

A Pragmatic Analysis of Flouting Maxims in Classroom Verbal Interaction as Seen in *Freedom Writers* Movie

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ABSTRACT

Successful classroom verbal interactions will occur when both the teacher and the students intend to be cooperative conversational agents contributing to the conversation's aims. In Pragmatics, this underlying principle is called Grice's conversational maxims. However, in the classroom, both sides often intentionally flout these conversational maxims. Thus, this research aimed to conduct a pragmatic analysis to investigate the types of Grice's conversational maxims violated by the main character of *Freedom Writers* movie along with the categories of teacher's verbal interactions found in that movie under Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System (FIACS). Using the document analysis method, the researcher used the movie transcript as the primary document to be analyzed. The findings showed that the four maxims were violated intentionally for several reasons, including warning the students of the consequences of their actions, encouraging them, avoiding certain topics of discussion, and emphasizing important messages without blatantly stating them to the whole class, and avoiding hurting the students' feelings. Meanwhile, under Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), direct and indirect talks could be found in the movie. The result of this study can provide educators and pre-service teachers a glimpse of the importance of promoting appropriate classroom verbal interactions by analyzing the quality of classroom verbal interaction in terms of Grice's Conversational Maxims and Flanders' Interaction Analysis.

Keywords: flouting maxim, grice maxims, pragmatics, verbal interaction

1. Introduction

Classroom interaction between the teacher and the students is one of the most pivotal things influencing the success of the teaching-learning process (Mardiana, Zainuddin, & Gultom, 2019). The quality of the classroom interaction can be observed from the quality and the quantity of the verbal interaction between the teacher and the students, which occurs verbally during the teaching-learning process (Yanfen & Yuqin, 2010). Realizing the importance of classroom verbal interaction in learning, Flanders (1970) developed Interaction Category Analysis System to observe and analyze the quantity and quality of classroom verbal interaction. Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) is divided into two categories: teachers' talk and students' talk. Student talk is broken down into ten sub-categories (Joe-kinanee, 2017).

Meanwhile, the teacher's talk is divided into two categories and seven sub-categories based on their function. Teacher's talk refers to the teacher's verbal interaction in the classroom context.

Teacher's talk is the kind of verbal interaction which dominates almost 50% of classroom interaction (Aisyah, 2016; Nugroho, 2019). The degree to which a teacher's talk influences the success and the effectiveness of the whole interaction in the classroom might differ depending on the quantity and quality of the teacher's verbal interaction with the students (Mardiana et al., 2019).

Flander broke down teachers' talk into indirect and direct speech. Indirect teachers' talk consists of four sub-categories: "accept feelings, give praises or encouragements, accept or use ideas of students, and ask questions" (Amatari, 2015, p.27). Accepting feeling refers to the teacher's attempt to accept the students' feelings, both positive and negative, in a non-threatening manner. Creating a supportive classroom environment where students can express themselves and feel accepted is essential, eventually fostering their learning (Martina, 2021). Moreover, praising and encouraging are necessary to motivate the students and increase their self-esteem. According to Davies (2011), a teacher should give sincere praise as spontaneous reactions to students' positive behaviour in the classroom.

Furthermore, accepting or using the idea of students refers to the teacher's attempt to acknowledge the students' initiatives to express and share their thoughts. A teacher might confirm the students' suggestions and ideas by repeating them using the teacher's words to acknowledge their effort (Ettter, 2005). The last sub-category of teacher indirect talk is asking a question. Questioning is indirect teacher's talk used to stimulate the students to participate in the classroom actively, encourage them to speak up about their ideas, and trigger their critical thinking (Kim & Ahn, 2017).

