

## CHAPTER I

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

The speakers and listeners always make efforts to contribute efficiently when they partake in conversation in order to achieve the purpose. In achieving the purpose, the conversation should have direction. Grice considered this by proposing conversational maxims to set the mechanism of conversation in order to make the speaker and listener understand each other based on which people interpret others' utterances.

Conversational maxims are a set of rule in conversation between speaker and the listener as Chapman (2000:131) says that conversational maxims are the areas in which conversational partners cooperate. The speaker and the listener cooperate during conversation by delivering his/ her intention for speaker and interpreting the speaker's intention for the listener so that the communication becomes effective. Therefore, understanding conversational maxims is fundamental for smooth communication, and conversational maxims which are shared in society may contribute to mutual understanding during conversation.

Sometimes the listener misunderstands what the speaker says. This can occur if the speaker does not say something directly what he/ she means. When the speaker does not say what he/ she means, it means he/ she implies the meaning. It can be understood if the listener can misunderstand the speaker's utterance because sometimes what the speaker means is different with what speaker says.

Therefore Thomas (1995: 63) divided conversational maxims into two types, they are Observance maxims and Non-Observance maxims. Observance maxims are the speaker and listener observe or obey the maxims during conversation. Meanwhile, non-observance maxims are the speaker and listener disobey the maxims during conversation.

Conversational maxim is not a challenge to the majority of normal people because they have intact pragmatic language skills. However for a significant number of people like Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) children, conversational maxim is difficult to be understood. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is known as developmental disorder characterized by atypical deficit in social, communicative and cognitive functioning.

American Psychiatric Association (1994) defines autism as a pervasive developmental disorder which is characterized by impairments in communication and social interaction and restricted, repetitive and stereotypic patterns of behavior, interests and activities, less frequent and varied speech acts, difficulty in making appropriate judgments about how much/little to say in conversational responses, problems in taking another's perspective in conversation.

Autism children lack of the cognitive and linguistic skills which take the listener from a decoded utterance to what the utterance means in a particular context so that they have poor topic maintenance, preservation with language, failure to signal turn taking, etc.

SLB Yapsi Tebing Tinggi is an elementary school for children with special needs and children who need special attention such as autism children, low

functioning children, hyperactivity disorder children and learning disability children. This school educates these children to be independent in doing their activities and help them to develop their potential. The researcher chose SDLB Yapsi as the data because this school manages the class based on the children's severe such as children with mentally retardation will be in a class, children with autism will be in a class so on. Furthermore autism children at this school are able to communicate with others.

The researcher observed autism children during learning activities in this school. The following is an example that researcher found at SDLB Yapsi Tebing Tinggi. An autism child did not obey conversational maxim. In Bahasa Indonesia lesson, the teacher asked Yoga about daily life as follows:

T: Y di mana kita buang sampah?

Y: *Bu buang sampah.*

T: Y di mana kita buang sampah?

Y: *Buang sampah.*

The example above shows Yoga disobeyed conversational maxim. When the teacher asked where he should throw the trash, he misunderstood by repeating his teacher's words. Realizing he misunderstood with the question, the teacher repeated the question to make it clear. Nevertheless he still gave wrong answer by repeating his teacher's words.

Furthermore, some previous studies about conversational maxim performance of autism children support the communication characteristic of autism children which are deficit in communication especially in identifying the conversational maxim. These previous studies found that autism children are not able to perform conversational maxim successfully.

Baron-Cohen et al (1996) tested three different groups of children, one of the group is autism children. They found that, autism children offered extra information that is known to the listener. Here examiner asked Jane about breakfast: Examiner: What did you have for breakfast?

Jane : A hard boiled egg cooked in hot water in a saucepan.

In this example, Jane answered overly precise to the question. She added extra information that was already known. She must not add “cooked in hot water in a saucepan”. It was enough to say “A hard boiled egg”.

Perkins (2007:231) tested an autism child by playing guessing game. Here he found that the child had difficult to draw the conclusion to the clue as follows:

Adult: this is something to help you travel, to go places on and it's got wheels.

Child: car

Adult: and it's got a seat to sit on, and it's got a handlebar, and only one person can ride on it.

Child: wheelchair

Adult: and it's got pedals. It's got two wheels and pedals and a seat and a handlebar and one person can ride it.

Child: wheelchair

When the adult generally gave the first clue, the child could understand by answering car but because the child could not get enough with the clue, then the adult gave another clue. On the second clue, the child misunderstood that seat with handlebar and only one person ride on it was wheelchair. On the third clue, the adult gave specific clue but the child still could not answer it. Here the child was hard to draw conclusion of the clue given even the adult had give specific term.

Ghani (2010:90) did research about conversational skill of autism teenager. He found that Y (the autism teenager) always lost his focus in conversation as follows:

- M: What did you have for breakfast?  
Y: wang (money)  
M: What did you have for breakfast this morning?  
Y: I see.....  
M: No, not I see. Say "I had ....." "  
Y: I had.....  
M: nasi lemak, chicken....  
Y: nugget, egg

In this example, Ghani explained that Y knew "money" is not food; and he knew that M wanted to know what he had at the school canteen. M continued asking Y until he was able to tell what he had for breakfast. So, in order to obtain the truth from Y, the conversational partner had to ask him several times because he got distracted and always lost his focus in a conversation.

Based on these phenomena, the researcher is interested to investigate the conversational maxim of autism children in SLB Yapsi Tebing Tinggi. This research observed the occurrence of autistic children's conversational maxim which is involved the observance and non-observance maxim.

## **1.2 The Problem of the Study**

Based on the explanation given in the background, the problems of the study are formulated in the following questions:

1. What types of conversational maxims are used by the autistic children?
2. Why are the conversational maxims used in the way they are?

## **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

In accordance with the problems of the study, the objectives of this research are:

1. To find out the types of conversational maxims used by the autism children.
2. To give the reasons of conversational maxims used by the autism children in the way they are.

## **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited into conversational maxim in autism children. The data is limited to the Indonesian words that produced by autism children at SLB Yapsi Tebing Tinggi. The aspects of the study are the occurrences of observance and non-observance in maxims proposed by Grice.

## **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study have two general significances, namely theoretical and practical significance.

1. Theoretically, this study enriches the theory of pragmatics especially in the conversational maxims.

2. Practically, the findings of this study could be used for further research and sort of guidelines for the teachers and parents who directly involve in this area, in order to be able to guide autism children to create good understanding in daily conversation.



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