

# AN ANALYSIS OF MAXIM FLOUTING IN TV SERIES GAME OF THRONES SEASON 1

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**Abstract** : This research aims to analyze the types of maxims that are flouted in *Game of Thrones* Season 1. The descriptive qualitative method is employed in this research. The data of this research are in the form of utterances from the characters in *Game of Thrones* that contain maxim flouting. The source of the data is the *Game of Thrones* TV series and its script. The data are collected through watching the TV series, reading the script, and taking notes of utterances where the maxims are flouted. The results show that all the four types of maxims are flouted by the characters of the TV series with the occurrence of 19 times. The type of maxim that is flouted the most by the characters is the maxim of relation. The characters flout the maxim of relation on nine different occasions. Then, the maxim of quality is ranked second with the frequency of six times. After that, the following maxim of quality is maxim of quantity with three cases. Finally, the least flouted maxim of all four is maxim of manner which only appears one time.

**Keywords** : *Maxim Flouting, TV Series.*

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**Abstrak** : Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis maksim yang dilanggar di *Game of Thrones* Season 1. Metode kualitatif deskriptif digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Data penelitian ini berupa ucapan dari karakter-karakter dalam *Game of Thrones* yang mengandung maxim flouting. Sumber datanya adalah serial TV *Game of Thrones* dan naskahnya. Data dikumpulkan melalui menonton serial TV, membaca naskah, dan mencatat ucapan di mana maksim dilanggar. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa keempat jenis maksim dilanggar oleh karakter serial TV dengan terjadinya 19 kali. Jenis pepatah yang paling banyak dicemooh oleh karakter adalah pepatah hubungan. Karakter mencemooh pepatah hubungan pada sembilan kesempatan yang berbeda. Kemudian, maksimal kualitas berada di peringkat kedua dengan frekuensi enam kali. Setelah itu, maksimal kualitas berikut adalah maksimal kuantitas dengan tiga kasus. Akhirnya, pepatah yang paling tidak dilanggar dari keempatnya adalah pepatah cara yang hanya muncul satu kali.

**Kata Kunci** : *Maksim mencemooh, Serial TV.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language plays an essential role in human lives. As a matter of fact, language is one of the reasons of the survival of Homo sapiens. Harari (2015) states that through the ability to comprehend and communicate the language, *Homo sapiens* can cooperate collectively and establish civilizations. Hampp (2019) also adds that “*Through language, humans can think and develop their knowledge*”. With the invention of language, human life became a lot easier than before. There are many things that language gave to us. For instance, there are two major functions of language as stated by Yule (1996: 6) that There are two major functions of language use, which are interactional function and transactional function. Interactional function deals with the gesture and sound production process, while transactional function involves the way humans communicate knowledge, skills, and information.

Communication is a process of exchanging messages, ideas, or emotions by two or more people. Liando (2018) adds that “*people need to communicate by using language to interact with other people and to express their feelings or share ideas and thoughts*”. The goal of communication is delivering and receiving information from one person to another. Thus, in order to achieve the goal, the people who are involved need to find the best way to deliver the information so that it can be understood correctly by the listener. On the other hand, the listener should also be able to know what the partner really means in his/her utterance. Samola (2006) states that “*In order to use language to communicate, people include a meaning in their language*”.

There are two branches in Linguistics that focus on the study of the meaning of an expression, they are Semantics and Pragmatics. This particular research is focused on Pragmatics. Yule (1996) states that Pragmatics is the study of utterances as communicated by the speaker and interpreted by the writer. It is the study of what the speaker means in his/her utterance and how the hearer understands it. In order to successfully do so, both parties have to comprehend the context in which the conversation occurs. Damopolii (2021) adds that “*Context is an important factor used to interpret the meaning intended by the speakers*”. There are several pragmatic theories that focus on the way to understand the true meaning of an utterance, one of them is called the cooperative principle.

