

**PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF MAXIM FLOUTING AS  
A REFLECTION OF AMERICAN SOCIAL ISSUES IN  
*THE SIMPSONS TV SERIES***

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**ABSTRACT**

The study aims to describe a) the types of Maxim Flouting of Cooperative Principles used by the main characters in *The Simpsons TV Series*, b) the strategies of maxim flouting used by the main characters in *The Simpsons TV Series*, and c) kind of American social issues reflected through Maxim Flouting in *The Simpsons TV Series*. The study used descriptive qualitative approaches. The method used to analyze qualitative data was a referential method with regard to the theories presented by Grice (1975). In referrence to data analysis, the results show three findings. First, there are four maxims that are flouted. They are (1)flouting of quantity maxim, (2)flouting of quality maxim, (3)flouting of manner maxim, and (4)flouting of relation maxim. Second, there are eleven strategies in flouting the maxims. They include: (1)giving too little information, (2)giving too much information, (3)hyperbole, (4)methapor, (5)irony, (6)sarcasm, (7)banter, (8)changing the topic, (9)giving irrelevant answer, (10)giving ambiguous information, and (11)being not brief. Third, there are five American social issues which reflected in *The Simpsons TV Series*. They are (1)capitalism, (2)nepotism, (3)labor right, (4)offensive joke, and (5)libel. This suggests that the American social issues determine the use of language as reflected in *The Simpsons TV Series*.

**Keywords:** maxim flouting, American social issues, *The Simpsons TV Series*

**INTRODUCTION**

Language as a means of communication seems interesting to discuss. Language is also a part of society and its development. Language makes people free as individuals but chains people socially. It has already been demonstrated that people are not mere creatures of conditioning when it comes to language. The language that a society has is not static. In the vocabulary and discourse rules, languages have developed

quite differently, in accordance with the values of their societies (Chaika 1982: 8). The study of language can be done in the scope of linguistics. As Chaika said Linguistics is the academic discipline that deals with the structure of the human language. Throughout the linguistics we know the culture of the society that is in the language used.

America is a big country. The great revolution had happened to the society. Based on the theory, it takes some effects

to its culture. The language as a part of the culture changes as well. The actual meaning of an utterance depends partially on the social context in which it occurs (Chaika, 1982: 69). In the decade of 1980s, there were some hot issues that influenced the society. They were reflected in the themes which were discussed in mass media, such as magazines, newspapers, and television. The TV programs are the media that the researcher chose. The researcher is focusing on the spoken language used by the people at that time as the contribution that represents the social interactions at that time. Through the films that were produced, the researcher tries to find and measures how far the film can reflect the social condition of American people at the time. So that, the researcher chooses a cartoon film entitled *The Simpsons TV Series* which is popular in America in 1980s. *The Simpsons TV Series* is one of them who reflected the daily life of family in America. The series are a satirical parody of a middle class American lifestyle epitomized by its family of the same name, which consist of Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie. The show is set in the fictional town of Springfield and parodies American culture, society, television and many aspects of the human condition. The researcher does such analysis and research entitled “A Pragmatics Analysis of Maxim Flouting as

a Reflection of American Social Issues in *The Simpsons TV Series*”.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used qualitative descriptive approach. According to Denzin and Lincoln in Ritchie and Lewis (2003: 3), qualitative research puts the researchers to study things in natural settings, to attempt to make sense of, and to interpret phenomena in forms of the meanings people bring to the researchers. Similar with the statements, Burns (1994: 11) explains that qualitative investigation tends to be based on recognition of the importance of the experimental life of human beings. From these two statements, it can be concluded that this type of research captures what people say and in order to describe and interpret how people understand their world. Thus, identifying the social phenomenon, in this case is the phenomenon of maxim flouting and social issues, fits the idea of qualitative research.

This research was done based on the data taken from *The Simpsons TV Series*. The data were in the form of written text based on scene. They were words, clauses, phrases and utterances. The contexts of the data were dialogues. There were two kinds of source as the data sources in this research. The primary source was the film itself and the script of the film retrieved from the internet. The data were taken

from the main characters" dialogues. To do this, the researcher watched the film and then checked the accuracy of the dialogues by reading the script. The secondary sources were books, articles of the film itself which were related to the topic of this research. Those books and articles were used to find out the related theories in order to answer the research questions.

A descriptive (especially qualitative) research has a natural setting as the direct resource and the researcher is the key instrument (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982: 27). Thus, the researcher herself was the main instrument in this research. The secondary instrument was data sheet which was used to note the linguistic phenomena found in the form of utterances spoken by the main characters in *The Simpsons TV Series*.

In collecting data, the steps were: downloading the movie and the script; checking both movie and script in order to have exact data; watching the movie comprehensively in order to achieve a deep comprehension; parting down into several scenes, acts and minutes; reading and note taking the transcript of the movie many times to determine utterances that can be taken into data sheet; checking the accuracy of transcription as well as the context utterances; selecting the data from *The Simpsons TV Series* which were in accordance with the objectives of the

study; refitting the collected data; and recording data into the data sheet.

To gain trustworthiness of the data, the researcher conducted several steps: discussing with the thesis consultants, reconfirming the data in *Bahasa Indonesia* to an expert related in this field, and discussing the data analysis with several colleagues.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Grice"s theory, maxim flouting categorized into four types; those are flouting of quantity maxim, flouting of quality maxim, flouting of relation maxim and flouting of manner maxim. All 30 English data are classified into the types accordingly. The speakers of the data used all the strategies to flout the maxim and it is reflected American social issues.

From the findings, types and strategies of maxim flouting as a reflection of American social issues are in the following.

### 1. Flouting of Quantity Maxim

BS: Mom, I"m so glad you"re alive.

