter from the audience, but act out works as well as punch line. However, the way the comic is acting out to represent the situation is not the same as how it is in the real life. The comic dramatizes it. The comic flout Grice's maxim of Quality (do not say what you believe to be false) in two parts, first is in "Ck... kemaren disini... dimanaa yaaa...". This sentence shows how hard he is looking for the grave which might have moved somewhere by itself. In fact, it is not possible to happen. Second is in punch line by saying the human corpse wakes up and call. In reality, human corpse can never be back to life from the grave yard or even talk like how the living human in general.

Without any violation of Grice's maxims in the following set up, audience laughs once the comic tells what he finds in that situation. Again this laughter refers to audience's agreement with the comic. The part of the joke above does not contain any punch line but it is not lack of laughter since the act out is strong enough to raise the laughs. The act out is dramatized by the comic.

Iya, kuburan sekarang itu udah rapet-rapet. Kalau kita ziarah nih, kita bisa aja punggung-punggung sama keluarga lain gitu. (Audiences laugh). Iya punggung-punggung gitu. Makanya kalau ada orang keluar nangis itu kadang bukan karena sedih, karena kena sikut aja. Geser kau sedikit. Auuhh. Geser kau sedikit auuh. Geser kau sedikit auuhh (while acting out) (Audience laughs and gives applause) Keluar "uhhuuhh uhhuuhh." (crying expression)	[SET UP] [ACT OUT]
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Seharusnya ya untuk mengatur supaya kuburan gak terlalu rame menjelang Ramadhan, sistem penziarah ini dibuat sistem waiting list. (Audience laughs) Dipanggilin satu-satu gitu. "Keluarga Bapak Bambang, masuk masuk." (Copying the way of an attendant) "Keluarga Bapak Heru. Keluarga Bapak Heru dua kali. Keluarga Bapak Heru!" (Getting louder voice) <i>Ini kalo gak ada mayatnya kita idupin lagi ni ya.</i> (Audience laughs)	[SET UP] [PUNCH LINE]
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The set up of this part is not too long because it is in the story background of previous part. Audience laughs when the comic mentions 'waiting list.' It is unexpected and uncommon for the people to have this kind of idea for visiting the graveyard. This is not relevant and violates Grice's maxim of Relevance. Next, apparently the comic flouts Grice's maxim of Quality (do not say what you believe to be false) by saying 'Ini kalo gak ada mayatnya kita idupin lagi ni ya.' Human corpse cannot be woken up to life.

Atau sistem ziarahnya menggunakan durasi. (Audience laughs a little) Iya. Jadinya gak lama-lama gitu. A: "Bapak Ardit Erwanda" Dateng B: "Ohiya saya saya saya" A: "Udah siap pak?" B: "Siap siap saya siap (while acting out to get ready for running) siap siap. (Audience laughs) Eh eh bunga-bunga sini sini. Aer-aer aer sini. Siap pak." A: "Ziarah, waktunya satu menit dimulai dari sekarang" Nyiram bunga,, aer.. balik. (a bit running going to the grave and watering then leaving the grave) Aduh belum nangis lagi (Going back to the grave) hauuhh hauuhhh hauuhh hauuhhh (crying expression with two hands up for praying) (Audience laughs and gives applause)	[SET UP] [ACT OUT] [ACT OUT] [PUNCH LINE]
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There are some points cause laughter among the audiences here which flout Grice's maxim of Relevance (be relevant). The points are 'Do'a kamu bagus' (your prayer is good) and

'*Nebar bunganya juga bagus*' (pouring some flowers on the grave). Both are unusual and uncommon to be judged or scored either it is good or bad. In terms of overtime, it is a kind of inside joke which only those who watch SUCI for many times get the point or message of this joke. The people who may watch it for the first time might not laugh since they have no clue what this is about. Overtime is the term used by the judge once the comic performs his stand-up comedy more than the allocated time. The comic did a good job in punch line as a satire to place himself as the winner in this occasion even though no one guarantees he becomes the winner of this performance. Grice's maxim of Quality (do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence) is flouting. He claims himself to be the winner without any reasons.

In this part the comic go to the next case but still related to the theme which is Ramadhan. Once the comic starts the next topic of story, he provides longer set up as the background of the story. Mostly the comic's act-out raises the laughs. Punch line is delivered together with act out which cause more laughter among the audience even though no violation or flouting happens there.

Kalau terawih nih ya di Ramadhan itu kalau terawih, aku paling gak seneng nengok anak-anak. Selain terawihnya main-main, wudhunya juga main-main. Anak-anak nih wudhu asal-asalan tapi sholat.	[SET UP]
Wudhu asal wudhu aja itu. Tangan, muka, pala udah siap. (While practicing and leaving to pray) (Audience laughs)	[ACT OUT]
Sekali pernah ada wudhunya bener. Bagus gitu wah bener, balik malah main sarung woy woy hey... (While practicing playing sarong) (Laughter)	[PUNCH LINE & ACT OUT]

Iya. Anak-anak pun kalo misalnya puasa main petasan. Aku paling inget petasan satu itu petasan roket. Petasan roket kalo terbang gak pernah lurus. Gak pernah.	[SET UP]
Diidupin, wisshhuuwiiish. (Practicing how the firecracker is going here and there using his hand like a rocket) (Audience laughs)	[ACT OUT]
Itu pasti karena disitu letak kesenangannya. Karena kalau petasannya lurus, bosen. "Woy indra punya petasan woy woy woiii..."	
Diidupin, cuusssss. (Representing how the firecracker is going straight up and he is looking up to sky following it with a flat facial expression) (Audience laughs)	[ACT OUT]
Darr (In flat expression and intonation) (Audience laughs)	[PUNCH LINE]
Kaya gitu aja petasan gua. Kutandai kau ya. Balik balik balik	[TAGLINE]

causes raising laughter. So far, it can be drawn that not all the punch line is followed by a tagline. Here the comic make use of his catch phrase '*kutandai kau ya.*' No specific maxim is flouting here. The following part has the same case in which act out is dominantly used and punch line affects more laughter come from the audience.

Sama aku paling seneng sama petasan, petasan korek. Petasan yang diidupinya meledaknya lama. Itu aku bilang petasan like a boss. (Audience laughs) Iya. Kita main petasan itu keren kali.	[SET UP]
Kita idupin, jesssss... (Throwing back the firecracker) jedar... (While showing an act like a boss) (Audience laughs)	[ACT OUT]
Cuman petasan itu keren kalau petasannya bagus. Coba mlempem. (Audience laughs)	
Kita idupin, jesss..... (Throwing the bomb and trying to showing like a boss action for about three times but it does not explode)	[ACT OUT]
Kok gak meledak, Pak? (Picking up the firecracker and pinching it using fingers)	
Jedar. (Showing an act like a boss). (Audience laughs)	[PUNCH LINE & ACT OUT]

The story below is the last part of the performance with different topic but in the same theme.

After providing the story background, the comic provides some examples to build the concept of the audience how his poetry is working. In the examples, audience laughs at some points of the surprising meaning of the verse. Audience's response shows their appreciation how the comic could arrange the words to be a beautiful sentence in the poetry. Then, laughter happens when the comic comes up with the next talk about cat. In the last minute of the performance, the audience is surprised by a short unexpected punch line unlike the previous examples which has full of content. Here Grice's maxim of Quantity is violated (make your contribution as informative as is required).

In the joke above, the comic mostly shows the funny part of the story in act out. Then punch line is placed to strengthen the funny act out with flat expression and intonation of speech. It

