

## An Analysis of the Flouting Maxim Portrayed in Barbie (2023) Movie

*Adira Amabela Marta<sup>1</sup>\*, Galuh Dwi Ajeng<sup>1</sup>, Eva Nurchurifiani<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung

*adiraamabelam@gmail.com* \*

### ABSTRACT

Pragmatics is the study of the meaning of conversations, which occurs based on the context and the situation. This study focuses on analyzing the flouting maxim in the Barbie (2023) movie. The researcher aims to identify the types of flouting maxims in the conversations carried out by the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie, and also to capture the implied meaning of what is conveyed through the flouting maxim. This study uses Grice's grand theory, namely the cooperative principle (1975). This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. Meanwhile, the movie and its transcript are used as data sources. The researcher serves as the main instrument in this research. In collecting data, the researcher watched the movie, identified the dialogues that contained flouting maxims, classified them based on the types of flouting maxims, and analyzed their implicatures based on the context of the conversation. Although many studies have discussed Gricean maxims, limited research has focused on how characters in recent popular movies flout maxims to express hidden meanings. The results of this research show that there are four types of flouting maxims in the movie, with a total of 27 data found. Those are flouting maxim of quantity, it was found 6 times; flouting maxim of quality, it was found 12 times; flouting maxim of relation, it was found 7 times; and flouting maxim of manner, it was found 2 times. Researchers also found the implicature of the flouting maxim used by the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie. These findings are expected to help readers understand how pragmatic strategies can reveal implied messages in fictional conversations.

### ARTICLE INFO

**Keywords:**

Barbie (2023) movie;  
Flouting Maxim;  
Implicatures;  
Pragmatics

**Article History:**

Received: 13 May 2025  
Revised: 11 July 2025  
Accepted: 12 July 2025  
Published: 13 July 2025

**How to Cite in APA Style:**

Marta, A. A., Ajeng, G. D., & Nurchurifiani, E. (2025). An Analysis of the Flouting Maxim Portrayed in Barbie (2023) Movie. *Lexeme : Journal of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics*, 7(2), 347–352.  
<https://doi.org/10.32493/ljal.v7i2.49026>

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### INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans need other people to interact with each other in order to establish relationships, share knowledge, and live in society. One example of daily interaction that is always needed by humans is communication. Communication is a process of interaction that involves speakers and listeners to provide and obtain information, messages, ideas, and convey their feelings and desires to others (Widiani et al., 2021). On the other hand, there are still many people who are unable to build good communication, that creates misunderstandings between speakers and listeners. Sometimes the speaker conveys ideas and information implicitly. They seem to have something that cannot be said directly. Some people don't understand the context intended by the speaker, can create a new problems in having clear communication.

Effective communication can be created if the speaker and listener follow the cooperative principle created by H. Paul Grice in 1975. This cooperative principle consists of four principles known as maxims, namely maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relation, and maxim of manner. By adhering to the maxim of quality, the speaker will provide information that is in accordance with the facts or truth. Adhere to the maxim of quantity allows the speaker to provide information that is in accordance with what is needed by the listener. Adhere to the maxim of relation allows the speaker and listener to provide each other with information and answers that are in accordance with the topic being discussed. Adhere to the maxim of manner requires the speaker to provide clear and orderly information.

Although adhering to the cooperative principle and maxims is essential in communication, in reality, many people struggle to apply them in everyday conversations. As a result, they often violate these principles, a phenomenon known as flouting maxims. Flouting maxim is a process that occurs when a speaker or listener does not adhere to one of the maxims while communicating (Mahmudah & Mansur, 2024). This can happen when the speaker intends to convey his meaning indirectly or implicitly to the listener either intentionally or unintentionally. Cutting (2002) also explains that speakers flouting the maxims because they have a specific communication goal such as sarcasm, humor, irony and hyperbole.

Flouting maxims occur not only in real life communication but also in movies. The dialogues in movies are often intentionally designed to flout maxims in order to entertain, provoke thought, and engage the audience emotionally. Flouting maxims are also used to create tension and reflect character traits through the use of hyperbole or sarcasm. Therefore, analyzing flouting maxims in movies is relevant, as it mirrors similar occurrences in real-life communication (Rabecca et al., 2021).

