

GRICE'S MAXIMS IN HUMOUR: THE CASE OF "HOME WITH KIDS"

Zhao Xue

Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Malaysia
E-mail:852977313@qq.com

Kuang Ching Hei

Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya, Malaysia
E-mail:kuangch@um.edu.my

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Abstract: Sitcoms provide entertainment, one of which is through humour. Using Grice's (1975) non-observance of Cooperative Principles – flouting, violating, infringing, opting out, and suspending as framework for analysis, this study aims to investigate whether the non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims can contribute to the humorous effects seen in the Chinese sitcom "Home with Kids (Season 4)". Specifically, this study aims to detect which of the maxims play an important role in creating humour. Data were compiled from 96 episodes of the show. A comparison of the non-observance was made before findings were qualitatively presented. The findings revealed that flouting and violating were used most frequently to create humour. The outcome of this study will have beneficial effects for L2 learners of Mandarin by enabling them to comprehend Chinese humour. The implications derived from this study suggest that humour may be created differently due to cultural differences.

Keywords: *Chinese sitcoms, humour, flouting, violation, non-observance, maxims*

INTRODUCTION

Humour is ubiquitous and cosmopolitan, existing throughout every culture, race and region. Humour has been conceptualized in various ways as "a specific type of communication that establishes an incongruent relationship or meaning", "it is presented in a way that causes laughter" (Berger, 1976, p.113). Humour can be reflected in meetings, classrooms, films and television programs but Koestler (1993) gives a general classification of humour which can be better understood for this paper. Humour is classified by Koestler (1993) as verbal humour and situational humour. The former, verbal humour, refers to linguistic-oriented humour; that is humour which is felt or experienced as a result of some faux pax or unconventional use of language. The latter, situational humour, refers to situation-oriented humour that is related to some situational contexts. Since situational

humour is very distanced from language and it has almost no influence on language, it is excluded from the focus of this paper. Thus, only verbal humour is given attention.

Verbal humour can be found in all languages and in all cultures but little has been written about the Chinese culture and how humour is created through the Chinese language of Mandarin, particularly in local sitcoms of China. In that regard, this paper attempts to explore how humour is achieved in a Chinese sitcom so that the outcome obtained can be used to better understand the humorous phenomenon of the Chinese culture, thereby, contributing to literature on humour. With that in mind, the research question posed is: "How do Grice's (1975) maxims contribute to the humorous effects noted in a local Chinese sitcom, "Home with Kids (season 4)" and which of these maxims are more or less

frequently observed in creating the humorous effects?"

Among the various studies conducted in the domain of humor, studies focusing on situation comedy (sitcom) are central to furthering the understanding of humor. This is because situation comedy, hereby also termed as sitcom, is more appreciated within homes as entertainment among families. The term also refers to a series of humorous shows shown on television that makes the audience laugh. In this context, the situations that made the audience laugh tend to originate from daily life situations, hence, the conversations shared by the characters can be considered as the representative sample of real life. As a matter of fact, most humorous topics noted in modern-day sitcoms are based on current events happening within our society. Depending on the era of the sitcom, some may even be able to reflect a particular kind of living style that is reminiscent of such an era. This reflection is revealed not just by the attire, food, display of artifacts but also by the topics mentioned in the humour (Lu, 2014).

Most previous studies (Murata, 2014; Rogerson, 2007) looking at humour revealed that majority of researches investigated cross-cultural differences or cross-linguistic similarities and distinctions such as in workplace context. Only a few studies focused on sitcom humour as is evidenced by the outcomes noted in Caesilia's study (2015) and Shu's research (2012). These two studies focused mainly on American sitcoms and they concluded that failing to observe Grice's (1975) maxims can create humor while some studies (Zhen, 2013; Wu, 2005) chose to make comparisons of humour between American sitcoms and Chinese sitcoms. Zhen (2013) developed a framework of contextual dimensions -- physical, temporal and experiential, to analyze humorous conversations in an American sitcom "Friends" and a Chinese sitcom "I Love My Family". She found that compared with "I Love My Family", "Friends" depended more on linguistic knowledge and less on social and cultural knowledge to create humour. Wu (2005) also compared humour between "Friends" and "I Love My Family" by using

Grice's (1975) maxims. Likewise, she concluded that flouting Grice's (1975) maxims is the most popular way to achieve the humorous effects in the two sitcoms.

