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Conversational Implicature in Kim Namjoon's UN Speech: A Paul Grice Pragmatic Implicature Analysis

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Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the conversational implicature in the speech of Kim Namjoon (RM), leader of South Korean music group BTS, at the 2018 United Nations General Assembly. The analysis was conducted using a pragmatic approach based on Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature, as explained in the book *Doing Pragmatics* by Peter Grundy. The method used is descriptive qualitative with content analysis technique, which aims to reveal the implied meanings of the utterances in the speech. The results showed that RM strategically utilized violations of Grice's maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner) to produce strong conversational implicature. The violations do not reduce the effectiveness of the message, but rather strengthen the persuasive, emotional, and universal power of the speech. The implicature reflects values such as courageous self-acceptance, empathy, and the urge to express one's true self. The findings confirm that the communication strategies used by RM in his speech are an example of effective application of pragmatics in the context of cross-cultural and global communication.

Keywords: Implicature, Cross-culture, Self-Acceptance

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Introduction

In today's era of globalization, characterized by the rapid and massive flow of information through social media and language skills that have become an important necessity. In this context, language serves not only as a tool for human communication but also means of thinking, building relationships, and conveying creative ideas. In the language used for communication and idea transmission, pragmatics a component of linguistics, plays a crucial role that must be considered, as pragmatics is the branch of linguistics examines how language is used appropriately and in accordance with its context or situation. From what has been briefly discussed above, it can be concluded that language is a structured system that encompasses sounds and sequences of sounds used to communicate between individuals or groups (Carrol, 1956). Meanwhile, according to Sudaryono, Language is an effective communication tool used by humans, even though it is not perfect, and the imperfections in language create many gaps that cause misunderstanding. Therefore, because of these many gaps that cause misunderstanding, it is important to explore the meaning beyond what is literally said by someone.

In this case, pragmatic analysis is needed to analyze the meaning of someone's speech. Pragmatic analysis focuses more on the meaning behind a utterance. One of the core concepts of pragmatics is conversational implicature, which was first introduced by H.P.Grice in 1975. Conversational Implicature refers to the implied meanings conveyed by the speaker, which differ from the literal meaning. According to Grice, as quoted by Rustono (1999), conversational implicature is an implicit proposition, something that can be interpreted or intended by the speaker. This is relevant or the same as the literal meaning but rather has as implied meaning to reinforce the message, influence the audience indirectly, or create a certain effect.

Pragmatism itself was first used in print media to describe a philosophical view about a century ago by William James (1842-1910). William James used the word in a speech he gave in 1898 entitled "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," which he delivered at the University of California (Berkeley). However, James also mention that the term had been coined nearly three decades earlier by his colleague from the same country, CS Pierce (1839-1914), (*Pragmatism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)* n.d). The modern term "Pragmatic" was first used by the philosopher Charles Morris (1938), who proposed a general form of science that studies signs or semiotic. Morris Divided his research into three types: syntax (the study of the relationship between one sign and another), semantics (the relationship between signs, including words related to real world objects they represent), and finally, pragmatics (the relationship between a sign and its interpreter). Pragmatics itself, according to (*Pragmatics - Yan Huang - Google Buku*, n.d), can be defined as a study that examines meaning that depends on something and is determined by its linguistics use.

Public speeches, especially those delivered by influential figures at major international forums, are a rich source for pragmatic study. One speech that attracted global attention, particularly from K-pop fans, was the speech given by Kim Namjoon (RM), leader of the South Korean global music group BTS, at the UN General Assembly in September 2018. This speech featured a campaign titled "Love Yourself", which captured the attention of people worldwide not just BTS fans but all segments of society. The speech reached millions of people globally, encouraging them to love themselves. The relevance of this speech, a pragmatic study lies in RM's role as an artist and global icon. In this speech, languages was not only used to convey messages literally but also to build an emotional connection and imply deeper meaning.

