



The Flouting of Grice's Cooperative Maxims in the Dialogues in *Pearls before Swine* Web Comic

Rizka Fauziah^{1✉}, Issy Yuliasri², Dwi Rukmini²

¹. SDN 3 Bandungharjo, Jepara, Indonesia

². Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract

Web comic is one of media of communication that can attract both children and adults. It may contain humor. Humor itself may be created by flouting the cooperative principles. This study aimed to explore the types of maxims flouting of Grice's maxims in *Pearls before Swine* web comic and their contributions to create humor in the comic. This study was descriptive qualitative research in the form of discourse analysis. 30 episodes of the comic were used as data. The data were then collected and analyzed under three big steps proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10). The results of the study revealed that all types of maxims were flouted in web comic. The most prominent flouting was the flouting of relevance maxim, then followed by the flouting of quantity maxim, manner maxim, and quality maxim became the least maxim that was flouted. Maxim of quality contributed to create humor as in the flouting there were sarcastic words which were intentionally used to trigger funny situation. The use of flouting of quantity maxim was indicated on the use of exaggeration which enhanced the information and blown thing up beyond the response needed. Relevance maxim was flouted by using both facetiousness and repartee. Meanwhile, in the flouting of manner maxim, the contributions were on the use of insult and pun.

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✉Correspondence Address:

Jatitumpang, Bandungharjo, Donorojo, Jepara Regency, Central
 Java 59454
 E-mail: rizkafa94@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

In the middle of today's society, a comic is used as a medium of communication, such as transferring information and expressing sympathy of certain condition that occurs in certain society. Comic does not only attract children's interest, but also adult's. As children usually enjoy the story in a comic through colorful pictures and attractive animations, adults tend to enjoy comic through its content, either as a web comic in newspaper, magazine, comic book, or online media.

Pearls Before Swine is an American web comic written and illustrated by Stephan Pastis. It chronicles the daily lives of an ensemble cast of suburban anthropomorphic animals: Pig, Rat, Zebra, Goat, and fraternity of crocodiles, as well as a number of supporting characters. Each character represents an aspect of Pastis' own personality and world view.

Generally, the way the writer communicates to the readers through comic is by creating jokes. The jokes in every comic have different characteristics between one another, for example the jokes that contain political issue, family life, philosophy, satire, or purely humor. There are some cartoonists or comic writers that either intentionally or unintentionally make humor in comic. An individual can disobey the Grice's cooperative principles just to create hilarious web comics to amuse the readers. Thus, the theory of cooperative principle by Grice will be used in this research to analyze the meaning of utterances in *Pearls before Swine* web comic since it is intended to study meaning in use or meaning in context (Levinson, 1983; Thomas, 1995; Yule, 1996). Retnowaty (2013, p. 70) adds that the Cooperative Principle enables one participant in a conversation to communicate on the assumption that the other participant is being cooperative.

However, sometimes people fail to observe maxims. Grice (as cited in Thomas , 1995, p. 64) states that there are five ways of failing to observe a maxim, those are flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, infringing a maxim,

opting out a maxim, and suspending a maxim. Thomas (1995, p. 64) states that from five ways of failing to observe a maxim, the most important category is flouting. Flouting take place when participants are unable to apply certain maxims in their conversation and leads to misunderstanding on their conversation. When they flout maxims in conversation, they put certain implied meaning on their utterances. It means what they say and what they mean does not accord. Thus, the researcher intends to focus on analyzing the flouting of Grice's cooperative principles in *Pearls before Swine* web comic and find out the contribution of maxims flouting in creating humor.