In order to be cooperative in a conversation, each interlocutor is expected to follow the four sub-principles called Cooperative Principles. Grice (in Yule 1996) states that Cooperative Principles encourage participants in a conversation to make conversational contributions as needed, at the appropriate time, and in accordance with the agreed-upon purpose or direction in a conversation. Maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of manner, and maxim of relation are the four conversational maxims.

However, those conversational maxims are not always followed by the participants in a talk exchange. There are times when the participants in a conversation deliberately do not follow the maxims, like when they want to generate the implicit meaning of their utterance. They intentionally break the conversational maxims by flouting them. By flouting the maxims, the speaker has certain purposes and intended meaning behind their

utterance and expects the hearer to know his/her true intention. The example of maxim flouting is when a son replies to his mother question about whether or not his homework is already done with 'The mathematics is done'. In that example, the son flouts the maxim of quantity by only mentioning one subject in his homework when he is asked about all of them. By doing so, he implicitly says that the rest of the homework has not been done yet. The situation in which the maxims are flouted is not only seen in real life, but it can also be seen in artworks like movies, novels, and TV series. Kamagi (2019) says "*The use of language can be found in various media, such as audio, visual, and visual media*".

In conducting this research, the researchers use the first season of a TV series entitled *Game of Thrones* as the object. *The Game of Thrones* tells a story of political intrigues, conspiracies, and wars of the nine great houses to claim the Iron Throne in fictional continents of Westeros and Essos. Since the purpose of the dialogues in this particular series is mainly political, every character has their own communication strategies to achieve their goals, one of them is by flouting the maxims. Maxim flouting is often used to implicitly express negative sentimental feelings between characters in a conversation.

When conducting preliminary research by watching some episodes of the series, the researchers find several dialogues in which the maxims are flouted by the characters. Below is the example of the flouting of a maxim in a dialogue:

Mormont : *We've been capturing wildlings, more every month. They're fleeing south. The ones who flee say they've seen the white walkers.*

Tyrion : *Yes, and the fishermen in Lannisport say they see mermaids.*

(Game of Thrones S01E03)

In that dialogue, Tyrion responds Mormont's utterance by flouting the maxim of relation. By saying that the fishermen in Lannisport say they see mermaids, Tyrion's response implies his skepticism towards the white walkers, the ancient monstrous creatures who are capable of bringing back the dead to be their army, which existence he denies just as the existence of mermaids.

After finding some samples of maxim flouting in preliminary research, the researchers believe that there are many other scenes in which the flouting of maxims appears in *Game of Thrones* season 1.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Cooperative Principle

In his paper *Logic and Conversation*, Grice (1975) believes that in order to make a conversation works, conversational partners need to assume one another to be acting cooperatively within the speech exchange. He formulated a guideline to form an effective and efficient conversation which is known as the cooperative principle. Finch (2005) adds that Grice's cooperative principle assumes that in order to reduce misunderstanding and misinterpretation in a conversation, the participants have to cooperate. They cooperate by following Grice's guideline which consists of four conversational maxims: maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner.

There are two possibilities in conducting conversational maxims, namely

observance of maxim and non-observance of maxim. When the speaker successfully fulfills the required maxim(s), he is observing the maxim. On the other hand, when the speaker fails to fulfill the required maxim(s), it means he is not observing the maxim.

### Maxim Flouting

Cutting (2002) states that maxim flouting occurs when the speaker deliberately disobeys the maxim but expects the listener to understand the implicit meaning of the utterance. By flouting the maxim, the speaker performs an indirect speech act and hopes that the listener can infer the implicit meaning. It needs to be understood that flouting the maxim is different than violating the maxim. When the speaker violates the maxim, they purposely convey inadequate information, say something insincere, irrelevant, or ambiguous, and the listener incorrectly assumes that they are cooperating.

