

The application of generosity maxim: a case study in “Divergent” movie

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Abstract – Maxim is general principle which is thought to underlie the efficient use of language. This research was conducted to find out the existence of the generosity maxim applied by the characters in “Divergent” movie and the factors which caused the characters applying the maxim in their utterances throughout the movie. Data of the research was utterances used in the movie. The data was identified by using theory of maxim (Leech, 1983) to see if it merely applied the maxim of generosity and what factors influenced it use in the data. The data were analyzed by using the theory of politeness maxim proposed by Leech (1983) and the statements about factors that influence the application of politeness maxims proposed by Holmes (2001). The result analysis was described descriptively. Documentation and observation methods are applied in collecting the data. The result showed that the application of the generosity maxim existing in “Divergent” movie and the factors influencing the application of the maxim in this movie are gender and context of situation. The factors which most frequently influenced the application of the generosity maxim in the movie is the context of situation, and the factor which least frequently influenced the application of the maxim is gender.

Keywords: *politeness, generosity, maxim, factor*

1. Introduction

Communication is very important in human life. Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Luxenburg, 2010). An information can be transmitted or delivered orally or in writing. People create languages, gestures, and manuscript to deliver what they want to tell to the others. However, people have a certain culture to be followed as general agreement in their society. One part of that culture is to differentiate good attitudes from the bad ones. So is in speaking. In conversation, people should speak in a way that is considered as the good one to avoid conflict with the others. People should be polite in communicating and interacting with others; in behavior, attitude, and in way of speaking as well.

Politeness means behavior that is respectful and considerate of other people (<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=politeness>). In social life, politeness should be applied to make and maintain good relationship with other people. Politeness is described as a genuine desire to be pleasant to others, or as underlying motivation for an individual's linguistic behavior (Thomas, 1995). By being polite, people will be able to minimize the probability of conflict with others. They will respect each other and there will be no one being offended. By applying politeness in everyday life, harmony in society should be able to be maintained. Politeness is important to make all the parties in a conversation feel comfortable to each other. By applying politeness, they will be able to create a good and comfortable situation when they are having a talk in, for example, a discussion, a meeting, a family gathering, a community gathering, and all forms of interactions with the other people.

Politeness applied in a society has to be in line with the culture of the society itself, but mostly politeness exists and is applied in every culture around the world. Politeness is realized by people in a region by following particular norms in line with the culture where they live, but generally, the purpose of politeness is to maintain harmony in a society. Politeness seeks opportunity for comity (Leech, 1983). The term "comity" is defined as friendly social atmosphere or social harmony (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/comity>).

Leech proposed a theory of politeness namely politeness principle. This theory will be applied in analyzing the data in this research. Politeness principle might be formulated as minimizes the expression of impolite beliefs and maximizes the expression of polite beliefs (Leech, 1983). Politeness principle is divided into six maxims, such as the tact maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, the modesty maxim, the agreement maxim, and the sympathy maxim. This research is focused only to Generosity Maxim.

Leech states in his book entitled *Principles of Pragmatics* about the generosity maxim as "speaker has to minimize the expression of beliefs which express or imply benefit to self and maximize the expression of beliefs which express or imply cost to self" (Leech, 1983). The generosity maxim is centered on the speaker and 'others' should be put first instead of the 'self'. It is provided some examples (Leech, 1983) below.

1. You can lend me your car (Impolite)
2. I can lend you my car (Polite)

3. We must come and have dinner with you (Impolite)
4. You must come and have dinner with us (Polite)

The second sentence, which is an offer, and the fourth sentence, which is an invitation, are presumed to be polite for two reasons; the first reason is because they imply benefit to hearer, and the second reason is because they imply cost to self. But in the first and third sentences, the speaker implies benefit to self and cost to other, so those sentences do not belong to generosity maxim.

The factors influencing the application of the generosity maxim in conversation are analyzed by using theory proposed by Holmes (2001). Holmes stated about some factors that can influence the application of politeness, in this case the generosity maxim which is a part of Leech's politeness principles. Holmes also stated about three factors that may influence the application of politeness, such as age, gender, and context of situation.