Owing to the aim of this paper which attempts to investigate how humour in a local sitcom, "Home with Kids – Season 4" was created, the model provided by Grice (1975) is used. Within the Cooperative Principle, Grice (1975) proposed four types of maxims to be observed: 1) The maxim of quantity; make your contribution as informative as required and do not make your contribution more informative as required; 2) The maxim of quality; try to make your contribution one that is true, do not say what you believe to be false, and do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence; 3) The maxim of relation; be relevant; 4) The maxim of manner; be perspicuous and specifically, avoid obscurity of expression, avoid ambiguity, be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity), and be orderly (Grice, 1975, p. 46).

There exist some conditions whereby speakers may not observe these maxims during conversations. For instance, someone who is incapable of speaking clearly or who deliberately chooses to tell a lie. In his study, Thomas (1995) noted that there are five types of non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims which include; 1) Flouting: to blatantly fail to observe a maxim with no intention of misleading the hearer but with the intention of creating a conventional implicature; 2) Violating: to quietly and purposely fail to observe a maxim with the intention to mislead the hearer; 3) Opting out: to be unwilling to cooperate and withdrawing from the interaction; 4) Infringing: to unintentionally fail to observe a maxim due to limited language capabilities and understanding; and 5) Suspending: to force speakers not to observe a maxim because of certain circumstances, i.e. cultural specification.

The model will enable this study to detect how the humour was created and which of the maxims were more or less observed in creating the humorous effects noted in the identified sitcom. It is assumed that analyzing the humorous language of Chinese sitcoms may facilitate non-native Chinese audiences,

especially learners of Mandarin as a second or foreign language, to appreciate the nature of the language, in comparison to other languages. In this regard, second language speakers of Mandarin will be able to appreciate the humour as well as the Chinese culture, thereby, deepening their insights into the Chinese language (Mandarin) and idiosyncrasies.

There are three major theories of humour: superiority, incongruity and relief and they are widely depicted by most researchers in humour studies. The three theories clarify the purpose of using humour in daily lives and they have been used by others such as Caesilia (2015), Shu (2012) and Sri (2006).

The superiority theory of humour originated from the perception that laughter can be said to be an expression of the feeling of superiority over another person or situation. This form of humour provides enjoyment and amusement for self and others through the means of suppressing and lowering other people who are in a weaker situation (Keith-Spiegel, 1972).

The incongruity theory of humour is possibly the one that is most widely used in describing humour. The theory proposes that someone laughs at something because of its impropriety when compared to the conventional patterns of things. Consequently, this difference can lead to amusement.

The relief theory of humour facilitates the relieving of tension and nervous energies caused by laughter and mirth. The basic principle of the relief theory is that laughter supplies psychological support, reduces pressure and provides supreme energy whilst caught in a nervous situation. Consequently, the usage of humour in tense conditions helps to release the nervousness contained within the person thereby assisting the person to return to a stable condition after a struggles, stress and tension (Raskin, 1985).

Past studies (Caesilia, 2015; Murata, 2014; Rochmawati, 2012) looking at humour have covered a variety of contexts, such as, workplace, jokes, and sitcoms. These studies have focused on similar issues, focusing on how Grice's (1975) maxims contribute to the humorous effects. Rochmawati (2012)