The researcher selected Barbie (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig, as the object and primary data source for this study on flouting maxims. This live-action adaptation of the iconic Barbie doll combines comedy and drama while presenting social criticism related to gender roles, social expectations, and identity. The story focuses on Barbie, who lives a seemingly perfect life until she enters the human world to solve her problem, which leads her to question her identity and purpose.

Although flouting maxim analysis has been widely applied in various types of media, there has been no previous research that specifically examines flouting maxims in the Barbie (2023) movie. This movie has not yet been used as the subject of flouting maxim analysis, despite its rich use of pragmatic elements such as sarcasm, hyperbole, and humor. Therefore, this research offers a novelty by analyzing flouting maxims in a recent and widely-discussed movie that has not been explored from a pragmatic perspective. This research aims to identify the types of flouting maxims found in the conversations of the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie and also to reveal the implied meanings conveyed through the utterances of flouting maxims, with a focus on messages that are not conveyed directly in the conversations carried out by the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie. This movie was chosen due to its engaging narrative and its relevance to pragmatic analysis, as the dialogues frequently feature humor, hyperbole, and sarcasm, which are often expressed through flouting maxims.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics, according to Yule (2017: 361), concerns with how meaning is formed in particular communication settings. Yule explains that understanding depends not only on what is said, but also on who is speaking, to whom, and in what context. Yule also emphasizes that pragmatics helps us understand implied meanings or what is meant even if not directly said. It connects the speaker's intention with the listener's interpretation, making communication more effective and accurate. According to Fried et al. (2023), the meaning of an utterance depends not only on the words used but also on the context in which it is spoken. By understanding the context and situation, the listener can understand what the speaker really means. Furthermore, Karaeng et al. (2023) expand this view by stating that pragmatics considers various contextual elements such as when, where, how, and who is involved, as well as the reason behind the utterance.

## 2. Grice's Cooperative Principle

The Cooperative Principle was introduced by H. Paul Grice in his book *Logic and Conversation* (1975). This principle explains how effective communication can be achieved when both the speaker and the listener cooperate in conversation. It states that speakers should make their conversational contributions in accordance with the purpose and direction of the ongoing conversation. This means that both participants are expected to work together by contributing appropriately, so that the exchange of meaning can be understood clearly and efficiently. Furthermore, Grice (1975: 26) outlines four conversational maxims that support this principle. These maxims are the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relation, and the maxim of manner. Each maxim serves as a guideline to ensure that communication remains clear, relevant, truthful, and well-structured, allowing interlocutors to interpret meaning effectively.

### 2. Flouting Maxim

Flouting maxim, as explained by Grice (1975: 49-50) and Irawan et al. (2021), refers to the intentional act of not following one or more maxims of the cooperative principle in order to convey an implied meaning. Flouting maxim of quality occurs when a speaker provides information that is not true or does not correspond to the facts. Flouting maxim of quantity occurs when a speaker provides too much or too little information in a conversation. Flouting the maxim of relation occurs when a speaker provides an answer or information that is unrelated to the topic of conversation or is off-topic. Flouting maxim of manner occurs when a speaker presents information in a way that is unclear and ambiguous.

This research is based on the pragmatic theory proposed by Yule (1996), which emphasizes how meaning in communication depends not only on the words spoken, but also on the context. Referring to Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), it is used to identify flouting maxims in the *Barbie* (2023) movie and explain their implied meanings such as criticism, humor, and hyperbole by understanding the context.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Qualitative descriptive method is a research method that uses words and images to explain a phenomenon that occurs descriptively (Merriam 2009: 16). This study aimed to explain the flouting maxim and implicatures that occurred in *Barbie* (2023) movie. Researchers used data sources from the movie and dialogue transcripts in the *Barbie* (2023) movie. Data selection was based on conversation dialogues that demonstrated the flouting maxims performed by the characters in the movie. The data that has been collected is then analyzed by applying Grice's (1975) cooperative principle theory using the following procedures: First, the researcher identified the dialogues in the *Barbie* (2023) movie that flouted the maxims. Second, the researcher analyzed the identified data and classified them based on the types of flouting maxims. Third, the researcher described the reasons and context of the flouting maxims in the movie. Fourth, the researcher interpreted and explained the implicatures resulting from the flouting maxims used by the characters in the *Barbie* (2023) movie based on the context. Finally, the researcher conducted triangulation by validating the data and analysis through consultation with the thesis supervisor. This step was taken to ensure the accuracy, credibility, and validity of the research findings.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Types of Flouting Maxim

