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Violating Grice's Maxims in 'Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief': A Discourse Analysis of Deception

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana Rick Riordan secara strategis melanggar maksim-maksim Grice dalam "Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief" untuk membuat cerita menjadi lebih menarik. Pendekatan pembacaan yang cermat mengidentifikasi bagaimana tokoh utama, Percy, seorang remaja pemberontak, menyimpang dari kaidah Grice melalui sarkasme dan pembangkangan. Pelanggaran-pelanggaran ini mencerminkan bagaimana mereka berkontribusi pada perkembangan cerita dan hubungan karakter. Analisis ini mengungkapkan bagaimana Riordan memanfaatkan pelanggaran Maksim sebagai alat bercerita, menciptakan pengalaman yang lebih menarik dan mudah dipahami oleh pembaca.

Kata Kunci: *Grice Maxim, Pelanggaran Maksim, Sarkasme*

Abstract

This study examines how Rick Riordan strategically violates Grice's Maxims in "Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief" to enhance the narrative. A close reading approach identifies how the protagonist, Percy, a rebellious teenager, deviates from the Maxim of Manner through sarcasm and defiance. These violations reflect his character and contribute to humor and character relationships. This analysis reveals how Riordan utilizes Maxim violations as a storytelling tool, creating a more engaging and relatable experience for young adult readers.

Keyword: *Grice Maxim, Maxim Violation, Sarcasm*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is fundamental to human life. Ideally, good communication means having a clear and shared understanding where no information is hidden (Boni, 2016). In social settings, the cooperative principle guides people to communicate during conversations effectively. Grice (1975) stated that speakers and hearers have a mutual obligation to make their contributions informative, truthful, relevant, and clear. The principle that Grice proposed is known as Grice Maxim. The existence of this maxim does not guarantee the ideal communication in every conversation. Miscommunication arises when someone says something unintentionally irrelevant to the conversation (Helman, 2015). Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011) stated that speakers can intentionally violate a maxim to convey a meaning different from the literal words spoken. Borjesson (2017:100) distinguishes two levels of meaning: what is said (semantics) and what is meant (implicature), the latter being the speaker's concealed purpose and a challenge in pragmatics. This is often seen in conversation when speakers use sarcasm or irony where flouting a maxim creates a negative pragmatic effect, meaning the intended message is the opposite of the literal meaning.

Sarcasm is a fascinating phenomenon that involves intentionally expressing the opposite of one's intended meaning (Chomsky, 1965 p. 83). As part of pragmatics, sarcasm can sometimes go against the existing law. Sarcasm is generally not considered a politeness strategy in traditional pragmatic theory. It is commonly viewed as a violation of maxims, particularly the maxims of quality and manner. According to this perspective, the violation that occurs in Grice's maxim is intentional by conveying a meaning opposite to the words' literal meaning. The speaker is not being truthful, and by making the meaning ambiguous, the speaker is not being perspicuous. Therefore, the violation of the maxim relies on context, which is not meant to be taken literally and is influenced by social and cultural factors, making the subject a great example of a pragmatic phenomenon. The studies explore various contexts, including therapy sessions (Sobhani & Saghebi, 2014), fantasy novels (analysis of Percy Jackson), and television series (Putri et al., 2014; focus on sarcasm in Vampire Diaries). These analyses highlight how maxim violations contribute to character development, plot advancement, and genre conventions (e.g., humor in fantasy). While these studies identify different maxim violations (e.g., Taufiq & Marlina, 2022, analyze quality, relation, and quantity violations in Tom Sawyer), a gap exists in exploring these violations' broader social or cultural implications. Future research could delve deeper into the motivations behind maxim violations and their impact on character relationships and the overall narrative.

As part of this research, the aim is to analyze how the book violates the Grice Maxim Principles to achieve various communicative effects and enhance the narrative. The violation of the maxim is a common feature of Percy Jackson's narration and dialogue. The book's author intentionally deviates from the maxims to achieve various communicative effects. Examining the maxim violation in Percy Jackson provides valuable insights into Riordan's writing style and his use of language to achieve various narrative effects. It demonstrates how intentional deviations from the cooperative communication principles can enhance a story's humor, irony, suspense, and character development.

RESEARCH METHOD

The primary data is dialogue from the novel *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief*. This focus aligns with Grice's theories, which center on communication through conversation. The study employs a documentary method, analyzing existing text (the novel) to understand language use and communication. A close reading approach involves multiple readings to identify instances of Maxim violations, their motivations, and their impact on the story. A descriptive qualitative method is used to explore and describe Riordan's use of maxim violation based on textual data. A combined descriptive and analytical approach is used. Descriptions provide context for the violations (situations, characters, specific words). The analysis identifies, categorizes, and quantifies violations, revealing patterns in the data. This approach balances the "how much" (frequency) with the "why" and "how" (meaning and impact within the story).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section delves into the results and discussion of the analysis conducted. The documentative method serves as the framework for analyzing the data gathered. Each piece of data is examined based on the specific Gricean maxim it violates. The analysis concentrates primarily on dialogues within the novel, particularly those where these conversational maxims are strategically violated. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, the context surrounding the data is provided, illuminating the situations that might have prompted these intentional violations.

