

# THE STUDY OF HUMOR IN ELLEN DEGENERES SHOW SEASON 12

by

Aqmalinka Mazaya Wurintara  
211110003@student.machung.ac.id

## Abstract

*Theoretically, in a conversation either the speaker or the listener has to be cooperative in producing meaningful conversation (Grice, 1975). They have to follow maxim of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. In fact, if they do not always follow that maxims means they break the maxim. One of the ways of breaking the maxims is by flouting it. Flouting maxims does not bring the conversation to the end. It may bring the conversation into laughter to the listener, audience, or the speaker itself. Possible reasons that make the listener does not fulfill the maxims are they feel being interrogated, they are afraid to be punished, they want to keep information in secret, or they want to imply something. In this study, the writer wanted to know what maxims are flouted and implicatures it contains place in Ellen Degeneres Show. And the writer found that maxims that maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, and maxim of manner are flouted in the videos. The most flouted maxim is maxim of quantity which is flouted at the most by an adorable child. Moreover, the implicature takes place in it to satire, complain, feel superior, disparage, and so on which raise laughter in the audience.*

**Keywords:** *The Cooperative Principle, Humor, Implicature, Ellen Degeneres Show*

## INTRODUCTION

As a phatic function, language enables human beings to communicate with others in order to maintain social relationship (Jakobson, 1960). It serves a bridge for people so that they can express feelings, anger, and opinions. In addition, they can also request or give command to others via language. Language also enables listeners to comprehend what the speakers mean when exchanging the information during the conversation. In short, people exchange their intention meaningfully because of the language.

Evenmore, Chomsky (1966) mentions that human beings are able to produce infinite number of sentences because of their linguistic creativity. Despite the fact that human language system consists of finite number of linguistic properties, people can produce unlimited utterances. Due to this

linguistic creativity, people converse and exchange the meanings with each other beyond the literal utterances. For example, the term of “see you later” may refer to some illocutionary acts such as threatening, promising, and hoping.

Human beings produce so many words every time they want. Ideally, people have to follow the cooperative principle in a conversation. The cooperative principle is introduced by Grice (1975) that is in a conversation, the speaker and the addressee are being cooperative to produce meaningful conversation. Otherwise, the conversation becomes meaningless. The cooperative principle explains that in a conversation people (speaker and addressee) are being cooperative to create meaningful and further conversation (Grice, 1975). As people become cooperative, they have to ensure that their utterances have met such maxims as quantity, quality, manner and relation. In fact, people do not follow those norms. By contrast, they flout the maxims. People flout the maxims because they feel being interrogated about the information they want to keep in secret. Moreover, they probably hate the addressee. As a result, they mean something more than what they say. One of the possible consequences caused by such an intended communicative strategy is humor. Kusuma (2006) states that flouting the maxim may not bring the conversation to an end but it may cause humor.

In this study, the writer chose humor as her thesis topic with six videos of Ellen Degeneres Talks Show in season 12 as her object. There are two reasons why the writer chose humor as her topic. First, nowadays most of the television programs such as music programs and talk shows which contain humor sense in it. The writer is interested in analyzing that humor sense. As the writer here is a student of English Letters Study Program, the writer chose Ellen Degeneres Show as her focus. Second, in fact there are many studies that have discussed about humor, but as far as the writer's experience in literary review there is no study that focuses on Ellen's speech act. Therefore, this study is considered new, it will contribute in the body of pragmatics knowledge.

There are two research problems that the writer attempts to find out:

- a. Which maxims are flouted in Ellen DeGeneres's shows?

b. Which implicatures are contained in the maxims flouted of Ellen DeGeneres's shows?

Based on the research questions above, this study aims to describe maxims flouted and implicatures in the maxims flouted of Ellen DeGeneres's shows. The objects of this study were the episodes of The Ellen DeGeneres talk show in season 12. In this study, the writer chooses some parts of interview guest segments and plays games segments.