### Types of Maxim Flouting

#### A) Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

Flouting the maxim of quantity happens when the speaker deliberately gives either less or more information than is required (Cutting, 2002). Below is the example of flouting the maxim of quantity:

A: *Well, how do I look?*

B: *Your shoes are nice...*

(Cutting, 2002: 37)

In the conversation above, B flouts the maxim of quantity by not giving a complete information about A's look. He

only mentions that A's shoes are nice and does not mention anything other than that. A asks about his whole appearance but he only gets the information about his shoes. By only saying that A's shoes are nice when he is supposed to give complete information about A's appearance, B's answer implies that he only likes the shoes and hates the rest of A's appearance. B flouts the quantity maxim to hide his intended meaning.

#### B) Flouting the Maxim of Quality

A speaker flouts the maxim of quality by intentionally saying something that is untrue (lie) or saying something in which he lacks evidence. Grice (1975) mentions some ways in flouting the maxim of quality, they are metaphor, irony, meiosis, and hyperbole. Cutting (2002) also adds that other items such as euphemism, banter, and sarcasm can be used to flout the maxim of quality. The items mentioned above are forms of figurative language. Figurative language is a type of language which cannot be taken literally. When the speaker uses figurative language, the listener is expected to interpret the implied meaning of the utterance. The following dialogue presents a situation in which a speaker flouts the maxim of quality:

Aang: *This is Appa (pointing to his bison), my flying bison!*

Sokka: *Well, this is Katara (pointing to his sister), my flying sister!*

(Avatar: The Last Airbender S01E01)

In that dialogue, Sokka flouts the maxim of quality by telling something that is untrue to Aang. He deliberately flouts

the maxim of quality by lying that he has a flying sister in order to insult Aang, a stranger nomad that he and his sister found in an iceberg, who says that he has a flying bison. What Sokka says does not represent his belief. His real intention is to tell Aang that he does not believe that Aang's bison is a flying bison.

#### C) Flouting the Maxim of Relation

Maxim of relation is flouted when the speaker's utterance is irrelevant to the previous utterance. When flouting the maxim of relation, the speaker expects the listener to connect his utterance with the preceding one. Below is the example of how the maxim of relation is flouted:

Leila: *Whoa! Has your boss gone crazy?*

Mary: *Let's go get some coffee.*

(Yule, 1996:43)

In the example, Mary seems to say something that is unrelated to Leila's question. Mary flouts the maxim of relation by not properly answering the question and instantly changing the topic. By doing so, Mary's utterance implies that Leila should not be talking about her boss in that particular context, because perhaps her boss is nearby.

#### D) Flouting the Maxim of Manner

According to Grice (1975) the maxim of manner is flouted when the speaker fulfills each or all of these four criteria: ambiguity, obscurity, failure to be brief or concise, and failure to be orderly. In conveying an information, the speaker has to be clear, brief, and orderly. The dialogue below presents a situation where the maxim of manner is flouted:

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 long-dinner's nearly ready.*

(Cutting, 2002)

Speaker B flouts the maxim by being ambiguous and obscure when he says 'that funny white stuff for somebody'. By saying 'funny white stuff', speaker B refers to ice cream and with 'somebody' he means their daughter. Speaker A intentionally flouts the maxim of manner and expects that speaker B, his wife, will understand what he means by his utterance.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Research Design

Qualitative research is the method that is employed by the researchers. According to Holloway (1997), qualitative research is a type of social study that focuses on how individuals understand and make meaning of their own experiences and the society in which they live. The findings of this study are discussed in detail explanation rather than in the form of statistical data.

### Object of the Study

The object of this research is the TV SERIES *Game of Thrones*. The researchers use the transcripts from the first season of *Game of Thrones* which consists of ten episodes. The utterances from all the characters that flout the maxims are analyzed in order to obtain the data.

### Data Analysis

The collected data are analyzed with the steps proposed by Miles and Huberman

(1994). Those three steps are data reduction, data display, and conclusion.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Data Reduction

After watching all the episodes of *Game of Thrones* season 1, the researchers find that there are many utterances in the series that consists of all four types of non-observance of conversational maxims. The researchers then reduce the data and take only the ones with maxim flouting. There are 19 utterances in *Game of Thrones* season 1 which consist maxim flouting.