Dealing with the topic above, some studies have been conducted by some researchers. Studies focusing on maxims flouting has been conducted by Khosravizandeh & Sadehvandi (2011); Boubakri (2014); Dewi & Putra (2014); Yuliasri (2014); Affifatusholihah & Setyawan (2016); Agustinia & Ariyanti (2016); Putri et al (2017); Zebua et al (2017); Ayasreh & Razali (2018). All of the previous study analyzed the maxims flouting of Grice's cooperative principle. Khosravizandeh & Sadehvandi (2011) and Boubakri (2014) conducted study which only focused on analyzing one maxim. Meanwhile, studies conducted by Affifatusholihah & Setyawan (2016) and Zebua et al (2017) focused on analyzing maxims flouting in TV program. Yuliasri (2014) and Agustinia & Ariyanti (2016) have similar topic with this study which related to humor. Yuliasri explored the shift of maxim flouting in translation which affected humor in *Donald Duck* comic, Agustinia & Ariyanti analyzed maxims flouting in TV series.

From the previous studies above, the researcher intends to analyze the flouting of Grice's cooperative principles in *Pearls before Swine* web comic and then find out their contribution to create humor.

METHODS

This study was descriptive qualitative research since the researcher collected and analyzed data by describing to make a conclusion. The object of the study was 30 episodes in Pearls before Swine web comic which were taken randomly. The unit of analysis was utterances containing maxims flouting in Pearls before Swine web comic. The data then collected and analyzed through three big steps proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994: 10). The data were classified based on the maxim flouting and find out the contribution of each flouting to create humor by analyzing using the rhetorical devices proposed by Berger (1995).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Flouting of Quality Maxim

The first research problem in this study deals with the flouting of quality maxim. The flouting of quality maxim happened if the participant lied or denied something that was believed to be false in order not to get some punishment from someone else. Then, the participant used irony statement when he/she flouted. It also happened when the speaker used sarcastic words to mock the hearer. This type of maxim flouting occurred only 3 times in data analysis and became the least maxim flouting. The example of flouting could be seen below.

Example 1

Context : There was a customer that asked Rat about the numerical keypad on the bathroom door.

Man : Excuse me, but I notice there's a numerical keypad on the bathroom door. Can I get the code?

Rat : Sure. It's the year the American civil war started.

Man : I don't know the year.

Rat : *Then I guess your dumbness precludes you.*

The conversation above told that a customer asked Rat about the numerical keypad on the bathroom door. However, Rat didn't answer by giving the code directly, he instead said that the code was the year the American

civil war started. The man did not know the year, then Rat flouted maxim of quality by mocking the man that his dumbness precluded him to know the answer.

Example 2

Context : Rat asked Goat about the kindest thing he could do for others.

Rat : What do you think is the kindest thing you can do for others?

Goat : Well, it's hard and takes a lot of patience, but I think it's to accept other people for who they are.

Rat : *I accept you for the idiot you are.*

The conversation above told that Rat asked Goat about the kindest thing he could do for others. Then Goat answered that it was hard and took a lot of patience, but it might be done by accepting other people for who they were. A few moments later, Rat met Pig and would like to express what he had known from Goat's explanation. However, Rat misunderstood to Goat's explanation. He said to Pig that he accepted Pig for the idiot he was. Thus, he flouted maxim of quality because Rat used sarcastic word to insult Pig.

From those examples above, it showed that maxim of quality was flouted by mocking/blaming which all had been done by Rat. This was because Stephan Pastis created Rat as sarcastic, condescending, self-centered, insulting, and often violent character in most of dialogues in the comic. Regarding to Grice's guideline in categorizing maxim flouting, unfortunately the researcher did not find any statements in the conversation about another rule of flouting quality maxim which said that the participant lied or denied something that was believed to be false in order not to get punishment from someone else. However, the use of sarcastic words also gave contribution in the flouting of quality maxim. It was based on Berger's theory (1995: 54) that he classified sarcastic words as one of rhetorical devices which triggered the flouting of quality maxim.

The Flouting of Quantity Maxim

The second research problem in this study dealt with the flouting of quantity maxim. The flouting of quantity maxim occurred when

a speaker blatantly gave more or less information than the situation required. It means that the participant did not explain to the point. Finally, the participant usually flouted this maxim because he/she used insufficient words to talk. It means that he/she gave incomplete words when he/she was speaking. This type of maxim flouting occurred 23 times in data analysis. Examples of the flouting could be seen below.