HS: Were you worried about me, boy?

BS: **Sure, why not?**

(Datum S24E11/06:36)

The dialogue happens after the disaster. Bart, Marge (Bart"s mother) and Homer (Bart"s father) are being victims of tornado. Bart Simpson flouts the maxim of quantity by giving too little information.

When Homer Simpson asks him whether he was worried or not, Bart answers too short with flat tone. Besides, Homer expects Bart to worry about him. It also shows offensive joke between father and son.

## 2. Flouting of Quality Maxim

MS: Darn car won't start.

HS: Let **Automobile Von Bismarck** give it a try (start the engine, it works) Well..

MS: Hmm. Well, it wouldn't start for me.

(Datum S24E03/07:11)

Marge tries to start the engine but it does not work. When Homer give it a try, the engine starts smoothly. He flouts the maxim of quality by using the expression (names himself as Automobile Von Bismarck). The utterance also shows offensive joke. He uses methapor to parody the name of nineteenth century German statesman Otto Von Bismarck.

## 3. Flouting of Relation Maxim

J : Homer Simpson, you shall receive \$5000 after legal fees.

L: Pay up, Krusty.

K: **It wasn't even my place! Man, I got a bad lawyer.**

(Datum S24E04/02:25)

The dialogue happens in the court. Homer demands the restaurant because the waitress makes mistake by throwing hot onion rings on Homer's face. Krusty flouts the maxim of relation by giving irrelevant answer. The utterance also shows libel

issue because actually the restaurant is not belonging to Krusty but he has to pay the fine. He tries to explain the right thing but nobody is listening.

## 4. Flouting of Manner Maxim

MS: Let me get this straight. None of you have time to take out the garbage?

HS (Royal Family): **Make Egyptian slave Homer do it.**

HS (Egyptian slave): **It's always me.**  
(Datum S24E02/20:41)

The conversation takes place in Simpsons' living room. There are many Homers from different era. It happens because the black hole is open so that ancient people and future people can go to the present time. Marge asks to Homers about who is going to take out the garbage, but Royal Homer does not answer the question straight. He asks Egyptian slave Homer to take out the garbage. Royal Homer flouts the maxim of manner by being not brief. Royal Homer's utterance is not only being not brief, but also shows the labor right issue. This shows racial discrimination to Egyptian slave. The other example of labor right is in the following.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

According to the findings and discussions in the previous chapter, some conclusions can be drawn related to the formulation of the problems and the objectives of the study. It can be concluded as follows.

First, related to the objective of the research that is to identify the types of maxim flouting in *The Simpsons TV Series*, the researcher found that all maxims of cooperative principles are flouted by the characters of the film. The maxims are maxim of quantity, quality, relation and manner. Flouting of quality maxim that occupies the highest frequency. It shows that the characters rather to give the strategies of flouting of quality maxim in their utterances to reflect the American social issues. The second place is flouting of relation maxim. The third place is flouting of quantity maxim. However, flouting of manner maxim has the least frequency of all. It shows that the people in America tend to speak straight forward rather than being not brief or giving ambiguous information. However, the flouting of manner maxim does exist in the society. The maxims of cooperative principles are broken when the characters flout one or two sub-maxims of the four maxims.

Second, related to the objective of the research that is to describe the strategies of Maxim Flouting used by the main characters in *The Simpsons TV Series*, the researcher found that all strategies are used by the characters to flout the maxims of cooperative principles. Maxim flouting by using hyperbole expression appear in the highest frequency which shows that the

characters exaggerate their utterance that distorts facts by making them much bigger than they are if looked at objectively. The characters rarely flout the maxim by banter and giving ambiguous information. It shows that the characters' utterances depend on the American culture which rather to speak straightly than giving ambiguous information or by using banter expression.

Third, related the objective of the research that is to describe kind of American social issues reflected through Maxim Flouting in *The Simpsons TV Series*, the researcher found that all of the maxim flouting data reflecting American social issues in 1980s which are capitalism, labor right, nepotism, offensive joke and libel. The American social issues in the era influence the utterances of the characters who presented American people in 1980s.

In summary, analyzing cooperative principles of *The Simpsons TV series'* characters conversation gives a deeper knowledge on their social system in general and the American social issues in specific. The cooperative principles are used to define which conversations observe the maxim and which do not. The maxims that are flouted are the main data that are used to find out the American social issues because there are some implied intention behind the offences.

In accordance with the results of the study, the researcher would like to give some suggestions so that the next other studies would be better by learning from this research's imperfectness. Maxim flouting of cooperative principles is uncommon phenomena in a conversation because most of the conversation obeys the maxims. The implied intention behind the flouted maxim varies. It can reflect the response to the social conditions, culture and ideology. The participants must pay attentions to the context: where and when the conversation happens, what the purpose of the conversation, who the participants are. American social issues which are capitalism, nepotism, labor right, offensive joke and libel as some of the social system of society can be seen in the behaviour and language use of the people who live there. By reading this research, it is expected that the students consider the language use of the literature products to understand the social system since they pay more attention in the behaviour and action of the society than analyzing the social system based on the language use or linguistic point of view. This research shows that pragmatics is not only used to analyze the meaning based on the contextual interpretation but also it can be used to see the social conditions where and when the conversation happens. Nevertheless, the research is still lack of

some significant notions of linguistics and literature analysis due to the limitation of the researcher. The further linguistic study on speech act of the characters' utterances is needed since the researcher found many indirectness speeches. Besides, other issues are found in the film, such as gun right and gender. Those of study are important to the improvements of not only pragmatic study but also linguistic study. Hopefully other language researchers are motivated to investigate more on the similar field with better quality and more significant results.

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