



An Analysis of Maxim Relevance by Main Character in Taxi Driver Film

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: 10 April 2023 Accepted: 24 June 2023 Published: 03 August 2023	When a speaker ignores maxims of the principle of cooperation or fails to convey the hidden meaning of an utterance, this phenomenon is known as maxim disrespect. The disregarded maxim of the movie "Taxi Driver" is the subject of this study. Taxi Driver is a 1976 American drama and crime film directed by Martin Scorsese. This study is intended to identify the relevance of various ignoring maxims that appear in the film and to explain their occurrence. Ignorance of relevance occurs because the interlocutor must be as true as necessary or convey information based on what is happening in real life. Researchers draw on ideas from Grice's Principle of Cooperation (1975). This study uses direct observation methods and qualitative descriptions in data analysis. As a result, the movie The Taxi Driver has at least 19 flouting maxim data, of which there are five results from the maxim relevance obtained from the conversational dialogue on the main character. From the 5 data, the author has also provided an analysis and answered various possibilities for the occurrence of flouting relevance either from the views of the speaker or listener. Flouting relevance occurs because the participants of the conversation have to be as truthful as required or should give the information based on what happens in real life. To sum up, there are various reasons why the character flouts relevance, including jokes and denial of a statement. However, it all returns to each character's role, which makes the scene more perfect.
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1. Introduction

Language is a system of communication that allows humans to work together and express their thoughts directly (Gerrig & Banaji, 2021; Cummins, 2021). Language,

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understood as a set of spoken norms of a given community, is also part of the larger culture of the community that speaks it. This definition emphasizes that the main function of language is as a tool for interacting with humans, a tool for thinking, and conveying the meaning of belief in society. Language has a very important role as a means of human communication in interacting (Chomsky, 2006). Language is also a tool for thinking and learning. Language is not only in terms of pronunciation, vocabulary, or grammar but also in “speech culture.” Humans use language as a way of indicating identity between cultural groups and differences from other people (see Downes, 1998; Emmorey, 2019; Gleitman & Papafragou, 2012; Taylor, 2012). That is why the more languages in a region or country, the more diverse the region is. The communication process itself requires cooperation between both the speaker and the speech partner. There is a set of assumptions that surround and govern conversational activity as language acts (see Hausser, 1989; House & Kádár, 2021; Leech, 1983; Levinson, 1983; Verschueren, 2010; Yule, 1996; Zhang, 2022). This principle is not adhered to forever running. Many also found violations of the principle of cooperation in a communication activity or conversation (Grice, 1975; Witek, 2022).

Talking about language certainly has to do with linguistics, one of which is pragmatics. Scientific pragmatics has become a very important part of linguistic research. As the science of meaning, those positions are equated with semantics and syntax. Pragmatics is important and unique because it can question the meaning of an utterance in a particular context. Pragmatics is the study of how meaning changes depending on the situation, such as how phrases are understood in different contexts (Birner, 2013; Abdulameer, 2019; Bublitz et al., 2013; Eco, 1976; Kim, 2008; Leech, 2014; Levinson, 1983). The speech that comes before the sentence being translated is the linguistic context, and the knowledge of the external environment is the situational context. The children have just eaten, but they are surprised to find themselves hungry. He was able to understand the second statement in light of the first one, thanks to the linguistic context. The situation’s context aids in our interpretation of his second statement because it is common knowledge that people rarely feel hungry after eating.

When dealing with the social sciences in general and linguistics in particular, the cooperative principle assumes that the interlocutor will usually try to speak informative, truthful, relevant, and articulate (see Atifi et al., 2011; Attardo, 1997; Ephratt, 2012; Ladegaard, 2009; Leudar & Browning, 1988; Locher & Bolander, 2019; Motschenbacher, 2020; Rosenberg et al., 2022; Sorlin, 2017; Su, 2017; Tsoumou, 2020). In his 1975 essay *Logic and Conversation*, philosopher H. Paul Grice presented the idea that a “conversational exchange” is more than merely a string of illogical statements. If this were the case, he contended, it would be irrational. Grice argued that collaboration characterizes genuine conversation instead. Each member finds a shared objective or set of objectives in it, or at the very least, a direction that is agreed upon by everyone.

