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Flouting Maxim in Leave the World Behind Movie Analysis

Rosita Fadillah
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945, Indonesia
rosittafadilah@gmail.com
Dona Rahayu Sugiharti
Universitas 17 Agustus 1945, Indonesia
donarahayu@untag-sby.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the types of flouting maxims found in the film Leave the World Behind (2023) and to identify the most dominant type. This study applies the Cooperative Principle proposed by Grice (1975), focusing on the flouting of four types of conversational maxims, namely flouting of quantity, flouting of quality, flouting of relation, and flouting of manner. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method. The data consist of utterances taken from the dialogues of the film, collected through observation and documentation techniques, which involved watching the film, reading the dialogue transcript, identifying utterances that contain flouting maxims, and classifying them according to Grice's theory. The findings show that there are 27 instances of flouting maxims in the film, flouting of quantity accounts for 8 data (29.63%), flouting of quality for 4 data (14.81%), flouting of relation for 14 data (51.85%), and flouting of manner for 1 data (3.70%). Based on the finding the most dominant flouted maxim is relation. The implicatures generated from these flouted maxims reveal that the characters frequently use indirect speech to express rejection, concealment of information, frustration, suspicion, and fear.

Keywords: *Cooperative Principle, Flouting Maxim, Grice, Leave The World Behind, Pragmatics*

1. INTRODUCTION

Communication is an essential part of human interaction. However, speakers do not always express their intended meaning directly but often convey implied meanings that require listeners to interpret utterances based on context. As Irfan et al. (2025) explain, communication enables people to share information, ideas, and social relationships, yet misunderstandings may occur when listeners rely only on literal meanings. Therefore, successful communication depends on understanding context, a phenomenon studied in pragmatics (Yule, 2001; Mey, 2001).

One of the main theories in pragmatics is Grice's Cooperative Principle (as cited in Yule, 1996), which explains that effective communication depends on cooperation between speakers and listeners. Grice (1975) proposes four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Nevertheless, speakers may deliberately flout these maxims to convey implied meanings while expecting listeners to infer the intended message from context. According to Wasilah et al. (2026), maxim flouting commonly occurs in everyday communication to express indirect messages, humor, or criticism.

Because maxim flouting is difficult to identify in spontaneous interaction, films provide an appropriate source for analysis through their fixed dialogues. Previous studies by Tunliu (2025), Ishaq

and Putra (2023), and Safitri (2024) found that the maxim of relation was the most frequently flouted in Joker (2019), Taxi Driver, and Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3. However, these studies mainly focused on drama, crime, and superhero genres, while psychological thriller films remain underexplored.

Several research gaps can be identified. First, previous studies such as Safitri (2024) and Ishaq and Putra (2023) focus on maxim violation rather than maxim flouting, although both represent different pragmatic phenomena. Second, most previous studies analyze action-adventure films, drama, and social media data, whereas psychological thriller films have received limited attention despite containing ambiguity, hidden information, and question avoidance. Third, no previous study has examined Leave the World Behind (2023), a psychological thriller portraying two families facing crisis and suspicion following a large-scale cyberattack.

Based on these gaps, this study examines maxim flouting in Leave the World Behind (2023). The film contains instances of flouting the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, making it suitable for investigating how Grice's Cooperative Principle operates in communication characterized by uncertainty and distrust. Accordingly, this study aims to identify the types of maxim flouting and determine the dominant maxim found in the film.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze the use of maxim flouting in Leave the World Behind (2023). A qualitative approach was selected because it focuses on analyzing language use and interpreting meaning in conversational contexts through detailed description rather than numerical measurement. Creswell (2014) states that qualitative research explores and understands the meaning individuals or groups assign to social or human problems. According to Lambert and Lambert (2012), a qualitative descriptive design is appropriate for providing a clear description of a phenomenon. Therefore, this study aimed to identify, describe, and analyze the types of maxim flouting and determine the dominant type found in the film. The data were analyzed based on Grice's (1975) four conversational maxims and presented descriptively.