People's speech varies at different ages (Holmes, 2001). In a conversation between a young participants and an old participants, the languages that the participants used has to be difference with the language they used when they are having a conversation with the people in the same age. This is obviously affected the application of politeness in the conversation. Age may has strong effects in the application of politeness in conversation.

Conversation between people with different gender may also cause the application of politeness in a conversation, especially when they are talking about something precious or privacy. Women and men do not speak in exactly the same way as each other in any community (Holmes, 2001). The way or the feel about how someone speaks to the people with the same gender will be different compared to the way or the feel when he/ she is talking to the people who have different gender.

The last factor described here is the context of situation. People can speak in different ways to each other according to the situation during their conversation. For example, conversation between people in a formal meeting must be having differences compared to the ordinary conversations between friends. Different situation makes different ways for someone to say something to other people. Certain social factors have been relevant for the particular language variety used (Holmes, 2001). These factors are participants (people involved in the conversation), the setting or social context (where they are speaking), the topic (what they are talking about), and the function (the reason why they are speaking).

For the data source, the movie chosen is entitled "Divergent". This movie was released in March 2014 in the United States and directed by Neil Norman Burger, an American film director. This movie lasts for 2 hours and 19 minutes. This movie story focuses on the adventure of a girl called Tris in a futuristic world where the society was divided into some factions or groups based on their natural personalities to keep the peace. This movie is a kind of action movie. This movie is chosen because it is full of tense situation and action scenes, and it seems to be more interesting to observe generosity maxim in this kind of movie rather than in movies describing about everyday modern life or modern teenage stories, which seems like it is very common. Furthermore, this movie is based on an international bestseller novel which has the same title written by an American author Veronica Roth.

2. Method

In analyzing the data of this research, it will be applied a part of Leech's politeness principle theory, that is the theory of generosity maxim (Leech, 1983).

The data in this research is in form of utterances which are spoken by the characters in *Divergent* movie. The utterances which are picked as the data contain the expressions of generosity maxim. It was applied documentation method and note-taking technique in this study.

The first step to start the research is by watching the whole movie. This is done to know and understand the whole story, so it will be easier to analyze the data since the analysis also focuses on the situation when the movie characters utter such utterances. Then the utterances containing the expressions of the generosity maxim will be chosen as data and then noted. To avoid any mistakes, the *Divergent* movie script was downloaded and read as well to compare and check the true utterances spoken by the characters. The utterances noted obviously have to be relevant with the theory applied in analyzing the data in this research. They have to contain the application of the generosity maxim stated by Leech.

After the data had been collected, they were analyzed and the presented in descriptive method. Firstly, the data are showed in form of conversations, and the expressions containing the application of the generosity maxim are presented in bold type. Then, each conversation is followed by the description of the analysis. It is described about how the data is classified into the generosity maxim and what factors caused the application of the generosity maxim in that situation. It is also described a little bit about the situation or what was happening when the movie characters were having the conversation containing the application of the generosity maxim. The data in this research are only limited to the conversation or dialogues in the movie, so any monologues would not be classified as the data of this research.

3. Results and Discussion

The result shows that there are some utterances spoken by the characters of "Divergent" movie contain the application of the generosity maxim. In this part, it is explained about the reason why those utterances are categorized as the generosity maxim and the factor which influences the application of the maxim in the conversation. The data will be presented one by one in form of conversation followed by the analysis. As it is stated before, the data or the expressions containing the maxim were presented in bold type.

(1) In the Corridor of Dauntless Building

[Jeanine stops as she recognizes Tris]

Jeanine : Prior. You're Andrew Prior's daughter, aren't you? Beatrice.

Tris : It's just Tris now.

Jeanine : Tris, I like that.

[Jeanine notices Tris's tattoo just above her chest]

Jeanine : You made an impressive choice, Tris, despite your parents and your test results.

