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## Flouting Maxims In Series *Never Have I Ever*

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**Abstract:** *The title of this study is “Flouting Maxims in Series Never Have I Ever”. It aim to analyze the types of flouting maxims used by the character in a series. The data were taken from the first episode of the first season of a famous American comedy series entitled Never Have I Ever. They were collected using observation and documentation methods. Then, they were analyzed using the theory of Flouting Maxims proposed by Grice (1975). The results showed that all the types of flouting maxims, namely flouting maxim of quantity, flouting maxim of quality, flouting maxim of relation, and flouting maxim of manner, were used by the characters in their interaction with each other.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential part of being a human in society. It allows us to relay information, tell stories, and do other activities that involve two people or more. It is something that we do every day that is almost as important as breathing. When we communicate with others, we always try to understand what others say to have a better conversation. However, people do not always say what they mean. They can just say something that means the opposite. This kind of situation often brings problems in the communication process like misunderstanding, assuming something that might not be true, etc. Then, how can we know what they try to say and avoid ambiguity? In this case, we need to learn and understand what the speakers mean in their utterances. In Linguistics, this study is called Pragmatics.

According to Leech (1983, p. 6), pragmatics is a study of meaning concerning speech situations. In making conversation, the interlocutors are expected to be cooperative enough to get what they want. Therefore, this topic is discussed in Grice's Cooperative Principles in the study of pragmatics. Grice assumes that both the speaker and the hearer must cooperate to achieve the mutual conversational ends. Therefore, Grice (1975) proposes four maxims of the cooperative principles, such as: (1) quantity; (2) quality; (3) relation; and (4) manner.

What if they fail to observe the maxims? This case is called a non-observance of the maxims. In this study, the focus discussion is based on the topic is flouting a maxim in the non-observance of the maxims. According to Grice (1975, p. 49) flouting a maxim means the interlocutors blatantly fail to observe the maxim without the intention of misleading.

The topic of flouting maxims is interesting to study since in daily conversation, people frequently float maxims. The most accurate representation of daily life is found in many literary works like novel, movie, series, etc. The example can be found in a series entitled *Never Have I Ever*. This series has been praised for breaking South Asia stereotypes and becoming a

representation in Hollywood. Therefore, the first episode of the first season of *Never Have I Ever* series is used as the data source.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Pragmatics**

People do not always mean what they say. This observational claim is a major influence of pragmatics. Yule (1996, p. 3) argues that there are four aspects that pragmatics are concerned with. Firstly, pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning. It studies the meaning of what is communicated by a speaker. Then, it has to be interpreted by a hearer in the conversation. The meaning of utterances is the focus of analysis rather than the words or phrases. Secondly, pragmatics studies contextual meaning. The context influences the meaning of what is said. Thirdly, pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said. And lastly, pragmatics is the study of the expression of relative distance.

### **Grice's Cooperative Principle Maxims**

The cooperative principle is proposed by Grice (1975, p. 45) which is the way to make your conversational contribution such as is required. It includes the stage at which it occurs and the purpose of the conversation in which the interlocutors are engaged. Grice (1975, p. 45) argues that the cooperative principle can be successfully implemented if the interlocutors follow the four maxims as the rules, such as: (1) maxim of quantity where the speaker gives the right amount of information; (2) maxim of quality deals with the truth; (3) maxim of relation is being relevant; and the last one (4) maxim of manner avoids ambiguity.

### **Flouting Maxims**

Levinson (1983, p. 109) argues that Grice's flouting maxim means that the interlocutors overtly and blatantly do not follow the cooperative principle maxims to exploit it for a communicative purpose. The speaker has no intention of misleading or deceiving but wants the hearer to look for the different or additional meaning from the expressed meaning (Thomas, 1995, p. 65).

Based on Grice's maxims, there are four types of flouting maxims, such as (1) flouting the maxim of quantity, (2) flouting the maxim of quality, (3) flouting the maxim of relation, and (4) flouting the maxim of manner.

### **Flouting the Maxim of Quantity**

The speaker will give more or less information than what is required. The speaker does not give enough information about what the hearer wants.

### **Flouting the Maxim of Quality**

In this case, the speaker says something false. It is not the truth and he or she lacks adequate evidence. The meaning of the utterance can be the opposite of what it is said. Moreover, Cutting (2002) there are several aspects used in flouting the maxims of quality such as: (1) metaphor is used to speak of a thing in a form of another; (2) irony and banter are used to form a pair, and (3) hyperbole is used in a form of extreme exaggeration.