Based on this background, this study will focus on the main question “How do conversational implicature appear in Kim Namjoon’s speech at the UN,” and “How can Paul Grice’s pragmatic analysis reveal these implicit meanings?”. The primary objective of this study is to identify the forms of conversational implicature found in his speech, as well as to analyze how Kim Namjoon (RM) utilize violations of Grice’s maxims to generate strong implied meanings.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies, particularly in the applications of Grice’s theory to the context of cross-cultural public speeches. The results of this study are expected to enrich our understanding of how a public figure or public personality uses language for persuasive or emotional purposes. (*Principles of Pragmatics - Geoffrey N. Leech - Google Buku*, n.d.) explains that pragmatics views meaning as a triangular relationship consisting of form, meaning, and context, which can be distinguished from semantics. Therefore, the application of Grice’s theory, which focuses on context and the principle of cooperation, is the most appropriate framework for analyzing Kim Namjoon (RM) speech delivered at the United Nations in September 2018 in depth.

In short, the data for this study was taken from the transcript of Kim Namjoon (RM)’s speech at the United Nations in September 2018, which was the part of the LOVE MYSLEF campaign in collaboration with UNICEF. This speech attracted a lot of attention for analysis because of its diverse audience and the message of self-acceptance that was delivered in a personal and persuasive manner.

Implicature is one of the basic principles in pragmatics studies that refers to meanings that are not literally spoken but implied by a speaker (Grundy). Grice explains implicature as a conclusion drawn by the listener based on assumptions about what they hear or observes from the speaker, or even by intentionally violating the principles of cooperation in conversational implicature (*Implicature (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)*, n.d.). The concept proposed by Grice distinguishes between what is “said” (literal meaning) and what is “implied” (implicit meaning). (Grundy, 2000) distinguishes between two types of implicatures: conventional implicatures, which are bound to the meaning of certain words, and conversational implicature, which are implied meanings resulting from interaction and conversational context. Furthermore, Grice classifies conversational implicatures into general implicatures and specific implicatures. These implicatures are fundamental in pragmatic research because of their ability to explain how communication can go beyond literal meaning, which can be to understanding complex utterances.

To explain how implicatures arise, (Grundy, 2000) introduced the Cooperative Principle. The principle is a basic assumption that can make communication more rational and coherent, where involvement is expected to provide an honest and relevant contribution in accordance with the purpose of the conversation pragmatics - George Yule - Google Buku (n.d.). To realize this principle, Grice proposed four conversational maxims:

1. **Quantity maxim:** This maxim explains that a speaker must provide information or input according to the needs and not provide more information than what is asked or needed.
 - Example: “My name is Kim Namjoon, also known as RM, the leader of the group BTS.”
2. **Maxim of Quality:** This maxim explains that a speaker or narrator must provide information about something in accordance with the facts, and a narrator is not allowed to convey information that they are not certain is true

- Example: "Even after making the decision to join BTS, there were a lot of hurdles. Most people thought we were hopeless. Sometimes, I just wanted to quit"
3. **Maxim of Relevance:** This maxim requires a speaker to convey relevant information so that there can be good cooperation between the speaker and the listener in a communication.
- Example: "After releasing the "Love Yourself" albums and launching the "Love Myself" campaign, we started to hear remarkable stories from our fans all over the world, how our message helped them overcome their hardship in life and start loving themselves. These stories constantly remind us of our responsibility. So, let's all take one more step. We have learned ourselves, so now I urge you to "Speak Yourself"."
4. **Maxim of Manner:** This maxim states that a speaker or narrator must provide clear, direct information, and avoid ambiguity.
- Example: "We have learned to ourselves, so now I urge you to speak for yourself." This conversational implicature often arises when a speaker or narrator deliberately violates one of the maxims, where this violation does not damage communication but becomes a signal for the listener to seek a deeper meaning behind a non-literal utterance, which results in implicature.

Grice theory of implicature has become a highly productive analytical framework in various fields, most notably in the analysis of public discourse and communication strategies. Previous studies have shown how maxim violations are used as rhetorical devices for persuasive, humorous, or even sensitive purposes. For example, the implicature analysis found in the study "An Implicature Analysis on Oh Brother! Comic Strip Serials" (Husna, 2013) shows how maxim violations can produce implied meanings.

