

## Abstract

The cooperative principle by Paul Grice is set to framework cooperation between participants in conversations in order to make their communication successful. The violation of this principle does not entail failure of the communication process but it might lead to the generation of verbal humor. The purpose of this paper is to check whether this claim is valid or not for the specific case of the British sitcom *mind your language*. In order to fulfill this task, a number of conversations within the most rated episode of the sitcom were studied. This dissertation presents a qualitative content analysis of some randomly picked scenes from the selected episode in which all the conversations of the scene were analyzed, looking for an intentional (violation) or unintentional (flout) breaking of maxim(s). Sampling happened at two levels; the first one which is purposeful, to pick one of the episodes on the basis of their ratings at the Internet Media Database (IMDb) and the second to choose randomly a number of scenes within this episode. The results showed that whenever there is a flout/violation of maxim(s) in any of the conversations, there is a funny effect. This result indicated that it is valid to consider verbal humor for this episode as a product of not adhering to the cooperative principle. This work helps enrich the field of humor studies in general and the Gricean cooperative principle in particular.

*Keywords:* the cooperative principle, conversation, violation, flout, verbal humor

## **Acknowledgments**

Praise be to Allah for enabling us to complete this work.

We would like first to thank our supervisor Mrs. Amina Ghoul, whose expertise was invaluable in formulating this research work. Your insightful feedback pushed us to sharpen our thinking and brought our work to a higher level. Your amiable attitude motivates us to work harder and enjoy accomplishing this work. You provided us with the tools that we needed to choose the right direction and successfully complete our dissertation.

We would like also to thank all of our teachers at Laarbi Tbessi University, department of English for putting us in the right way, equipping us with the required knowledge and helping us in reaching the level we acquire today. Especially, Ms. Asma Douaibia, who provided stimulating discussions and a special help in developing a proper and suitable research methodology. We would also like to thank members of the jury for accepting to assess our work, your effort and time are very well appreciated.

Thanks to our colleagues, friends and everyone who helped us in developing this dissertation.

Last but never least, we would like to thank our parents for their wise counsel and sympathetic ear, you are always there for us, you have dedicated your energy, time, money and all you have to bring out the best of us. May all of your efforts be generously rewarded.

## **Dedication**

We dedicate this work to our families and friends.

## List of Abbreviations

A: Ali

An: Anna

C: Miss.Courtney

CA: Conversation Analysis

CP: Cooperative Principle

D: Danielle

DA: Discourse Analysis

GVTH: General Theory of Verbal Humor

IMDb: Internet Media Database

KR: Knowledge Resources

LWT: London Weekend Television

SSTH: Script Based Semantic Theory of Humor

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Résumé

الملخص



## **General Introduction**

Human beings co-exist in groups and societies in which they cooperate to live. They help each other in different ways and they are always in constant need of one another. Individuals group together and exchange thoughts, ideas and information when verbally interacting, and they cooperate to reach the designed objective of their communication. Such cooperation is embedded in Grice's theory *The Cooperative Principle* (CP). He believed that communication is cooperative when it respects four different maxims: quantity, quality, relevance and manner and that people often do not adhere to the cooperative principle by breaking one or more of the maxims. In fact, people might either breach this principle intentionally via violating maxim(s) or unintentionally when they flout one or more of them, and such a practice leads to the generation of an implied meaning (implicature). In this paper, the non-observance of the cooperative principle is investigated to describe the verbal humor in conversations.

Verbal humor is the ability of adding a funny and ludicrous effect when speaking; it is the sense that individuals acquire and practice. Our main concern is the verbal humor in conversations in the entertainment industry, specifically in the British sitcom *Mind Your Language*. Comedy is one of the main genres in series where producers aim at gaining views by introducing laughable conversations between characters. The main subject of this study is the conversations that happened between the characters of the sitcom and how via seizing to adhere to the cooperative principle and breaking it they produce funny and humorous discourse.