explored humour strategies in 30 short jokes published in the Readers' Digest section for World's Funniest Jokes. It was noted that the speakers in the jokes had also employed irony, absurdity, exaggeration or simple lies to cause misunderstandings, thereby, violating Grice's maxims. In another study focusing on American sitcoms, Latan (2013) investigated the humorous language used in the "the Big Bang Theory". Likewise, it was discovered that the humour was created due to the non-observance of all the five maxims proposed by Grice (1975). Apparently, the audience's amusement could be traced to the flouting of Grice's maxim which totaled 66.86% of the time while infringing and violating of Grice's maxim accounted for only 16.57% and 13.71%, respectively. Slightly different from the findings of Latan (2013), the outcome noted in Caesilia's (2015) study found that humour was the result of the non-observance of four of Grice's (1975) maxims and the most important way of failing Grice's (1975) maxims so as to create humour was through violating Grice's maxim rather than flouting. Previous studies (Caesilia, 2015; Latan, 2013) also indicated that humour was not always created through the non-observance of all the five types of Grice's (1975) maxims. This has been confirmed by Latan (2013) who noted the non-observance of all the five maxims whereas Caesilia (2015) noted only four. While Latan (2013) observed flouting as the most commonly used strategy to create humour, Caesilia (2015) noted that it was violating the maxims and this implies that situations and contexts of the sitcoms may be two possible factors that affect this difference. In addition, Caesilia (2015) also noted that opting out a maxim in the situation comedy does not appear to be humorous. In fact, when this occurs, it appears to be a disappointment or curiosity for the hearer.

Replicating what previous studies (Sri, 2006; Latan, 2013; Caesilia, 2015) have done, this study is an attempt to shed light on the creation of humour in one Chinese sitcom by studying the relationship between humour and the non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims to see which of these was more commonly used.

METHOD

The sitcom selected for collecting data in this study is "Home with Kids (Season 4)" which was released to the audience in mainland China in 2007. As a popular sitcom, the show was released for several seasons and the one selected for the current study comprise the most recent season shown in the TV sitcom, amongst the four seasons of "Home with Kids" (at the point of this study) and it includes 67 episodes with each episode lasting about 25 minutes, thus, 67 episodes would comprise a total of 1675 minutes.

For the purpose of this study, a total of 96 conversations occurring in the living room in "Home with Kids (Season 4)" were extracted for analysis. The following are reasons justifying the selection: Firstly, all the

For the purpose of analysis, only portion of the data are presented in the study to illustrate the non-observance (e.g. flouting, violating, infringing, opting out, suspending) of Grice's (1975) maxims. This study is developed based on the following steps: Step 1: Firstly, download all the 67 episodes of the sitcom from www.youku.com via Internet. Then watch all the 67 episodes of the Chinese sitcom "Home with Kids (Season 4)" which have been downloaded. Next, identify the parts where the laugh track exist and then take note of the conversations that occurs regardless of where the setting (living room, kitchen, bedroom etc) is. Since most of the conversations that occurred in the living room were accompanied by laugh tracks as well as subtitles, the conversations were thus, selected and then manually transcribed until all the 67 episodes were completed. Transcriptions were done verbatim but where there are some nonverbal actions, these will be indicated in brackets. Step 2: Secondly, after the data were identified, selected and manually transcribed in Chinese, the transcriptions were compared to the conversations again to ensure accuracy. These Chinese conversations were then translated into English with Microsoft Word. As mentioned earlier, since situational humour (Koestler, 1993) almost has no influence on language, this paper only focuses on the portrayal of verbal linguistic humour (Koestler, 1993). Step 3: Thirdly, in order to validate the

examples chosen for analysis are included in the laugh tracks which had been inserted into the TV series. The laugh tracks indicate where the humour in the sitcom occurs, thus, it is considered as one of the unique features of sitcoms (Brock, 2008). In this regard, the laugh track is treated as the criterion to determine the verbal humour (Koestler, 1993). Secondly, these humorous conversations tend to occur in the living room of the sitcom and it appears that this setting carries the highest frequency of occurrences (62.7%) in the sitcom. Creswell (2012) says that the larger the sample, the more reliable the results, therefore, selecting the humorous conversations that had occurred in the living room as data can make the results of this study more reliable.

data to ensure that it is reliable, all the transcriptions were further verified by a bilingual person, who understands Chinese and English well.