The researchers have found four types of flouting maxims based on Grice's theory (1975), namely flouting maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relation, and the last is the maxim of manner with a total of 27 flouting maxims found in the *Barbie* (2023) movie.

**Table 1. Flouting Maxim in percentage**

Type of Flouting Maxim	Frequency	Percentage
Flouting Maxim of Quantity	6	22,22%
Flouting Maxim of Quality	12	44,44%
Flouting Maxim of Relation	7	25,93%
Flouting Maxim of Manner	2	7,41%
Total	27	100%

Based on the table presented above, it can be concluded that the most frequently used flouting maxim by all characters in the Barbie (2023) movie is the flouting maxim of quality, because the characters often speak, provide information, or respond with something that is not in accordance with the existing facts. The second flouting maxim that is most frequently used in the Barbie (2023 movie) is the flouting maxim of relation, because they often give responses that are not in accordance with the topic of conversation. The third flouting maxim that is most often is the flouting maxim of quantity, because many characters in the Barbie (2023) movie provide answers or information that is too little or too much of what the listener needs. And the last flouting maxim used by the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie is the floating maxim of manner, because they speak in a language and manner that is unclear, ambiguous, and too complicated.

## 2. Implicatures

### a. Flouting Maxim of Quantity

#### Data 2 (00:23:44)

BARBIE MARGOT: "When I'm there, how do I find this girl?"

WEIRD BARBIE: "***You will know.***"

This conversation occurs when Barbie Margot visits Weird Barbie's house to fix herself, as she is currently damaged. Weird Barbie suggests that Barbie Margot go to the human world to find the human who is playing with the Barbie Margot doll.

The data above demonstrates a flouting of the maxim of quantity. When Barbie Margot asks, "When I'm there, how do I find this girl?" she expects a clear, detailed response on how to locate the human. However, Weird Barbie's response, "You will know," is vague and provides insufficient information, not directly answering Barbie Margot's question.

In this instance, the flouting of the maxim is intentional. Weird Barbie's response is not meant to be a direct answer, but rather to reassure Barbie Margot. By saying "You will know," Weird Barbie conveys the belief that there is a special connection between Barbie Margot and the human in the real world, and that Barbie Margot will instinctively know how to find the human once she arrives. This response shifts the focus from providing practical directions to offering comfort, which can be understood through the context.

### b. Flouting Maxim of Quality

#### Data 7 (00:23:33)

KEN SIMU: "I guess she's going without you."

KEN RYAN: "***No, she literally asked me, but I preferred to stay here.***"

This conversation takes place when the Barbies and Kens gather at the Barbie dream house for a farewell party for Barbie Margot to the human world.

This dialogue is an example of flouting the maxim of quality, as Ken Ryan makes a statement that does not align with the truth. When Ken Simu says, "I guess she's going without you," Ken Ryan replies, "No, she literally asked me, but I preferred to stay here." In reality, Barbie Margot never invited him to come with her, which makes Ken's statement a clear lie.

Ken Ryan's response can be seen as an attempt to cover his embarrassment. Rather than admitting that he was left behind, he pretends that he was given the option but chose not to go. This reaction

reflects not only his wounded pride but also his disappointment. Considering how much he cared about Barbie Margot, but being excluded from such an important moment likely made him feel rejected, and the lie was his way of saving face in front of the others.

c. **Flouting Maxim of Relation**

**Data 1 (00:20:24)**

BARBIE MARGOT: "Can you fix them?"

