

The Flouting of Gricean Maxims Found in the TV Series *Mom*

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the flouting of Gricean maxims done by all the characters in the TV series *Mom* in the first 10 episodes in season 1. This research aims to identify and to classify the flouting of Gricean maxims according to Cutting's classification and the most used method of flouting. The quantitative and qualitative methods are used as data analysis instruments. The results show that there were 99 cases of maxim flouting, with 59.6% (59 cases) being the flouting of the maxim of quality, 18.2% (18 cases) the flouting of the maxim of quantity, 13.1% (13 cases) the flouting of the maxim of relation, and 9.1% (9 cases) the flouting of the maxim of manner. The characters in *Mom* tend to flout the maxims by using metaphors, being irrelevant, using irony or sarcasm, using hyperbole, or being ambiguous or obscure. The results also show that the characters flouted the maxims for several reasons, with the most frequent one being to offend or to hurt the hearer and to convince the hearer.

Keywords: *cooperative principles, flouting, Gricean, maxims, TV series.*

INTRODUCTION

Every individual has their own way of conveying what they want to other people. They have the same goal: to understand and be understood, even if it means breaking conversational rules to express what they are actually trying to convey. The hearer is expected to understand what the speaker is implying to have successful communication, even when the speaker uses ambiguous or sarcastic statements. There is a set of rules that makes a conversation successful, referred to as conversational maxims. There are four conversational maxims as proposed by Grice (1975): maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner. However, speakers may choose not to follow or observe these maxims. According to Cutting (2002), there are four

ways of not observing the maxims: violating, opting out, infringing, and flouting.

This research analyzes the flouting of Gricean conversational maxims in the script of ten episodes of the first season of *Mom* uttered by all the characters in the series. This research also analyzes the most frequently used strategy of flouting the maxims and the implicatures behind each flouting of the maxims done by the characters.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of studies have dealt with the non-observance of quality maxim. For example, Lestari (2015) conducted a research about the non-observance of quality maxim in the movie *Twilight*.

In her thesis, the writer analyzes the flouting and violation of quality maxim done by all the characters in the movie. The research focuses on classifying both flouting and violation of the quality maxim. The results are 25 cases of violating the maxim are found.

Another study was done by Ramadhan (2017). This research discusses about the flouting and violating of Gricean maxims. The writer identified and classified the non-observance of all maxims found in the TV series *The Flash*. The paper provided the differences of the way a character fails to observe the maxim to two different groups in the series.

Another similar research was written by Nayadheyu (2016), attempting to analyze only the flouting of four Gricean maxims in the TV series *Gossip Girl*. The research showed that flouting the quality maxim is used mostly by the characters, and maxim of relation is the least used in the series.

The next research was written by Kurniati (2017), focuses on flouting the four Gricean maxims, with the data taken from horror movies *Insidious* and *Insidious 2*. The results of the research show that maxim of quality is the most used by the characters in both movies.

Setiawati (2016) deals with the floutings of the maxims found in skincare advertisements. The writer uses Gricean maxims to classify the violations done in the collected data. The results of this research show that 32 headlines and slogans flout the maxims of Cooperative Principle; ten of the data are flouting the maxim of quantity, eight are flouting the combination of quantity and manner maxims, two are flouting quantity, quality, and manner maxims, and one is flouting quantity, manner, and relation maxims. In this research, we attempted to identify, classify, and analyze the flouting of the maxims found in *Mom TV* series. Thus, it can be said that this research is different from the researches mentioned above.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research mainly uses the theories proposed by Grice (1975) and Cutting (2002). Grice proposed the four cooperative principles. The first is maxim of quantity, in which one has to give just the right

amount of information, not more or not less. According to Levinson (1983), people should speak sincerely, relevantly, and clearly when providing sufficient information. Cutting (2002) provided an example: "Well, to cut a long story short, she didn't get home till two." The next maxim is maxim of quality, in which the speaker has to be truthful and does not say what they believe to be false. Grice (1975) also proposed the maxim of relation when a speaker says something relevant to what is said before. The last maxim is maxim of manner, where a speaker has to be brief, as clear as possible, orderly, and avoid ambiguity.

Cutting (2002) later classified the ways of not observing the maxim into four: violating, flouting, opting out of the maxim, and infringing. This research discusses specifically the flouting of maxims: flouting of maxim of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. When someone is flouting quantity maxim, they tend to give too little or too much information. Cutting (2002, p. 34) provided an example: "Well, to cut a long story short, she didn't get home till two." Meanwhile, someone is said to be flouting the quality maxim when they are saying something that does not represent what they think such as by using hyperbole, metaphor, irony (including sarcasm), and bantering. There is also flouting the maxim of relation, in which the speaker says something but expects the hearer to imagine what the utterance did not express. Lastly, flouting the maxim of manner occurs when the speaker speaks ambiguously, appearing to be obscure, and is often trying to exclude a third party.

