

# FLOUTING MAXIMS IN *HELLBOY* MOVIE

Mahardika Heru Sulistyo Rosana

SMA Anugrah Bangsa Semarang

*vmahardika@gmail.com*

**Abstrak:** Fokus dari penelitian ini adalah flouting maksim dalam percakapan pada film *Hellboy*. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah mencari tahu jenis-jenis dan frekuensi pelanggaran maksim, terutama flouting. Studi ini berdasarkan teori Cooperative Principle yang diperkenalkan oleh Grice (1975). Teori Cooperative Principle mencakup empat prinsip kerjasama, yakni maksim kualitas, kuantitas, cara, dan relevansi. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pada semua jenis maksim ditemukan pelanggaran (flouting). Pelanggaran maksim tersebut didasari oleh berbagai alasan karakter/pemeran film. Sedangkan jenis maksim yang paling sering dilanggar adalah maksim relevansi.

**Kata kunci:** Prinsip Kerjasama, Pelanggaran, Film *Hellboy*

**Abstract:** This study focuses on the flouting of conversational maxim found in the *Hellboy* movie. The purpose of this study are to find out the types and the frequencies of flouted maxims. This study is based on the theory of Cooperative Principle, proposed by Grice (1975), which establishes four maxims, those are maxim of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner. The approach of this study is descriptive qualitative. The findings of this study reveal that all types of maxim are flouted, those are maxim of quantity, quality, manner, and then relation. In conclusion, it has come up with various kinds of reasons why the main characters flouted the maxim. The most frequent flouted is maxim of relevance.

**Keywords:** Cooperative Principle, Flouting, *Hellboy* Movie

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a system to transfer and to inform something through a communication. People usually use language to inform, to express their idea, and to build up their social relationship so that, language is important thing for human being to maintain their life. Besides that, language is related to communication, and communication is, among other, speaking which is done by having a conversation. Conversation needs someone to be a speaker and a hearer. They have to be cooperative and have contribution or message, which can be understood by the listener in order to make the communication runs.

According to Grice (1975) people will have a successful conversation if they fulfil the cooperative principles that are related in the four maxims of conversation. The four maxims are maxim of

quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner. These principles can make the conversation work effectively and run smoothly.

On the other hand, people sometimes speak without fulfilling the maxims. They flout them because they have certain reasons. For example, a child is lying about his/her bad mark in school in order to avoid the punishment from his/her parents. Here, a child flouts the maxim of quality, which requires him/her to say to say something that is untrue or false. Another example, Andy meets his friend whom he dislikes, and his friend makes a conversation firstly, such as "how are you?" because Andy does not like him/her, so he answer the question like "oh the weather is not good today". Here, this answer is not expected by Andy's friend. Clearly, Andy does not want to give a good respond to the speaker so he changes

the topic. This situation already proved that Andy flouted his conversation because some reasons even though the flouting of maxim can cause the conversation unsuccessful.

As human, we all engage in communication with others right from our birth. When we interact with others we are communicating with them. The most common form of communication is conversation. Levinson (1983: 284) defines conversation as the familiar kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking, which generally occurs outside specific institutional settings like religious services, law courts, classrooms, and the like. From the definition, it is reckoned that, at least two participants, the speaker and the addressee, carry out the conversation and they interchange the roles. The participants of a conversation are also expected to obey a general co-operative principle to conduct an efficient and effective use of language in conversation. Grice in Yule (2003: 37) explains that the co-operative principle leads the participants to make a conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange.

Grice (1975) uses the term “implicature” to make the communication become achievement. It will refer to what a speaker can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says (Brown and Yule, 1983: 31). People sometimes use the communication to show their purpose, and it will give an implication behind the utterance. The implication will be accepted by listener, and it will get many perceptions in the listener mind. The Grice elaborates these general principles into four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Each of them has different use in giving contribution. To make the conversation successful, the speakers should obey the four maxims. Here are the examples of how the speakers can fulfil the maxims based on Grice (in Levinson, 1983:101-112).

The first is maxim of quantity. The participants make contribution as informative as is required for the current purpose of the exchange. They should not make their contribution more or

less informative, because the communication between the addressers and the addressors will be misunderstanding. For example, B will show the utterance that fulfills the maxim of quantity.