Grice introduced the principle of cooperation for the first time in his paper “*Logic and Conversation*” (1975) and explained the meaning of conversation. He argues that the generation and recognition of these implications are based on the following principles.

“You are the one who makes necessary conversational inputs, at the stage at which they are made, for acceptance and the direction of the conversational exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975, p. 48). Simply put, the cooperative principle aims to establish some rational principles that people explicitly follow when they talk.

In this study, the researcher is interested and chooses a film that was released in 1976, namely *A Taxi Driver*. This is no coincidence, and there are several reasons why the researchers decided to do this. First, the story was great, funny, and very moving at that point. This is no coincidence, and there are several reasons why the researchers decided to do this. First, the story was great, funny, and very moving at that point. Second, surprises occur in the film. Third, with a fairly complicated storyline, there are many indications of maxim violations in each of the main characters in the film. In communication, people tend to only focus on the topic and never think about the rules and consequences. Therefore, the researchers are interested in discussing the maxims that are relevant to *Taxi Drivers* and trying to explain them.

2. Literature Review

Research on the principle of cooperation, especially in the field of linguistics, is not only carried out in communication analysis but also on reading texts, even in autism analysis (see e.g., Asada et al., 2022; Hamann, 2023; Tsoumou, 2020; Vergis, 2017; Xiang, 2017; YusriYusri et al., 2023). Thus, it can be concluded that communication analysis and the principle of cooperation are very important especially in solving problems in social communication. Here are some previous studies that support this new research idea about maxim analysis.

Primarily, research conducted by Putri (2021) analyzing the flouting maxims in John Green's *the fault in Our Stars* Novel. This study aims to determine outcome of the conversations that take place in the novel. The main data in this were novel utterances. The results showed that he violated the maxim the novel presented on his two dates 28 times. The character states that in his remarks, he ignores one maxim 19 times and two maxims he ignores nine times. Data suggesting that participants violated maxims did not imply that the conversation was over, so the study was terminated based on the outcome of the conversation that took place within the novel. Furthermore, a research that focuses on investigating the flouting maxim on *Pitch-Perfect* Movies (Nuringtyas, 2018). The results show that maximum quantity was the most common at 39.2%, followed by maximum relationship at 34.8%, maximum quality at 21.7%, and maximum attitude at 4.3%.

Similarly, Adhityawan (2018) conducted a research that focuses on using Grice's cooperative maxim theory to identify the types, strategies, and functions of maxim ignorance in cinema. This study Cutting's theory (2002) about maxim-ignorant strategy and Austin's theory of oral effects. A descriptive qualitative method was used in this study. The research data concerned statements made by the protagonists of *Deadpool 2* that violated the principle of cooperation. The data was collected from the "*Deadpool 2*" movie. Data was classified using maxims, ignoring categories, strategies, and functions, and then examined to make conclusions. The research results disregard any proverbs that might be present in the film.

Lastly, research conducted by Puspasari and Ariyanti (2019) analyzing the complimentary aphorism in generating humor, a comparative study of Indonesians and Americans. The purpose of this study was to explore the ignorance of Indonesian and American comedians' aphorisms, the witty techniques they employ when ignoring aphorisms to create humorous material, and why they use certain aphorisms most frequently. It is to investigate whether or not it should be ignored is under consideration. It was about comparing the use of *neta* techniques. In this study, the consequences of ignoring maxims in stand-up comedy are observed using descriptive-

qualitative methods. The results of this research are presented in narrative form. Participants in this study are an Indonesian comedian named Abdul Arshad and an American comedian named Kevin Hart. Therefore, when they tell jokes, they use the same joke-telling technique. Similar jokes can also influence it. Both belong to minorities and thus usually suffer from fear and social criticism.