## **Background of the Study**

Humor as a field of study is not solely linguistic. Researchers approached it from different perspectives where each one of them is appealing to a certain science. These research works included and not limited to: examinations of gender differences in the appreciation of humor,

dimensions of humor like the cognitive/ perceptual, social/ behavioral and psychoanalytical ones. , the therapeutic and healthful/healing powers of humor (Carrell, 2008, pp.310-311).

This work is an attempt to study and analyze humorous discourse as a form of language from a pragmatic point of view. Conversations found in one of the episodes of the sitcom “Mind Your Language” are the material of analysis in order to describe the verbally expressed humor in the light of the cooperative principle. This dissertation deploys Gricean pragmatics to analyze the humorous discourse in the sitcom. Analyzing some conversations in the selected episode of the sitcom is aimed at describing solely the humor genre of them. Each conversation that contains a background laughter is analyzed in order to discover whether it violates the cooperative principle or not.

### **Significance of the Study**

Humor in general is a human quality; it is something that we frequent on a daily basis. Verbal humor in particular is something that people enjoy and look for. Therefore, the importance of the phenomenon in our lives makes it an interesting and significant topic of research. Moreover, verbal humor in the entertainment industry is a popular genre that is enjoyable for people and profitable for producers. This dissertation is located in the map of different works that aim at researching and studying this interesting topic. The accumulation of these works enriches the field of language sciences. The significance of this research lies in the fact that it investigates humor in conversation in a specific environment in the light of a theory that was not primarily dedicated for such a task.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The logic behind the cooperative principle is that people engage in conversations to exchange information and ideas. They have something to tell each other. Thus, they shall work together when interacting to make the communication process successful. Such mutual work is

what the theory calls ‘cooperation’, that is, cooperation is a fundamental factor that contributes to the success of communication. However, what if people break the CP intentionally or unintentionally and what might be the product of violating the CP? In fact, people might indeed not adhere to the CP and this practice affects their verbal production, they are likely to generate for example a funny and laughable contribution to the conversation. Nevertheless, how it is possible that people via disrespecting the CP create verbal humor that does serve the communication process and not cause it to fail. This statement is problematic because, from one side the theory entails that people should cooperate when conversing to achieve the communication objective, and from another side the non-cooperation does not negatively affect the communication process, but it may have a welcomed outcome such as in our case: humorous and funny effect.

### **The Research Question**

This dissertation concentrates on the verbal humor in conversations in one of the episodes of the sitcom in the light of the cooperative principle. Therefore, the question of the research is: does breaking the cooperative principle generate verbal humor in some conversations in episode nine (9) season one (1) of the British Sitcom “Mind Your Language”?

### **Aim of the study**

This research work aims at describing the verbal humor in a selected episode from the sitcom in the light of the cooperative principle. That is, to find out whether the funny and laughable contributions by the characters are created through the non-observance of the maxim(s). Therefore, it attempts to define the violation of the cooperative principle as a technique to create and produce humor in conversations. Hence, the objective of the analysis is to answer the former mentioned research question and to provide an informed opinion about the phenomenon.

## **Research methodology**

In order to answer the research question we opted for analyzing some conversations of one of the episodes of the sitcom “Mind Your Language”, aiming to describe the quality of humor within it. Thus, this research is a qualitative content analysis in which the raw data is the content of the chosen episode. Moreover, the population of this research is the episodes of the sitcom, and sampling happened at two levels using two different techniques. The first is purposive sampling by which we have selected an episode according to the rate of episodes relying on the website Internet Media Database (IMDb), and the second is simple random sampling which is used to select a number of scenes from the episode and analyze all the conversations within each of one of them.

## **Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into two chapters. The first one entitled *literature review* contains the necessary information from previous works about the topic; it provides the framework by which to carry the fieldwork. The second chapter is *the fieldwork* in which the adopted research methodology is explained and justified in the first section and then the analysis of the selected material takes place followed by findings and discussion.