In order to identify the speakers' non-observance of Grice's maxims, data were analyzed via the five types of non-observance of Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle which encompass: flouting, violating, infringing, opting out, and suspending of Grice's maxims. Following the analysis, a discussion is provided, linking the findings to previous studies in order to better understand how humour was created in "Home with Kids (Season 4)". Data were then accounted for based on occurrence of frequency before being presented in percentages.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Flouting Grice's maxims

Among the occurrences noted in the analysis, it appears that flouting occurred more often than the other non-observances of Grice's (1975) maxims.

Example #1: (Episode 38, *Home with Kids*)
Context: S1 (Liu Xing), S2 (Xia Yu), and D (Xia Xue) played badminton together, but D always couldn't get the ball and this made S1 and S2 feel disappointed. When they reached home, S1 and S2 complained about D.

Turn 1: 刘星: 小雪, 你这协调性可真够呛。你别老闷屋里看书了, 你多运动运

动。

(S1: Xiao Xue (D), look at your poor physical coordination. You should not be staying indoors and just reading books. You should do more sports.)

Turn 2: 夏雨: 女生嘛, 小脑不发达。

(S2: Cerebellum of girls are not so advanced when compared to boys.)

Turn 3: 夏雪: 小脑不发达也比你没有大脑强。(Laugh track)

(D: My cerebellum does not develop as well as the cerebellum of boys. However, it is still better than you who don't have a brain.)

In example 1, in turn 3, D's utterance obviously flouted the Maxim of Quality through expressing that S2 has no brains, which is untrue. It is clear that D is really not good at exercising, as is noted in turn 1. Therefore, in turn 2, S2 teased D, saying that her cerebellum is not completely developed. This was used as a hint to D to suggest that she is a stupid person. Therefore, in turn 3, D fought back to save face by satirizing S2 as having no brains. As we all know, S2, as a person, could not have survived if he had no brains. Hence, in turn 3, D's untrue words flouted the Maxim of Quality by delivering a sarcasm. This flouting generated a conversational implicature which suggests that S2 is more stupid than D, thereby making the audience laughed.

Brumark (2006) noted that amongst teenagers, flouting is often used by adolescents either through ironic speech or through teasing others, as a means to create humorous conversations. This observation is also similar to the example highlighted by Caesilia (2015) who noted that the teacher in her study also used sarcasm to regulate the student's behavior by flouting the Maxim of Quality.

Example #2: (Episode 27, *Home with Kids*)

Context: While S2 (Xia Yu) was doing homework in his room, he was required to see F (Xia Donghai) playing marbles in the living room.

Turn 1: 夏雨: 爸, 您快点弹吧?

(S2: Dad, can you play the marble right now?)

Turn 2: 夏东海: 哎, 好, 看着啊。那个弹之前, 爸爸必须再跟你说几句啊。虽然爸爸是当年人见人夸的"弹球大王", 但是毕竟这么多年不练了, 手可能有些生了, 爸爸就不再给你再现当年百发百中的惊人场面了。就是爸爸弹三次, 如果有一次弹中爸爸就算赢。就是让你感受一下爸爸当年的风采就行了啊。(Laugh track)

(F: Ah, ok, look. Before playing, Dad has something to say. Although as I was crowned the "King of playing marbles" during my younger years, and because I haven't practiced for years, your father now cannot fling the marbles accurately or successfully every time. So, give me three tries, and as long as I fling one marble accurately, it will be counted as my win. I just want to show you how good your father used to be in those days.)

Turn 3: 夏雨: 爸, 我想问问你这弹球是用嘴弹还是用手弹呢。

(S2: Dad, I just want to ask if you are playing marbles with your hands or with your mouth.)