In analyzing the data, the researchers applied the floating maxim theory developed by Grice and identified maxim neglect as follows.

Flouting maxim

Speakers sometimes ignore maxims without the intention of conveying a hidden meaning in their utterances or causing misunderstanding (Grice, 1975). In other words, it clearly does not follow the maxims of the principle of cooperation. Violated maxims are classified into four maxims.

1) Flouting the maxim of quantity

This maxim occurs when the speaker provides too little or too much information. Thomas (2013) explains: “Quantitative neglect occurs when the speaker blatantly provides more or less information depending on the situation” (p. 69). See the following example.

Chaira : *when you go to shopping?*
Andy : *after finish eating later, I think about 8. But it depends on my wife because she invited me first*

From the conversation above shows that Andy gave a lot of information, from which the answer as necessary was “after finishing eating.” However, he added more information by saying, “It depends on my wife because she invited me first.”

2) Flouting the maxim of quality

This maxim exists when the speaker’s utterance does not correspond to reality or when the speaker intentionally says something that is not true. In this case, the speaker may use ironic language to convey the implicit meaning to the listener. An example is shown below.

Martin : *where is the nearest church from here?*
Sergio : *I think it’s in the corner there, but actually I’m not from here.*

The example above shows that Sergio gave an approximate answer, so it just says “approximately.” This is borne out by the fact that he is not from there.

3) Flouting the maxim relevance

This maxim occurs when the speaker says something unimportant or incoherent. When the speaker fails to give the listener the desired answer or response or when the speaker deliberately changes the speaker’s topic. For example:

Anisa : *May I borrow your phone charger?*
Ruri : *Actually my phone is still low bat*

In the example above, Anisa intends to borrow a phone charger from Ruri. What needs to be answered by Ruri is to say, “Sorry, I still use the charger.” Nevertheless, it becomes a maxim of relevance because Ruri tries to explain the condition of his phone, which is still low bat, where a low bat phone certainly needs to use a charger.

4) Flouting the maxim manner

This maxim happens when the speaker utters something ambiguous. An ambiguous response or answer from the speaker makes the listener have to go deeper into what the speaker really means. Here is an example of a conversation between a father and a son.

Father : *who changed the channel?*
Son : *it was one of your two children*

In the example above, we could say maxim manner because it is not clear that the child is giving information to his father. Instead of mentioning a specific name, the child only confused his father and didn't answer the questions.

Movie

Cinema is a work of visual communication. This study is limited to visual studies that only show visual indications. The visual signs used adhere to Pierce's taxonomy, which classifies signs into icons, indices, and symbols. Effendi (1986, p. 239) characterized movies as a cultural artifact and an instrument for artistic expression. A variety of technologies, including photography, sound recording, visual and dramatic arts, literature, architecture, and music, combine to create cinema as a form of mass communication.

The Taxi Driver Movie

Martin Scorsese and Paul Schrader wrote and directed the 1976 movie Taxi Driver. The movie stars Robert De Niro, Jodie Foster, Harvey Keitel, and Albert Brooks and follows the story of a taxi driver who joins the military after serving in the Vietnam War.

Taxi Driver became a symbol of modern reality in 1970s America. Many young people in Vietnam are in government jobs and do not know what to do when they return to their home countries. In the last ten years, he has had one big event. It was the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Cinematically, the film manages to create a gritty atmosphere in the normally glamorous New York. Most of the scenes representing the nuances of the night show prostitutes and drug dealers roaming the streets and doing their jobs. The scene where Travis works at night is also cut, and Travis is depicted alone.

3. Method

Qualitative methods are used in this study. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), “Qualitative research aims at gaining a deeper understanding through direct experience, truthful reporting, and quotations from real conversations. It is about extracting meaning from people and understanding how that meaning influences their behavior.” To further comprehend ideas, opinions, and experiences and non-numerical

data (text, video, audio, etc.) are also collected and analyzed to understand ideas, opinions, and experiences better. Qualitative research can be applied to develop fresh research concepts or obtain a deeper understanding of a topic (Babbie, 2016; Cataldo et al., 2011; Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Yin, 2020). Through it, we can better understand how people perceive the world. Although there are many various methods for conducting qualitative research, they all have the trait of being adaptable and intensely focused on preserving overall meaning.