Grice's theory of conversational implicature is highly relevant and appropriate for analyzing Kim Namjoon (RM)'s speech at the UN General Assembly. Kim Namjoon's speech was not merely intended to inspire a global audience. In Kim Namjoon's speech, the meaning conveyed often transcended the actual words. Kim Namjoon uses language to create an emotional connection, build empathy, and convey a powerful message about self-Acceptance and courage. Grice's pragmatic analysis allows researchers to identify how Kim Namjoon strategically uses maxim violations to generate profound implicatures. For example, using metaphors such as "Tell me your story. I want to hear your voice, and I want to hear your conviction. No matter who you are, where you're from, your skin color, gender identity: speak yourself" is an example of a violation of the maxim of the quality that implies a message far stronger and more inclusive than the literal meaning. By employing Grice's theory, this research aims to uncover the implicit meaning hidden within text, which also provides new insight into effective communication across cultures and globally.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with methods used to interpret and analyze the deeper meaning and implied messages of discourse. This approach was chosen because it focuses primarily on in-depth analysis of the meaning behind a discourse and its context. According to Muloeng (2013) in the book of Qualitative Research Methodology by Feny Rita et al., qualitative research is type of research used to understand a phenomenon based on the experiences of research subjects, such as an actor, perceptions, motivations for actions, and others in holistic and descriptive manner

using words and language within a specific natural context, while utilizing various scientific methods. In the context, descriptive an existing phenomenon, where this research is used to analyze the conversational implication that emerges in Kim Namjoon's (RM) speech.

The approach used in this study is a pragmatic approach. This approach focuses on the use of language in specific contexts, where the meaning of utterances is not only viewed from linguistic perspective but also from social, culture, and situational perspectives. Specifically, this study applies to Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature is something implied by the speaker, which has a meaning different from what is literally said. This analysis will focus on the implied meaning that emerges through violations of Grice's maxims, namely the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

The object of this study is Kim Namjoon's (RM) speech delivered at the UN General Assembly in September 2018. This speech was chosen because of its rich meaning and relevance in the context of global communication. The primary source of this research is the official transcript of the speech obtained from the official UNICEF website (<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/we-have-learned-love-ourselves-so-now-i-urge-you-speak-yourself>) and the video recording of the speech published on the official UNICEF YouTube channel. This data source is considered valid because it originates from the official website of the institution directly involved in the event, ensuring the authenticity and accuracy of the verbal data to be analyzed.

Data collection was carried out using the documentation method. This method was chosen because the required data was already available in the form of the video and speech transcript. According to Zuriah (2009), documents are a means of collecting data through written archives, including books on theory, opinions, arguments, laws, and other matters related to the research topic. Thus, document can serve as records of past activities, events, or occurrences that have been documented and compiled into an achieve. The data collection process involves several steps, namely:

1. Locating and downloading the official transcript of Kim Namjoon's speech from the UNICEF website.
2. Comparing the video transcript with the original video recording available on the UNICEF YouTube channel to ensure accuracy; and
3. Recording sentences that may contain conversational implicatures, and
4. Relating the implicit meaning to the overall context of the speech. In addition, the determining element sorting technique (PUP) is used sort and classify important elements in the data, such as context, interlocutor, and speech purpose, to strengthen the interpretation.

The data analysis stages in this study adopted the interactive model developed by (*Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* - Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, Johnny Saldana - Google Buku, n.d.), which consist of:

1. Data Reduction, Which is the process of filtering irrelevant data from transcript and highlighting data that contains Implications,
2. Data Presentation, Which involves grouping data based on the types of maxim violations identified (e.g., violations of the Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, etc.) in form of table or narrative description; and
3. Drawing Conclusion, which involves interpreting the implied meanings emerging from each implicature and formulating general findings from the research. These three stages are repeated until the conclusion reached are truly accurate and verified.

