

# Schizophrenic Speech Potrayed in the Main Character in *Canvas* Movie

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## ABSTRACT

This research is focused on the analysis of psycholinguistics aspect. The purpose of the study is to analyze the linguistic phenomena of schizophrenia suffered by the amin character in *Canvas* movie which is Mary. The objectives of this research is to find out and describe the language abnormalities experienced by the main character. There are some findings related to schizophrenic language abnormalities, from eight types that occur in this research is only five. They are looseness, perseveration of ideas, non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic), weakening of goal, and poverty of speech. Speech abnormalities often appear in the symptoms of someone who has schizophrenia by repeating the same word or phrase over and over again.

**Keywords:** Psycholinguistics, Schizophrenia, Speech

## INTRODUCTION

Language and speech which a person speaks affects to some extent to what he or she has in his or her mind (Rosenthal, 1991:14). Thus, it is clear that the things inside someone's mind and the language he or she speaks cannot be separated from each other. In fact, the existence of language which expresses thoughts would be impossible without the ability of each individual to elaborate the mental functioning in his or her own mind. The abilities of a person to express his or her thought correctly, think clearly to solve problems in life and also communicate well with others depend on his or her own condition of mind. Basically, a person with a good condition of mind may not have any difficulties in processing utterances since the messages are transferred easily to the other people.

Actually, to process utterances may become the most difficult thing for a person with a mental disorder because there are disturbances of bad cells or neural impairments in his or her mind. Thus, this person often gets troubles in expressing his or her moods, feeling of an emotion and even, he or she sometimes has to face difficulties in uttering his or her words correctly. This condition will affect the sufferer's life because he or she will easily feel depressed.

One example of mental disorders is schizophrenia. As stated by Andreasen (Weinberger and Harrison, 2011:3), schizophrenia is an illness that has an effect on someone's identity, his or her brain, and his or her most complex functions of brain system. In many cases, a person who suffers from schizophrenia may have disorganized speech. He or she finds difficulties to distinguish what is real and unreal, and to express his or her own emotions. Unfortunately, sometimes the schizophrenic does

not realise that he or she is suffering from this illness and even, many of these sufferers refuse to get treatment.

One phenomenon of schizophrenia is like what is portrayed in a movie entitled *Canvas* which successfully got 8 awards in 2006 and 2007. This is one of the finest portrayals of a mental illness movie adopted from a true story of Joe Greco's mother (the director of this movie) who suffers from schizophrenia. The schizophrenic character named Mary is well played by Marcia Gay Harden. In this movie, Mary is described as a schizophrenic whose condition continues to slowly deteriorate as she hears phantom sounds, has hallucination, and becomes increasingly paranoid. Because of her illness, she must be separated from her social life which commonly happens to people with schizophrenia.

In short, the researcher is interested in analysing the language abnormalities of schizophrenic. The abnormalities of language are mostly related to a particular brain damage. In this case, when schizophrenia occurs, the sufferer may get a disruption on his or her mind influencing the utterances or speech. Therefore, it is of relevance to discuss the phenomenon by employing the approach of psycholinguistics. This is in accordance with the definition of psycholinguistics. Field (2005:ix) argues that the study of psycholinguistics provides insights into how people use language and also how they use it as a means to understand the others.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia is a complex mental illness that can be devastating if it is compared to the other brain disorders. This is in line with Veague et al. (2007:1) state that schizophrenia belongs to a psychotic disorder disrupting thoughts, speech, and behaviors.

The sufferer with schizophrenia will have episodes of acute psychotic symptoms, especially having the disturbances in mood, thinking, and behavior. The psychotic symptoms may affect the sufferer in losing contact with the reality. Thompson (2007:33) explains further that the psychotic symptoms are primarily characterized by hallucinations, delusions, and disorganized thought patterns. Hallucinations means that things seen, heard, and felt are not actually received. The person with hallucination may hear voices that are not there. Even, he or she will do bad things based on what the voices instruct him or her to do.

#### - **The Speech Abnormalities in Schizophrenic Speech**

Schizophrenia is a chronic, severe, and disabling brain disorder. It may cause the disturbance of speech in a person with this disorder. Abnormalities in language are central to psychosis, particularly the schizophrenic syndrome. In this case, the researcher uses Liddle's TLI (Thought and Language Index) to analyze the speech impairment of schizophrenia. The TLI is reliable and capable of detecting the speech abnormalities.