This study benefits some parties, such as teachers and students and other researchers. For the teacher and the student, it is to obtain practical significance. In addition, there is theoretical significance about the cooperative principle and implicatures which are the subfield of pragmatics. It must be useful for teachers and students in learning process. And for other researchers it might become source of data for further research regarding humor and language.

Moreover, this study also offers theoretical benefits. As this study tries to find the relationship between the humor variable and implicatures, this study can be said to contribute and extend the horizon of the body of knowledge, especially in the field of pragmatics.

In the selecting of the videos as the data, the chosen videos were the funniest based on the writer's view. From 197 videos of interviewing guest segments, the writer chose 4 videos as the data and from 97 videos of playing games segments, the writer chose 2 videos as the data. Therefore total videos in this study were 6 videos with the duration of each video was 3-4 minutes. The interpretation of the findings was based on the writer opinion. In order to avoid the subjectivity of the findings interpretation, the writer did a triangulation method which was done by proofreading of the advisor as a nonnative speaker and a foreigner friend's of the writer as a native speaker.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **The Cooperative Principle**

The cooperative principle is a principle in a basic conversation which in a conversation speaker and listener have to cooperate to produce meaningful conversation and so they can go further (Grice, 1975). Grice also believes that in a conversation people have to follow such maxim of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

### **Implicature**

According to Yule (1996), implicature is more than what is communicated rather than what is said. It means that the really meaning of information is not the utterances, but there is an implicit meaning of those utterances. Grice (1975) divides implicature into two categories, they are: conventional implicature and conversational implicature. Conventional implicature is that the truth of the meaning is not based on cooperative principle, while conversational implicature involves cooperative principle in it.

### **Humor**

Humor is all the relation of things that can raise laughter (Setiawan, 1990). Humor has three theories such as superiority theory, incongruity theory and relief theory. Superiority theory is when we feel that we are better than other people. This theory also views that usually we laugh at something because misfortune of it. Incongruity theory is when we feel that there is something unique or surprising. we laugh at uncommon thing. Last is relief theory. This theory views that we laugh at something to release strain thoughts in our minds.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study can be seen from many perspectives. If it is seen from the types of data, it is a document study because the data those were gathered and analyzed in form of verbal data. If it is seen from objectives of the study, it is a descriptive qualitative study because the finding result is described linguistically. And this

study is cross-sectional study because the object of this study only focuses on a point of time which is the videos of Ellen Talk Show in season 12 only.

In this study, the data were all of episodes of Ellen DeGeneres talk show in YouTube. The sampling type was purposive or judgmental sampling, which the writer chose some parts of the segments of Ellen DeGeneres show in season 12 intentionally. The data chosen in this study were considered contained more humor sense rather than the other segments. From 192 videos of interviewing guest the writer chose 4 videos for interviewing guest segment. From 97 videos of playing games segments, the writer chose 2 videos for playing games segments. The duration of each video was about 3-4 minutes. Here all the parts of segments that were used for the data analysis:

- a. Ellen Meets the “Apparently Kid, Part 1” (Adorable Kid Segment, 12,500,884 viewers)
- b. Kai Sings “ROAR” (Adorable Kid Segment, 3,517,385 viewers)
- c. Will Smith on Being Sexy (Interview Guest Segment, 1,515,804 viewers)
- d. Taylor Swift’s Deepest Fear (Interview Guest Segment, 4,198,051 viewers)
- e. JLO and Ellen Play Never I Have Ever (Play Games Segment, 1,678,750 viewers)
- f. 5 Seconds Rules with Pamela Anderson (Play Games Segment, 809,134 viewers)

The instrument of this study was the writer herself because she collected and analyzed the data by herself. In addition, the writer was also aided by some electronic devices in collecting and analyzing the data. Those electronic devices were laptop and internet.

First of all, the writer tried to watch the videos of Ellen Degeneres talk show season 12 in YouTube one by one. After that the writer selected some videos with the most viewed. Next, the writer rewatched those selected videos to see which video that had more humor sense. Based on the writer’s opinion, she chose six funniest videos to be transcribed. The writer transcribed the videos was for the verbal data that the writer used for analyzing step.

