

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

In daily conversation, people do not always say what they mean directly. Sometimes, they say less or more than they actually mean or they even utter something that is totally irrelevant to what they actually want to say. If this situation occurs, it is possible that the hearer(s) will misunderstand the message sent by the speaker because the speaker's utterance is not presented in explicit language. For example, while having a long conversation, one says, "It's eleven o'clock" to his friend to imply that the time has been late and it is time to end the conversation. In this example, the hearers will have to infer what the speaker means in saying the utterance. In linguistics, the speaker's meaning is studied in Pragmatics, which is "the study of how more gets communicated than is said ..." (Yule 3). H.P. Grice (in Thomas 57) calls the speaker's implied meaning implicature.

To avoid the hearers' misunderstanding of the speaker's implicature, Grice suggests Cooperative Principles, which state that speakers "make [their] contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which [they] are engaged" (Thomas 62). When a speaker fails to conform to these Cooperative Principles, his/her utterance will not be considered informative, truthful, relevant, and brief (Thomas 63). Therefore, he/she can be said to have performed non-observance of the Gricean maxims (Thomas 64). These maxims will be discussed further in the next chapter of this thesis.

Utterances that show non-observance of the Gricean maxims may lead to different results, such as puzzlement, annoyance, misunderstanding or humor. In relation to the speakers' language in a sitcom (situation comedy), which is "A humorous radio or television series featuring the reactions of a regular cast of characters to unusual situations, such as misunderstandings or embarrassing coincidences" ("What Is A Sitcom?"), the speakers' non-observance of Gricean maxims frequently leads to humor. Basically, humor in a sitcom is an important element to produce laughter.

The title of my thesis is "Non-Observance of the Gricean Maxims that Leads to Humor in the Sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*." I choose this topic for my thesis because in daily life, people often say something different to what they mean, which may generate an implicature. At other times, how they say their utterances may create humorous effect. For that reason, I think it is interesting to analyze people's utterances and their implicatures and how they lead to a

humorous atmosphere. I choose this particular TV show as my data source because the utterances of the characters in this sitcom often fail to observe the maxims and their utterances produce implicatures that can lead to the emergence of humor.

Fresh Prince of Bel-Air is a famous sitcom in 1990s era in the USA. It is proven with a number of awards that this sitcom won, which is an indicator that this sitcom is a favorite show for the viewers in the USA at that time. Moreover, the sitcom “had been nominated for 2 Golden Globe Awards for best performance by an actor in a TV series in comedy/musical in 1993 and 1994, and won 13 awards from 21 nominations” (*Internet Movie Database*). This fact proves that the sitcom is well appreciated. *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, which aired from 1990 until 1996, is a story about a 17-year-old young man from Philadelphia named William Smith, played by the famous Hollywood actor Will Smith, who moves in with his wealthy relatives, The Banks, in a luxurious residential, in Bel-Air, California, Los Angeles.

The analysis of non-observance of the Gricean maxims that leads to humor in the sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* is significant as it can make the readers more aware that in the society people tend to generate implicature in their utterance. Therefore, this analysis may make the readers more critical in producing and perceiving an utterance, that by doing such things, the hearers may not misunderstand the speakers’ implicature. Furthermore, I hope this thesis will be of benefit to the readers in general and also students of the English Department of Maranatha Christian University, especially for the students who are interested in similar topics, as an additional reference for their papers or theses.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the topic I choose, the problem of my study is formulated as follows:

1. What types of non-observance of the Gricean maxims can be found in the utterances of the characters in the sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*?
2. What is the implicature of each of those utterances?
3. How does each of the non-observance of the maxims in the utterances lead to the emergence of humor?

Purpose of the Study

In this thesis, I would like to analyze

1. the types of non-observance of the Gricean maxims found in the utterances of the characters in the sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*.
2. the implicature of each of those utterances.
3. the way each of the non-observance of the maxims in the utterances lead to the emergence of humor.

Method of Research

This study has been conducted in several steps. First, after choosing a particular topic, I did a search in the library and on the Internet to find relevant theories for my analysis. Second, after I watched the sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* and gathered the data from the dialogues in it, I analyzed my data using the

theory of non-observance of Gricean maxims. The analysis was conducted to reveal the types of the maxims that are being non-observed in the analyzed utterances, the implicature of each of the utterances, and the humorous effects of the non-observance of the maxims in the utterances. Finally, I wrote the research report.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter One contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Method of Research, and Organization of the Thesis. Chapter Two contains the Theoretical Framework, which presents the theories used to analyze the data. Chapter Three contains the analysis of the non-observance of the Gricean maxims in the dialogues of the sitcom *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*. Finally, Chapter Four contains the conclusion of the discussion and the results of the analysis. The thesis ends with the Bibliography and the Appendix.