In addition, Flanders' direct teachers' talk consists of three sub-categories: "lecturing, giving direction, and criticizing or justifying authority" (Aisyah, 2016). Lecturing is one teaching method of delivering material and information in the classroom. It is done by giving an oral presentation to the students. Furthermore, giving direction refers to the teacher's instruction and information on how to do a particular classroom activity (Kim & Ahn, 2017). The teacher should provide clear and concise directions to avoid students' confusion and misunderstanding. The last sub-category of direct teacher's talk is criticizing or justifying authority. This type of teacher's talk occurs when some issues related to students' disobedient behaviour in the classroom. In this case, the teacher needs to be assertive and be able to communicate dissatisfaction and anger with the students appropriately to control the classroom

Furthermore, successful verbal interactions will occur when both the teacher and the students can completely understand what each other means. In doing so, the teacher and the students need to realize that every utterance spoken by each side has assumptions and intentions to communicate information relevant to the classroom context or even beyond that context (Aisyah, 2016). Effective classroom communication can occur when both sides agree and follow these assumptions. This notion infers that both the teacher and the students intend to be cooperative conversational agents. In Pragmatics, these underlying principles are called Grice's conversational maxims. Grice Conversational Maxims are principles developed by Herbert Paul Grice to guide verbal interaction among speakers, to ensure meaningful communication, and to prevent less relevant discourse (Chaouki, 2011). Grice (1989) stated, "in a conversation, 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. 26). This principle emerged from the conception that rules govern human communication and interactions. One of which state that the fundamental underlying principle of conversation is acknowledging that the utterances said by both sides should contribute to the aims of the conversation. By following this principle, people are considered to be cooperative conversational partners. Based on this principle, one is considered to be a cooperative conversational partner if one follows four conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner

(Fukumura & Gompel, 2017).

The maxim of quantity refers to the amount of information given during the conversation. This type of maxim is broken down into two-sub maxims, which address that during the conversation, one should ensure to make each contribution as informative as is required, and one should avoid giving too little or too much information that is less required (Ayunon, 2018). It means meaningful and effective communication will occur if both sides provide sufficient information without overloading the conversation with unnecessary details. In addition, in a conversation, naturally, both sides rely upon the cooperative nature of truthfulness. This fundamental principle leads to the second type of maxim, which is the maxim of quality. This type of maxim concerns the degree of truth uttered by the speakers (Chenail & Chenail, 2011). To follow maxims of quality, one should ensure that the information one gives true by avoiding less trustworthy information with inadequate evidence. The maxim of relevance is pivotal to sustaining the conversation's flow and organization by preventing irrelevant topic shifts (Al-Hamadi & Muhammed, 2009). The default assumption of this maxim is that one should be relevant to the topic discussed in the conversation. Both sides should agree on any topic shift. The last type of maxim, the maxim of manner, is somewhat different from the three maxims discussed earlier. The basic assumption of this maxim is one should ensure that the information one gives is understandable and conveyed clearly. The maxim of manner is broken down into four-sub maxims, namely "avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly" (Grice, 1989, p.27).

However, in classroom verbal interactions, these conversational maxims are often violated or flouted by both the teacher and the students. These violations can occur intentionally due to hidden intentions. When speakers deliberately exploit the maxim, they might imply hidden meanings or want to communicate indirectly. By this, one can assume that their utterances contain implicature (Alvaro, 2014). According to Davis (2016), implicature can be defined as hidden intentions beyond the semantic level the speaker implies in their utterances. Someone might violate maxims for several reasons, such as avoiding hurting others, hiding the truth, expressing jokes and sarcasm, and avoiding discussion (Toda & Ghazali, 2017).

Furthermore, the flouting of Grice's conversational maxims can occur anywhere as long as it involves human language and verbal interaction (Amianna & Putranti, 2017). Thus, the flouting maxims can be found in real-life interaction or even in the movie. According to Trier (2016), a movie can be considered a means to depict humans' real life, event, and social phenomenon in symbolic expression. Therefore, one can assume that "analyzing the flouting maxim in a movie can represent the analysis of the maxim in human life" (Mariati, Asbah, & Bafadal, 2018, p.11).

In both movies and real-life contexts, Grice's conversational maxims have been extensively discussed in Pragmatics studies. First, Khayati and Mujiyanto (2019) investigated the flouting maxim of EFL teachers in different classrooms. The result revealed that the teacher followed the four maxims most of the time unless hidden intentions were implied. Second, Helmie and Lestary (2019) conducted a pragmatic study to analyze the flouting maxims of the main character in *Home Alone* movie by John Hughes. The analysis found that the quality maxim was most likely violated throughout the movie. Furthermore, competitive and collaborative reasons were the leading causes of flouting maxims. Another similar study on Grice's maxims was conducted by Amianna and Putranti (2017) as they explored the sense of humour that occurred due to the violations and flouting of cooperative maxims in American comedy series entitled *How I Met Your Mother*.