Example 3

Context : Goat asked Rat about what he was eating.

Goat : What are you eating, Rat?

Rat : *Pizza. I have a cold pizza for breakfast every morning.*

The conversation above told that Goat asked Rat about what he was eating. Then Rat answered “*Pizza. I have a cold pizza for breakfast every morning*”. It could be inferred that Rat added unnecessary information since Goat only asked about food he ate. He should give contribution by answering the question as much as needed. However, Rat answered by giving more information than was needed. Thus, he flouted the maxim of quantity.

Example 4

Context : The waiter offered Rat and Pig a favor.

Waiter : Can I get you two anything else?

Pig : *Just the check.*

The conversation above showed that the waiter asked whether Rat and Pig needed a favor. However, Pig only answered “*just the check*” since he had done eating and would like to pay the bill. Pig’s answer flouted maxim of quantity because he gave less information to the interlocutor in which it caused misunderstanding to the next conversation.

From the findings, it related to Grice’s theory and also some previous studies that have been conducted by some researchers (Affifatusholihah and Setyawan 2016; and Zebua 2017). Their findings showed that there were some misunderstanding because of the less information the hearer goat from the speaker, so s(he) did not get the point. There were also some utterances that the speaker gave much information than was actually required. This

condition caused ineffective conversation because of unnecessary information.

The Flouting of Relevance Maxim

The third research problem in this study dealt with the flouting of relevance maxim. There were some reasons why the participants flouted the maxim of relevance. One of them was the conversation unmatched. Usually, the participants did the wrong causality. Besides, they did not speak the same topic. They would change the topic or avoid talking about something. This was usually used to hide something. It means that the participants keep secret or something in order that nobody knew about it. This type of maxim flouting occurred 32 times in data analysis and became the most frequently occurred. Examples of the flouting could be seen below.

Example 5

Context : Goat and Pig asked a help to Rat since Goat’s car battery’s dead and they were stranded.

Goat : Hey, Rat. Pig and I need your help. My car battery’s dead and we’re stranded.

Rat : Oh, no. I’d help, but I’m having my own emergency. I can’t leave my house.

Goat : Oh my God. What happened?

Rat : *New season of ‘Game of Thrones.’*

The conversation above showed that Goat and Pig asked a help to Rat since Goat’s car battery’s dead and they were stranded. However, Rat could not help them because he said he was on emergency himself. Hearing Rat’s response, Goat asked what emergency he had, and he answered that there was a new season of *Game of Thrones*. Thus, Rat flouted maxim of relevance since his answer was not relevant to what Goat meant by ‘emergency’. It also implied that Rat tried to avoid helping them, so he changed the topic by saying that he could not move anywhere because there was new season of *‘Game of Thrones.’*

Example 6

Context : Pig introduced Armadillo to Goat. Then Goat asked Armadillo about his family.

Pig : Hey, Goat. This is our new neighbor, Mr. Armadillo.

Goat : Well, hello. Do you have any family?

Armadillo : I used to, but they were all run over by cars.

Goat : I'm sorry. What were their names?

Armadillo : Buck, Toyota, Honda, Ford, and Hyundai.

The conversation above showed that Pig introduced Armadillo to Goat. Then Goat asked Armadillo about his family members. He said that his family members were crashed by cars. Then Goat wondered about his family members' names by saying "what were their names?", unfortunately Armadillo misunderstood to Goat's question. He did not mention his family members' names but the names of cars instead. Thus, Armadillo flouted maxim of relevance since his answer was irrelevant to Goat's question because of misunderstanding.

Finding of this research was the same as what Grice meant about the flouting of relevance maxim. It was also the same as the previous studies that have been conducted by some researchers (Dewi and Putra, 2014; and Agustinia and Ariyanti, 2016). Their finding showed that the flouting of relevance maxim occurred because the interlocutors gave irrelevant answer. In addition, they also changed the topic that was being discussed to avoid talking about something.