## Chapter One: Literature Review

### Introduction

The contemporary meaning of humor covers anything that has a fun or amusing effect on oneself and others. It is studied in different fields from different perspectives. This work is a linguistic look at the concept of humor. In fact, linguistics and its numerous sub-fields study the concept from different angles. Pragmatics is our lens to look at the concept and what tools does it provide to analyze humor in utterances. Specifically how the *Cooperative Principle* (CP) by Paul Grice is valid to understand the creation of verbal humor in conversations. Hence, how it is relevant to analyze utterances (conversations) that have a humorous genre.

In the first section of this chapter, the concept is first defined in general and then within the field of linguistics, after that humor is historically investigated in order to understand how it acquired its contemporary meaning. Then, the relationship between the concept of humor and the linguistic theory in general is established with a brief account of the pioneering theories that take humor in language as their subject matter. The second section of this chapter after defining pragmatics provides first the relationship between pragmatics, discourse analysis, and more specifically conversation analysis. Next comes, what the theory exactly stands for, what are the *maxims* and what does violating the CP mean. These principles are provided and discussed so that they can be deployed in the second chapter to draw a conclusion on conversations that occur in media, with a specific case study. Finally, Humor in language is discussed and described in the specific terminology of the theory. It is a look at the concept from the point of view of the theory.

## Section One: An Overview of Humor

### Definitions of Humor

#### *General Definition*

If you ask anybody the question what is humor? You might arrive having different responses revolving around the idea that humor is everything that triggers a laughter or draws a smile on the face. Checking the dictionary, humor is " the mental faculty of discovering, expressing, or appreciating the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous: the ability to be funny or to be amused by things that are funny" ("Humor", 2021). Indeed, Humor is a matter of producing something that has a funny and laughable effect on others, or being affected by the sense of humor of other people. Thus, humor covers that piece of language responsible for creating an amusing environment.

Humor is an umbrella term that covers different types and forms such as “comic, ridicule, irony, mirth, laughable, jolly, funny, ludicrous, merry, etc.” (Attardo, 2014,p.xxx-xxxi). In fact, the term *laughter* is historically central to the phenomenon, “Until humor entered the researchers’ vocabulary, laughter was the dominant term covering all phenomena of the field as the archilexeme “(Hempelmann, 2017, p.44). Moreover, one can argue that all people laugh or at least smile and this triggers the idea that humor is not exclusive to a group of people or a certain culture; it is “a universal aspect of human experience” (Guidi,2017,p.18). The universality of humor is undeniable, “This universality of humor is further reinforced by the fact that surprisingly many jokes or situations will strike surprisingly many, if not all people as funny” (Raskin, 1985, p.2).

Humor is also claimed to be a “mode of communication”, it is “a use of language for purposes or functions other, or further, than sharing information, intentions, judgments, orders, requests, etc.” (Guidi, 2017, p.19). Thus, it is a human behavior, “humor is part of human

behavior”, it communicates feelings, emotions that manifests a human dimension and characteristic (Guidi, 2017, p.19), or as Raskin (1985) call it a “universal human trait “(p.2).

Another factor that contributes to the importance of the concept is that humor is an everyday practice for human beings “Funny situations, funny stories, even funny thoughts occur everyday to virtually everybody” (Raskin, 1985, p.2). Moreover, it is present throughout all the recorded history; historians and anthropologists assumed that “no cultural group has ever been discovered that was devoid of a sense of humor “(Guidi, 2017, p.19). These assumptions and insights express clearly the importance of the concept and thus justifies its presence in the academic realm and for research purposes.