Even though previous studies on flouting maxims have been ubiquitously discussed (Amianna & Putranti, 2017; Helmie & Lestary, 2019; Khayati & Mujiyanto, 2019), little attention has been given to analyzing flouting maxims and their relation to classroom verbal interaction. Most of the

studies mentioned above investigated the flouting of Grice Conversational Maxims outside the educational movie context. Thus, to fill the gap in the literature and to delve deeper into the quality of the verbal interaction between students and teachers in the classroom context, the researcher aimed to conduct a pragmatic analysis to investigate the types of Grice's conversational maxims violated by the main character of *Freedom Writers* movie, a famous inspiring educational movie, and to analyze the categories of teacher's verbal interactions in that movie under Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories System (FIACS). Furthermore, this study was worth conducting since it shed light on the importance of Grice's conversational maxims in verbal classroom interaction and helped educators understand the implications of classroom verbal interaction in the success of the teaching-learning process. Moreover, educators and pre-service teachers may benefit from this research since this research has given a glimpse of the importance of promoting appropriate classroom verbal interactions by analyzing the quality of classroom verbal interaction in terms of Grice's Conversational Maxims and Flanders' Interaction Analysis as a good example that represents good classroom interactions between the teacher and the students in the educational context

Freedom Writers is a movie released in 2007 based on the true events taken from *Freedom Writers Diary* written by a teacher named Erin Gruwell and her students in Wilson High School, United State of America. The movie mostly told about racism and socio-economic problems that happened in the society and how these problems impacted the classroom interaction between the teacher and the students. Furthermore, this movie could also depict the teacher-student interaction since the setting of the movie occurred in the educational field. Based on the background, *the Freedom Writers movie* was perceived as a suitable object for this study. To investigate the types of maxims violated by teacher Erin as the main character and analyze the categories of teacher's verbal interactions found in that movie, the researcher formulated two research questions as follows:

1. What conversational maxims are violated by the main character in *Freedom Writers* movie?
2. What categories of teacher's verbal interactions are performed by the main character in *Freedom Writers* movie?

2. Methodology

Document analysis was employed as this research systematically analyzed the contents of written documents to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Like other qualitative research methods, document analysis requires in-depth evaluation and interpretation to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The materials chosen to be analyzed can be in the form of reports, movie transcripts, textbooks, recordings, web pages, newspaper articles, and other documents (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010). In document analysis, the researcher first began by studying the chosen document, developing coding categories, and interpreting the data in descriptions to present the findings (Creswell, 2014).

As this study aimed to investigate Grice's Conversational maxims flouted by the main character of *Freedom Writers* movie along with the categories of teacher's verbal interactions, the movie transcript was used as the primary document to be analyzed in this research. Using the document analysis method, the researcher first watched the movie, skimmed through the movie transcript, and carefully developed coding categories. The researcher first analyzed the linguistic aspect of the data collected. In developing coding categories, the researcher referred to Grice's conversational maxims theory to help filter, code, and categorize the selected materials. The researcher classified the findings into four flouting maxim categories: quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. The researcher also drew some implicatures from the flouting maxim performed by the

main character in *Freedom Writers* movie.

After locating and analyzing the flouting maxims, the researcher focused on the teacher's talks uttered by the main character and classified them into some categories under Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System (FIACS) to know the quality of the classroom verbal interaction in that movie. The researcher comprehensively interprets the collected data by referring to the two theories (Grice's Conversational Maximx and Flanders' Interaction Analysis Category System). The analysis results were presented and elaborated in the table and description. To ensure trustworthiness and validate the data gathered in this study, the researcher gave the analysis of the movie transcript to two external validators whose expertise is in linguistics and English Education. According to Ary et al. (2010), one of the ways to validate qualitative data is by involving experts in a particular area to review and judge for quality analysis of the data.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 The Overview of *Freedom Writers* Movie

Freedom Writers is a movie released in 2007 and directed by Richard LaGravenese. The movie was based on the story of an inspiring teacher, Erin Gruwell, who came to Wilson High School, Los Angeles and taught a group of high school students labelled as "troublemakers". The students came from diverse cultural, social, and economic backgrounds and had unresolved problems, including ex-drug abusers, ex-convicts of juvenile prisons, and gang members.