The dialogue between the main protagonist and supporting characters in the film *Taxi Driver* served as the source of the data for this study. Researchers collected data by direct observation, multiple viewings of the film, and downloading scripts to improve the data. The Data were qualitatively analyzed using Grace's (1975) cooperation principle theory.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 *The Relevance of Various Ignoring Maxims that Appear in the Film Taxi Drives*

The results of this study are divided into two parts: the first part describes the case of the flouting maxim relevant in the film *The Taxi Driver 1976*, and the second part presents and explains the possible reasons why the case of flouting maxim occurred in the film *The Taxi Driver 1976*. This researcher has clarified the data and found 5 data flouting the maxim of relevance in the character's dialogue, as depicted in the following table.

Table 1. The data finding in *The Taxi Driver* Movie dialogue

No	Character	Utterances	Implicatures
1	Travis Betsy	Travis (to Betsy): No. I want to volunteer with you. Betsy (curious): And why is that? Travis: Because you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen.	Betsy is actually still confused by what she heard from Travis.
2	Travis Betsy	Travis: There's plenty of movies around here. Betsy: No, I don't feel so good. We're just two very different kinds of people, that's all.	Betsy felt uncomfortable after conflict with Travis inside movie.
3	Travis	Concession girl: Kind I help ya? Travis: What is your name? My name is Travis.	Travis is trying to find information about that girl.
4	Travis Iris	Travis: What's your name? Iris: Easy. Travis: That ain't much of a name. Iris: It's easy to remember. Easy Lay.	Iris do not comfortable about someone asking information about her identity.
5	Travis Iris	Iris: He never killed nobody. He's a Libra. Travis: Huh? Iris: I'm a Libra too. That's why we	Travis got confused about her statement about matthew.

	get along so well.	
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Data 1

(00:20:33-00:20:45)

- Travis (at Betsy's desk) : I want to volunteer.
Tom : If you'll come this way.
Travis (to Betsy) : No. I want to volunteer with you.
Tom : Bets.
Betsy (curious) : And why is that? (Travis is on his best behavior. He smiles slightly)
Travis : Because you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen (smiling)
Betsy : Is that so?

In the conversation above, Data 1, there is a scene where Travis comes to Betsy's office; the scene begins when Travis walks into the office and says that he wants to be a volunteer. It is weird when Travis actually wants to be Betsy's volunteer, even though it is clear that Betsy is only there working and volunteering for presidential candidate Charles Palantine. When Betsy asked, "Why?" Travis replied, "Because you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." Travis's utterance belongs to the floating maxim of relevance because it does not match Betsy's question.

The explanation above reveals Travis's intent and purpose. Although he initially only made jokes and joked a bit, his main goal was to get Betsy's attention and invite introductions by inviting her to drink coffee afterward. Here, Travis flouts relevance because since he entered Betsy's workplace, one that exists only in Travis's mind, Betsy, it can be seen from previous conversations that Travis does not even know about the name and figure of the presidential candidate.

Data 2

(00:08:34-00:08:42)

- Concession girl : Kind I help ya?
Travis : What is your name? My name is Travis

The conversation above shows Travis talking to a concession girl at a cinema. The guard asks what she can help, and Travis casually answers by asking the woman's name back and introducing himself: "What is your name? My name is Travis." Simply, this answer can be said to be irrelevant because it is not in accordance with the previous question.

From the example case above, Travis intends to change the topic from what was originally a formal conversation at work. The aim is to get the woman's attention so that she can be invited to get acquainted.

Data 3

(00:36:16-00:36:25)

- Travis : There's plenty of movies around here.

Betsy : No, I don't feel so good. We're just two very different kinds of people, that's all.