In example 2, the flouting of the Maxim of Quantity occurred in turn 2 where F said too many words. In turn 1, when S2 asked F to play the marble "right now", all M needed to reply was "Ok", which would have been sufficient for an answer. However, in turn 2, F went into a long-winded utterance about how invincible he was at playing marbles during his younger years and he went on to boast about his being the "King of playing marbles" and yet he was also making excuses about why he was not able to show the amazing skills "right now". Probably to avoid his incompetence in playing marbles, F tried to negotiate with S2 in turn 2 by saying "So, give me three tries, and as long as I fling one marble accurately, it will be counted as my win" as a way of saving his own face. Thus, by turn 3, S2 showed his intense impatience with F who provided too much unnecessary and redundant information by satirizing F. In turn 2, F said too many words and this caused humour to be created as it also carried a conversational implicature which suggests that F's skill of playing marbles was not as excellent as he claimed. This explains why F

offered so much explanation as a means of preventing S2 from laughing at him.

In Wang's (2014) research which examined how the characters in the American Sitcom "Friends" flouted the four maxims of the Cooperative Principle and how the humorous effect was derived, it was mentioned that the characters flouted the Maxim of Quantity by offering too much information when giving answers to others' questions. The abundant information had led to the humorous effects. Wang (2014) also noted that sometimes, more information does not guarantee a better understanding for the hearer. In the context of the present study, F's abundant explanation in turn 2 was unnecessary and it caused impatience in S2 impatient. Thus, it flouted the Maxim of Quantity and created humour.

Violating Grice's maxims

Violating Grice's (1975) maxims was noted to be the second common according to the occurrence of frequency.

Example #3: (Episode 11, *Home with Kids*)

Context: M (Liu Mei) bought a great calligrapher's work as a decoration. D (Xia Xue), S1 (Liu Xing), and S2 (Xia Yu), found that calligraphy was terrible and laughed at the calligrapher.

Turn 1: 刘梅: 自己不会欣赏,就在这瞎狂。我告诉你们,欣赏墨宝也是要学的要品味的,要胸怀的。这里面包含着很多容量的呢。

(M: You don't know how to appreciate art and you act like one who knows. Let me tell you this, only those who have knowledge, great taste, and an open mind are able to appreciate the beauty of calligraphy. This calligraphy contains lots of meaning.)

Turn 2: 夏雪: 妈,您懂啊?

(D: So mom, do you know how to appreciate it?)

Turn 3: 刘梅: 当然了。

(M: Of course.)

Turn 4: 夏雪: 那您懂,你说说它哪好?

(D: Since you know how to, could you please enlighten us on its beauty?)

Turn 5: 刘梅: 它.....多好啊。(Laugh track)

(M: *It issooooo beautiful.*)

This example demonstrates the violating of the Maxim of Quantity in turn 5 where M provided lesser information than required. In turn 4, D's question to M was "could you please enlighten us on its (calligraphy) beauty?" expecting M to elaborate on how she found calligraphy to be an art. However, in return, D received an unsatisfying answer from M. In turn 5, all M said was "It issoooo beautiful" instead of giving enough details which can explain why and how she appreciated the calligrapher's work, instead, her response was totally different. As an example, M could have said, "The calligraphy is vigorous and forceful" as one reason in expressing the beauty of calligraphy but nevertheless, in turn 5, M purposely provided less information in reply to D's question. This, therefore, created humour and made the audience laughed because now they are doubting if M really knew how to appreciate the beauty of calligraphy. In this case, M may have just wanted to save face as a "knowledgeable" mother.

Likewise, Rochmawati (2012) found that in the jokes published in Readers' Digest, humour was created when people violated the Maxim of Quantity and did not provide what the addressees were expecting. In most cases, humour is usually contained in the speakers' absurd responses. In this regard, M's absurd utterance in turn 5 violated the Maxim of Quantity because she offered too little information about the appreciation of calligraphy, thereby creating humour.

Example #4: (Episode 61, *Home with Kids*)

Context: M (Liu Mei) was suffering from menopause, so she was easily irritated and made angry. One day, she quarreled with a man outside. Upon returning home, she complained to F (Xia Donghai), D (Xia Xue), and S1 (Liu Xing). M hoped that her husband and children could do something as an act of justice for her.

