

# Maxim Flouts Strategies Analysis in The Main Characters Utterances in “*Freedom Writers*” Movie

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## ABSTRACT

*This research is under pragmatic study. The objectives are the strategies used by the main characters in “Freedom Writers” movie to flout the maxims. This research was descriptive qualitative. It concerned with the description of the data in the form of utterances produced by the main characters in which maxim flouts exists. The results show that all maxims of Cooperative Principle are flouted. They are maxim of quality, quantity, manner and relation. There are some strategies used by the main characters to flout the maxims. To flout the maxim of quantity, the main characters use the strategies of giving too much information and too little information. To flout the maxim of relation, the main characters use the strategies of changing the topic and giving an irrelevant answer. To flout the maxim of quality, the main character use the strategies of using metaphor, banter, sarcasm, irony and hyperbole. Finally, to flout the maxim of manner, the main character use the strategies of being ambiguous and being not brief. Flouts of quantity maxim occurs 15 times. It is followed by flouts of relation maxim which takes place 10 times. The third position is flouts of quality maxim which happens 10 times. The last position is flouts of manner maxim which takes place 5 times. Flouts of quantity maxim gets the highest rank by giving too much information than what is required. The main character who flouts quantity maxim is Erin. She flouts the quantity maxim for many reasons, such as to explain something, to stress her utterances, to make the hearer more understand about the topic.*

**KEYWORDS:** Pragmatics, Cooperative Principle, Maxim Flouts, Freedom Writers.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Language has an important role in human social interaction as a main tool of communication. The language used may indicate the intention of someone through communicating a message. A speaker will produce some messages from language that encodes the message as its meaning; the message will be identified and composed by hearer. In linguistic especially in pragmatic field, there is a theory that explains how people can be cooperative in the conversation. It is cooperative principle. This theory is a principle of conversation that was introduced by philosopher (H. Paul Grice, 1975). He states that the cooperative principle is the opinion that participants in the conversation usually trying to be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear. It means that every participant is supposed to give contributions in the conversations as required.

Flouts of maxims appear not only in everyday conversations but also in movies. Films are a suitable medium for analyzing linguistic phenomena because they effectively depict gestures, intonation, situations, and expressions of characters, making the interactions appear as realistic as those in real-life situations.

The phenomenon of the principle of cooperation occurs in society, in real conversations. However, to analyze it, you do not have to observe real society because it is depicted in many media, such as movies. A movie is one of the many popular social media platforms in society.

Therefore, based on the explanation of the above phenomena, the researcher intends to analyse strategies of flouting maxims in the movie “Freedom Writers.” The researcher analyzes the film dialogues that occur between characters using flouting maxim strategies. This assists the audience in understanding the plot of the movie. Additionally, the film “Freedom Writers” is part of a series that



is very popular among all ages. In teaching and learning, flouting maxims become some of the hardest material students need to learn. So, the researcher tries to analyze the flouting maxims to help teachers use them as a medium for teaching language. The 'Freedom Writers' movie is based on the true story of teacher Erin Gruwell and her students at Woodrow Wilson Classical High School in Long Beach, California. The movie is based on the book "The Freedom Writers Diary" written by Erin Gruwell and her students in 1999. As a result, this research helps people who do not master pragmatics, especially strategies for flouting maxims, to understand the implicit meanings that occur in the interactions between the characters in the movie.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Definition of Pragmatics

The study of pragmatics focuses on how speakers communicate in a way that is understandable to listeners or perceivers. This study's main goal is to understand how individuals understand their own meaning, especially in light of context and how it affects their speech. In linguistic research, the study of meaning interpretation is referred to as pragmatics. Despite the fact that it is challenging to define pragmatics precisely, a pragmatic study is one that is methodical and depends on language use to determine meaning by virtue.

### 2.2 Cooperative Principles

The Cooperative Principle is the guideline that individuals follow to have productive conversations. Typically, we have a series of connected remarks in our conversational interactions, and it does not make sense if they do not. These are, at the very least, generally cooperative endeavors in which each member acknowledges the existence of shared goals or, at the very least, a path that is agreed upon.