However, the amount of the flouting of relevance maxim was different from some previous study (Yuliasri, 2014; and Putri, 2017). Their finding showed that the flouting of relevance maxim was the least maxim flouting that occurred in data analysis. This was because the different object of the study which caused different result.

The Flouting of Manner Maxim

Participant flouts the maxim of manner when he/she used ambiguous language. He/she used another language such as foreign language which made the participant did not understand. Sometimes, this flouting was used by the participant to exaggerate things. It means that the participant represented greater things. Moreover, participant used slang in front of people who did not understand. This type of maxim flouting occurred 10 times in data

analysis. Examples of the flouting could be seen below.

Example 7

Context : Pig clarified to old woman Wanda about her complaint of what she had seen to Pig and Rat's house to police. Then Pig gave curtains to her.

Pig : Hey, old woman Wanda, Rat says you've been complaining to the police about some of the stuff you've seen going on at our house.

Wanda : You bet I have and will continue to. Why?

Pig : Because it's curtains for you.

The conversation above showed that Pig clarified to old woman Wanda about her complaint of what she had seen to Pig and Rat's house to police. Then Pig gave curtains to her. Seeing what Pig was holding, she was shocked and fainted. It was because the clause "it's curtains for you" could be translated both literally as being slang. In fact, Pig intended to give the old woman curtains so that she did not look after his house anymore. However, she misinterpreted it as the word "it's curtains for you" was one of slang that sometimes was used in gangster movie which meant that the interlocutor was going to be killed. Since the meaning of Pig's statement was ambiguous, it flouted maxim of manner.

Example 8

Context : Guard Duck told his plan to build a nice bunker that the army can use later by participating Mack and his sicko friend to help.

Pig : Hey, lil' guard duck. Shouldn't you be at a military base?

Duck : I got bored so I fled. I'm absent without leave.

Pig : You're A.W.O.L?

Duck : Yep, but I'm handy. So I thought I'd build a nice bunker that the army can later use. That way, if they catch me, they might go easy on me.

Pig : But how are you gonna get the money for that?

Duck : My friend Mack here is gonna help.

Mack : Well, not me, exactly, by my sicko friend. He's got a lot of cash.

Rat : What's guard duck doing?

Duck : *I'm building A.W.O.L and Mack's sicko is gonna pay for it.*

The conversation above showed that Pig wondered that Guard Duck should be at military base. Guard Duck said that he was bored so he went A.W.O.L. A.W.O.L. is generally used by American and British to express that the army fled from the post. However, to some other people out from America and Britain that word might sounds ambiguous. Thus, it flouted maxim of manner.

Another part of the conversation that flouted maxim of manner was when Guard Duck would build a bunker and asked Mack's sicko friend to pay since he got a lot of money. This situation also became ambiguous since the word 'sicko' belonged to pun, in which the word sounded the same but had different meaning. It could refer to *sick people* and to *Mexican 'sicko people'*. Thus, it flouted maxim of manner.

From the analysis of the findings, it could be concluded that the findings was related to Grice's theory that flouting of manner maxim was flouted when the speaker used ambiguous language. The use of ambiguous language was caused by the occurrence of pun and slang. Pun is a word that sounds the same but has dual meaning. It could trigger ambiguity if both the speaker and the hearer did not refer to the same context. Meanwhile, slang is a type of language that consists of words and phrases that are regarded as very informal, are more common in speech than writing, and are typically restricted to a particular context or group of people. Since different community sometimes had different slang, it would affect to the conversation between people with different background community. There would be ambiguity because of misunderstanding the conversation.