The data source was the film Leave the World Behind (2023), released on the Netflix streaming platform. The film was selected because it contains conversations demonstrating the use of maxim flouting. The data consisted of utterances containing flouting of Grice's (1975) four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

Data collection was conducted by obtaining and watching the film to understand its plot, characters, and dialogues, obtaining and verifying the dialogue transcript, identifying and highlighting utterances containing maxim flouting, and compiling the selected data for further analysis. The data were then categorized according to the flouted maxims, grouped by type, and analyzed by explaining the conversational context, the maxim flouted, and the resulting implicature. Finally, the frequency and percentage of each type of maxim flouting were calculated to determine the dominant type, and conclusions were drawn based on the findings.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Finding

Based on the analysis, 27 instances of maxim flouting were identified in the dialogues of *Leave the World Behind* (2023). The data were classified according to Grice’s (1975) four conversational maxims, resulting in four types of maxim flouting: flouting of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Among these, flouting of relation was the most dominant type.

Tabel 1 Frequency and Percentage of Flouting Maxim

Flouting Maxim	Frequency	Percentage
Flouting of Quantity	8	29,63%
Flouting of Quality	4	14,81%
Flouting of Relation	14	51,85%
Flouting of Manner	1	3,70%
Total	27	100%

Table 1 shows that flouting of relation occurred most frequently, with 14 instances (51.85%), followed by flouting of quantity with 8 instances (29.63%), flouting of quality with 4 instances (14.81%), and flouting of manner with 1 instance (3.70%). Two utterances contained more than one type of maxim flouting. Amanda's utterance in Data 4 was classified as both flouting of quantity and Data 1 of flouting of relation because it provides excessive information while failing to answer Clay's question directly. Likewise, Ruth's utterance in Data 8 was categorized as both flouting of quantity and Data 1 of flouting of manner because it provides insufficient information and is expressed in an indirect and unclear manner. Overall, the findings indicate that the characters frequently employ indirect utterances to convey implied meanings throughout the conversations.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Flouting of Quantity

Data 1

This dialogue takes place late at night after G.H. and Ruth are allowed to enter the house. Feeling uneasy about their arrival, Amanda reacts to G.H.'s offer to refund the rental payment.

G.H. Scott : *Clay, Amanda, we could absolutely refund you your money.*

Amanda : *You want us to leave? ... I think I need to call the company. I don't even think you can do this.*

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of quantity. According to Grice (1975), the maxim of quantity requires speakers to provide as much information as necessary, but no more. Instead of directly accepting or rejecting G.H.'s offer, Amanda provides additional information about the late hour, her sleeping children, and her intention to contact the rental company. This excessive information emphasizes her strong disagreement with leaving the house. The implicature is that Amanda rejects G.H.'s request and considers it unreasonable for her family to leave in the middle of the night.

Data 2

This conversation occurs in the basement after Ruth questions G.H. about the ongoing crisis.

Ruth : *Everything is going to be okay, isn't it?... Your client didn't tell you anything else, did he?*

G.H. Scott : *There's no point in talking about this until we know more. That's what I think.*

G.H.'s response flouts the maxim of quantity because, rather than answering Ruth's questions, he provides only a vague statement. According to Grice (1975), the information given is less than required, indicating that G.H. intentionally withholds his thoughts to avoid causing further panic. The implicature is that he suspects more than he is willing to reveal.

Data 3

While discussing their occupations, Amanda asks Ruth about her job.

Amanda : *And you, what is it that you do?*
Ruth : *Me, I'm... I'm still figuring my shit out...*

Ruth flouts the maxim of quantity by giving a lengthy explanation instead of a brief answer. Rather than simply stating that she has not yet decided on a career, she elaborates on her concerns about future career choices. This additional information implies that her current situation is a deliberate decision rather than uncertainty about her future.

Data 4

This conversation takes place when Clay notices Amanda packing for a trip.