### 2.3 Types of Maxim Flouts

#### 2.3.1 Flouts Maxim of Quantity

When a speaker openly provides more or less information, they flout the principle of quantity. The speaker who disobeys the quantity maxim provides either too little or too much information. This implies that the speaker may not provide the information that is needed. For example:

*Peter: Well, how do I look? Mary: Your shoes are nice.....*

In this case, Mary flouts the maxim of quantity by giving less information than required. Peter asks her about his whole appearance, but Mary only refers to his shoes. She does not say directly that the shirt or his jeans look nice, which means that she is not impressed with the rest of what he is wearing. To avoid offending Peter, Mary decides not to obey the maxim of quantity. Thus, Peter is forced to infer the hidden meaning of Mary's utterance.

#### 2.3.2 Flouts Maxim of Quality

The interlocutors can be said to flout the principle of quality when they imply information that is not appropriate given the circumstances. When a speaker makes a claim that is obviously false or for which there is insufficient support, they are guilty of flouting the principle of quality. We implicitly assume that everyone with whom we communicate tells the truth when they speak. For example, speaker A below queries speaker B about what they plan to do this evening. At this point, A is counting on B to respond with candor.

*A: Teheran's in Turkey isn't it, teacher? B: And London's in Amerika I suppose.*

From the dialogue, it can be seen that B flouts the maxim of quality. By giving the statement that London is in America, B fails to fulfill the maxim of quality because he tells something false; London is actually in England. The reason for B's response to A is that A also says something false: Teheran is in Turkey, when it is actually in Iran. This reduces Grice's concept of disobeying the quality criterion to five well-known methods.

#### 2.3.3 Flouts Maxim of Relevance

Making a comment or remark that is blatantly unrelated to the subject at hand flouts the relevance guideline. Therefore, when the speaker does not respond to the topic being discussed, they flout the relevance principle.

A: *Smith doesn't seem to have a girlfriend these days* B: *he has been paying a lot of visits to New York lately*

The dialogue shows that the conversation between A and B is unmatched. The response of B is not relevant to A's statement. By saying so, B implies that Smith might have a girlfriend in New York because he spends more time going there. In this case, B flouts the maxim of relation because B tries to shorten the utterance by merely saying that.

#### 2.3.4 Flouts Maxim of Manner

Those who flout the maxim of manner appear to be obscure and often try to exclude a third party, as in this sort of exchange between husband and wife:

A: *Where are you off to?*

B: *I was thinking of going out to get some of that funny white stuff for somebody.* A: *Ok, but don't be log-dinners nearly ready*

Therefore, B speaks in an ambiguous way, saying 'that funny white stuff' and 'somebody' because he avoids saying 'ice cream' and 'Michelle' so that his little daughter does not become excited and ask for the ice cream before her meal.

### 2.4 Strategies to flout the maxims

In flouting maxims, there are some backgrounds of why people flout the maxim. One of them is strategies. There are several strategies to flout the maxim. The strategies to flout maxims include giving too little information, giving too much information, using irony, banter, metaphor, sarcasm, hyperbole, changing the topic, giving irrelevant answers, being not brief, and giving ambiguous information. Each strategy is different from another. These strategies will be explained in down below. In maxim flouts, speakers use strategies to make the listener accept the explicit or implied meaning of utterances.

#### 2.4.1 Strategies to flout the maxim of quantity

There are two types of strategies to flout the maxim of quality, such as giving to little or too much information than what is required.

#### 2.4.2 Giving too little information

The following example is taken from a conversation between A & B. A: And you say that the warden is a nice person.

B: *Oh yes you will get other opinions but that's my opinion.*

A knows that B gives too little information for him to get the full meaning of what is being said. He knows that B has more information. Sometimes, speakers often say more than they need, perhaps to create a sense of occasion or to show respect. Meanwhile, speakers say less than they need to be rude, blunt, and forthright.

#### 2.4.2 Giving too much information

The following example is taken from a conversation between Erin and Margaret of "Freedom Writers" movie.

Margaret : Here's your coffee.

E : *Thank you. I brought my lesson plans. I'd love it if you'd look them over.*

In this case, Erin flouts the maxim of quantity by giving too many statements than what is required.

Here, Erin gives a lot of explanations about her lesson plans. Actually, she just needs to say "Thank you".

#### 2.4.3 Strategies to flout maxim of quality

There are five types of strategies to flout the maxim of quantity. They are by using irony, sarcasm, banter, metaphor, and hyperbole.

#### 2.4.4 Irony

Irony arises when a speaker says something different from what they actually mean, often the opposite



or a negation of what is uttered. The example of irony in maxim flouts can be seen in the utterance, “*If only you know how much I love being woken up at 4 am by a fire alarm*”

This utterance is said by a student to their friends when they are getting breakfast downstairs. This utterance

shows how the student is annoyed by the alarm ringing at 4 am to wake them up and have breakfast early in the morning. It also implies that the student expects to have more sleep and eat breakfast at a later time.