After the writer has transcribed the videos, she analyzed the utterances of each video to see the maxims flouted. The writer made a table to help her

analyzed the data. Then the writer categorized those utterances that contain flouted maxims such as maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, and maxim of relevance. Next, the writer gave comment on some examples that are presented in findings. This was done to answer the first research question. In order to answer the second research question, first the writer tried to see the indicator of each humor theory. Second, from the utterances that contain flouted maxim, the writer categorizes it again which utterances belongs to humor indicator such as surprising, feeling superior, disparaging, satirizing, etc.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

There are three maxims that are flouted in those videos such as maxim of quantity, maxim quality and maxim of relevance. The most flouted maxim is maxim of quantity. Moreover, it is followed by maxim of quality, and then maxim of relevance. To make it clearer, see table Maxims flouted in Ellen Degeneres Show.

**Table 1 Maxims Flouted in Ellen Degeneres Show**

<b>No</b>	<b>Maxims Flouted</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>1</b>	Maxim of Quantity	36	52,9%
<b>2</b>	Maxim of Quality	26	38,2 %
<b>3</b>	Maxim of Relevance	6	8,8%
<b>4</b>	Maxim of Manner	0	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>68</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on Table Maxims Flouted in Ellen Degeneres Show above, the majority of the maxim that is flouted is maxim of quantity with 52, 9%, second is maxim of quality with 38, 2%, third is maxim of relevance with 8, 8% and maxim of manner with 0%. The latter means that there is no maxim of manner flouted in those videos. By seeing this table, it answers the first research question.

**Table 2 Implicatures in Maxim Flouted**

No	Implicatures	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Disparagement	2	2,9%
2	Making Mistake	7	10,2%
3	Feeling Superior	5	7,3%
4	Surprise	28	41%
5	Satire	14	20%
6	Complaint	11	16%
7	Sex Humor	1	1,4%
TOTAL		68	100%

Based on Table Implicatures in Maxim Flouted above, implicatures are contained in flouted maxim of Ellen Degeneres show are disparagement, making mistakes, feeling superior, surprise, satire, complaint, and sex about humor. The majority of the implicature that is found is surprise with 41%, followed by satire with 20% and in third position is complaint with 16%. Those implicatures are taken from each humor theory, which is the indicator of humor.

## **Discussion**

Based on the data analysis on Ellen Degeneres Show videos, the writer has found that humor or comical sense causing laughter occurs because either the speaker or the listener has flouted the maxims. The maxims flouted are such as maxim of quantity, maxim of quality and maxim of relevance. Every person who flouts the maxims has different implicatures. In fact, in each maxim flouted is contained implicature such as satire, complaint, disparagement, feeling superior and perfect, surprising and sex about humor.

According to Setiawan (1990) there are three types of humor expression such as personal humor, daily life humor, and art humor. All the humors that occurred in Ellen Degeneres Show are daily life humors because it is the common jokes in form of satire, mistakes or fault, complaint and superiority feeling to tease the guest or Ellen.

In fact, in the whole world different people sometimes might find something that is unfunny with them but funny with other people. Raskin (1985) states that some jokes might be particular and some jokes might be universal jokes. Raskins states that a particular joke is the joke that is only understood by some members of a group or society while a universal joke is the joke that can be understood by all the people. He also states when we are talking about universal jokes, we are dealing with a universal human trait, such as language, morality, logic, faith, behavior, and so on.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study found that humor sense in Ellen Degeneres Show occurs when either Ellen or the guest flouts maxim of quantity, maxim of quality and maxim of relevance. In every maxim flouted there is an implicature such as feeling superior, making mistakes, surprising, satirizing, disparaging, complaining and sex about humor. Setiawan (1990) states that one of the types of humor expression is the daily humor which is jokes that happen in daily life conversation when it becomes a satire, complaint, disparagement and so on. The comical sense that occurs in Ellen Degeneres Show is daily life humor so it is easy to be understood by all the people. That is the possible reason why her show becomes so favorite in all over the world until now.