Ms Erin Gruwell attempted to approach her students by using unorthodox ways of teaching to connect with her students' lives. Through several challenges and failures, she could gradually earn her students' respect and trust. Ms Gruwell tried to capture her students' hearts through meaningful classroom communication and interaction. She did it by referring to students' culture that they were familiar with, teaching materials that were relatable to their real lives, and helping the students to reconcile with their rage and hatred towards the world by asking them to express their feelings through writing a journal. The students' journals were then used as inspiration in the *Freedom Writers* movie.

3.2 Flouting Maxims Performed by the Main Character

This part discusses the maxims flouted by the main character of *Freedom Writers* movie. From the findings, there were four maxims violated by Erin Gruwell as the main character of the movie, namely quantity, quality, relevance, and manner (Chenail & Chenail, 2011). The summary of flouting maxims uttered by Erin Gruwell is presented in table 1.

Table 1. The Summary of Flouting Maxims Uttered by Erin Gruwell

No	Flouting Maxims	Classroom Context	General Context	Frequency
1	Quantity	6	11	17
2	Quality	4	6	10
3	Relevance	7	9	16
4	Manner	8	11	19

The flouting maxim uttered by Erin, as shown in table 1, is categorized into two, classroom context and general context. Classroom context includes the entire flouting maxim spoke by Erin in the classroom during a teaching-learning activity. Meanwhile, the general context encompasses the

flouting maxims uttered by Erin while interacting with other characters outside of the classroom. However, the researcher would only present the sample excerpt from classroom context to analyze the quality of classroom verbal interaction between the teacher and the students.

3.2.1 Flouting Maxim of Quantity

The maxim of quantity refers to the amount of information given during the conversation. This type of maxim is broken down into two-sub maxims, which address that during the conversation, one should make one contribution as informative as required, and one should avoid giving too little or too much information that is less required (Ayunon, 2018). It means meaningful and effective communication will occur if both sides give sufficient information without overloading the conversation with unnecessary details. The following conversation represents the flouting maxim of quantity found in the movie:

Excerpt 1

Eva Benitez : “I have to go to the bathroom”.

Erin Gruwell : “Okay, before you go to the bathroom make sure that you take a permission card at the administrator office and return the card before”

Eva Benitez : “Yeah, I know”

Erin has just arrived at the class on her first day of teaching. Before she started the class, one of the students impolitely told her that she wanted to go to the bathroom. Knowing that the student did not want to go to the bathroom but skipped the class, Erin explained the procedure for leaving the class. The school applied strict procedures for the students who left the class during lesson hours. Detention would be given to the students who did not obey the rule. Those procedures were implemented to prevent the students from leaving the class unattended and joining gang fights during school hours. In this case, even though Erin was aware that the student was familiar with the procedures and rules, she insisted on explaining too many “unnecessary details” to “warn” the students not to go to the bathroom as an excuse to skip the class. Thus, maxim of quantity was intentionally flouted to warn the students of the consequences of their actions.

Excerpt 2

Students : “What? What are you talking about? You don't wanna be our teacher next year?”

Erin Gruwell : “Of course I do. I can't”.

Students : “Why not?”

Erin Gruwell : (silent)

This conversation occurred when Erin had taught the students for almost a year and had successfully earned the students' respect and trust. However, she could no longer teach those students next year since they would be juniors, and Erin could only teach first- and second-year students. These were the seniority problems that have been deeply rooted in that school for a long time that involved the stakeholders, principals, and other senior teachers. Knowing that the students would not understand this complex situation, Erin gave a short answer related to this matter. She intentionally flouted the maxim of quantity as she gave minimal information and refused to explain it further to the students. She violated the maxim by avoiding a specific topic of discussion in the classroom.