To ensure data validity, this study uses triangulation techniques. Triangulation itself is a technique used to verify the accuracy of data or information obtained from different perspective. In this study, triangulation was conducted in two ways, namely:

1. **Theoretical Triangulation:** this is an approach in research that combines various theoretical framework to analyze and understand social phenomenon in a more comprehensive manner. Theoretical triangulation can also be interpreted as the use of two or more different theoretical frameworks to analyze the same data or phenomenon. In this study, for example, comparing the results of the analysis with Grice's implicature theory from various source (e.g., Gruncy, Leech, Yule).
2. **Data Triangulation:** Data triangulation is a technique used in qualitative research to enhance the validity and reliability of finding by combining data from multiple sources. In this study, this involves comparing the transcript of Kim Namjoon's speech available on the official UNICEF website with the video recording of his speech on the UNICEF YouTube channel to ensure there are no interpretive errors.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on a qualitative analysis of Kim Namjoon (RM)'s speech transcript at the UN General Assembly, it can be found that conversational implicatures appear significantly through violations of Grice's 4 maxims. The results of this study can answer the main question of how conversational implicatures are generated and how Grice's pragmatic analysis can reveal their implicit meaning. The findings specifically show that there are intentional violations of maxims to convey a deeper and more persuasive message.

1. Violation of Quality Maxim

Violations of quality maxim are found when RM uses metaphors or statements that are not literally true for persuasive purposes. For example, in the sentence "Tell me your story. I want to hear your voice, and I want to hear your conviction. No matter who you are, where you're from, your skin color, gender identity, just speak yourself". This violation is found when Kim Namjoon (RM) uses figurative language, specifically metaphors, that are not literally true or do not align with the literal meaning. For example, in the speech, RM emphasized when he urged the audience to "Speak Yourself" and "Tell me your story." Literally, RM was not asking the audience to tell their stories at that moment, but rhetorically, he implied an invitation with a much deeper meaning.

2. Violation of the Maxim of Quantity

RM often violates the maxim of quantity by providing more information than is necessary for rhetorical purposes. For example, when introducing himself, he not only mentions his name, but also adds details about his identity and background: "My name is Kim Namjoon, also known as RM, the leader of the group BTS...", "I was born in Ilsan, a city near Seoul, South Korea. It's a beautiful place, with a lake, hills, and even an annual flower festival... and I was just an ordinary boy." Literally, he only needed to say his name. However, RM added geographical and personal details ("a beautiful place," "ordinary boy"), which clearly violates the maxim of quantity. The implication is that he wants to build a personal connection with the audience. He implies that despite his status as a global icon, he has a simple background and can relate to every individu.

3. Violation of the maxim of relevance

In this speech, Kim Namjoon did not violate the maxim of relevance because the content of his speech was relevant to the campaign he was promoting, namely "Speak yourself." Kim Namjoon did not deviate from the topic, ensuring that the entire speech focused on the theme of "Love Yourself."

4. Maximum violation Method

Maximum violation can be seen when RM uses ambiguous and indirect language to convey complex and emotionally sensitive messages. For example, "...These faults and mistakes are what I am, making up the brightest stars in the constellation of my life...", in this sentence, RM is poetically expressing that mistakes and shortcomings are not flaws, but rather part of who we are that makes life meaningful.

The results of this analysis strongly support Paul Grice's theory of conversational implicature (1975). These findings show that Grice's Cooperative Principle is not only applicable in everyday conversation, but also relevant and effectively applicable in formal public discourse. The violation of the maxim found in Kim Namjoon's speech is not a form of communication failure, but rather a deliberate communicative strategy to create a stronger implied meaning. This aligns with (*Pragmatics - George Yule - Google Buku*, n.d.) view that implicature is something implied by the speaker, which has a different meaning from what is literally stated.