Turn 1: 刘梅: 刘星,这个时候你是不是应该站起来,跑出去,为妈妈打抱不平啊,说"谁啊谁啊谁啊,谁欺负我妈了"?

(M: Liu Xing (S1), shouldn't you stand up for me now and run out, saying "Who? Who?

Who bullied my mom?")

Turn 2: 刘星: 我觉得我还是回屋复习一会儿吧。(Laugh track)

(S1: *I think it's better for me to stay at room and do some revision.*)

Turn 3: 刘梅: 小雪, 你是不是应该替妈妈说几句话啊?

(M: Xiao Xue (D), shouldn't you speak up for your mom?)

Turn 4: 夏雪: 嗯, 我觉得我也应该回屋看会书了。(Laugh track)

(D: *Eh, I think that I should stay in my room and read books.*)

Turn 5: 刘梅: 夏东海, 你老婆在外面可是受人欺负了.....

(M: Xia Donghai (F), your wife was bullied by a man outside.....)

Turn 6: 夏东海: 这电视看时间久了, 我发现脑袋特别疼。真的, 我回屋躺一会。脑袋怎么回事?(Laugh track)

(F: *I spent too much time watching TV, and I feel I have a terrible headache. Yes, I think I had better return to my room and lay in bed for a while. What's wrong with my head?*)

This example showed how the Maxim of Relation could be violated by uttering about other topics as a means of evade the current situation. From the context, it is noted that M was bullied by a man outside, so she had hoped that her family could support her. In turn 1, M was questioning S1 for not backing her when she was bullied. S1 chose to give an irrelevant reply which is that he had better return to his room and review the lessons, as shown in turn 2. Then, M turned to D for comfort. Like S1, D also replied that she had to study, in turn 4, and she too ran away because she clearly knew that she did not want to irritate M especially when she was in such a bad mood. When M's attempt to get D failed, she pinned her hope on her husband, F. Similarly, being afraid of M's bad temper at this juncture, F, in turn 6, also made up an excuse to evade the situation. It seems clear that all the family members avoided M by using ridiculous reasons at the same time, and this provided amusement to the audience. In the example given, F, D, and S1 violated the

Maxim of Relation by talking about other affairs when answering M's question.

Rochmawati (2012) stated that violating the Maxim of Relation was employed by making irrelevant statements and changing the topic and speakers would use the strategy to escape from an embarrassing situation or from answering some awkward questions. In the context of this example, it appears that F, D, and S1 answered M but they purposely provided irrelevant answers so as to avoid answering M's embarrassing question as well as to avoid annoying her. This had thus created a humorous effect for the audience.

Infringing Grice's maxims

The third most common non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims was infringing Grice's maxims.

Example #5: (Episode 14, *Home with Kids*)

Context: S1 (Liu Xing) bought a bird then persisted in teaching his bird to say "Mommy".

Turn 1: 刘星: 妈。妈。妈。妈。

(S1: Mommy. Mommy. Mommy. Mommy.)

Turn 2: 刘梅: 哎。干嘛? 你叫我干嘛?

(M: Hey, what is the matter with you? Why are you calling me?)

Turn 3: 刘星: 我没叫您, 我叫它“妈”呢。(Laugh track)

(S1: *I didn't call you, I am calling it (the bird) "Mommy".*)

Turn 4: 刘梅: 叫什么?

(M: What?)

Turn 5: 刘星: 不是, 我让他叫我“妈”。

(Laugh track)

(S1: *No, I mean, I am training it (the bird) to call me "Mommy".*)

In this example, the humorous effect was created in turn 3 and turn 5. Here, S1 infringed the Maxim of Quality because he was nervous and excited at the same time and so he was unable to say something coherently whilst answering his mother, M. In turn 3, S1 replied that he called the bird "Mommy" and in turn 5, S1 replied that he wanted the bird to call him "Mommy". This ridiculous answer made the audience laughed, because we all know that S1 is a male person who therefore, cannot become a mother for a bird. S1 was unable to speak

clearly or make his point clear because he was a little afraid of his mother. This was the main reason that made him nervous. Thus, S1 had infringed the Maxim of Quality to create the humorous effect. Caesilia (2015) had also concluded that when a speaker becomes too excited (in the sitcom), the speaker tends to infringe the maxims.