In this regard few remarks are worth mentioning so that to address the concept adequately. The first is the *terminological chaos* because of the abundance and competition of similar and adjacent terms such as “humor, laughter, the comic, the ludicrous, the funny, joke, wit” (Raskin, 1985, p.8). Having a large lexical field made humor a hard concept to identify. Researchers in the field do not present an agreement or consensus by which to define each subcategory and draw a clear distinction between them. Although they use these terms to draw a taxonomy of the concept but “there is no terminological agreement among different researchers, and one man's 'humor' may be another man's 'laughter,' and so on and so forth” (Raskin,1985,p.8). This issue inevitably leads to the lack of an agreed upon definition of humor, as a result, the concept has “a great number of loose, incomplete, unrestricted or circular definitions of itself” (Raskin, 1985, p.7). For example Ogden and Richards (1923) provided at least ‘16 types of definitions’ of humor (cited in Raskin, 1985, p.7). Finally, another disagreement in the field is whether to consider humor instances positive or negative? Some researchers claim that since humor is a “cheerful mood” then it presents a positive situation. However, for some others this “cheerfulness” is no more than a “foolish and childish” act, and

this is clear in the way people make fun of each other where some laugh and enjoy that while others complain and feel offended by such behavior (Raskin, 1984, p.12).

### ***Humor as a Linguistic Entity***

Humor as a field is a subject of study to different disciplines where each one addresses the concept from a certain perspective. For example “cognitive psychology deals with the cognitive mechanisms that trigger humor, social psychology with the social effects and mechanisms of humor, folklore with the ways that people of different groups produce humor, linguistics with the semantic and pragmatic aspects of language that produce humor,” (Attardo,2014,p.xxxi). Linguistics is the study of language in all of its forms, as Aitchison (2012) put forward “Linguistics tries to answer the basic questions 'what is language?' and 'How does Language work?’”(p.4). Hence, linguistics can study humor as a part of the language system, and since it has numerous sub branches every one of them approaches it from a different point of view.

Considering a semiotic look at the concept, but first it is worth mentioning that traditionally semiotics is the sum of pragmatics, semantics and syntax (Morris, 1938, p.2). “A semiotics of humor is in fact the analysis of the different types of signifiers that a common semantic mechanism (script opposition/isotopy disjunction/bisociation) can be transposed into.” (Attardo, 1994, P.194). Indeed, semiotics analyses humor as the result of a process of signification that reflects a meaning other than the literal one. Thus, a semiotics conclusion on Humor is that: it is a language instance that is used to go beyond the language traditional meaning (semantics) and reflects a deeper one. “They [semiotic theories] all share a common interest for types of humor that go beyond the joke (as a short, basic text) and encompass larger texts, such as short stories, novels, etc., or other types of "texts" in semiotics “(Attardo, 1994, P.193). Semiotics as a branch of linguistics is an example of how humor is suitable for a



linguistic study. This dissertation is a pragmatic account of humor, it intends at studying a type of humor using a pragmatic approach to check the validity of humor as a pragmatic concept and what conclusions can be possibly reached.

### **Etymology of Humor**

The lexeme *humor* is of a Latin origin that used to have the meaning of moisture or liquid; “The word humor is etymologically related to words such as humidity and to contemporary medical uses in which humors still designate fluids.” (Attardo, 2014, p.350). Considering the contemporary dictionary meaning of humor, the word witnessed a meaning change. In fact, the contemporary conventional meaning of humor is “that quality which appeals to a sense of the ludicrous or absurdly incongruous: a funny or amusing quality” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The shift of meaning from ‘a fluid’ to something laughable or comic is complex but it is a reflection of the attempts made to understand human psychology. In Ancient and Medieval Medicine, personhood and character were believed to be governed by the natural four humors (fluids) that are blood, phlegm, choler, and black bile. Each fluid has certain characteristics and effects on human thought and behavior. Furthermore, “medical treatment was concerned with regulating this constitution in order to prevent the excessive dominance of particular traits rooted in particular humors .The character dominated by blood was held to be sanguine or cheerily optimistic, by phlegm phlegmatic or slow and leaden, by choler bilious or war-like, and by black bile melancholy”( Attardo,2014,p.350). In other words, humor is psychological, it is revolving around fun, irony and sarcasm, and it is that ancient belief of the effects of fluid on the psyche that generated the modern meaning of the lexeme humor. However, the new meaning that humor acquired was not used until the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. Ben Jonson’s comedy of humors, in the late 16th century, was the first forum in which humor and the comic were systematically linked.” Humor was metaphorically defined by Jonson in’ Every Man Out of His Humor ‘(1599), it created a form of comedy defined by odd and extravagant