### **Flouting the Maxim of Relation**

The maxim of relation can be flouted by saying something irrelevant to the topic in the conversation. It can be done by trying to fail the other person's goal in asking the question or

changing the topic (Thomas, 1995, p. 70).

### **Flouting the Maxim of Manner**

When the speaker's utterance is ambiguous, it means that he/she flouts the maxim of manner. It also appears to be obscure and often tries to exclude a third party (Cutting, 2002, p. 39). Flouting this maxim also can be done by hanging the question being asked.

### **Context of Situation**

Firth in Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 8), the context of the situation consists of the participant, action, surrounding objects and events, and the effect of the verbal action. Halliday and Hasan (1985, p. 12) list three features of the context of the situation namely: Field, Tenor, and Mode. The field of discourse can be defined as what is happening, the place where the event takes place and also what the interlocutors are engaged in.

The tenor of discourse refers to who is taking part. Who the participants are, what their roles are, and also the relationship between the speaker and the hearer is included in the tenor. The mode of discourse is about what part the language is playing. Moreover, mode refers to what the participants expect the language to do in that situation.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

There are four aspects included in the research method in this study. Those are data source, method and technique of collecting data, method and technique of analysing data, and method and technique of presenting data.

### **Data Source**

The data of this study were taken from an American coming-of-age comedy-drama series entitled *Never Have I Ever* created by Mindy Kaling and Lang Fisher. It is starring Maitreyi Ramakrishnan as a young Indian-American high school girl who tries to spruce up her social status after a traumatic year. There are two seasons with ten episodes in each season that have been premiered. Related to the topic of this study, the first episode of the first season entitled "Pilot" was chosen from the series and written as *Never Have I Ever S1:E1 Pilot*. This episode was chosen because it has enough data to be analyzed about the flouting maxims used by the characters.

### **Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

In this study, the methods used in collecting the data were observation and documentation method. The techniques of collecting data in this study are: first, the whole episodes were watched and the first episode of the first season entitled "Pilot" was chosen as the data source. Second, the transcript of the data source was downloaded from the internet. Third, the data source was re-watched along with the transcript to observe the characters' expressions and the situation in uttering the utterances. Fourth, the data that related to the flouting maxims was collected by highlighting the transcript and note-taking the utterances.

### **Method and Technique of Analysing Data**

This study used the qualitative research method. The qualitative research method is a means for exploring and understanding a social or human problem which then the researcher makes interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). After the data were collected, they were classified into four types of flouting maxims, they are flouting maxim of quantity,

flouting maxim of quality, flouting maxim of relation, and flouting maxim of manner that answered the first question using the theory of maxims proposed by Grice (1975).

### Method and Technique of Presenting Data Analysis

The data was presented using the narrative method. It means that the data was explained and described narratively according to the theories using sentences. In the conversation, the utterance that contained a certain type of flouting maxim was typed in bold. Then, it was explained using sentences in paragraphs.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the analysis of the flouting maxims is discussed. The analysis uses the Flouting Maxim theory proposed by Grice (1975) that includes four types of flouting maxims.

### Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

If the speaker flouts the maxim of quantity, it means they either give less or more information than what is required. Therefore, the hearer does not get the answer that they want.

#### [Data 01]

Nalini: Devi, are you still praying? Our Gods have other stuff to do, you know?

Devi : I was about to ask for good grades.

Nalini: Now, grab your textbook. We need to go.

(Devi almost dropped the textbook)

Nalini: **Devi, that textbook has been blessed. If it touches the ground, I have to take it back to the priest. I don't have the time to go to Rancho Cucamonga today.**

Devi : It's fine. I caught it..

In data 01, Devi was praying to the household Hindu shrine before going to school. She had been praying for quite a while because she asked for many things she wanted. Her mother, Nalini, could not wait anymore and went to Devi's room. Nalini told Devi to hurry and grab her textbook. When Devi tried to grab her textbook, it slipped and almost dropped. Seeing that, her mother gasped and started to nag. It can be seen from the data 01.

In Nalini's utterances, she was shocked at how Devi almost dropped the book and she started to say those utterances in reflect. This is proof that Nalini has flouted the maxim of quantity. She is being too informative in her utterances. She could have just said something like, "don't drop the textbook" to Devi. However, Nalini chooses to give more information that is not needed. This shows that Nalini does not want the textbook to touch the ground because it has been blessed. Just as Nalini said in her utterances, if the textbook touches the ground, it will give much more work for her later.