Clay : *Amanda? What are you doing?*
Amanda : *Well, I couldn't sleep... so, I went online this morning and I rented us a beautiful house...*

Amanda's response flouts the maxim of quantity because she provides a lengthy explanation instead of directly answering Clay's question. By explaining their stressful year, work pressures, and her decision to rent a beach house, she gives more information than necessary. The implicature is that she believes her family needs a vacation to relieve stress.

Data 5

Ruth asks Clay why he is filling the bathtub.

Ruth : *What are you doing?*
Clay : *Filling up the tub. That's what they say to do for, you know, water.*

Clay flouts the maxim of quantity by adding unnecessary information about preparing for a possible water shortage. Instead of simply describing his action, he explains its purpose, implying that he is worried about the uncertain situation and possible disruption of the water supply.

Data 6

While searching for Rose, Ruth asks Amanda why she is always angry.

Ruth : *Why are you like this?*
Amanda : *(lengthy explanation about her work, people, and society).*

Amanda's utterance flouts the maxim of quantity because she responds with an extensive explanation rather than directly answering Ruth's question. Beyond explaining her anger, she expresses her disappointment with human nature and society. The implicature is that her distrust and anger stem from her experiences observing people's selfish and dishonest behavior.

Data 7

Amanda repeatedly asks G.H. to explain the strange events they are experiencing.

Amanda : *...What happens next in that sequence?*

G.H. Scott : *Everything I know I have told you.*

G.H.'s response flouts the maxim of quantity because it provides less information than Amanda requests. Rather than sharing his suspicions, he deliberately limits his response. The implicature is that G.H. knows or suspects more than he reveals but chooses to remain silent to avoid creating greater panic.

Data 8

Amanda questions why G.H. and Ruth want to stay in the house.

Ruth : *Because, again... You know, it is like... our house.*

Ruth's utterance flouts the maxim of quantity because it provides insufficient information. Instead of explicitly explaining that they are the owners of the house and therefore wish to remain there, she gives only a brief and incomplete statement. The implicature is that she wants Amanda and Clay to recognize their right to stay because the house belongs to them.

Overall, the findings indicate that flouting of quantity is used to reject requests, withhold information, express disagreement, or emphasize particular situations by providing either more or less information than required. These findings support Grice's (1975) view that speakers deliberately flout the maxim of quantity to generate conversational implicature. However, unlike Wangi (2023), who focused on maxim violation, this study demonstrates that the characters intentionally flout the maxim to encourage listeners to infer the intended meaning rather than to mislead them.

3.2.2 Flouting of Quality

Data 1

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of quality because she sarcastically refers to G.H. as having a *"crystal ball."* According to Grice (1975), this maxim requires speakers to say only what they believe to be true. Amanda does not literally mean that G.H. can predict the future. Instead, the expression implies that she believes he knows more about the situation than he is willing to reveal. The implicature is that Amanda wants G.H. to stop withholding information and explain what he actually knows.

Data 2

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of quality because she compares their situation to *"sitting ducks,"* an expression that is not literally true. Rather than describing the situation factually, she uses metaphor to emphasize how helpless and vulnerable they feel. The implicature is that Amanda believes they are trapped in a dangerous situation without any control over what may happen next.

Data 3

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of quality because her statement, *"I'm really sorry for you then,"* is not intended as genuine sympathy. Instead, it is delivered sarcastically

to express her cynical view of people and of G.H.'s profession, which revolves around dealing with them. The implicature is that Amanda believes human nature is disappointing, making G.H.'s work unfortunate.

Data 4

Clay's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of quality because he exaggerates by saying that Archie *"sleeps through the atom bomb."* This hyperbole is not meant literally but is used to emphasize that Archie is a very heavy sleeper. The implicature is that Amanda does not need to worry about waking the children, so the conversation can continue.

Overall, the findings indicate that flouting the maxim of quality is mainly realized through sarcasm, metaphor, and hyperbole. Rather than providing false information, the characters intentionally use literally untrue expressions to convey implied meanings and emotional attitudes. These findings support Grice's (1975) view that speakers may deliberately flout the maxim of quality to generate conversational implicatures.