1. "My greatest accomplishment." (S01E01 – 42:39)
2. "Impressive." (S01E02 – 13:27)
3. "A shame you didn't say a prayer for the butcher's son." (S01E03 – 05:33)
4. "I understand you knew my brother Brandon as well." (S01E03 – 05:54)
5. "Is she?" (S01E03 – 23:58)
6. "I'm looking at you. You've got an interesting face. Very distinctive faces. All of you." (S01E03 – 25:30)
7. "Shall we return to the Khalasar, Khaleesi?" (S01E03 – 37:43)
8. "You know, my brother once told me that nothing someone says before the word 'but' really counts." (S01E03 – 40:00)
9. "Yes, and the fishermen of Lannisport say they see mermaids." (S01E03 – 49:55)
10. "I'd rather throw myself down a well." (S01E04 – 51:45)
11. "Any man of the Night's Watch is welcome at Winterfell." (S01E04 – 03:35)
12. "Then I'm not a dwarf." (S01E04 – 04:27)

13. "My lady? Your loyalty to your captors is touching." (S01E04 – 05:24)
14. "So the lion does concern himself with the opinions of.." (S01E07 – 04:24)
15. "Such a dutiful boy to make sure his Grace did not lack refreshment. I do hope the poor lad does not blame himself." (S01E07 – 26:00)
16. "I always wanted to be a Wizard." (S01E07 – 40:00)
17. "In my own bed, at the age of 80 with a bellyful of wine and a girl's mouth around my cock." (S01E08 – 21:03)
18. "Your father didn't come to the wedding." (S01E09 – 09:30)
19. "The Stark boy appears to be less green than we'd hoped." (S01E10 – 19:04)

### Data Display

After collecting reducing the data, the researchers then display them by categorizing them into groups based on their types. The table below presents the utterance in *Game of Thrones* season 1 which flout the maxims.

First, the Utterances which flout the maxim of relation.

**Table 1: The Utterances which flout maxim of relation.**

| No | Utterance  | Occurrence       |
|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | "A shame you didn't say a prayer for the butcher's son."   | (S01E03 – 05:33) |
| 2. | "Shall we return to the Khalasar, Khaleesi?"   | (S01E03 – 37:43) |
| 3. | "You know, my brother once told me that nothing someone says before the word "but" really counts." | (S01E03 – 40:00) |
| 4. | "Yes, and the fishermen of Lannisport say they see mermaids."                                      | (S01E03 – 49:55) |
| 5. | "Any man of the Night's Watch is welcome at  | (S01E04 – 03:35) |

|    | Winterfell.”  |                  |
|----|---|------------------|
| 6. | “So the lion does concern himself with the opinions of..” | (S01E07 – 04:24) |
| 7. | “I always wanted to be a Wizard.”                         | (S01E07 – 40:00) |
| 8. | “Huh. Your father didn't come to the wedding.”            | (S01E09 – 09:30) |
| 9. | “The Stark boy appears to be less green than we'd hoped.” | (S01E10 – 19:04) |

*Utterance 1*

Lord Eddard Stark flouts the maxim of relation by saying something that is unrelated to his interlocutor's utterance. He does that to mock Lord Varys because he only cares about the Prince's recovery and completely ignores the fact that the butcher's son is wrongly accused and punished for hurting which is something he didn't do.

*Utterance 2*

In that dialogue, Jorah flouts the maxim of relation by ignoring Viserys' order and giving him a completely unrelated utterance. By doing so, Jorah wants to show to Viserys that he does not take orders from him and that his loyalty lies to Daenerys, whom he refers to as 'Khaleesi' (The Queen of Dothraki).

*Utterance3*

In the dialogue above, Benjen Stark flouts the maxim of relation by interfering Tyrion's sugarcoating utterance and simultaneously giving an entirely unrelated information to the previous utterance because he knows that Tyrion is going to say something bad about them afterward.