#### [Data 02]

Mr Shapiro : I am honoured to have powerful voices in my class, but in the past, the competition between the two of you has not been useful to the learning environment of others. So, do you think you can set aside your rivalry for the good of the class?

Ben : Well, of course, Mr Shapiro. A great idea, as always.

Devi : I agree. **In fact, I liked your idea even more than he did.**

Mr Shapiro : Okay.

After the history class, Mr Shapiro called Devi and Ben to come back to the class. Ben Gross is Devi's nemesis. He and Devi had been rivals since the first grade. They had been vying for number one spot in the class every year. Mr Shapiro tried to explain why their competition was not effective to others. He also asked them, "So, do you think you can set aside your rivalry for the good of the class?" Ben agreed directly to Mr Shapiro's suggestion as well as Devi. However, based on data 02, Devi added that she liked the idea more than Ben.

The maxim of quantity has been flouted here. Devi gives more information than what is required in the conversation. When she said she liked the idea more than Ben, Mr Shapiro, as the hearer, does not need that information. It is because, he just need the answer whether Devi agrees or not with his suggestion. In conclusion, Devi's utterance has flouted the maxim of quantity by being too informative.

### Flouting the Maxim of Quality

When the speaker does not say what is believed to be the truth, it means that he flouts the maxim of quality. The meaning of the utterance can be the opposite of what it is said.

#### [Data 03]

John McEnroe: So the next morning, Devi took her dad's advice and decided to fight back with her spirit, AKA she would be serving a damn look. **Ben Gross better get ready to eat his words..**

In data 03, Devi dreamed about her dad. In her dream, she grumbled about her life to her dad. She said that she was ugly and someone said mean things to her. Her dad, in response, compared her to his favourite football player. It was John McEnroe who was also the narrator of this series. He said that Devi resembled John. Moreover, he said that Devi should fight with her spirit and stand by herself just like John. The next morning after Devi dreamed about her dad, John described how Devi took his dad's advice. In his narration, he also mentioned that Ben Gross needed to get ready to eat his words.

This utterance is considered as flouting the maxim of quality. According to Cutting, one of the aspects used in flouting maxims of quality is hyperbole. John's utterance was made in a form of extreme exaggeration. It also does not make sense that someone can eat his/her words. Therefore, John's narration in data 03 is an example of flouting the maxim of quality by using hyperbole to emphasize his utterance.

#### [Data 04]

Nalini : What was that? What happened to the window?

Devi : **A bird hit it.**

Nalini : Bird?

Kamala: This is my fault for keeping the windows so clean. Where is the poor bird?

Devi : It flew away.

Devi and Ben were punished by their principal to do some unpaid labor in the office. When they were moving some boxes as punishment, they saw Eleanor was kissed by one of a drama club tech crew. Devi was shocked at that moment. She did not know that Eleanor had a boyfriend. Also, the most upsetting thing that Eleanor said Fabiola knew about that. Devi felt

unfair. She immediately went home. In her room, Devi took one of her book and threw it breaking the window. She was angry. Her mom, Nalini, and Kamala heard the sound and went to Devi's room in rush. Nalini asked what happened to the window. Devi lied and said the bird hit the window.

In Devi's response, she is dishonest and does not tell the truth. It is considered as a flouting of the maxim of quality. In this type of flouting maxim, the interlocutor tends to say something false. It is shown by how Devi tells lie to her mom by saying that a bird hit the window instead of the fact that she throws the book and breaks the window. Moreover, Devi flouted the maxim of quality again when she said that the bird flew away.

### Flouting the Maxim of Relation

When the interlocutor wants to fail the other person's goal in asking the question, he can flout the maxim of relation. It can be done by saying something irrelevant to the topic.

#### [Data 05]

- Devi : Guys, don't you want a better high-school experience? I mean, last year was a freshmen shit-fest.
- Fabiola : **Are you saying that cause of your mobility issue?**
- Devi : What? No. Nobody even remembers that.
- A guy : 'Sup, FDR? [laugh]
- Devi : Well, nobody will remember that once we're cool.

After Devi could walk again, she returned to her school for the first time. At school, she found everybody was looking at her. However, when Devi saw her friends, Fabiola and Eleanor, she felt secure. They then had some conversations. They were talking about some school stuff. Devi thought that last year was a freshmen shit-fest and asked Fabiola and Eleanor, "Guys, don't you want a better high-school experience?" Instead of answering Devi's question the way it should be, Fabiola asked whether it was because of her mobility issue or not. Devi denied it and said that no one remembered about her mobility issue and nobody would once they were cool.