Liddle (2002:326) presents eight types of abnormality. Two items are poverty of speech and weakening of goal reflecting impoverishment of thought and speech. Meanwhile, four items are looseness, peculiar word use, peculiar sentence construction, and peculiar logic reflecting the disorganization of thought and language. Those items mentioned are related to the discussion of schizophrenia since it shows the characteristics of psychotic disorders. Last, the TLI includes two nonspecific abnormalities of the regulation of speech and thought. They are perseveration and distractibility.

**Components of the Thought and Language Index (TLI)  
 of Liddle (2002)**

Impoverishment	Poverty of speech
	Weakening of goal
Disorganization	Looseness ( derailment, tangentiality)
	Peculiar word (rare or neologised)
	Peculiar sentence (Odd syntax)
	Non-logical reasoning (Peculiar Logic)
Dysregulation	Perseveration of ideas (repetition of ideas)
	Distractibility (by external stimuli)

**RESEARCH METHOD**

The definite method used in this paper is library research approach. Following this approach, it is important to collect data about some related articles/journal and books to the issue emerged in this paper. In collecting the data, the following steps needed to be paid attention.

- a. Searching related articles/ journals and books in library
- b. Gaining additional information via internet access
- c. Scanning the appropriate statements by expert in relevance to the issue
- d. Note-taking the statements and making cohesiveness from one statement to another one
- e. Putting thought into sequences
- f. Working on the paper

The data gathered is in the form of behavioral events, as acknowledged by Sutopo (2013)

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

According to Liddle (2000:326), there are eight types of language abnormalities. They are poverty of speech, weakening of goal, looseness, peculiar use of word, peculiar sentence, non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic), perseveration of ideas, and distractibility. Based on those types, Mary only experiences five types of them. They are perseveration of ideas, non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic), looseness, weakening of goal, and poverty of speech. The further explanations and examples for each phenomenon are presented as follows.

### a. Perseveration of ideas

Perseveration of ideas is the most-often appearing phenomenon if it is compared to the other types of speech abnormalities. It occurs 25 times that is out of the total 54 data of the occurrences. Perseveration of ideas happens when a schizophrenic uses the same words, phrases, and sentences repeatedly during her speech. This condition is influenced by the pressed delusion which makes the sufferer lose her self-control. In this case, Mary always repeats her word many times, in order to convince the others when she gets delusion. The sufferers experience a wrong belief, so they will feel worried, anxious, and even nervous. This situation is also experienced by Mary as a schizophrenic in *Canvas* movie. When she worries about her son, her speech becomes uncontrollable. However, as a schizophrenic, she is not aware of this abnormality since she experiences it as her part of reality.

The findings show that Mary employs perseveration of ideas. One example of this abnormality is shown in the following datum:

*Mary : Where's my baby?! (with her worried face)*

*Where's my son?!*

*Hughh! Chris!(By hugging tightly)*

*Hi, Honey, are you ok? Are you ok, Honey?*

*Are you ok? Are you sure?*

*Chris : Yeah!*

In the example, the phenomenon of perseveration of ideas is shown by the bold words. In this scene, Mary gets delusion which makes her worried about her son's condition. She does not believe that her son will be safe outside. She thinks that her son is in a danger, so she tries to save and ask him to come out from the school bus. In this case, the sentence *Are you ok* which is repeated three times by Mary representing the phenomenon of perseveration of ideas. In this case, her emotion influences her uncontrolled utterances. What is portrayed in Mary's utterance is in line with the theories of perseveration of ideas. This phenomenon happens when a schizophrenic sufferer uses the same words, phrases, and sentences continuously because of delusion and hallucination as the psychotic symptoms.

The second occurrence of perseveration of ideas occurs in the level of word. This phenomenon is different from the previous example since Mary as

a schizophrenic gets hallucination as if she sees and hears someone whispering to her. What happened to Mary can be seen from the example below.

*John : Mary! What are you doing?! Don't do that!*

*Don't do that! Mary!!*

*(Mary tears the portraits and then, she throws some canvas)*

*Mary : I don't want to lay down, I want to fight it!*

*That's what I want to do. I don't want to stop it.*

*What?! What?! What?*

*They're listening. They've wired the house! Argh!*

The phenomenon of perseveration of ideas is shown by the bold words. It is the repetition in the level of word. Mary repeats the word what three times since she gets hallucination. She sees some people who come near her house and then, they wire her house. Because of the influenced of Mary's visual hallucination, she informs John that she will fight with some people who are trying to wire her house. Moreover, she tells John that there are some people who are listening to her words. As a result, the repetition of her speech occurs as the result of her hallucination. Thus, it is clear that she experiences a false belief.