This research also uses the theory of context. According to Leech (1983), context is a background knowledge assumed to be shared by the speaker and hearer, contributing to the hearer's interpretation of what the speaker means by a given utterance. Context is an essential aspect that makes an utterance understandable. Hymes (1972), in his study of context, said that context plays an important role in limiting the range of possible interpretations and supporting the intended interpretations. This research also analyzes the data using implicature theory. Levinson (1983) stated that implicature is the most important part of Pragmatics due to its explicit explanation about how it can imply more than what is spoken.

METHODS

The data source of this research is the American TV series entitled *Mom* as seen on *iFlix*, a legal movie streaming application downloaded from Android App Store. *Mom* is created by Anna Faris, Allison Janney, Chuck Lorre, Eddie Gorodetsky, and Gemma Baker. The series was first premiered on CBS in 2013, with a total of 6 (six) finalized seasons. However, this research focused only on the first season of the series, aired from 2013 to 2014, using the first 10 (ten) episodes out of 22 episodes, with a various running time between 18-22 minutes per episode. Each episode has its own title, indicating two things being mentioned in each of the episodes. The data were taken from the conversation that occurs between all the characters of the series.

The primary data in this research were collected through the observation method. We legally accessed and downloaded the series from *iFlix*. We watched the first ten episodes of the first season to understand the series's storyline. The next attempt was to pay attention to each episode and its subtitle (downloaded from <http://subscene.com>), noting down utterances which contained the flouting of cooperative principles. Whenever a flouting was identified, we paused streaming to mark the subtitle and typed the data into a document file that contain subtitles (conversation), floutings which were written in italics, timestamp, context, and the interlocutors.

The primary data were analyzed by using qualitative method and simple calculation. The qualitative method produced data in the form of descriptive information. The simple calculation produced data in the form of tables to show the frequency of flouting the maxims.

There are several steps taken in analyzing the data. After the data were gathered, they were reviewed to determine the cases of flouting of the four conversational maxims. First, the data were analyzed using Gricean four conversational maxims and Cutting's proposition of methods of flouting the maxims. After the data were identified and classified, each of the data was analyzed to understand the implicature behind each flouting of the maxims. All the collected data were then presented in a simple table mentioned above.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data analysis, 99 cases flouted the Gricean maxims: 9 cases showed the flouting of the quantity maxim, 59 the flouting of quality maxim, 18 the flouting of relation maxim, and 13 the flouting of manner maxim. The most dominant maxim flouted in the *Mom* TV series is maxim of quality with 59.6% or 59 cases out of 99 in total, using metaphor as the most used method of flouting. This is followed by maxim of relation with 18.2% or 18 cases and maxim of manner with 13.1% or 13 cases. The least occurrence is the flouting of maxim of quantity, with 9.1% or only 9 cases in total, with giving too much information as the most used method of flouting the quantity.

Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

(1) 00:11:50,746 ◊ 00:12:00,521 (Episode 1)

Context: Christy meets Bonnie at her Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, a support group for recovering alcoholics. It is their first encounter since Christy leaves Bonnie due to Bonnie's alcoholism. After the meeting, they both are having some time together at a diner near the meeting. The waiter, Greg, then approaches them and starts offering the menu. Throughout the time, Bonnie is flirting with him, trying to get his number which he responds happily. After he is done talking to Bonnie, he turns away to Christy and offers her wine.

Greg: Um, and for you? We have a lovely selection of local wines.

Christy: I'll have a bottle of each and a funnel.

Bonnie: *She's kidding. We're both in Alcoholics Anonymous.*

Bonnie's utterance to Greg contains too much information. After Christy says that she will have wine, Bonnie reveals that they both are in Alcoholics Anonymous when she could have told the waiter that Christy does not mean what she says or that "she is in Alcoholics Anonymous", not "we". She deliberately tells too much information to tell the waiter, whom she is flirting with, that she is sober and has been attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, a support group for people trying to be

sober. Hence, Bonnie is flouting the maxim of quantity.

(02) 00:17:58,041 ◊ 00:18:09,967 (Episode 4)

Context: *At the Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, Christy approaches Marjorie, who is standing beside the cookie table organizing drinks and snacks, thanking her for advising about anger the other day. Bonnie then greets her, joins them, and gets drinks without being aware of Marjorie's presence and vice versa. Right after Marjorie hears Bonnie's voice, she looks up and exchanges look at each other. Christy then asks if they know each other. Bonnie, looking annoyed, answers that they crossed paths.*

Christy: Do you two know each other?