In this conversation, Fabiola is not cooperative. Fabiola's answer is considered as a flouting maxim of relation because it is irrelevant to the question that is being asked. When Devi asked her friends whether they wanted a better high-school experience or not, Fabiola turned the topic to Devi's mobility issue. Therefore, Fabiola's utterance is the example of flouting the maxim of relation.

#### [Data 06]

- Ben : Man, *David*, watching you flirt with Jonah was just about the saddest thing I've ever seen, and I saw my dad run over our cat. You know he's gay, right?
- Devi : **Your cat? No, I didn't. That's so cool.**

Ben is Devi's rival since they were in first grade. In the previous class, Ben saw Devi flirting with a guy named Jonah who was known as gay. Ben said that seeing Devi flirt with Jonah was as sad as seeing his dad run over his cat. In his utterance, Ben compared two scenes with a similarity that made Ben sad. He then reminded Devi that Jonah was gay. In response, Devi answered as in the data 06.

In this scene, when Ben asked "You know he's gay, right?" he referred it to Jonah.

However, Devi intentionally made a false interpretation of the subject in Ben's question from Jonah to Ben's cat. This means that Devi blatantly fails to observe the maxim especially the maxim of relation. Devi's answer is irrelevant to the topic that was talked about by Ben. It can be done because the speaker wants to fail the hearer's goal in asking the question. Moreover, the maxim of relation has been flouted in this conversation.

### Flouting the Maxim of Manner

The speaker will say something ambiguous when they flout the maxim of manner. Also, it can appear to be obscure and try to exclude a third party.

#### [Data 07]

Eleanor : Oh, my God. I just realized that this is our last first day of sophomore year we'll ever have. I'm gonna cry.

Devi : Right. This reminds me of a problem I want to talk to you guys about. We are not cool.

Eleanor : Uh, would a not cool person wear... one dangly earring?

Devi : **Was that a choice, or did you lose your earring on the bus?**

Eleanor : I didn't ride the bus. I rollerbladed.

After being in a wheelchair for a while, Devi finally returned to her school for the first time after she could walk again. As Devi walked into school, she noticed that everybody was staring at her. At that moment, she discovered her squad, Eleanor and Fabiola. They started to talk about their sophomore year. In this conversation, Eleanor responded to Devi's statement that said they were not cool by asking, "Uh, would a not cool person wear... one dangly earring?" Then, Devi answered it by asking a question as well to Eleanor. She said her utterance in the bold sentence of data above.

Devi's answer is ambiguous. It means that this utterance is one of the examples of flouting the maxim of manner. Devi does not directly answer Eleanor's question. Rather, she gives an ambiguous response. Devi is not sure about the answer she would give to Eleanor's question. Therefore, she chooses to flout the maxim of manner.

#### [Data 08]

Devi : Wait. What are you doing here?

Mohan : **This is my living room.**

Devi : No, I mean, you died.

Mohan : Oh, that? **I'm better now.**

At night, when Devi was walking to the kitchen, a voice called her name. It was her dad, Mohan. He told Devi to sit down with him in the living room. He introduced his favourite football player all the time, John McEnroe. Suddenly, Devi burst into tears. She told all her problems to her dad. She thought that she was ugly and told him that a boy said something mean to her. Her dad tried to calm her down and said that she should stand up for herself just like John McEnroe. Devi felt so grateful for Mohan's words and said that she would try his advice.

Then, Devi remembered that her dad was no longer alive. She asked him, "What are you doing here?" Mohan answered that was his living room. Unsatisfied with her dad's answer, Devi explained "No, I mean, you died." Then, her dad said that he was getting better now. In his utterances, he flouted the maxim of manner. The answers are ambiguous and do not answer the

question. It is shown by Devi's unsure expression toward the ambiguity of his dad's answers. Therefore, Devi's dad has flouted the maxim of manner in his utterances.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In this study, there are eight data found from the series. Based on the data, all four maxims of cooperative principles have been flouted. First, the maxim of quantity is flouted when the characters are too informative. Second, the characters flout the maxim of quality by being dishonest and also using hyperbole to emphasize the utterance. Third, when the characters give an irrelevant answer, it means that they flout the maxim of relation. Last, the characters say something ambiguous to flout the maxim of manner.

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