characters” (Attardo, 2014, p.350). Indeed, the semantic shift occurred to the lexeme humor is salient and it is understood through a look at its history. This shift can be fully grasped in Attardo (2014, p.350) words:” In the 18th and 19th centuries, humor was increasingly seen as a subjective quality of mind and perception rather than an objective quality of character.” In our modern days, humor is easily accepted as everything related to fun, sarcasm and laughter and within the realm of linguistics, it is a worth researching topic.

### **Humor as a Subject of the Linguistic Theory**

Humor as a linguistic concept is relatively modern; it is until the 1980s that the concept received the required attention. In this respect Attardo (2011) maintained “Linguistics – and before it the reflection on language – does not contribute much to research on humor until the ‘80s. Before then, with few exceptions, puns and other wordplay were the only subjects deemed interesting to or treatable by linguistics” (p.135). One might argue that even puns and other wordplay are a category of humor and since they were studied before the 80s, it is not logical to consider humor as a modern topic of linguistics. Indeed, the study of puns, jokes and wordplay is traced back to the time of Greeks, however, they were considered vague and not representational to the concept of humor in general. Attardo (2011) stated “Terms such as ‘pun’ and *joke* are not technical terms and are ultimately fuzzy”(p.135).The field of study of the concept humor is very broad; researchers in the field categorized it aiming at better and more systematic investigations. Therefore, it would be unfair to consider the study of one form or category as the study of the concept in general; the latter is the accumulation of all the studies made in the field covering different forms and types (Attardo,2011,pp135-136). Although, one cannot detach the old and ancient contributions to humor research from modern ones, we decided to focus only on humor as a modern field of study because it is the product of developments from older and ancient times being in a more developed and sophisticated state. In addition, it is more relevant for our study to consider only modern humor development

because of the limited length of our study and the appropriateness that modern studies of humor presents.

### ***Pioneering Linguistic Theories of Humor***

There were several attempts to develop a linguistic theory, which orients itself to the study and investigation of the concept of humor within language. Carrell (2008, p.314) and Attardo (2011, p.137) stated that the first linguistic-based theory of humor was presented by Raskin (1984), it is called *Script-based semantic theory of humor*.

**Script-Based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH).** Raskin (1985) developed this theory. In his own words, Raskin (1985) stated:

“The principal research strategy adopted in the book is the application of a newly-developed semantic theory, script-based semantics, to verbal jokes. The purpose of the application is to provide a (partial) answer to the main problem in the field of humor research, "What is humor?" or "What is funny?" in terms of semantic concepts, features and categories. A number of semantic notions made available by contemporary semantic theory can be successfully used to explain numerous jokes. ” (p.53)

Raskin deployed semantics and its basic assumptions to analyze and understand the nature and meaning of jokes. He called semantics as the ‘*Source Field*’ and Humor as the ‘*Target Field*’. The theory (source field) is to provide the required tools to deal with different problematic issues of the ‘target field’. He literally said: “In a legitimate application of the source field to the target field the problems should come from the latter while the methods are supplied by the former.” (Raskin, 1985, p.51). This contribution marked the birth of the concept Humor with language sciences.