Bonnie: *We've, uh... crossed paths.*

By saying that 'we crossed paths', Bonnie is flouting the maxim of quantity. Her response does not provide enough information to Christy's question when she could have answered with 'we do' or 'Bonnie may be deliberately giving too little information than what is actually being asked to tell Christy implicitly that Bonnie and Marjorie do not have a good relationship with each other or that they had a bad encounter in the past.

Flouting the Maxim of Quality

(03) 00:00:38,752 ◊ 00:00:54,264 (Episode 7)

Context: *Bonnie is talking to Christy on the phone at 2.30 in the morning about her thinking that she might be pregnant. Christy asks her if she has taken the pregnancy test, but Bonnie says that she does not have to because she gets the signs and that there is fruit in her loins while caressing her stomach. Christy, still in disbelief, says no.*

Christy: Did you take a test?

Bonnie: I don't need to. I've got all the signs. I missed my period, I'm moody, my nipples are incredibly angry. Trust me, *there's fruit in these loins.*

Christy: No, no, no.

By using the metaphorical expression 'there is fruit in these loins', Bonnie is flouting the maxim of quality. According to the Farlex Dictionary of

Idioms, 'fruit in one's loins' means 'one's child or children'; or 'one's immediate future descendant'. She is flouting the maxim by using a metaphor to emphasize that she really believes she is pregnant. She also expresses the term while caressing her stomach for a second. She wants to make Christy believe and that she really tells the truth about her situation.

(4) 00:08:47,947 ◊ 00:09:04,362 (Episode 1)

Context: *Christy enters Roscoe's school auditorium to watch his talent show. Roscoe asked her to attend the night before, but she said no since she needed to work. She felt bad and decided to come anyway, skipping work so she could watch him. However, when she arrives, there is only a janitor there, cleaning.*

Christy: There's no talent show today?

Janitor: I don't think so.

Christy: Are you freaking kidding me?! I lost a day's pay for no reason?

Janitor: Maybe we were destined to meet.

Christy: *It would definitely be the high point of my day.*

Christy's response is an example of flouting the quality maxim by using irony. According to Collins Dictionary, the meaning of 'high point' is when one is having the most exciting or enjoyable part, but Christy is having the opposite of the day. The implied meaning is that since she does not get paid for not coming for work to watch a talent show that does not exist, she is not having a good day and meeting that janitor is something that she would not want to happen because she would rather come to work and earn money.

(5) 00:08:29,770 ◊ 00:08:45,970 (Episode 5)

Context: *Christy invites Regina for a cup of coffee at the diner near where they just had their AA meeting with Bonnie tagging along. It is Christy and Bonnie's first meeting with Regina, who is crying during the meeting. After Christy is done telling her stories and her dark past about the reason she stops drinking, she asks Regina about hers. Regina says she has a great childhood, unlike Christy and Bonnie who grew up*

with problematic family members, poverty, and alcoholism.

Christy: So, Regina, tell us about you.

Regina: Oh, I don't have any stories like that. I had a great childhood, great parents, did well in school.

Bonnie: *Hmm, no wonder you were having a nervous breakdown at an AA meeting.*

Regina: I don't like you.

In the dialogue above, Bonnie is flouting the quality maxim by using sarcasm. Although Regina's childhood is happy, unlike Christy's and Bonnie's, she is currently having the same problem with them: being an alcoholic. Ever since Christy is little, Bonnie already neglects her and often goes out drinking, partying, or using drugs, which ends up with their separation and Christy's alcoholism. Despite implying she has a happy childhood, Regina still grows old being an alcoholic, just like Christy and Bonnie. By being sarcastic, Bonnie may be implying that she does not believe in what Regina says.

Flouting the Maxim of Relation

(6) 00:11:39,246 ◊ 00:11:52,507 (Episode 4)

Context: *Christy is meeting Bonnie at a small diner near the AA meeting. Christy is sorting things out to help herself since she is in the sobriety program. Upon her sponsor's advice, she's asking for her mother's forgiveness for yelling at her the other day. However, Bonnie is not easy to forgive and demands more from her.*

Bonnie: Well, I would think you'd feel ashamed, as well.

Christy: Okay. Ashamed.

Bonnie: Maybe a little dopey.

Christy: *Dopey, Doc and Sneezzy.* Are we good?

Bonnie: I came in here good.

When Christy is asking for her mother's forgiveness for what happens a few days prior, Bonnie does not immediately respond and instead, she says that Christy she should feel terrible, ashamed, and dopey as well. Doc and Sneezzy are characters from the story Snow White, which are

unrelated to what Bonnie says previously. In response to Bonnie's saying, Christy flouts the maxim of relation by saying something irrelevant to Bonnie's statement. By doing so, she may want her to stop asking for more to her and start responding to her apology; hence she asks if they are good with each other.