*Utterance4*

In that dialogue, Tyrion responds to Mormont's utterance by saying something that has nothing to do with what Mormont

says before, which flouts the maxim of relation. By saying that the fishermen in Lannisport say they see mermaids, Tyrion's response implicitly implies his skepticism towards the white walkers, the ancient monstrous creatures who are capable of bringing back the dead to be their army, which existence he denies just as the existence of mermaids.

*Utterance5*

Robb's response toward Tyrion's utterance is considered as maxim of relation flouting because it is not in line or related with Tyrion's utterance. Tyrion talks about the cold and tense welcome that he gets, while Robb responds with a statement that Winterfell would gladly welcome the men of the night's watch. By saying so, Robb wants to imply that Tyrion is not welcome in Winterfell.

*Utterance6*

Jaime flouts the maxim of relation by saying something that is not related to Tywin's utterance. When Tywin explains to him why he wants to bring his brother back, Jaime restates Tywin's statement about how a Lion should not concern about the opinions of a sheep to harass Tywin.

*Utterance7*

In that dialogue, Samwell and Jon are talking about Jon's new position in the Night's Watch when Samwell suddenly changes the topic by saying something that is not related to the previous topic in order to cheer Jon up. By doing so, Samwell's last utterance is considered to flout the maxim of relation.

*Utterance 8*

In the dialogue above, Walder's last utterance is considered as flouting of

maxim of relation because he intentionally says something that has no relation to the previous utterance. When Catelyn talks about his new wife, Walder brings up the fact that Catelyn’s father broke his promise by not coming to his wedding in order to declare his resentment towards Catelyn’s family.

*Utterance 9*

When Tywin explains that their enemy, Robb Stark, has his son, Tyrion responds with an irrelevant statement. Instead of talking about Tywin’s son, Tyrion chooses to remind everyone in the room that they were wrong for underestimating their enemy before. When doing that, Tyrion flouts maxim of relation.

Second, the utterances which flout the maxim of quality.

**Table 2: The Utterances which flout maxim of quality.**

| No | Utterance  | Occurrence       |
|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | “My greatest accomplishment.”  | (S01E01 – 42:39) |
| 2. | “Impressive.”  | (S01E02 – 13:27) |
| 3. | “I’d rather throw myself down a well.”   | (S01E04 – 51:45) |
| 4. | “Then I’m not a dwarf.”  | (S01E04 – 04:27) |
| 5. | “My lady? Your loyalty to your captors is touching.”   | (S01E04 – 05:24) |
| 6. | “Such a dutiful boy to make sure his Grace did not lack refreshment. I do hope the poor lad does not blame himself.” | (S01E07 – 26:00) |

*Utterance 1*

In the dialogue above, Tyrion’s last utterance is considered flouting the maxim of quality because it tells something that is untrue. Tyrion sarcastically lies to Jon about being the queen’s brother as his greatest accomplishment, and then refers Jon as his father’s bastard in order to tell him that he should not refer to Tyrion only as “someone’s someone”.

*Utterance 2*

The dialogue occurs when Arya tries to show Jon that her direwolf, Nymeria, has been helping her to fold her things. However, when she asks Nymeria to hand over her gloves, Nymeria just sits down and does not do anything. Watching that ridiculous moment, Jon sarcastically tells Arya that it is impressive to mock her. By doing so, Jon flouts the maxim of quality.

*Utterance 3*

In that dialogue, Sir Rodrick refuses the singing beggar’s offer to sing him a song while waiting for his orders by saying that he would rather throw himself down a well, which is clearly an exaggeration and untrue statement. Thus, that utterance is a maxim of quality flouting.

*Utterance 4*

Tyrion’s last utterance in that dialogue is categorized as flouting of maxim of quality because he tells something that is not true because he indeed is a dwarf. He only says that to implicitly convince Bran to accept the fact that he has become a cripple.

*Utterance 5*

In that dialogue, Tyrion ridicules the fact that Theon really honors the family that captures and imprisons him by calling them with the lordship titles by saying that Theon’s loyalty to his captors is touching, which is contrary to what he actually means. By doing so, Tyrion flouts the maxim of quality.