**b. Non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic)**

The phenomenon of non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic) occurs 13 times out of 54 times of occurrences. This ranks as the second phenomenon after perseveration of ideas which has 24.10 % in its percentage. Based on Liddle's theory, this phenomenon happens when a schizophrenic gets hallucination and delusion, so he or she makes an illogical statement which is out of reality. In fact, the illogicality affects the sufferer to have wrong or false premises. However, in normal people, their thoughts reveal a good deal of illogicality. They are able to think clearly based on the facts. In this case, since Mary has hallucination and delusion, she cannot follow the situation logically. There are three examples of such phenomenon experienced by Mary in *Canvas* movie. The first example is shown by the datum below.

*John : Mary!*

*Mary : I made Chris meatloaf sandwiches for tomorrow.*

*He loves meatloaf sandwiches.*

*Did they check for footprints underneath the window?*

In the example, Mary has a conversation with John. John asks her what actually happens to her because Mary loses her self control. Then, Mary tries to give explanation to her husband. When she is making meatloaf sandwiches to Chris for tomorrow morning, she suddenly sees footprints underneath the window. In this case, she thinks that there is someone who comes to her house. Hence, she calls the police to check the footprints. In fact, the police come to her house but there are no footprints. Thus, the bold word shows that Mary has an illogical thought. The word footprints here prove that Mary has a hallucination as if she sees footprints which belong to a stranger.

The phenomenon of non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic) only exists in schizophrenia. The content of thought is understood by a schizophrenic, while

the other people cannot understand what his or her speech means. In other words, when there is a delusion, then an illogical thinking will also take place. Therefore, the sufferer will have an illogical pattern of speech because of his or her hallucination and delusion.

The second example also marks the phenomenon of non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic) which is portrayed in Mary's utterances. It is clearly shown in the following datum:

*Mary : The FBI is here. No, no. You are going to jail. You are! I'm not going to jail! You are!*

*I'm not going to do that.*

*I don't want to go to my room!!*

*John : Mary, don't you... don't...*

*Unconditionally, Mary shakes her head. She wants to make the voices disappeared.*

*Mary : I'm not doing anything (by shaking her head)*

The above utterance contains a phenomenon of non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic). It is shown by the bold words. In this situation, Mary cannot control herself, so she rages violently. Then, she is angry to John and tells that

John is going to be put in jail. In this case, she gets delusion which makes her afraid of FBI. She believes that the FBI will come to her house and then, bring her to jail. In fact, what she thinks about FBI is a kind of delusion since there is no one who will be put in jail. What she believes about the FBI is a wrong premise, so it influences Mary's interpretation. This condition is in line with Liddle's theory that non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic) happens when a person with schizophrenia does not follow and think logically since hallucination and delusion exist there.

The third phenomenon which is portrayed in Mary's speech is shown by the following datum: In the hospital, Mary looks confused. Suddenly, she hears someone laughing but there is no one in the bathroom. The hallucination happens again to Mary. She tries to look for the voices in each single part of the room.

*Mary : Hello! Hello! She looks for the voices and there is nobody.*

*Who's laughing?*

*Stop it! Please, stop it!*

In this scene, Mary talks to herself because she is alone in the bathroom. She tries to look for the voices which she thinks fulfill in the bathroom. She gets hallucination as if she hears someone who is laughing. Thus, non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic) is portrayed in Mary's utterances. The occurrence of illogicality often appears for several times because of the hallucination and delusion. Both symptoms are the main signs for someone with schizophrenia. Thus, those psychotic symptoms take a great influence to the sufferer's thought and utterances.

### c. Looseness

The phenomenon of looseness appears in the third rank as a schizophrenic language abnormality. Among the 54 places of occurrence, it occurs as often as 12 times. According to Liddle (2002:329), looseness happens when a sufferer cannot make a right statement which loses cohesion between ideas. It means that the sufferer's utterance is tenuous or absent having an irrelevant answer. If it is compared to normal people, looseness happens in a different place. In other words, in normal people, looseness usually happens when people cannot catch the message because of the difficulties in focusing to the speaker's point. This phenomenon is also influenced by bad listening habits so it may lead to misunderstanding.