3.2.2 Flouting Maxim of Quality

In a conversation, naturally, both sides rely upon the cooperative nature of truthfulness. This basic principle leads to the second type of maxim, which is the maxim of quality. This type of maxim concerns with the degree of truth uttered by the speakers. By this, to follow maxims of quality, one should ensure that the information one gives is true (Chenail & Chenail, 2011). Moreover, one should not deliver less trustworthy information with inadequate evidence. The following conversation represents the flouting maxim of quality found in the movie:

Excerpt 3

Erin Gruwell : “Gloria, please read the first sentence on the first chapter”.

Gloria Munez : “Why me?”

Erin Gruwell : “Because I know how much you love to read. Close the magazine and please read the first sentence on the first chapter”

This conversation occurred during the teaching-learning process. Erin asked one of her students, Gloria, to read the sentence in the book because she knew that Gloria was busy reading the magazine during her class. Instead of yelling at her student for not paying attention to her class, she used another way to get her student’s attention. Everyone in the class knew how Gloria hated anything related to school, let alone reading an academic book. Thus, it seemed that Erin gave untruthful facts about Gloria. Even though Erin knew this, she kept saying, “because I know how much you love to read” referring to the magazine she was reading to encourage Gloria to focus on the lesson. The flouting maxim of quantity in this context was meant to inspire.

Excerpt 4

Erin Gruwell : “You can stay as late as you want, and I can even drive you to your aunt's, if it gets too late”

Eva Benitez : “Ms. G, let's not get nuts”

Eva, one of her students, has just testified in the courtroom as a witness for a gang member murder case. She bravely gave true testimony, resulting in one of her relatives being convicted guilty. The other family members who were affiliated with that gang were angry and cast her out of her house. As a result, she had to stay with her aunt, who lived even further away. In the afternoon, Eva came to Erin’s office after the trial and talked with her. Erin then offered to drive her home. From Eva’s point of view, it seemed that what Erin say is unlikely to be true as she knew that it was already late and Erin also had personal life outside of school. Thus, she thought Erin did not mean to drive her home and that the offer was just her teacher being polite. Therefore, she replied, “Ms G, let's not get nuts” as a response.

3.2.3 Flouting Maxim of Relevance

The maxim of relevance is pivotal to sustaining the conversation's flow and organisation by preventing irrelevant topic shifts (Al-Hamadi & Muhammed, 2009). The default assumption of this maxim is that one should be relevant to the topic discussed in the conversation. Both sides should agree on any topic shift. The following conversation represents the flouting maxim of relevance found in the movie:

Excerpt 5

Erin Gruwell :” Ok, next question. How many of you know where to get drugs right now? How

many of you know someone in a gang? How many of you are gang members?"

Students : "Nice try. Nice try".

Erin Gruwell : "Okay, that was a stupid question, wasn't it?"

Students : "Yeah".

Erin Gruwell : "You're not allowed to join any gang affiliations in school. I apologize for asking. My badness"

In this context, Erin and her students played Line Game where Erin asked the students some questions, and if the question resonated well with the students, they had to step onto the line. Erin asked common questions about music, hobbies, movies, and anything related to teenagers' daily lives. Then, she suddenly shifted the topic of the questions to drugs and gang affiliations. Her students saw these as irrelevant questions. However, here Erin intentionally flouted the maxim of relevance. She knew that some of her students in the class were affiliated with some gang and drug dealers. She wanted to know how deeply they got involved in this situation. Furthermore, she also wanted to emphasize that as students, it was forbidden to join any gang that dealt with drugs without blatantly stating it to them because she knew that her students were sensitive to this topic.

Excerpt 6

Marcus : "Is she gonna read the letters?"

Erin Gruwell : "Well, right now it's a writing assignment. I'll read them"

For the final test, Erin asked the students to write a letter to Miep Gies, who hid and helped shelter Anna Frank during the Nazi period. The students got excited about their assignment since some considered Miep Gies a hero after reading the *Diary of Anna Frank*. Marcus then asked whether Ms Gies would read their letters or not. However, Erin's response did not seem to answer Marcus' question. Nonetheless, she did that intentionally, simply because she was unsure whether Ms Gies would read each of the letters written by the students. Moreover, she also did not want her students to feel discouraged if eventually those letters would not be read by Ms Gies since she was already old.