(7) 00:11:12,260 ◊ 00:11:18,240 (Episode 5)

Context: *Regina is about to have a sleepover at Christy's place after her breakdown at the AA meeting. They just met for the first time earlier at the meeting. When she excuses herself to the bathroom, Bonnie stops her and starts asking questions about what she has in her purse and on her body, which is drugs. Regina answers that she is a full-figured woman because she has large breasts and a curvy body.*

Bonnie: What do you get going on with your cleavage?

Regina: I'm a full-figured woman.

Bonnie: *Yeah, and I want to motorboat you all night long.* Now give.

In the dialogue above, it can be seen that Bonnie is saying something unrelated to what Regina is implying. When Bonnie asks her to reveal what she has in her cleavage, Regina answers that she is a full-figured woman to refuse Bonnie's order. Understanding what she means, Bonnie proceeds by saying that she wants to motorboat her all day long to imply that she does not accept the refusal and insists that she gives the drugs hidden in her cleavage. Although the word 'motorboat' does not have a formal meaning, according to Urban Dictionary, 'motorboat' means the act of sticking one's face between a pair of one's breasts and shaking their head violently while making noises that resemble a motorboat.

Flouting the Maxim of Manner

(8) 00:01:19,431 ◊ 00:01:29,740 (Episode 4)

Context: *Christy is having a dream of herself and her mother in an immigration line at the airport, going back to the US from Mexico to smuggle drugs. They are waiting for their time to get checked by the immigration officer. Christy, walking in difficulty,*

tells her mother that she cannot walk comfortably with the things taped to her thighs, which are drugs. Bonnie says that there is actually another place to hide them, but Christy is too dainty.

Christy: I can barely walk with all the crap you've taped to my thighs.

Bonnie: *Well, there was another place to hide it, but you're too dainty.*

Christy: I told you that's exit only.

Bonnie's response to Christy's complaint contains ambiguity because it does not express directly what the 'another place' means. It is common for drug smugglers to hide drugs inside their body, including the rectum. She may not exactly say where to hide the drugs to show her annoyance towards Christy's complaint about the heavy drugs taped on her thighs, and it can be assumed that she provides the idea of another place to hide them but gets rejected because the rectum is for 'exit only'.

(9) 00:10:00,146 ◊ 00:10:09,196 (Episode 8)

Context: *Bonnie is helping Christy packing for her overnight trip with Adam for Adam's bestfriend's wedding. While checking the closet and drawer, she asks about Christy's plan on her first-time overnight romantic getaway with Adam since they first started the relationship in which they have not had sex yet.*

Bonnie: *All right, let's forget about the event ensemble for a moment and talk about the event ensemble.*

Christy: What about it?

In the dialogue above, Bonnie is flouting the maxim of manner by using ambiguity, referring to both the wedding party, the reason why they are looking for a dress for Christy to wear; and Christy and Adam's first time to have sex after having waited for months since they started dating. Using ambiguity, which uses the same terms for two different events, she wants Christy to look for the implied meaning that she intends by asking 'what about it', with 'it' refers to the implied meaning Bonnie is conveying indirectly through her utterance.

CONCLUSION

This research was set to analyze the flouting of Gricean maxims in the *Mom* TV series. Based on the results, flouting the maxim of quality is most used by the characters in the movie as it is found in 59 cases (59.6%) with the methods varying from saying something that does not represent what the speaker thinks, bantering, or using metaphor, irony, sarcasm, or hyperbole. The second most flouted maxim is maxim of relation, with 18 (18.2%) out of 99 cases. Next, maxim of manner is flouted 13 times (13.1%), and the least flouted maxim is maxim of quantity with 7 (8.04%) cases found in total.

This research shows that the movie characters flout the maxim of quality the most frequently because they know that the hearers understand what they say implicitly. For instance, the characters use sarcasm or irony to hurt the hearers, banter to flirt or express closeness, or use hyperbole to emphasize the real meaning of the utterance produced. Meanwhile, flouting of the maxim of manner may be used to make the conversation sounds ambiguous and obscure but still understood by the hearers. Lastly, maxim of relation is often flouted to hide the truth or simply to change the subject of the conversation.

Furthermore, from the data analyzed, the characters often flout the maxim of quality by using metaphors, with the frequency of 23 times out of 99 cases of floutings found in the movie. These floutings by using metaphor may often be done to position the speakers socially, express attitudes, and make their point more effective and convincing. Meanwhile, giving too little information and bantering are the least methods used in the series, which may be caused by the characters' nature that seem to often talk openly about each other and that they have their own ways of showing intimacy and closeness as a family. So instead of giving too little information and bantering, they use sarcasm and any other means of communications.

In conclusion, the characters in *Mom* flouted all types of conversational maxims, with the maxim of quality being the most frequently flouted compared to the others. Hopefully, the findings of this research would improve the understanding of

the flouting of conversational maxims and the implicatures.

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