The Contribution of Maxims Flouting to Create Humor

Table 1. The Contribution of Flouting Quality Maxim to Create Humor

Excerpt	Episode1/FL2/QL
Situation	The man did not know the year that Rat meant, however Rat mocked him.
Narrative	Man : I don't know the year. Rat : <i>Then I guess your dumbness precludes you.</i>
Script	Flouting maxim of quality
Opposition	
Rhetorical device	Sarcasm

The situation happened when a customer met Rat to ask the security code to the bathroom door. However, Rat didn't answer by giving the code directly, he instead said that the code was the year the American civil war started. The man did not know the year that Rat meant, then Rat flouted maxim of quality by mocking the man that his dumbness precluded him to know the answer. The speaker used sarcasm as the rhetorical device in which it was a form of irony that was intended to hurt someone. In relation to humor, this type of rhetorical device was used as structuring tool to comic creation. Humor was created by using this device in order to amplify the humorous effect.

Table 2. The Contribution of Flouting Quantity Maxim to Create Humor

Excerpt	Episode8/FL12/QN
Situation	Goat asked Rat about what he was eating.
Narrative	Goat : What are you eating, Rat? Rat : <i>Pizza. I have a cold pizza for breakfast every morning.</i>
Script	Flouting maxim of quantity
Opposition	
Rhetorical device	Bombast

The data above illustrated how humor was created from Rat's utterance. The situation happened when Goat was asking Rat about what he was eating. Then Rat answered "*Pizza. I have a cold pizza for breakfast every morning*". He flouted maxim of quantity by adding unnecessary information that affect to

ineffective conversation. In relation to humor, the rhetorical device used was bombast, in which it was a hyper-inflation of language.

Table 3. The Contribution of Flouting Relevance Maxim to Create Humor

Excerpt	Episode2/FL3/RL
Situation	Goat was calling Rat to ask help to him because Goat's car battery's dead. However Rat said that he had his own emergency and could not leave his house.
Narrative	Goat : Hey, Rat. Pig and I need your help. My car battery's dead and we're stranded.
	Rat : Oh, no. I'd help. But I'm having my own emergency. I can't leave my house.
	Goat : Oh my God. What happened?
	Rat : <i>New season of 'Game of Thrones.'</i>
Script Opposition	Goat : I question whether that's an actual emergency.
	Rat : <i>Can't move. Send food.</i>
	Flouting maxim of relevance
Rhetorical device	Facetiousness

The situation above showed that Goat was calling Rat to ask a help to him since Goat's car battery's dead and Goat and Pig were stranded. However, Rat could not help them because he said he was on emergency himself. Hearing Rat's response, Goat was shocked and asked what emergency he had, and he answered that there was a new season of *Game of Thrones*. Thus, Rat flouted maxim of relevance because his answer was not relevant to what Goat meant by 'emergency'. It also implied that Rat tried to avoid helping them, so he changed the topic by saying that he could not move anywhere because there was new season of *'Game of Thrones.'* In relation to humor, the rhetorical device used was facetiousness. It was called joking or teasing. Speaking facetiously was usually saying one thing when it meant the opposite. The hearer sometimes could not

determine whether the speaker was serious or not.

Table 4. The Contribution of Flouting Manner Maxim to Create Humor

Excerpt	Episode22/FL49/MN
Situation	Pig visited old woman Wanda's house and clarified about an issue he heard from Rat.
Narrative	Pig : Hey, old woman Wanda, Rat says you've been complaining to the police about some of the stuff you've seen going on at our house.
	Wanda : You bet I have and will continue to. Why?
	Pig : <i>Because it's curtains for you.</i>
Script Opposition	Flouting maxim of manner
Rhetorical device	Pun/ wordplay

The situation above showed that Pig clarified to old woman Wanda about her complaint of what she had seen to Pig and Rat's house to police. Then Pig gave curtains to her. Seeing what Pig was holding, she was shocked and fainted. It was because the clause "*it's curtains for you*" could be translated both literally as being slang. In fact, Pig intended to give the old woman curtains so that she did not look after his house anymore. However, she misinterpreted it as the clause "*it's curtains for you*" was one of slang that sometimes was used in gangster movie which meant that the interlocutor was going to be killed. Since the meaning of Pig's statement was ambiguous, it flouted maxim of manner. In relation to humor, the rhetorical device used was pun. Pun is a joke made from word play. It was a word that sounded the same but have dual meaning. Because of misunderstanding happened between Pig and old woman Wanda in interpreting the clause "*it's curtains for you*", ambiguity occurred, then it resulted a humor.