Tris : You've seen my test result?

Jeanine : Of course. I'm glad you were smart enough to know your own mind.
Let me know if you ever need anything.

Data in conversation (1) above is proper to generosity maxim. The conversation was between Tris and Jeanine when they were in corridor of Dauntless building. Tris and her friends were walking down the corridor when they saw Jeanine talking with some people. As Jeanine saw and recognized Tris, she stopped. They had met once before at a big ceremony. Jeanine remembered Tris and her family, the Prior family. "Tris" is a nickname from her real name "Beatrice". She changed her nickname since she left her family and joined with a new faction that she chose.

In generosity maxim, speaker has to minimize the expression of beliefs which express or imply benefit to self and maximize the expression of beliefs which express or imply cost to self (Leech, 1983). In this conversation, Jeanine applied the Generosity Maxim well. Jeanine maximized cost to herself by offering some help to Tris. She got cost more than benefit. Jeanine offered some help to Tris by saying "Let me know if you ever need anything". Jeanine showed her attention to Tris.

The factor which influenced the politeness maxim in the conversation was *context of situation (the function)*. Jeanine as a faction leader spoke politely to Tris, who was just an ordinary faction member. Related to her position as a leader, Jeanine should talk politely to all people so that they would respect her. Thus, Jeanine said something like "let me know if you ever need anything" to show politeness and kindness to Tris and also to make and maintain good relationship between other people and herself. Although the relation between Jeanine and Tris was not close, Jeanine tried to speak politely to Tris by stating that she would help Tris if Tris needed anything.

(2) Four's Room

[Four finishes tending to her wounds and stands]

Four : You should lie down, get some sleep.

Tris : Yeah.

Four : **I'll take the floor.**

[the next morning Tris wakes up to find Four not in the room, as she gets up, Four enters the room]

Four : How are you feeling?

Tris : Better.

Data in conversation (2) is proper to the generosity maxim. The setting of the conversation was in Four's room. Four saved Tris after some people hurt her by trying to throw her into chasm inside Dauntless building, and one of the doers was Tris's friend named Al. After Four defeated those people, he took Tris into his room, gave her a sweater, and took care of her wounds. Since it was already night, Four asked Tris to sleep on the bed in his room, meanwhile Four would sleep on the floor. It can be concluded that Four showed his attention to Tris.

Four said "I'll take the floor". This utterance is belonged to the Generosity Maxim, since Four maximized cost to himself by saying that he would sleep on the floor, and he minimized benefit to himself by letting Tris slept on his bed.

This maxim application was obviously influenced by *gender* factor. As a boy, Four spoke to Tris kindly by showing his attention, especially since Tris's condition was not good as well. Four offered that he would sleep on the floor and let Tris slept on his bed by saying "I'll take the floor". Four showed his generosity to a girl. He let Tris sleep on his bed, while he would sleep on the floor. This also means that Four showed respect to Tris in sharing his bedroom to her.

(3) In Dauntless Building, Near the Chasm

Tris : It's my fault that he's dead.

Four : No, it's not because of you. He made his own choice. He would have been factionless, he was not gonna pass the final test.

Tris : Neither am I.

Four : Why do you say that?

Tris : You know why. And as soon as all the others find out, they're gonna kill me.

Four : **I'm not gonna let that happen.**

Data in conversation (3) can be classified to the generosity maxim. This conversation occurred between Four and Tris after Tris found that her friend named Al died because he committed suicide. Some people found Al's corpse and pull it up from the bottom of chasm, Tris was shocked. After that she remembered the result from her aptitude test long time ago that she was a Divergent. Divergents were people with special personality and way of thinking. The society thought Divergents as threat to the peace. They would be hunted and killed. Tris was really afraid if people found out about this fact. Four had figured it out since Four became her test administrator several times. He realized after seeing Tris' reaction in the test that her true test result was not the same as what she said to everyone. Four wanted to help Tris and did not want her to be in danger.