3.2.3 Flouting of Relation

Data 1

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because, instead of directly answering Clay's question about what she is doing, she explains the reasons behind planning a vacation. Rather than saying she is packing, Amanda shifts the conversation to their stressful year and her decision to rent a beach house. The implicature is that she wants Clay to understand that she is preparing for a much-needed family vacation.

Data 2

G.H.'s utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because he does not directly answer Clay's question about the purpose of his visit. Instead, he comments on the awkwardness of arriving late at night. The implicature is that G.H. wants Clay to first recognize the unusual situation before explaining why he came.

Data 3

Ruth's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because, instead of explaining the purpose of their visit, she merely hints that Clay does not know something important. The implicature is that G.H. and Ruth are actually the owners of the house, although Ruth chooses to reveal this indirectly.

Data 4

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because she does not respond to Clay's suggestion to sit down and talk. Instead, she mentions that the children are sleeping. The implicature is that Amanda does not want to continue the discussion and uses the children as an indirect reason to avoid it.

Data 5

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because she does not respond directly to G.H.'s explanation that he wants to stay because the house is safe. Instead, she emphasizes that her family is on vacation. The implicature is that Amanda believes her family also has the right to remain in the house.

Data 6

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because she ignores G.H.'s explanation about his wife and instead asks for his identification. The implicature is that Amanda still doubts G.H.'s identity and wants proof that he is the owner of the house.

Data 7

G.H.'s utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because, rather than answering Ruth's question about why he was near the pool, he asks her to get him clean clothes. The implicature is that G.H. is deliberately avoiding questions about what actually happened during his trip.

Data 8

G.H.'s utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because he does not directly respond to Amanda's apology. Instead, he talks about how people often judge others based on assumptions. The implicature is that G.H. indirectly forgives Amanda by suggesting that prejudice is a common human tendency.

Data 9

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because she ignores Ruth's theory about the animals and instead points out bike tracks ahead. The implicature is that Amanda is focused on finding Rose rather than discussing Ruth's speculation.

Data 10

Clay's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because he ignores Amanda's warning about the suspicious sound and continues talking about his student. The implicature is that Clay does not consider the sound important enough to interrupt the conversation.

Data 11

Clay's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because, instead of responding to Amanda's comment about the game, he asks her to refill his drink. The implicature is that Clay notices Amanda is getting another drink and takes the opportunity to ask for one as well.

Data 12

Amanda's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because she does not answer Rose's question about the car and instead changes the topic to breakfast. The implicature is that Amanda wants to avoid discussing the car and redirect Rose's attention.

Data 13

Clay's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because he ignores G.H.'s questions about the flyers and instead focuses on the travel route. The implicature is that Clay prioritizes getting his family to safety over discussing the meaning of the flyers.

Data 14

G.H.'s utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of relation because, instead of answering Clay's question about the route, he warns that the city is dangerous. The implicature is that G.H. is more concerned about Clay's safety than about the specific route they plan to take.

Overall, the findings indicate that flouting the maxim of relation is mainly used to avoid direct responses, shift the topic, or express concerns indirectly. Rather than answering questions explicitly, the characters often redirect the conversation, requiring listeners to infer the intended meaning from the context. This finding supports Grice's (1975) view that flouting the maxim of relation generates conversational implicatures. It also aligns with Tunliu (2025), who found relation as the most frequently flouted maxim. However, in this study, its dominance reflects the psychological thriller setting, where fear, uncertainty, and distrust encourage indirect communication.

3.2.4 Flouting of Manner

Ruth's utterance is categorized as flouting the maxim of manner because, according to Grice (1975), this maxim requires speakers to express themselves clearly and avoid ambiguity. Instead of directly stating that she and G.H. want to stay because they own the house, Ruth says, *"Because, again... You know, it is like... our house."* Her use of pauses and expressions such as *"again"* and *"you know"* makes the utterance indirect and unclear. Rather than stating her point explicitly, Ruth leaves Amanda and Clay to infer the intended meaning. The implicature is that Ruth wants them to recognize her and G.H.'s right to remain in the house as its owners.