Comparison of the non-observance of Grice's maxims

In total, this study was able to extract 96 humorous examples from "Home with Kids (Season 4)". Based on the analysis of the non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims, the findings are further divided into the respective categories, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Comparison of non-observance of Grice's maxims in "Home with Kids"*

Four maxims	Flouting	Violating	Infringing	Opting out	Suspending	Non-observance	
						Number	Percentage
The Maxim of Quantity	5	3	0	0	0	8	8.3%
The Maxim of Quality	26	23	2	0	0	51	53.1%
The Maxim of Relation	8	8	0	0	0	16	16.7%
The Maxim of Manner	10	11	0	0	0	21	21.9%
Total	49	45	2	0	0	96	100%

From the Table, it is noted that amongst the five types of non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims, flouting is the most commonly used, hence, the most important strategy used to create humour as almost half or 49% of the data consisted of this. The second and third strategy used are violating and infringing. Opting out and suspending of Grice's maxims were not detected in the Chinese sitcom, "Home with Kids" (Season 4) for creating humour.

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that out of the five types of non-observance of Grice's (1975) maxims, only three were used to create humour in the Chinese sitcom, "Home with Kids" (Season 4). It appears that flouting, violating, and infringing the maxims contributed in creating the humorous effect for the sitcom whilst opting out and suspending the maxims were not employed by the characters at all.

The findings of this study differ from the outcomes noted by Latan (2013) who stated

that flouting and infringing Grice's (1975) maxims played an important role in American sitcom. Nevertheless, the latter work of Caesilia's (2015) appears to share some similarity with the present study as it too noted that flouting and violating the maxims played an important role in creating humour in the sitcom she studied whilst infringing had little influence on creating humour. It is further noted that Caesilia (2015) had also asserted that opting out of Grice's maxims did not appear to be humorous for the hearer which was not noted in the current study. According to Sri (2006), suspending Grice's (1975) maxims means concealing the truth owing to the cultural code and it rarely occurred. Likewise, in the Chinese sitcom, "Home with Kids (Season 4)", suspending the maxims was not detected.

CONCLUSION

This study has highlighted the outcome noted from investigating how humour was created in

a popular Chinese sitcom, “Home with Kids” (Season 4). Data were analysed according to Grice’s (1975) maxims to see if all the five types of non-observance were employed by the characters to create humour. Unlike previous studies which noted four types of non-observance, the current study detected only three types of non-observance: flouting, violating, and infringing of Grice’s (1975) maxims, which play an important role in creating the humorous effect for the sitcom.

The Chinese sitcom in study, “Home with Kids (Season 4)” is a popular entertainment programme for the mainland Chinese viewers. It is a sitcom that is loaded with humorous language, cultural knowledge and social values, and so it contains the ideal material that can be used to enhance both language and culture learning for non-native Mandarin learners. In this regard, the Chinese sitcom has the following advantage to offer learners of Mandarin as a second or foreign language. First, language and culture were interwoven in the sitcom so it is a good source of material to use for helping to develop learners’ communicative and linguistic competence. Second, the sitcom is immersed in the Chinese (Mandarin) language, it reflects real-life situations and so when used as a resource for learning, the outcome not only relaxes learners, thereby, lowering their affective filters, the sitcom can also offer learners a more authentic language-learning atmosphere. It is also an interesting language-learning context with interesting conversations and this can enable learners to become more competent in using the target language.

As pointed out by Shifman (2007), humour could be a key to comprehend social and cultural processes, and by incorporating humour into the learning of Mandarin as a second language for non-native Mandarin learners, the benefits gained are not only cultural, social but also personal.

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