This analysis examines how characters in the novel "Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief" violate Grice's Maxims of conversation. Grice's theory proposes four principles for cooperative communication: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The analysis finds that characters frequently violate the Maxim of Manner, emphasizing clear, brief, and relevant communication. The analysis reveals that characters in the novel frequently deviate from this

principle, employing sarcasm, rudeness, or indirect language. These violations serve various narrative functions.

Maxim Quantity

According to Grice (1979), the maxim of quantity emphasizes providing the necessary amount of information in conversation. This means striking a balance—avoiding overly detailed statements or, conversely, a lack of crucial information. Violations of this maxim can occur in two ways: speakers might express insufficient information, leaving listeners confused, or they might speak excessively, providing unnecessary details that hinder clear communication.

[3-1] Gabe scratched his double chin. 'Maybe if you hurry with that seven-layer dip... And maybe if the kid apologizes for interrupting my poker game.'

'I'm sorry,' I muttered.

'I'm really sorry I interrupted your incredibly important poker game. Please go back to it right now.'

Percy's statement, "I'm sorry I interrupted your incredibly important poker game," violates the Maxim of Quantity in the analyzed dialogue. The unnecessary detail "incredibly important" creates a sarcastic tone, revealing Percy's animosity towards his slow-to-understand stepfather. This violation highlights their strained relationship and foreshadows Percy's use of sarcasm throughout the story.

[3 - 2] "My mom created the olive tree. The people saw that her gift was better, so they named the city after her.' '*They must really like olives.*'

'Oh, forget it.'

'Now, if she'd invented pizza – that I could understand.'

'I said, forget it!'

Analyzing Percy's response to Annabeth's explanation of their parents' rivalry, one can see that there is a violation of the Maxim of Quantity. His sarcastic remark, "They must really like olives," with its exaggerated emphasis, expresses his disagreement with Athena's victory and implies his view of the Athenians' foolishness. Further, his comment about pizza introduces an unrelated topic, highlighting another violation. Despite their seeming superfluity, these violations likely function as playful bickering, a social lubricant Percy uses to break the ice and ease tension with Annabeth amidst their parents' historical conflict.

Maxim Quality

While the maxim of quality, outlined by Grice (1975), emphasizes truthfulness and avoiding demonstrably false information, the study of language reveals a deeper

complexity. Speech acts, for instance, encompass more than just the literal meaning of spoken words.

[3 – 3] 'A hellhound got into the forest,' Chiron continued.

'Those can only be summoned from the Fields of Punishment, and it had to be summoned by someone within the camp. Hades must have a spy here. He must suspect Poseidon will try to use Percy to clear his name. Hades would very much like to kill this young half-blood before he can take on the quest.'

'Great. That's two major gods who want to kill me.'

As the narrative throws a curveball with a hellhound breaching Camp Half-Blood's defenses, Percy's seemingly nonchalant response ("great") to the news of potential conflict with two powerful gods violates the Maxim of Quantity. This principle emphasizes truthful and relevant information. Percy's statement likely contradicts his true fear, suggesting a personality that uses humor or deflection to mask emotions. This sarcastic reaction, highlighting the absurdity of his situation, showcases him as a demigod who confronts danger with wit, even in the face of Olympian hostility. However, his focus on the gods might overshadow Chiron's implication of a potential internal threat (a camp spy) that facilitated the monster's entry.

[3 – 4] 'Relax,' Chiron told me. 'Keep a clear head. And remember, you may be about to prevent the biggest war in human history.'

'Relax.' I said, 'I'm very relaxed.'

Despite Chiron's encouragement and relaxation techniques, Percy remains apprehensive about the mission, a feeling underscored by his physical reaction (sweat, anxiety). This discrepancy between his words, relaxed, and body language suggests a violation of the Maxim of Quantity. Percy's statement doesn't reflect his true emotions (concern, fear), potentially hindering communication with Chiron. Directly expressing his apprehension could benefit Percy by allowing Chiron to offer more tailored support or reassurance.

Maxim Relation

Luhman (1992) stated that communication is a complex process that involves more than just sending and receiving messages. The ideal communication must relate to what each person has been discussing. However, as Sadehvandi (2011) explained, speakers can intentionally violate the principle of communication. It means that they can intentionally have an unrelated conversation during communication. Grice (1975) claimed that the maxim of relation is where one tries to be relevant and say things pertinent to the discussion.

[3 – 5] 'Percy,' he said. 'Don't be discouraged about leaving Yancy. It's... it's for the best.'

I mumbled, 'Okay, sir.'

'I mean...' Mr Brunner wheeled his chair back and forth, like he wasn't sure what to say. 'This isn't the right place for you. It was only a matter of time.'