3.2.4 Flouting Maxim of Manner

The basic assumption of maxim of manner is one should ensure that the information one gives is understandable and conveyed clearly. The maxim of manner is broken down into four-sub maxims "avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly" (Grice, 1989, p.27). The following conversation represents the flouting maxim of manner found in the movie:

Excerpt 7

Tito : "That thing that you said before, the Holocaust?"

Erin Gruwell : "Holocaust, yes"

Tito : "What is that?"

Erin Gruwell : "Raise your hand if you know what the Holocaust is. Raise your hand" *none of them raised their hands*

In this context, Erin reprimanded Tito, who drew an ugly face on a piece of paper to bully another student. Then, Erin used Holocaust tragedy to illustrate how a simple drawing to mock a

Jewish man could be used as propaganda to hate Jewish in general. However, the messages or life lessons she tried to convey were not interpreted well since none of her students knew about what Holocaust was. This is under Smith (1991), who stated that in a conversation, avoiding jargon or words specialized to specific knowledge that might cause the listener's confusion is necessary to prevent misunderstanding and obscurity of expression.

Excerpt 8

Andre Bryant : “Think we don't know 2Pac?”

Marcus : “White girl gonna teach us about rap”.

Erin Gruwell : “No, it's not that. See, what I was trying to do is...”

Eva Benitez : “You have no idea what you're doing up there, do you?”

Erin attempted to approach her students by referring to the culture they were familiar with. She tried to teach Poetry by using Tupac's song lyrics. However, this intention was not well received by the students since Erin failed to avoid obscurity and communicate the purpose of the activity. The students accused her of being racist since she thought that as a “white woman,” she pretended to know everything about “black” people's culture.

Based on the findings, it was apparent that maxim of manner (19 utterances) became the most dominant maxim flouted by the character both in the classroom and general context, followed by maxim of quantity (17 utterances), relevance (16 utterances), and quality (10 utterances). In this study, the flouting maxims employed the implied meaning behind the main characters' utterances. First, the presupposition was used to find meaning based on assumptions. However, this presupposition did not survive in several complex sentences and could also be cancelled (Yule, 1996, p.30). The result of the current study is in line with the study conducted by the research undertaken by Zeb (2019), which found that maxim of manner was the most frequently flouted by the characters in comedy dramas to achieve comic effects. A similar result was also found in the study conducted by Kurniati and Hanidar (2018), which revealed that maxim of quantity became the least frequently flouted by the characters of *Insidious 2* Movie.

In contrast, the current research results differed from the study conducted by Wahyuni, Arifin, and Lubis (2019). Their study found that even though the four maxims were all flouted by the main character of *La La Land* and each flouting maxim contained the implied meaning behind the main characters' utterances depending on the context of conversation; the maxim of quantity became the most frequently flouted because the main characters usually explain in detail about Jazz music. Meanwhile, the maxim of manner was the least frequently flouted by the main characters because they occasionally provide ambiguous and unclear responses to their interlocutor.

3.3 Categories of Teacher's Verbal Interactions

This part will discuss the categories of teacher's talk that will be divided into two types, namely direct and indirect teacher talk uttered by teacher Erin Gruwell as the movie's main character. It is shown from table 2 that all sub-categories of Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), both direct and indirect talks, could be found in the *Freedom Writers* movie. The summary of the teacher's talk is presented in table 2.

Table 2. The Summary of Teacher's Talk Uttered by Erin Gruwell

No	Indirect Teacher's Talk	Frequency
1	Accept feelings	9
2	Give praises or encouragements	6
3	Accept or use ideas of students	4
4	Ask questions	8

No	Direct Teacher's Talk	Frequency
1	Give direction or instruction	8
2	Lecturing	6
3	Criticize or justify authority	9

Table 2 shows that accepting students' feelings was the type of indirect teacher's talk that was most frequently found, followed by asking questions, giving praises or encouragement, and accepting or using students' ideas. Meanwhile, the context of criticizing or justifying authority, giving directions or authority, and lecturing were found in indirect teacher's talk. One sample excerpt from each category is presented in the following section.