*Utterance 6*

In that dialogue, Varys uses irony in his last statement in order to implicitly state his suspicion towards the king’s squire, whom he thinks is responsible for



murdering the king, to his interlocutors. Hence, Varys statement is a maxim of quality flouting.

Third, the utterances which flout the maxim of quantity.

**Table 3: The Utterances which flout maxim of quantity.**

| No | Utterance  | Occurrence       |
|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | "...I understand you knew my brother Brandon as well."                                       | (S01E03 – 05:54) |
| 2. | "I'm looking at you. You've got an interesting face. Very distinctive faces. All of you."    | (S01E03 – 25:30) |
| 3. | "In my own bed, at the age of 80 with a bellyful of wine and a girl's mouth around my cock." | (S01E08 – 21:03) |

*Utterance 1*

The dialogue occurs when Eddard Stark arrives in the capital and joins the small council meetings with the other lords. In that dialogue, Eddard flouts the maxim of quantity when he states more information than what is required by his interlocutor, Petyr, which is if his wife has mentioned him before. Eddard mentions his brother, who once fought and won a battle against Peter, to remind him what happens when he wrongs Eddard's family.

*Utterance 2*

In the dialogue above, Tyrion's first utterance is considered as maxim of quantity flouting because he gives more information than is required. When Tyrion is asked what is he looking at, he responds by answering what is he looking at, why is he looking at their faces, and even gives them an ambiguous information which triggers another question. Tyrion does that to implicitly tell his interlocutors that he is not afraid of them.

*Utterance 3*

In the beginning of the dialogue, it can be clearly seen that Shagga shows his intention to kill Tyrion and Bronn by threatening them. He even asks Tyrion a rhetorical question that actually means "in

what way would you like me to murder you?'. Instead of giving up and ignoring that question, Tyrion responds with an entirely unexpected answer by giving too much information. Tyrion says those things to tell them that he does not want to die at that moment.

Last, the utterances which flout the maxim of manner.

**Table 4: The Utterances which flout maxim of manner.**

| No | Utterance | Occurrence       |
|----|-----------|------------------|
| 1. | "Is she?" | (S01E03 – 23:58) |

*Utterance 1*

In that dialogue, Eddard shows his cooperation in responding Petyr's question. He answers the question with a brief, and straight explanation. On the other side, Petyr is clearly being uncooperative. He is being obscure. He responds to Eddard's utterance by asking an ambiguous question. By doing so, Petyr intends to put Eddard in doubt about his knowledge of his wife's whereabouts. Therefore, Petyr's response is considered as an example of maxim of manner flouting.

After conducting the research and finding the results, the researchers manage to draw some conclusions. First, the characters of the TV series *Game of Thrones* season one indeed flout the conversational maxims in some of their dialogues. All the four types of conversational maxims flouting are found in the series. Second, all the four types of conversational maxims are flouted by the characters in *Game of Thrones* TV Series. The frequency of all types is sorted from the highest to the lowest frequency. The type of maxim that is flouted the most by the characters is maxim of relation. The characters flout the maxim of relation on nine different occasions. Then, maxim of quality is ranked second with the frequency of six times. After that, the following maxim of quality is maxim of quantity with three cases. Finally, the least flouted

maxim of all four is maxim of manner which only appears one time.

## CONCLUSION

After conducting the research and finding the results, the researchers manage to draw some conclusions. First, the characters of the TV series *Game of Thrones* season one indeed flout the conversational maxims in some of their dialogues. All the four types of conversational maxims flouting are found in the series. Second, in terms of the frequency, the type of maxim that is flouted the most by the characters is maxim of relation. The characters flout the maxim of relation on nine different occasions. Then, maxim of quality is ranked second with the frequency of six times. After that, the following maxim of quality is maxim of quantity with three cases. Finally, the least flouted maxim of all four is maxim of manner which only appears one time.

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