*A: How did Harry fare in court the other day?*

*B: Oh he got a fine.*

(Levinson, 1983, p. 106)

In the example, Harry got a life sentence too, then B would certainly be guilty of misleading A, for he has failed to provide all the information that might reasonably be required. Therefore, speaker B has already given the informative situation.

The second is maxim of quality. Maxim of quality gives contribution to what addressor believes to be true. Here, the addressors should not say what they believe to be false, and should not lack adequate evidence. It will be more clearly to look at below example.

*A: Does your farm contain 400 acres?*

*B: I do not know that it does, and I want to know if it does.*

(Levinson, 1983, p. 105)

Here, the sentence shows that it simply extends the scope of quality by reviewing truth as a special sub-case of sincerity applied to assertions. A answers B about the B's farm. Yet actually, B does not deny that B has farm, and B can prove it when B said that he/she would want to measure his/her farm. This case can be proved that B can give contribution to what addressor believes to be true.

The third is maxim of relevance. Each person usually should give the relevant contribution to the topic. The communication messages should not be unmatched, yet it must relate to what has gone before. So, the conversation, which fulfils the maxim of relevance, must relate with that the speaker mean. In this case, the communication will flow fluently between the speakers and the listeners. Below is example of maxim of relevance.

*A: Where's my box of chocolates?*

*B: it's in your room.*

(Leech, 1983)

The example is interpreted as relevant to the present action. A is asking about 'where', and B

answer about the place that is 'your room'. So, B's answer matches A's question.

The fourth is maxim of manner. Maxim of manner means that the participants have to be perspicuous, and also they have to avoid obscurity of expression, ambiguity, and unnecessary direction. The utterance of the participant produced should be brief and orderly.

A: *Where was Alfred yesterday?*

B: *Alfred went to the store and bought some whiskey.*

(Levinson, 1983, p. 108)

The above example has already obeyed the maxim of manner. B can give explanation orderly since he/she gives a clear explanation where Alfred was. The theory of maxims can give benefit for the speakers and the addressees who are obeying the instruction of cooperative principle. Then, if they follow these maxims, the communication becomes smooth and successful.

In case of delivering the information, people also need to act in appropriate manners. One of them is through posture. Posture is a rich channel for conveying nonverbal information. From time to time postural messages are obvious. If you can see a person drag through the door slump over while sitting in a chair, it is apparent that something significant is going on. Yet, most postural clues are more subtle. For instance, the act of mirroring the posture of another person can have positive consequences. One experiment showed that career counselor who used "posture echoes" to copy the positions of client were rated as more emphatic than those who did reflect the clients position.

Gesture are intentional-emblems like a cheery wave or thumbs up. In other cases, gestures are unconscious. Occasionally, an unconscious gesture will consist of unambiguous emblem, such as a shrug that clearly means "I don't know". More often, however gestures are ambiguous. They consist of what we usually call fidgeting movements in which one part of the body grooms, massages, rubs, holds, fidget, pinches, or otherwise manipulates another body part. For instance, B is going to café, and the waiter asks he/she something "would you like coffee or tea?" then, B does not say anything, but

he/she signs his/her answer by waving his/her hand (Leech, 1983). Nonverbal communication has already existed at this example. In this case, B does not want to drink anything because he/she gives a gesture by waving his/her hand.

Communication can be done through expression from face and eyes. Ekman and Friesen have identified six basic emotions of facial expression reflect: surprise, fear, anger, disgust, happiness and sadness (Adler, R. B. & Rodman.G., 1991, p. 131). This below is the example of face and eyes expression. As an illustration, Marta has already broken with her boyfriend. In this example, it has already proven that Marta is sad because of the tears. However, this kind of expression also occurs in happiness. Another illustration, Alex is crying after he knows that he passes his thesis examination. This kind of expression shows that he is happy because thesis examination is something important in his life. Therefore, he cries after he hears about his thesis examination.