## **REFERENCES**

- Andresen, N. (2013) Flouting the Maxim in Comedy: Analysis of flouting in the comedy series *Community*. Unpublished Thesis, Karlstad University.
- Brown, P & S. Levinson (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge University Press
- Cicilia, P. (2014) *The Study of speech acts for humorous purposes in Tante Tutik drama comedy TV series*. Unpublished thesis, Petra Christian University.



- Chomsky, N. (1966). *Cartesian Linguistics. A Chapter in the History of Rationalist Thought*. New York: Harper & Row
- Freud, S. (1905/1960). *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious*. Trans. J. Strachey. New York: W. W. Norton. (Original work published 1905).
- Grice, H.P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. *Syntax and semantics*, vol.3 edited by P. Cole and J. Morgan, Academic Press. Reprinted as ch.2 of Grice 1989, 22–40
- Grundy, P. (2000), *Doing Pragmatics*, London: Arnold
- Hobbes, T. (1840). *Human Nature*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury, Volume IV*, ed. William Molesworth, London: Bohn.
- Institute for Work and Health (2009) What researchers mean by cross-sectional vs longitudinal studies. *Research Excellent Advancing Employee Health*. Weblog [Online] (n.d). Available from: <http://www.iwh.on.ca/wrmb/cross-sectional-vs-longitudinal-studies> [Accessed 10/05/2015]
- Jackobson, R. (1960) *Closing statements: Linguistics and Poetics*, Style in language, T.A. Sebeok, New-York, 1960
- Jane, A. (2002) Tips for Writing a Document Study. *Tips Document Study*. Weblog [Online] 2nc Oct. Available from: [https://www.mun.ca/history/fac\\_staff/bryan/TipsDocumentStudy.pdf](https://www.mun.ca/history/fac_staff/bryan/TipsDocumentStudy.pdf). [Accessed 05/05/2015]
- Kant, I (1790). *Critique of Judgement*. J. H. Bernard, Trans. New York: Hafner.
- Kusuma, S. A. (2006) *Humor resulted from the flouting of conversational maxims in the drama comedy TV series "Bajaj Bajuri Salon Oneng Edition"*. Unpublished Thesis. Petra Christian University.
- Levinson, S.C. (2000) Conversational Implicature. *Presumptive Meanings: The Theory of Generalized Conversational Implicature*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
- Moore, B. (2014) Oscar Review: How Did Ellen DeGeneres Do as a Host? [WWW] Huffingtonpost.com. Available from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/03/oscars-review\\_n\\_4889294.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/03/03/oscars-review_n_4889294.html) [Accessed 20/05/2015]

- Monro, D. H.(1988) Theory of Humor [WWW] Msu.Edu. Available from:  
<https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/monro.html> [Accessed 20/05/2015]
- Setiawan, A. (1990) History, Theory, Type and Function of Humor.*Theory of Humor*.Jakarta: Majalah Astaga, No.3 Th.III, hal. 34-35
- Schopenhauer, A. (1818). *The World as Will and Representation*.
- Spencer, H. (1860). "*The Physiology of Laughter*." *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1, pp. 395-402.
- Raskin, V. (1985).*Semantic Mechanism of Humor*.Dordchet-Boston-Landcester: D. Reidel
- Tenant, T. (2015) Who is Ellen Degereres? A Brief Biograpfy about the Host [WWW] talkshow.about. com. Avaiaable from:  
<http://talkshows.about.com/od/ellendegeneres/p/BioEllen.htm>. [Accesed 20/05/2015]
- Wishnoff, JR. (2000).*Second Language Acquistion Studies*. 19: 119-148
- Yule, G (1996, 36). *Pragmatics*. Linguistics (eds). Oxford: Oxford University Press