Furthermore, people do not rely on the beliefs and knowledge of their hearers to design what they say, so the hearers may not consider knowing exactly what the speakers say. Thus, since conversation is very quick, with a rapid turn taking, the hearers take the speaker's words effortlessly and automatically. In this case, there will be misunderstanding and miscommunication in having interpretation or meanings. Besides, the cohesion between ideas is not considered carefully. That is why; the speaker must clarify what his or her words in order to help the hearer to catch the message well.

Meanwhile, in schizophrenic people, the cohesion between ideas is really tenuous or absent. This phenomenon happens because it is influenced by hallucination and delusion. The form of cohesion between ideas is also different from the normal people's utterances. In fact, schizophrenic people sometimes combine things between the reality and hallucination or delusion. Thus, they are not aware of their abnormalities since they consider the phenomenon as part of their reality. In this case, there are two occurrences of sub abnormality which can be manifested during the phenomenon. They are derailment and tangentiality.

The findings show that tangentiality gets a higher occurrence than derailment. One example of tangentiality employed by Mary is shown in the following datum:

*(She holds a knife and points to John. She wants him not to come near.*

*John : You're ok! It's ok!*

*Mary : No, no, I'm not going with you. I don't wanna go! No!*

In the above example, the phenomenon of tangentiality is shown in the bold words. In that situation, Mary has a conversation with John. She is out of control because she gets hallucination. She thinks that John is a stranger who wants to take her out to go somewhere and then, she threatens him by holding a knife in front of him. Facing this kind of situation, John tries to calm her down and take the knife. He says that Mary will be fine. However, as presented in the bold words, Mary gives a completely irrelevant answer. She only talks about what she feels. She does not want to go with John since she feels that it is not safe to go out with him. Mary's response is clearly not relevant to John's statement. Mary only says what she feels now but she ignores what John says. To give further explanation about tangentiality, the second example also shows this phenomenon. It is shown by the following datum.

*Seller : Sir?!*

*Mary : Everyone is eating and I'm hungry!*

*I don't want cafeteria food.*

*John : Here, take it. Let's go!*

*Let's go Chris! Let's go Chris! Let's go!*

The phenomenon of tangentiality is shown clearly in the bold words. This occurrence is similar with the previous example since the type of tangentiality happens in the beginning of the utterance. This situation happens when Mary is angry to the seller because she cannot get a pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving Day. In fact, she expresses what she feels and thinks. She says she wants to have pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving Day. However, her statement which is shown by the bold words seems tangential and it can be classified as an irrelevant answer. In this case, Mary only tells that she is hungry. She only gives a spontaneous speech without considering the question.

**d. Weakening of goal**

After looseness, weakening of goal comes as the fourth rank by occurring as often as 3 times out of the total of 54 occurrences. This way, its percentage is 5.55 %. In fact, what is meant by this phenomenon is when a schizophrenic sufferer cannot achieve his or her goal to deliver the message or information. It is difficult for him or her to elaborate ideas and making informative statement. The sufferer tends to make an empty speech. This condition is often characterized by various phrases without having any identifiable goal. The phenomenon of weakening of goal happens almost to all people with schizophrenia. It is influenced by the poverty of thoughts since the sufferers have a problem in delivering systematic information. The message is unclear and then, it is difficult to understand what the content is. Since the phenomenon only manifests in human's thought, people with schizophrenia experiences it as part of their reality. They are not aware of this abnormality and then, they sometimes produce unclear references to their statement. However, this phenomenon may not occur in normal people since they can express what they want to say without any difficulty. Furthermore, they have no problem in their way of thinking. Thus, the idea can be transferred easily from a speaker to a hearer. As portrayed in *Canvas* movie, there are three occurrences which show the phenomenon of weakening of goal. One example of this phenomenon is presented as follows.

*Mary : Look at me. Alright, go ahead and eat.*

*And you can tell me about that... thing, in the backyard.*

*I don't like you having Diet Coke, I'm sorry.*

*John : Water. Cows drink water, just like milk.*

*You want one.. .. .*

This dialogue happens when Mary comes back to her house. She feels surprised to see that John is trying to hide something in their backyard. When she tries to ask about this event, she produces an unclear utterance. It can be seen from her utterance which is followed by long pause. In addition, after asking about the mysterious thing, she changes into another topic. In this case, Mary's



statement has poverty of content which makes the hearer difficult in following her idea.

The second occurrence of weakening of goal is clearly seen in the below example. In this situation, Mary as a schizophrenic character still makes a long pause since it is difficult for her to identify a thing to be uttered. This phenomenon is illustrated clearly in the following datum.