#### 2.4.5 Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a form of irony that conveys a more derogatory and ironic message to the listener. It is frequently employed to intentionally harm the listener, as in, “*Why don’t you leave all your dirty clothes on the lounge floor, love, and then you only need to wash them when someone breaks a leg trying to get to the sofa?*”

This utterance is said by a wife to her husband. In this utterance, the wife tries to tell the husband to help her with the housework. She feels tired of doing it alone while her husband is not helping; instead, he makes her more tired by leaving all the dirty clothes around the house.

#### 2.4.6 Banter

Banter is an offensive manner of being friendly that conveys a negative message while implying a positive one. By using a negative statement (abusive or insulting language), the speaker suggests a good attitude by demonstrating closeness, social intimacy, and unity among best friends or partners.

An example of banter is a lengthy exchange of statements in which a speaker and an interlocutor taunt each other in a lighthearted or teasing manner. Words that are taboo, such as “bad girl” and “dork,” are used to convey a sense of social closeness or solidarity between the speaker (A) and the listener (B)

*A: You’re a bad girl, aren’t you? B: You’re a dork!*

*A: You don’t get out much, do you? B: You’re cute, like my little sister.*

The conversation between A and B is banter. They tease one another in a humorous way. B does not get offended by being called a “bad girl,” and A does not feel annoyed by being called a “dork.” Both the speaker (A) and the interlocutor (B) understand the implied meanings behind “bad girl” and “dork,” which show the closeness between them. They belong to the same group as intimate friends, so it does not cause any conflict between the two.

#### 2.4.7 Metaphor

Metaphor is a comparison between two objects. Through metaphor, a speaker implies something, and the hearer infers the meaning by comparing the two items in the metaphor. In maxim flouts, the speaker uses metaphor to convey a deeper meaning, and the listener understands the implied message by interpreting the comparison. The example of maxim flouts using metaphor.

This utterance, “*My house is a refrigerator in January*” shows that the speaker uses the metaphor “*a refrigerator*” to tell the hearer that their house is very cold in January. The hearer understands the comparison and infers the intended meaning of the speaker’s statement.

#### 2.4.8 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an extravagant remark or the use of exaggerated language to create emphasis or a heightened effect. For example, “*He asks me a hundred times*” exaggerates the number of questions because the speaker wants to criticize the interlocutor for repeatedly asking the same question. The speaker knows that the frequency of the question is not actually a hundred times, but perhaps only ten, yet they exaggerate the quantity to emphasize their frustration.

#### 2.4.9 Strategies to flout maxim of relation

In flouting the maxim of relation, a speaker usually changes the topic at the moment of speaking. Another way to flout this maxim is by giving irrelevant information.

### 2.5.0 Changing the topic

Speakers change the topic of conversation to divert attention from the current situation or to show that they are not interested in the previous topic. The following example comes from a dialogue in the “Freedom Writers” movie.

Steve : With your brains, you could run a major corporation. Instead, I worry all night because you're a teacher at Attica.

E : *Can you hear what you're saying? How many times have I listened to you about walking civil rights marches?*

Erin flouts the maxim of relation by mentioning another topic that is not related to the previous question. This occurs when Steve interviews Erin and asks, With your brains, you could run a major corporation. Instead, I worry all night because you're a teacher at Attica. Erin does not answer the question but introduces a new topic by asking, “*Can you hear what you're saying? How many times have I listened to you about walking civil rights marches?*”

### 2.5.1 Giving irrelevant answers

Speakers make irrelevant statements to refuse to answer some embarrassing questions. An example of strategy to flout maxim of relation by giving an irrelevant answer in the following.

A: There's somebody at the door B: *I'm in the bathroom*

B expects A to know that the present location is irrelevant to A's statement. However, the implied meaning is that B tells A that she cannot go and see who is coming because she is in the bathroom.

### 2.5.2 Strategies to flout maxim of manner

Flouts maxim of manner is done by being not brief and giving ambiguous information. The following example is taken from a conversation of “Freedom Writers” movie.

Steve : I'll lay odds your kids don't even know who Rap Brown or Eldridge Cleaver were. You're gonna waste your talent son people who don't give a damn about education. It breaks my heart. I tell you the truth.