This study extends the application of Grice's theory from simpler contexts, as seen in Husna's (2013) study of comic strips, to the analysis of global public speeches. While in comics, maxim violations are often used for humorous purposes, in Kim Namjoon's speech, these violations are used as persuasive and emotional rhetorical tools. These findings confirm that Grice's theory is highly adaptive and can explain complex communication mechanisms in various situations, including cross-cultural ones. The theoretical implications of these findings suggest that pragmatics can be used as a highly productive framework for analyzing communication that aims to do more than just inform. RM's speech, designed to inspire and motivate, consciously or unconsciously utilizes pragmatic principles. This means that the meaning within an utterance is not determined solely by the words, but also by the situation, the audience, and the speaker's purpose, as explained by (*Principles of Pragmatics - Geoffrey N. Leech - Google Buku*, n.d.).

Practically speaking, this analysis provides insight into why RM's speeches resonate so strongly on a global scale. His ability to generate universal implications through maxim violations, regardless of cultural background, shows that messages about self-acceptance, empathy, and courage are universal. This communication strategy shows public speakers that emotional openness and the use of language that is not merely literal can create a deeper connection with the audience, reinforcing the message being conveyed. However, this study has several limitations. The analysis focuses solely on the speech transcript without considering non-verbal elements such as tone of voice, facial expressions, or body movements, which can also contribute to implicatures. Furthermore, this study did not measure how culturally diverse audiences interpret these implicatures. Therefore, further research is recommended to combine nonverbal analysis and audience reception studies to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of RM speeches.

ANALYSIS

This study focuses its analysis on the transcript of a speech delivered by Kim Namjoon, leader of the global music group BTS, at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018. This speech, as part of UNICEF's "Love Myself" campaign, serves as a platform for public communication rich in implied messages. The verbal data analyzed includes several key quotes selected for their potential to trigger conversational implicatures. Specific quotes such as "My name is Kim Namjoon, also known as RM...", "...I was just an ordinary boy," and the call to "Tell me your story" form the core of this

analysis. This data, validated through data triangulation by comparing UNICEF's official transcripts and the original video recordings, forms the basis for uncovering the meanings behind utterances that are not always literal. This analysis uses Paul Grice's pragmatic framework, which includes the cooperative principle and the four conversational maxims mentioned above. In the context of this public speech, it was found that RM centrally violates these maxims to generate strong implicatures. This violation is not a form of communication failure but rather a deliberate rhetorical device.

The implicatures generated by violating these maxims serve as pragmatic tools for achieving several goals. First, RM conveys messages that are far more persuasive and emotionally resonant than those that can be conveyed explicitly. The audience's mental engagement in interpreting implied meanings creates a more personal and profound connection. Second, implicatures increase verbal efficiency. Complex ideas such as accepting one's shortcomings can be packaged in brief metaphors, avoiding lengthy explanations. Third, the use of implicature functions as a strategy of politeness (*Principles of Pragmatics - Geoffrey N. Leech - Google Buku*, n.d.). By not being too blunt and direct, RM discusses sensitive and personal topics such as self-doubt, making the message feel more universal and acceptable to a diverse audience. The findings of this implicature analysis are highly relevant to the context of RM's speech, which aims to inspire and motivate young people around the world. These implicatures serve as a bridge between RM as a global icon and the audience as ordinary people from a perspective aligned with (*Principles of Pragmatics - Geoffrey N. Leech - Google Buku*, n.d.).

CONCLUSION

This study focuses its analysis on the transcript of a speech delivered by Kim Namjoon, leader of the global music group BTS, at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018. This speech, as part of UNICEF's "Love Myself" campaign, serves as a platform for public communication rich in implied messages. The verbal data analyzed includes several key quotes selected for their potential to trigger conversational implicatures. Specific quotes such as "My name is Kim Namjoon, also known as RM...", "...I was just an ordinary boy," and the call to "Tell me your story" form the core of this analysis. This data, validated through data triangulation by comparing UNICEF's official transcripts and the original video recordings, forms the basis for uncovering the meanings behind utterances that are not always literal. This analysis uses Paul Grice's pragmatic framework, which includes the cooperative principle and the four conversational maxims mentioned above. In the context of this public speech, it was found that RM centrally violates these maxims to generate strong implicatures. This violation is not a form of communication failure but rather a deliberate rhetorical device.

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