3.3.1 Indirect Teacher's Talk

1) Accepting Students' Feelings

Accepting students' feelings refers to the teacher's attempt to get the students' positive and negative emotions in a non-threatening manner. It is crucial to create a supportive classroom environment where students can express themselves and feel accepted, eventually fostering their learning (Martina, 2021).

Excerpt 9

Marcus : "You don't know nothing, homegirl. Do you even know how we live?"
Erin Gruwell : "No, I don't, Marcus! So why don't you explain it to me?"
Marcus : "I ain't explaining shit to you!"

In this conversation, Erin knew that her students' had intense anger towards life that hindered their learning. Thus, she tried to understand her students' lives and struggles by asking them to express their feelings. Instead of being angry with her students' impolite behaviour in the classroom, she tried to allow them to describe and explain their feelings. Moreover, she also tried to understand her students' points of view and feelings to slowly approach them and gradually change them to be better individuals.

2) Giving Praise or Encouragement

Praise and encouragement in the classroom are essential to motivate students and increase their self-esteem. This will also strengthen positive behaviour and weaken the tendency to perform negative behaviour. According to Davies (2011), a teacher should give sincere praise as spontaneous reactions to the students' positive behaviour in the classroom. The encouragement given by the teacher can also show supportive learning culture and a positive atmosphere in the classroom.

Excerpt 10

Miguel : “Ms. G? Can I read something from my diary?”
Erin Gruwell : “That’d be great”.

Miguel was a timid boy who had just lost his mother. He had complex family issues where her mother was divorced, got killed, and as a result, he was nearly homeless. Speaking up in the classroom was something that he would have never done before. However, he seemed to trust Erin as her teacher to share what he had been through and why he was absent for a couple of weeks. The way Erin encouraged and praised him by saying, “that’d be great” was a simple yet powerful way to make the students feel safe and accepted in the classroom. With everyone listening to what Miguel has written in his journal and encouraging him to do that, Erin, as a teacher, has done an excellent job of motivating and increase his student’s self-esteem.

3) Accepting or Using the Students’ Ideas in the Classroom

Accepting or using the students’ ideas refers to the teacher’s attempt to acknowledge students’ initiatives to express and share their ideas. A teacher might confirm the students’ suggestions and ideas by repeating them using the teacher’s words to acknowledge their effort (Etter, 2005).

Excerpt 11

Erin Gruwell : “Okay, listen up. Marcus has given me an idea. Instead of doing a book report on The Diary of Anne Frank, for our assignment, I want you to write a letter to Miep Gies, The woman who helped shelter the Franks.....”

As a teacher, Erin acknowledged Marcus and that he had given her an idea for their final assignment. It turned out the idea was brilliant. Through this, Erin acknowledged her students’ contribution to the class. This will stimulate other students to actively participate and share their ideas since their efforts, voices, and contributions in the classroom are appreciated and heard.

4) Asking Questions

Teachers’ questioning is not only a way to get correct answers from the students but also to stimulate them to participate in the classroom actively, encourage them to speak up about their ideas, and trigger their critical thinking (Kim & Ahn, 2017). Furthermore, the questions raised by the teacher can also engage the students with the topic of discussion and trigger their curiosity.

Excerpt 12

Erin Gruwell : “I have this idea. We’re gonna be covering poetry. Who here likes Tupac Shakur?”
Andre Bryant : “It’s 2Pac”.
Erin Gruwell : “2Pac Shakur. Excuse me. Raise your hand...”

At the beginning of the class, Erin asked her students a simple question to get their attention. Erin tried to connect the materials with something the students were familiar with, such as famous rappers and rap songs. Here, the questions addressed by Erin were not meant to elicit correct answers from the students but merely as an attempt to engage the students with the topic of discussion and trigger their curiosity.

3.3.2 Direct Teacher’s Talk

1) Giving Direction or Instruction

Giving direction refers to a set of instructions and information the teacher provides to the students on how to do a particular classroom activity (Kim & Ahn, 2017). The teacher should give clear and concise directions to avoid students' confusion and misunderstanding.

Excerpt 13

Erin Gruwell : "Now, none of these sentences is correct. I'd like you to rewrite these sentences using the proper tenses and spelling on page four of your workbooks".