Overall, the findings show that flouting the maxim of manner occurred only once in the film. Although infrequent, it demonstrates that ambiguity can be used intentionally to communicate an implied meaning. Instead of expressing the message directly, the speaker relies on the listener to interpret the intended meaning from the conversational context, supporting Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature.

3.2.5 The Dominant Flouting

Based on the findings, flouting of relation is the most dominant type of maxim flouting in *Leave the World Behind* (2023), with 14 out of 27 instances (51.85%). This indicates that indirect and seemingly irrelevant responses are a recurring pattern throughout the film.

According to Grice (1975), the maxim of relation requires speakers to provide relevant responses. However, when this maxim is flouted, speakers intentionally give responses that appear unrelated while expecting listeners to infer the intended meaning from the context. Rather than causing communication failure, this strategy creates conversational implicatures.

The dominance of flouting of relation is closely related to the film's setting. Throughout the story, the characters face uncertainty, distrust, and limited information due to the ongoing crisis. As a result, they often avoid answering questions directly, shift the topic, or respond indirectly to express suspicion, fear, or hesitation without revealing everything they know.

This pattern can be seen in the main characters. Amanda frequently redirects conversations to avoid uncomfortable topics, G.H. Scott often withholds information by avoiding direct answers, Ruth tends to communicate indirectly, and Clay occasionally changes the subject instead of responding to the ongoing discussion. Although their responses seem unrelated on the surface, they still convey meaningful messages that can be understood through the conversational context.

These findings suggest that the dominance of flouting of relation reflects both the communicative behavior of the characters and the psychological thriller genre of the film. Indirect communication becomes a strategy for dealing with uncertainty and mistrust while allowing the characters to express implied meanings without stating them explicitly. Therefore, the findings support Grice's (1975) theory that flouting the maxim of relation generates conversational implicatures rather than disrupting communication.

4. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, this study identified 27 instances of flouting maxims in the dialogues of Leave the World Behind (2023). These consisted of 8 instances of flouting of quantity, 4 of quality, 14 of relation, and 1 of manner. Among these, flouting of relation was the most dominant type, while flouting of manner occurred least frequently.

The dominance of flouting of relation indicates that the characters tend to communicate indirectly rather than provide straightforward responses. They frequently shift topics, avoid direct answers, or give seemingly unrelated responses whose meanings can still be understood through the conversational context.

Each type of maxim flouting serves a different communicative function. In flouting of quantity, the characters provide either more or less information than required. In flouting of quality, they use sarcasm, hyperbole, and figurative expressions that are not intended to be interpreted literally. Meanwhile, flouting of manner occurs when a character conveys a message in an indirect or ambiguous way. Overall, these findings show that the characters rely on indirect communication to express their thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

The flouting maxims generate various conversational implicatures, including rejection, concealment of information, frustration, suspicion, and fear. Although these meanings are not expressed explicitly, they can be inferred from the context of each conversation.

Overall, this study concludes that flouting maxims play an important role in Leave the World Behind (2023). They enable the characters to convey implied meanings while supporting the development of interactions, conflicts, and the psychological tension throughout the film. Furthermore, this study contributes to pragmatic research by providing empirical evidence of maxim flouting in a psychological thriller film that has received little attention in previous studies. Unlike

many earlier studies that focused on maxim violation, this study demonstrates how maxim flouting is used to convey implied meanings in situations characterized by fear, uncertainty, and distrust.

Future studies may explore other areas of pragmatics, such as implicature, speech acts, or politeness strategies, to provide a broader understanding of meaning in film dialogue. Researchers may also apply different pragmatic theories or compare maxim flouting across different films, media, or genres. In addition, using more diverse data sources could provide a deeper understanding of how indirect communication and implied meaning are realized in various forms of discourse.

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