The conversation above shows a scene where Travis and Betsy are in the hallway at the exit of the cinema, starting from an argument because of Betsy's incompatibility regarding the film they have watched in the cinema. Because of this, Travis also offered Betsy to look for other films. In this conversation, Betsy replied, "No, I do not feel so good." Betsy might say, "No, I have enough today." You could say flouting the maxim of relevance because, basically, Betsy's answer did not completely answer Travis' question.

From the explanation above, Betsy intended to answer something like "I do not feel so good" because she is no longer in the mood to watch any films again; Betsy also said that they are an example of two different humans based on favorite film genres. Here, Betsy expresses flouting relevance due to her discomfort at being in a movie theater with Travis. She was irritated with Travis because what should have been a great moment on their first date went wrong because having to watch porn made Betsy uncomfortable.

Data 4

(01:20:11-01:20:23)

Iris : Easy.
Travis : That ain't much of a name.
Iris : It's easy to remember. Easy Lay.

The dialogue above shows a scene with Travis and Iris in the same room where Iris usually works as a prostitute. The scene begins with Travis trying to calm her down by asking Iris, "What is your name?" Travis continued. From the brief conversation above, it is clear that what Iris said does not apply to Travis' question and is, therefore, part of the floating maxim of relevance.

From the above description, it is clear that the purpose of Iris' reaction was to avoid revealing her identity. On the other hand, Travis's knowledge of Iris's name, in and of itself, did not matter too much to Iris either but was backed up by her further reaction from Iris. "Easy Lay".

The relevance principle is broken here, as Iris focuses solely on her work and caring for Travis. For them, such questions are less important. Conversely, the only purpose Travis met with Iris was to help Iris quit her prostitution job.

Data 5

(01:26:04-01:26:13)

Travis : At least I don't walk the streets like a skunk pussy. I don't screw and fuck with killers and junkies.
Iris : Who's a killer?
Travis : That fella "Sport" looks like a killer to me.
Iris : He never killed nobody. He's a Libra.
Travis : Huh?
Iris : I'm a Libra too. That's why we get along so well.

The scene above shows a conversation between Travis and Iris at a diner; after several topics, they finally talk about the figure of Matthew (sport). Matthew himself is a figure who is quite close to Iris; besides that, he is the one who hired Iris as a prostitute. After his first meeting with Matthew did not go so smoothly, Travis concluded that Matthew was a murderer and drug addict; because of her innocence, Iris asked, “Who’s a killer?” “Sport” looks like a killer to me. Reply Travis. With a confident tone, Iris denied Travis’ argument, “He never killed nobody. He is a Libra”. As we know, the Libra, in this case, is one of the zodiac, which is not fully trusted, and the truth is also believed. Therefore, it can be said that Iris’ statement is flouting the maxim of relevance because the answer is more irrelevant than it should be.

In the explanation above, Iris’s purpose in saying it is because on the basis of denying an argument, she assumes that every Libra is a good person just as she is a Libra too, “I’m a Libra too,” Iris added to Travis afterward. Here, Iris violates the relevant adage because it is convenient for Iris’s innocence and ignorance about the real Matthew. Travis’ claim that Matthew is the killer is not entirely believable, but so is Iris, who defends Matthew by relating it to the zodiac and is believable.

5. Conclusion

From the analysis results, the movie *The Taxi Driver* has at least 19 flouting maxim data, of which there are five results from the maxim relevance obtained from the conversational dialogue on the main character. From the 5 data, the author has also provided an analysis and answered various possibilities for the occurrence of flouting relevance either from the views of the speaker or listener. Flouting relevance occurs because the participants of the conversation have to be as truthful as required or should give the information based on what happens in real life (see Croddy, 2002; Lumsden, 2008; Siegel, 2015; Sorlin, 2017). To sum up, there are various reasons why the character flouts relevance, including jokes and denial of a statement. However, it all returns to each character’s role, which makes the scene more perfect.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.

Authors’ contribution

Author made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors took responsibility for data analysis, interpretation and discussion of results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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