Erin : *Well... I'm sorry. I can't help that.*

By saying, “Well... I'm sorry. I can't help that,” Erin flouts the maxim of manner. She gives an ambiguous statement because it has two meanings. First, she apologizes if he wastes his talent. Second, Erin says that education is important for children.

## 3.0 METHOD

This research uses descriptive qualitative methods as it emphasizes describing the phenomenon of language use. In this study, the researcher explains or describes the phenomenon of maxim flouts uttered by the main characters in the movie “Freedom Writers”. The model of the data is as follows.

**Table 1 : The Data of Maxim Flouts in the Main Characters' utterances in “Freedom Writers” Movie**

NO	Code	Types of Maxim flouts				Strategies Used to Flout the Maxims	Explanation	
		Q	L	Q	N	M	R	
Dialogues								
1	MF/FW/00:17:36					✓	Changing the topic of the conversation	Conversation happens when Steve interviews Erin and says, “With your brains, you could run a major corporation. Instead, I worry all night because you're a teacher at Attica.
	Steve : With your brains, you could run a major corporation. Instead, I worry all night because you're a teacher at Attica.						Steve interviews Erin and says, “With your brains, you could run a major corporation. Instead, I worry all night because you're a teacher at Attica.	

E : <i>Can you hear what you're saying? How many times have I listened to you about walking civil rights marches?</i>				In this case, Erin flouts the maxim of relation by introducing a different topic unrelated to the previous question. Erin does not answer the question directly but creates a new topic by asking a new question. <i>Can you hear what you're saying? How many times have I listened to you about walking civil rights marches?</i>
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#### 4.0 FINDING AND DISCUSSION

**Table 2 : Strategies of Maxim Flouts in the Main Characters' Utterances “*Freedom Writers*” Movie**

No	Types of Maxim Flouts	Strategies to Flout the Maxim	Frequency
1	Quantity	Giving too little information	10
		Giving too much information	5
2	Relation	Changing the topic	8
		Giving irrelevant answer	2
3	Quality	Giving Hyperbole statement	1
		Giving Metaphor statement	1
		Giving Irony statement	3
		Giving Banter statement	1
		Giving Sarcasm statement	4
4	Manner	Being not brief	2
		Giving ambiguous information	3
Total			40

In flouting the maxim of quantity, two strategies are used: giving too much information and giving too little information, both of which are demonstrated by Erin. The frequency of giving too much information is 5 out of 40 instances, while giving too little information occurs 10 out of 40 times.

In flouting the maxim of relation, two strategies are identified: changing the topic and giving irrelevant answers. The frequency of changing the topic is 8 out of 40 instances, while giving irrelevant answers occurs 2 out of 40 times. All of these strategies are used by Erin.

Additionally, in flouting the maxim of quality, five strategies are identified: using metaphor, irony, banter, hyperbole, and sarcasm. The frequency of metaphors is 1 out of 40 instances, while irony occurs 3 out of 40 times. Banter appears 1 out of 40 times, hyperbole occurs 1 out of 40 times, and sarcasm is noted 4 out of 40 times. All of these strategies are employed by Erin.

Meanwhile, in flouting the manner maxim, two strategies are found: being not brief and giving ambiguous information. The frequency of being not brief is 2 out of 40 instances, and the frequency of giving ambiguous information is also 3 out of 40 instances.

#### 4.1 Strategies to Flout Maxim of Quantity

There are two strategies used to flout maxim of quantity. They are by giving too much and too little information than what is required. The reason why speakers tend to flout maxim of quantity by giving too much information is because they know much about the topic being discussed and want to be closer to the hearer. An example of this strategy is shown in the following datum.

Margaret : Those are lovely pearls.

E : *Thank you. From my father.*

(Datum 5/MF/FW/00:06:16)

In the conversation above, Erin and Margaret conduct an interview. Margaret the interviewer asked Erin who was interviewed, it was a beautiful pearl. Then responding to Margaret's statement, Erin said thank you. From my father. Actually, Margaret didn't ask the origin of Erin's pearls, she just praised them.

In this case, Erin flouts the maxim of quantity by giving too much information. Here Erin gives a lot of explanation about her pearls. Actually he just needed to say "thank you".

#### 4.2 Strategies to Flout Maxim of Relation

There are two strategies used to flout the maxim of relation: the first changing the topic, while the second by giving irrelevant answer. In "Freedom Writers", the main characters often shift the subject of conversations to avoid discussing topics that are embarrassing or simply to conclude the discussions. An example of this strategy in flouts the relation maxim is illustrated in the following data.