Four showed his attention to Tris and offered a protection indirectly by saying "I'm not gonna let that happen". Four maximized the cost to himself by protecting Tris, or in other words, by letting himself to be in danger for Tris' sake, and minimized cost to Tris since he would help Tris out. Four minimized benefit to himself as well.

This application of generosity maxim was influenced by *context of situation (the topic)*. The topic of their conversation was the consequences of being Divergents. Four wanted to help and he offered a protection to Tris. Four did not want other people found out the truth. Four said "I'm not gonna let that happen" and it showed that Four did not wanted Tris to be in such a danger. If Tris wanted to survive, the fact that she was a Divergent must be hidden from the people in the society, since they considered Divergent as a trouble for the existence of the faction system in the society, as well as the peace.

(4) Erudite Building – Jeanine's Office

Jeanine: You're aware that Abnegation is undermining the faction system, they're breaking laws, harboring Divergents?

Tris : No, I didn't know that. But if that's true, then I'm glad that I left.

Jeanine: See I need to know that I can count on you to enforce the law, even if it's been broken by someone close to you, someone you care about.

Tris : Of course.

Jeanine: Good. **Then I'll have my car take you back to Dauntless.**

Data in conversation (4) is proper to Generosity Maxim. The conversation was between Jeanine and Tris. At that time, Tris visited her brother, Caleb, in Erudite building. After that, a problem was happened between Tris and two Erudite official. Tris attacked them when suddenly, Jeanine, the leader of Erudite faction, stopped that conflict and then they had a talk in Jeanine's office. Jeanine seemed to be glad that Tris had come to Erudite building and they could talk. When Tris wanted to go back to Dauntless building, Jeanine let Tris to use her car to go back to Dauntless building.

Jeanine applied the generosity maxim by saying "I'll have my car take you back to Dauntless". Jeanine maximized the cost and minimized the benefit to herself by lending Tris her car. Jeanine showed that she cared about Tris, even the Dauntless building was not close from the Erudite building.

Context of situation (the participants) is the factor affected the application of the generosity maxim in the conversation above. The relationship between Jeanine and Tris was not close, but Jeanine still showed her attention by speaking politely to Tris. Jeanine said "I'll have my car take you back to Dauntless" to show her generosity as a leader toward Tris who was just a faction member.

(5) Dauntless Building – Simulation Room

[Four takes Tris into the simulation room]

Four : Shut the door.

[Tris closes the door]

Four : You're gonna practice.

Tris : In my fear landscapes.

Four : **No, in mine. We go in together.**

Data in conversation (5) belongs to the generosity maxim. Four took Tris into a simulation room in Dauntless building to tell Tris how to pass the second training stage and what she should do in order not to be found by the people about her status as a Divergent. A simulation test was done in form of hallucination in the mind of the participant, but this time Four let Tris did it in his mind, in his fear landscapes. Entering someone's mind was not good since it was full of privacy information. Because in this case Four offered help to Tris, it was considered that he applied the generosity maxim. He maximized the cost to himself by letting Tris entered his mind, and he also minimized the cost to Tris since he helped Tris by sharing his knowledge and strategies to Tris. He also accompanied Tris to do the simulation test, although this test was usually done alone by the participants, conducted by the administrator.

The politeness maxim was used in conversation (5) because of *context of situation (the participant)*. Four was a Dauntless instructor and Tris was a Dauntless member. Four showed his attention as an instructor toward a member like Tris by offering help. By saying that utterance, Four showed kindness to Tris. The relation between Tris and Four had been getting closer up to this situation.

4. Conclusion

The application of the generosity maxim is exist and found in Divergent movie. The maxim is applied in utterances spoken by the characters of the movie. Generosity maxim is not much applied in the movie. It is found only some utterances containing the maxim.

The factors which influence the application of the generosity maxim in Divergent movie are gender and context of situation. Context of situation gives more influence to the application of the generosity maxim. If the situation changes, the way how people speak to each other changes as well. Gender does not give much influence to the application of the generosity maxim in Divergent movie.

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