According to incongruity theory (McGhee, 1979), humor was seen as something unexpected, out of context, inappropriate, unreasonable, illogical, and exaggerated. Humor

also occurred from a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke. Data analysis of flouting quality maxim showed that it related to incongruity theory because the use of sarcastic words in the conversation which triggered to humor.

In addition, the same relation also happened on data analysis of flouting quantity maxim, relevance maxim, and manner maxim. The flouting of quantity maxim was also related to incongruity theory because there were the contribution of bombast and exaggeration as rhetorical devices to create humor. Bombast is the hyper-inflation of language and a mismatch between word and action. Meanwhile, exaggeration is enhancing reality and blowing things up far beyond the reality.

The flouting of relevance maxim also used rhetorical devices to trigger humor, namely facetiousness and repartee. facetiousness is called as joking or teasing. speaking facetiously is usually saying one thing when it means the opposite. the hearer sometimes could not determine whether the speaker was serious or not. besides, repartee is defined as saying something quickly as flash. it could be said as a quick and witty retort in responding to slight or putdown remark.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the analysis and discussion of this present study, there are some conclusions that can be drawn. Firstly, maxim of quality was flouted by the participant of conversation since he used sarcastic words which were more like mockery. This maxim flouting becomes the least maxim used by the comic writer.

Secondly, maxim of quantity was flouted by the participant of conversation by giving more or less information needed by the interlocutor. The more information found in conversation sometimes becomes unnecessary. However, if the participant gives less information, it will become incomplete sentence which can lead misunderstanding between the speaker and the hearer.

Thirdly, maxim of relevance was flouted by the participants as they did not speak the same topic because of misunderstanding or it could happen to hide something by changing the topic or something. This type of maxim was the most prominent flouted by the comic writer. This was because irrelevant words could easily trigger humor.

Fourthly, maxim of manner was flouted by the participants as they did not speak clearly and orderly. They tended to use ambiguous words which caused misunderstanding between the characters. Also, there were some situations that the participant insulted the interlocutor by using impolite word.

Lastly, there were some contributions of Grice's maxim flouting to create humor in *Pearls before Swine* web comic. In the flouting of quality maxim, it contributed to create humor since the comic writer used sarcastic words. They were used intentionally to trigger funny situation. In the flouting of quantity maxim, the contribution was on the use of exaggeration in which it enhanced the information and blown thing up beyond the response needed. In the flouting of relevance maxim, the contributions were on the use of both facetiousness and repartee. Meanwhile, in the flouting of manner maxim, the contributions were on the use of insult and pun. Insult was a direct use of verbal aggression to degrade the interlocutor, while pun was a word that sounds the same but have dual meaning. This word could cause ambiguity when applied in conversation.

The conclusions explained above lead the researcher to provide some suggestions. It is beneficial for students of English Education to learn more about cooperative principle and apply it in conversation. Moreover, the comic readers should be able to differentiate the use of cooperative principle and understand the rhetorical devices which contribute to create humor. Furthermore, the next researchers are suggested to broaden to analyze other types maxims non-observance. In addition, since this researcher just focused on written text, it will be better if the next researchers analyze the spoken text by using natural occurring data which can be

taken from different background, such as age, gender, occupation, etc.

This present study, however, still has some weaknesses since the researcher did not interview the comic writer of *Pearls before Swine* to ask his intention in flouting the maxims and the meaning behind the flouting which triggered to create humor. Besides, the researcher only asked one triangulator to validate the data, therefore the evaluation might be biased.

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