*Mary : And I've brought... here, pass them around. And a hat for all the kids and we can play games...*

*Chris : Stop it, Mom!(angrily)*

In this scene, Mary has a conversation with Chris. It happens when Mary makes a surprise party to celebrate Chris' birthday. In this case, Chris is very angry to Mary. He does not want his friends to know about his mother's illness. Then, he celebrates his party in Arcade with his friends. Mary knows and then, she hurries to meet Chris. She has brought everything for the surprise party including cake, candles, and hats. When she tries to give a birthday cake to Chris, she takes some hats to Chris' friends first. The last example of weakening of goal in Mary's utterance can be seen in the datum below:

*John : Mary? She's finished. Start packing.*

*We're picking you up first thing in the morning, for the weekend.*

*The doctor ok'd it.*

*Mary : I just... I don't think it's such a good idea right now, I...*

*Maybe next time... You an...You and Chris go.*

The bold words show the phenomenon of weakening of goal. This situation is different from the two previous examples since in this situation, Mary's condition is better than before. She can think and behave normally although she must do treatment. In fact, John invites Mary to go sailing with him by a ship. However, she cannot fulfill his request. She says that she can go next time with a lower tone. A unique thing in her answer is the form of her statement. In this case, her utterance has a lack of ideas. She makes an unclear sentence. The repetition of pronoun "I" also shows her failure in making an informative statement. Mary tries to explain the reason why she cannot go but in fact, she does not give a complete answer. Hence, she makes some long pauses and various phrases which have no brief goal. Thus, the phenomenon of weakening of goal happens in this situation.

**e. Poverty of speech**

After weakening of goal, poverty of speech comes as the fifth rank. It occurs only once out of the total of 54 occurrences. This way, its percentage, is 1.85 %. Like its name, poverty of speech happens when there is reduction in the amount of speech which is done by a schizophrenic. The sufferer may give brief or empty responses and decreased fluency of speech. Thus, the schizophrenic speech may be draining, so a hearer should keep prompting and asking for elaboration. The phenomenon of poverty of speech is the same as the concept of weakening of goal. Both items have lack of explaining and

communicating idea. However, poverty of speech deals with the decreased in amount, while weakening of goal is the poverty of content.

Meanwhile, in schizophrenic people, the phenomenon of poverty of speech is considered as a common phenomenon since the sufferers are in a chronic stage for their illness. They will speak in a short statement which never gives more explanation. As portrayed in Mary's utterance, there is only one example of poverty of speech in Canvas movie. Mary gives a short and brief response when she feels frustrated because of her illness. She tries to tell the others what she feels.

*John : How are you feeling?*

*Mary : Tired.*

*John : Yeah, I know the feeling. But you're getting a lot of rest, right?*

*So are you painting?*

*Mary : No.*

*John : Well you should, Mary. Give you something to do.*

The phenomenon of poverty of speech is shown in the bold words. In this case, Mary dislikes staying in the hospital. She is frustrated as if she wants to go home soon. When John asks about her condition and activity, she only gives a brief answer. She does not elaborate what she feels. In this case, Mary's answer shows that there is poverty of speech.

## CONCLUSION

Related to the description of the language abnormalities experienced by a schizophrenic in the Canvas movie. Among the 43 data analyzed, there are 54 occurrence reflecting the schizophrenic language abnormalities. This condition happens since one datum in this research may involve only one or more in the phenomenon of language abnormalities.

Besides, as employed in this movie, there are only five types of language abnormalities. They are perseveration of ideas, non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic), looseness, weakening of goal, and poverty of speech. In this research, Mary as a schizophrenic mostly repeats her words in many times. Thus, perseveration of ideas occurs as the most often appearing phenomenon with the highest position. Actually, Mary's utterances tend to be uncontrolled when she gets hallucination or delusion. In this case, she uses the same word, phrase, and sentence repeatedly showing her diminished mind. Even, this phenomenon can be clearly seen when Mary gets worried, anxious, nervous, and then she cannot control herself. In the second position is non-logical reasoning (peculiar logic). This phenomenon happens when Mary gets hallucination or delusion. She says illogical things which make other people difficult in conceiving the truth of what she tries to communicate to them. For this reason, her utterances may be tangential, irrelevant, and decreased in the fluency of speech. These conditions are reflected in the occurrence of looseness, weakening of goal, and poverty of speech which have the same occurrences.

Moreover, she cannot place herself well in a proper situation which then forces her to do excessive crying and meaningless laughter.

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