My eyes stung.

'No, no,' Mr Brunner said. 'Oh, confound it all. What I'm trying to say... you're not normal, Percy. That's nothing to be –'

"Thanks a lot sir, for reminding me."

Chapter 2 of Rick Riordan's "Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief" explores Percy's emotional turmoil through his behavior. Witnessing a monstrous attack (unremembered by others) triggers outbursts, including one towards his English teacher, costing him a Yale invitation. Even Mr. Brunner's attempt at comfort seems to backfire, with Percy's sarcastic response ("thanks a lot, sir") violating the Maxim of Relation (staying relevant). This likely stems from his emotional state and highlights how emotions can distort meaning. The sarcasm can also be seen as a response to Mr. Brunner's comment about Percy not being normal, shattering a perception of understanding. Furthermore, this exchange might foreshadow Percy's underlying awareness of his difference, piquing the reader's interest in the source of his "abnormality."

[3 – 6] 'Percy,' my mom said, 'there's too much to explain and insufficient time. We have to get you to safety.'

'Safety from what? Who's after me?' "Oh, nobody much. Just the lord of the dead and a few of his blood-thirstiest minions."

The opening chapters establish Percy's confusion. Grover's panicked arrival on vacation, followed by his mother's secretive trip and Grover's unhelpful answer ("Oh, nobody much. Just the Lord of the Dead...") all violate the Maxim of Relation by withholding relevant information. This secrecy isolates Percy and fuels his confusion, but for the reader, it sparks excitement for the fantastical world about to unfold. It also foreshadows the coming conflict – Percy losing his mother, his demigod identity, and the accusation of stealing Zeus' lightning bolt –while Percy remains blissfully unaware. Grover's confusing answer, despite hindering communication, hints at his role as protector and the approaching danger.

Maxim of Manner

[3 – 7] 'Mr Brunner!' I cried.

'Ah, good, Percy,' he said. 'Now we have four for pinochle.'

"Oh, I suppose I must say it. Welcome to Camp Half-Blood. There. Now don't expect me to be glad to see you."

Upon arrival at Camp Half-Blood, Percy encounters contrasting greetings. While Chiron offers a warm welcome, Mr. D's sigh and unenthusiastic "oh, I suppose I must say it" violate the Maxim of Manners. This indirect negativity, further bolstered by his statement, "Don't expect me to be glad to see you," implies he finds Percy unwelcome. However, this exchange also serves a dual purpose. First, Percy's surprise at Mr. Brunner's true identity (Chiron) injects humor into the scene. Second, it reveals Mr. D's personality as far removed from the usual festive spirit associated with Dionysus, the god he represents.

[3 – 8] She rolled her eyes and mumbled under her breath, 'I can't believe I thought you were the one.' 'What's your problem?' I was getting angry now. 'All I know is, I kill some bull guy – 'Don't talk like that!' Annabeth told me. 'You know how many kids at this camp wish they'd had your chance?'

'To get killed?'

Arriving at Cabin 11, representing Hermes, Annabeth informs Percy it's his temporary home until his godly parent claims him. Anxious about the number of unclaimed campers, Percy persistently questions the head counselor. Annabeth, offering a contrasting perspective, argues that defeating the Minotaur, a feat many would covet, increases his chances of being claimed. Percy's response, "To get killed?" violates the Maxim of Manner. Misinterpreting her words, he assumes wishing for such an opportunity signifies a death wish rather than proving oneself. While this impulsive question has no direct plot impact, it establishes their dynamic. This violation reveals their potential for bickering as Percy resents the burden implied by Annabeth, while she views his pestering as ungrateful. This frustration fuels her scolding, prompting Percy's own violation, setting the stage for future clashes.

[3 – 9] I blinked. 'Like... the war god?'

Clarisse sneered. 'You got a problem with that?'

'No,' I said, recovering my wits. *'It explains the bad smell.'*

In a tense encounter at the camp restroom (Chapter 6, pg. 69), Percy's surprise at meeting Clarisse, daughter of Ares, quickly sours as her demeanor evokes past bullies. His concluding remark, "that explains the bad smell," violates the Maxim of Manners with its rudeness. This coping mechanism, mirroring how he dealt with bullies, likely stems from the association between Ares, the war god, and the unpleasantness of war. Percy's sarcastic connection between Ares and Clarisse's smell foreshadows future conflict. This initial dislike, established through their rude exchange, hints at future tension with Ares himself. Despite

being the newcomer facing a seemingly stronger opponent, Percy emerges victorious in this encounter, foreshadowing his potential to overcome challenges related to Ares.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, examining Grice Maxim's violations in "Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief" reveals their power as a storytelling tool. Percy, a rebellious teenager, constantly breaks the Maxim of Manner. His sarcasm and defiance mirror real teenage behavior, making him relatable. These violations also add humor and build rapport between characters. The author strategically uses Maxim violations to create a more engaging and immersive reading experience for the young adult audience.

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