Eva : White people always wanting their respect like they deserve it for free. E : *I'm a teacher. It doesn't matter what color I am.*

(Datum 19/MF/FW/00:33:14)

Eva comments on white people expecting respect without earning it. Instead of addressing Eva's point about race and respect, Erin responds by saying, "I'm a teacher. It doesn't matter what color I am." Erin's reply shifts the conversation from the racial dynamics Eva points out to her identity as a teacher, which does not directly engage with the issue Eva raises.

#### 4.3 Strategies to Flout Maxim of Quality

An example of this strategy for flouts the quantity maxim is illustrated in the following data.

E : Settle down. Let's go over the first name on the list, Homer. Homer's The Odyssey. Marcus : I know Homer the Simpson.

E : No, this Homer was an ancient Greek, but maybe he was *bald* just like Homer Simpson. Okay.  
(Datum 28/MF/FW/00:43:15)

The conversations above happens in a class. When Erin discusses Homer's Odyssey. One of the students named Marcus said, "I know Homer Simpson," one of the students said. Erin replied, "No, this Homer was an ancient Greek, but he might have been bald like Homer Simpson." Okay. In this situation,



Erin's response showed sarcasm. This is reflected through the word bald. Sarcasm occurs when a speaker says something that is mocking or mocking. Bald means has no hair. Erin shouldn't say something like that because it insults someone's hair.

#### 4.4 Strategies to Flout Maxim of Manner

There are two strategies to flout maxim of manner. They are by being not brief and by being ambiguous. An example below shows the strategy of being not brief to flouts the manner maxim.

Eva : When is Anne gonna smoke Hitler? E : *What?*  
(Datum 39/MF/FW/00:45:20)

In Erin's response, "*What?*" she flouts the maxim of manner by being not brief to Eva's remark. Rather than engaging with Eva's comment about "Anne" and "smoke Hitler," Erin's brief response lacks context and clarity. This reaction fails to address the potentially provocative nature of Eva's statement and leaves the conversation unresolved, appearing disorganized and not promoting meaningful dialogue.

### 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher finds that all four maxims are flouted: quantity, quality, manner, and relation. The study shows a total of 40 instances of maxim flouts in the main characters' dialogue. Quantity maxim flouts occur 15 times, relation maxim flouts happen 10 times, quality maxim flouts also occur 10 times, and manner maxim flouts are the least frequent, appearing 5 times. Flouts of the relation maxim rank second because the main character gives irrelevant answers and changes the topic. Flouts of the quality maxim rank third. The main character flouts the maxim by giving too much or too little information.

The strategies used to flout maxims in the movie "Freedom Writers", the findings show that the main characters use various strategies. Erin flouts the quantity maxim by giving too much or too little information. She is especially talkative with other teachers. Although Erin is a new teacher, she has experience in teaching, so it's inappropriate for her colleagues or superiors to underestimate her. She is unwilling to concede when other teachers and the principal express differing views. This is why the findings show that Erin often flouts the quantity maxim by being overly talkative in her responses. Conversely, when there is no debate, she gives too little information. These factors contribute to her tendency to flout the quantity maxim. The main character frequently flouts the maxim of relation by giving irrelevant answers and changing the topic of conversation. When the main character does this, it appears that the remarks are not connected to the previous discussion. In the movie "Freedom Writers," Erin flouts the maxim of relevance because she feels uncomfortable with the topic being discussed. In flouting the maxim of quality, the main character uses irony, metaphor, banter, and sarcasm when responding to statements or answering questions. Erin breaks this maxim because she wants to conceal or hide something. The maxim of quality suggests that speakers should be sincere and say what they believe to be true. However, in this film, Erin rarely expresses her true intentions directly. By using strategies like metaphor, irony, banter, and sarcasm, she prompts Steve to infer the hidden meaning behind her words. Ultimately, Erin should be honest, and the situation involves Scoot and Steve, making it clear that Erin flouts the maxim of quality. In flouting the maxim of manner, the main character does so by being not brief and by giving ambiguous information. As a new teacher, Erin carefully and thoughtfully selects her words. She aims to organize her speech in a clear and coherent way. Her sentences are well-structured due to her teaching experience, so Erin always tries to speak carefully, giving detailed explanations in her statements. However, she tends to be lengthy in her responses, and her answers become ambiguous when addressing questions. Therefore, it is Erin who flouts the maxim of manner.

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