From the excerpt, it is clear that Erin gave directions or instructions to her students on how to do a certain classroom activity.

2) Lecturing

Lecturing is the most common teacher's talk found in the classroom. Lecturing is one teaching method of delivering material and information in the classroom. It is done by giving an oral presentation to the students (Kim & Ahn, 2017).

Excerpt 14

Erin Gruwell : "... I have the lyrics to this song printed out. I want you to listen to this phrase I have up on the board. It's an example of an internal rhyme. What he does is very sophisticated and cool, actually".

Erin used Tupac's lyrics song to teach her students about internal rhyme. She gave the oral explanation as one of the teaching methods of delivering materials to her students.

3) Criticizing or Justifying Authority

This type of teacher's talk occurs when some issues are related to students' disobedience behavior in the classroom (Kim & Ahn, 2017). In this case, the teacher must be assertive and communicate dissatisfaction and anger with the students to control the classroom.

Erin Gruwell : "You think this is funny? Tito? Would this be fun if it were a picture of you?"
Tito : "It ain't".

As a teacher, Erin should be able to control the dynamics of the class. In this context, almost all students in her class were challenging to handle since they came from unfortunate families with unresolved issues. Thus, Erin should be able to be assertive by communicating her dissatisfaction appropriately. From the conversation, Tito, one of her students, made fun of another student by drawing an ugly picture of his friend and passing it to other friends during the teaching-learning process. Seeing this negative behaviour, Erin reprimanded him by justifying her authority as a teacher. Instead of giving harsh critics that might even hurt her student, Erin asked Tito to imagine if the same situation occurred to him. She did this because she was aware that if she just scolded him without giving him an understanding of why his action was wrong, he would repeat the same negative behaviour in the future. By doing this, Erin tried to teach her students about empathy and thoughtfulness.

The findings suggested that direct teacher talk (7.7%) was more dominant than indirect teacher talk (6.8%). The result was similar to the study by De Gelan (2022), which revealed that direct teacher talk in the form of lecturing was the most dominant verbal interaction in the classroom.

The lecture was mainly for explaining grammar, explaining the meaning, and making comments. Meanwhile, accepting feelings and encouraging became the most dominant form of indirect teacher talk. The study also found that positive teacher talk was dominantly used to build rapport and establish trust between the teacher and the students in the classroom. A similar study was also found in the study conducted by Novianti (2022), in which direct teacher talk became the most dominant verbal interaction used in one of the private high schools in Makasar, with the teacher talking time primarily used for giving directions.

4. Conclusion

The findings showed that the maxim of manner was the most frequently flouted maxim followed by the maxim of relevance, quantity, and quality, respectively, in the context of classroom verbal interaction. Furthermore, in terms of teacher's talk verbal interaction, accepting students' feelings was the type of indirect teacher's talk that was most frequently found followed by asking questions, giving praises or encouragement, and accepting or using the students' ideas. Meanwhile, criticizing or justifying authority, giving directions or authority, and lecturing were also found in indirect teacher's talk context.

After analyzing the maxims flouted by Erin as the teacher, it was found that they were violated intentionally for several reasons. They are warning the students of the consequences of their actions, encouraging and avoiding specific topics of discussion in the classroom, emphasizing important messages without blatantly stating it to the whole class, and avoiding hurting their students' feeling and ruining their expectation. Meanwhile, under Flanders Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), direct and indirect talks could be found in the Freedom Writers movie. From this, the researcher could conclude that classroom interaction between the teacher and the students observed in the movie was excellent and appropriate.

To conclude, educators and pre-service teachers may benefit from this research since this study has given a glimpse of the importance of promoting appropriate classroom verbal interactions by analyzing the quality of classroom verbal interaction in terms of Grice's Conversational Maxims and Flanders' Interaction Analysis. In addition, this movie can also be an excellent example of good classroom interactions between the teacher and the students in the educational context. The researcher hopes that a further study can be conducted to investigate Gricean Conversational Maxims in a real classroom context to have more prosperous and more authentic data which depict the quality of the teaching-learning process in the Indonesian classroom.

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