Voice is another form of nonverbal communication. Paralanguage is something to describe nonverbal, voice message. There are many ways that voice communicates through its tone, speed, pitch, volume, number and length of pauses (such as stammering, use of "uh", "um", "er", and so on). For example, in a sentence *This is a fantastic communication book*, *this* is stressed as to show that it is not just any book, but this one particular. Another example, there is one tourist Indian goes to America. Then, she/he asks someone (B), who has just lived for one month, the direction how to go Hilton Hotel?. The tourist asks "Excuse me to bother you, sir. Could you help me how to go to Hilton Hotel?" B said "hmm ..., you may be take a taxi and go the west way. Then you will find the Avenue streets, and the hotel has the right side" B has given nonverbal clue that is voice because B gives a tone "hmm ..." in this meaning, B does not know the direction to go to Hilton Hotel. So, he gives the direction doubly.

*Hellboy* is not only great in terms of action, effects, and visuals, but it also provides excellent commentary on the issue of dramatic and action story. Guillermo del Toro, who is the director of

*Hellboy*, mixed between action and romantic fiction. *Hellboy* has become an enormously popular movie catching in 2004 and up to now. When the writer was watching this film, he noticed that there were many maxims flouted in their conversation. Due to that particular reason, the researcher interested in analyzing their utterances.

In reality, the cooperative principles can be flouted in daily conversations. *Hellboy* is a famous movie whose two leading characters have given deep impression to the viewers. Then misunderstanding may occur when a maxim is flouted and given non verbal clues. Therefore, this study is aimed at finding out (i) the types of flouted maxims in *Hellboy* Movie, and (ii) are the frequency of flouted maxims.

This study concerns with discourse analysis. The researcher only analyses the characters' conversation which contains the flouted maxims. In analyzing, the researcher uses Paul Grice's theory of conversational maxims as his basic theory to analyze the conversation. In addition, the researcher wants to find out the reasons why the main characters flout the maxims for answering the research question number two. The researcher gets the answer based on the addressee's responds and facial expression when he is speaking to the addressor.

## METHOD

This was a descriptive qualitative study in which the data were the utterances taken from a movie entitled *Hellboy*. The script of the movie is gained from the internet. The data were collected by identifying the conversations of the main characters based on conversational maxims suggested by Grice, classifying the flouting of maxims, and finding the maxim that is mostly flouted in the movie.

The technique of collecting data was based on purposive sampling or criterion based on the purpose of the study. In addition, in doing the research the writer was also aided by some electronic devices such as a TV, a VCD player, and internet. These instruments were needed, especially to collect and analyze the data. The samples

of this study are the main character's dialogues that employ the flouting of four conversational maxims in the conversations of *Hellboy* movie. I analyzed the utterances of each scene to see what maxim had been flouted. Then, categorized those utterance containing flouted maxims into their categories: maxim of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. This was done to answer his research question number two. To follow, to answer the last research question, he analyzed whether or not misunderstanding took place due to the flouted maxims. This analysis was done by the writer by referring to both the transcript and the film so as to see the nonverbal clues for the occurrence of misunderstanding.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the data, the writer found that there were many maxims which were flouted by characters in *Hellboy*. The findings showed that the flouting of maxim relevance is mostly occurred in *Hellboy's*, *Liz's* and *Myers's* utterances. The writer also found that there were many reasons which caused the main character flouted the maxims. Furthermore, finding also revealed that the communication could still run smoothly even thought the main characters flouted the maxims. Further discussions and sample of the analysis on findings are presented in the discussion below.

### Flouting the Maxim of Relevance

Ext. Bellamie Mental Hospital - garden area-night

*Hellboy's* sitting on a bench, next to *Liz*.

*Hellboy* : I miss you at the Bureau.

*Liz* : *No, don't say that*, H.B. It's been months since I've had an episode. And you know what? I'm learning to control it. Around her right hand a faint blue aura of fire blooms, crawling over her fingers like a velvet haze. She stares at the pale flame.

*Liz* : I'm learning where it comes from. (beat) And for once in my life I'm not afraid. (She clenches her fist and puts the flame out.)

In the conversation *above*, maxim of relevance was flouted. First of all, *Hellboy* said that he miss Liz. However, Liz had told her that he did not want *Hellboy* to say he miss her. Actually to follow the maxim of relevance, she should have said that she miss him too. So, his utterance was unmatched, and therefore, relevance maxim was flouted.

### Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

Int. Machen library - night

Abe snaps out of it. Broom is pale. He steps away, wincing, enduring a bolt of pain in his side. Abe holds him. Motions for the others to stay back. He extends his open palm and “feels” the air near the old man’s back.

Abe : Professor..? You -- are very sick --

Broom: I don’t want *Hellboy* to know --(Broom turns around, gently pushes Abe’s hand away.)

Broom : Sixty years ago Abe, they tried to destroy the world. And they are back in my lifetime, they are back. To finish the job.

In underlined utterance, Broom was flouting the maxim of quantity. He gave too much information and was not to the point or circumlocution. He should have said to Abe that she did not like her wedding if he obeyed the maxim of quantity.

### The Flouting of Maxim of Quality

Int. Broom’s office - night

Myers stands by Broom’s desk as the old man places a new set of books on the reading stands in front of the fish tank.

Myers : I’m in way over my head, I know that much.

Broom : You’re doing fine. (At the last book stand, Broom glances at Abe, who is sitting in the shadows near the door.)

Myers : No, I’m not. He respects Clay. Not me. I don’t know why you chose me, Sir. But I’m not qualified. (Discouraged, Myers heads for the door.)

Broom : (very quiet) I’m dying Agent Myers. (Shocked, Myers looks over at Broom.)

The underlined utterance contains the flouting of maxim of quality. Myers has denied about

her feeling, and she lied to Broom that she was doing fine. Myers was still hoped that he could accept Broom praise. Therefore, his denial in this conversation proved Myers flouted the maxim of quality.

### The Flouting of Maxim of Manner

Int. Bellamie mental hospital - padded cell - day

Liz doesn’t acknowledge Myers’ presence. He kneels and looks up at her.

Myers : Miss Sherman? I’m Agent Myers, FBI. (Liz turns away.)

Myers : Miss Sherman? I’m Agent Myers, FBI. (no response) The hospital called us. They don’t feel they’re capable of caring for you any longer, and --(Silence.)

Myers : Liz -- can I call you Liz? It’s a beautiful name --

Liz : (sighs) 60% of the women in this world are named “Liz”.

Myers : It’s still impressive by my standards: My name’s John. (She looks at him. He offers his hand. She looks away.)

Myers : Dr. Broom asked me to invite you back to the Bureau. No special

Liz : Doesn’t sounds like him.

Myers : Miss Sherman, he’s asking you back, but it’s entirely your choice. (Liz turns to the 2-way mirror. Both their reflections are there.)

Liz : Choice, huh? That’s cute. I’ve quit the Bureau thirteen times. I always go back. (snaps two rubber bands) Where else would I go?

In this part, Myers has flouted the maxim of manner. He made an ambiguous statement. It means that he did not give clear statement. In this case, it, here, did not have any clear reference. To follow the maxim, it should have been ambiguous.

## CONCLUSION

Finding of this study reveal that maxim of relevance was mostly flouted by the characters in *Hellboy movie*. In term of the reasons of flouting the maxims, I have come up with various kinds of reasons why the main characters flouted the maxim.

The most frequent reason used for flouting the maxim of relevance, the most reason employed by the addressee for flouting the maxim of quantity. Next to be sarcastic was the most common reason why the addressor flouted the maxim of quality. Finally, the addressor flouted the maxim of manner over flow the main characters feeling. The fact is that Grice believes that a communication can be a failure when maxims are flouted. However, result of this study proves that it is never a guarantee that when a maxim is flouted, the communication will breakdown. To conclude, with regard to the fact that a conversation will not always breakdown even though maxims are flouted, it should then lead to better understanding when an application of cooperative principle is the concern. Further research can also be done in this field in order to generalize these findings.

## REFERENCES

- Brown, G. & Yule, G. 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, H. P. 1975. *Logic and Conversation*. In Cole P, Morgan JL (eds) *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech acts*. Academic, New York.
- Levinson. S. C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge. Cambridge Univesity Press.
- Toro, G.(Producer/Director). 2004. *Hellboy* [DVD]. New York: Columbia Pictures.
- Yule, G. 2003. *Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press