WEIRD BARBIE: "*You're Stereotypical Barbie, aren't you?*"

BARBIE MARGOT: "Uh, yeah..."

WEIRD BARBIE: "*That Ken of yours is one nice looking little protein pot.*"

This conversation occurs when Barbie Margot visits Weird Barbie in hopes of finding a solution to her emotional and physical malfunction. Weird Barbie is known for her understanding of such issues, making her the most reliable figure for help in this situation.

The dialogue above reflects a flouting of the maxim of relation. When Barbie Margot asks, "Can you fix them?", she is clearly referring to her physical and emotional malfunctions. However, instead of giving a relevant response, Weird Barbie shifts the topic by first confirming Barbie's identity as Stereotypical Barbie and then abruptly commenting on Ken's physical appearance. Her response about Ken "That Ken of yours is one nice looking nice looking little protein pot" has no direct connection to Barbie Margot's concern, which shows that she deliberately changed the topic.

Weird Barbie's response, although seemingly unrelated, serves a purpose beyond just avoiding the question. By steering the conversation in an unexpected direction, she lightens the mood and breaks the tension that Barbie Margot is feeling. This approach reflects a way of offering comfort through distraction, allowing Barbie Margot a moment of relief before confronting the seriousness of her condition. It shows that Weird Barbie understands the emotional weight of the situation and chooses to ease Barbie Margot into it rather than overwhelming her with immediate answers.

d. **Flouting Maxim of Manner**

**Data 2 (00:14:42)**

BARBIE MARGOT: "You can go now."

KEN RYAN: "I was thinking that maybe I could, you know, stay over tonight?"

BARBIE MARGOT: "Why?"

KEN RYAN: "Cause we're girlfriend boyfriend."

BARBIE MARGOT: "To do what?"

KEN RYAN: "*To... I'm not actually sure...*"

This conversation occurs after the party at Barbie's dream house. As they prepare to go home, Ken Ryan talks to Barbie Margot outside, taking the moment to say goodbye and unexpectedly to express his wish to stay over at her place.

The data above illustrates a flouting of the maxim of manner, as Ken Ryan gives an ambiguous and unclear response. Initially, when Barbie Margot asks why he wants to stay over, Ken replies, "Because we're girlfriend boyfriend." When asked further, "To do what?", he hesitantly answers, "To... I'm not actually sure...", which fails to provide a clear or informative explanation. His response lacks clarity, making it difficult for the listener to understand his actual intention. This makes his utterance a clear example of flouting the maxim of manner, as it creates confusion rather than effective communication.

Ken's uncertainty isn't just about not knowing what to say, but it reflects his emotional hesitation. He wants to be closer to Barbie but doesn't know how to express that in a straightforward way. His flouting of the maxim shows that he's nervous, maybe even afraid of being rejected or misunderstood, so instead of being direct, he keeps things vague.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research conducted by the researcher, it can be concluded that the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie often do flouting maxims based on Grice's (1975) theory. Where all the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie do all the flouting maxims 27 times; the flouting maxim of quantity is found 6 times, the flouting maxim of quality is found 12 times, the flouting maxim of relation is found 7 times, and the flouting maxim of manner is found 2 times. The researcher also realized that the characters in the Barbie (2023) movie mostly consciously and intentionally do the flouting maxim with a certain purpose. The characters flouting the maxim of quality because they want to maintain their self-esteem and also make the impression of the story more suspenseful by exaggerating something. They flouting the maxim of relation because they want to avoid the existing topic of conversation by discussing something outside the existing topic of conversation. Flouting the maxim of quantity because the characters deliberately provide too little information, expecting the listener to understand and figure things out on their own, or they provide too much information because they get carried away. Lastly, the characters flout the maxim of manner because they are too afraid and confused to express their desires clearly, so they let the listener draw their own conclusions. The researcher has suggestions for future research by conducting research on flouting maxims using other more diverse data such as flouting maxims in everyday conversations, social media, talk shows and others to be able to see flouting maxims in the context of real and broader communication.

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