**General Theory of Verbal Humor.** This theory was a revision of the former theory. It was a collaboration between Raskin and Attardo, which resulted in a new theory called “*General Theory of Verbal Humor*” (GTVH). (Carrell, 2008, p.314). The limitations of the SSTH were immediately pointed out by Raskin and eventually led to its revision in Attardo and Raskin (1991) (Attardo, 2011, p.137). As the word *general* implies, this theory went beyond the meaning-based inquiry and attempted to draw a more holistic conclusion on humor. Carrell (2008) described the basic elements of the theory as “based on six knowledge resources, or KR, “which inform the joke”: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation (which includes the audience), target, narrative strategy, and language.” (p.314). this means that it is a thick description of the humorous situation and all the surroundings of the event; language, participants, narration, function and so on. This theory is therefore a clear development on the linguistic-based theories of Humor.

**Audience-based theory of verbal humor.** Carrell introduced it in 1993. The theory as Carrell put forward (2008)

“Humor does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, it has four necessary constituents which make up the humor event: the joke teller, the joke text, and the audience all existing within a particular situation which contributes to each of the other three constituents in the humor event” (p.315).

The novelty of this theory is that it presents the concept of *humor event* and this is a more critical and systematic look on the concept of Humor than the GTVH. The importance of this theory also is that it contributed to the development of the linguistic-based theories of humor as it presented a more developed apparatus of humor study within language sciences.

We can notice that the former linguistic-based theories among others started in a humble way by looking only at the semantic features of verbal jokes and gained momentum

with time. We did not include all the theories that study humor we just wanted to give an account of the development in manner and scope of the theories. One of the modern theories that were deployed to study humor is the ‘Cooperative Principle’ theory by Paul Grice (1989), the latter is the theoretical framework adopted in this dissertation and will be profoundly described and investigated in the following section. The aim of this section is to highlight the relevance of humor as a concept to the field of language sciences and to provide a brief overview of the development of the linguistic theories of humor.

## Section Two: Pragmatics / The Cooperative Principle and Humor

### Pragmatics

#### *A Look at the History*

Morris (1938) introduced pragmatics as a science. He believed that pragmatics, semantics and syntax form a unity that studies *meaning* (p.2). “Traditionally, pragmatics has been considered as forming a triad with syntax and semantics” (Mey, 2009, p.786). In fact, the reason that Morris (1938) used the concept *sign* to refer to meaning lies in the fact that he considered Pragmatics, Semantics and syntax (syntactic) as sub branches of *semiotics*. They reflect different dimensions of meaning and they are interconnected in this regard. For Morris “The significance of semiotic as a science lies in the fact that it is a step in the unification of science” (1938, p.2). This means that semiotics is a multidisciplinary entity that aims at providing the necessary foundations required to study signs. A sign is a meaningful unit that has a representation within the language system and refers to an idea or an object at the outer world. This means that the sign is assigned to a function and the process in which something functions as a sign may be called *semiosis* (Morris, 1938, p.2-3). Thus, *semiosis* is the systematic meaning assignment of a unit in the language to another entity, and the sign is the subject matter of Semiotics. Morris (1938) suggested that syntax is considered with the study of the formal relations of one sign to another, semantics studies the relations of signs to objects in the outside world, and pragmatics is thought of as the relation between signs and those who interpret the signs or the users of language (p.6-7). Thus, each sub branch is devoted to the study of a certain piece that composes meaning.

Mey (2001) assumed that the late sixties and early seventies witnessed the collapse of the earlier theories and hypotheses of pragmatics “in particular the Syntax-only approach of Chomsky “and the rise of a new model (p.4). At first practitioners in the field were not aware

of the emergence because “All one could see at the time was a growing number of unexplained (and, in fact unexplainable) observations, giving rise to numerous theoretical paradoxes” (Mey, 2001, p.4). Thus, Pragmatics emerged to fill this gap, it provided what is needed for practitioners to consider and deal with these observations. One of these observations is the context; the context plays a crucial role in determining the meaning of what is being said, and thus one cannot discard it when looking at language in use, and it is pragmatics to provide the required framework to look at it (Mey, 2001, p.4).

### ***Pragmatics as a Separate Branch of Linguistics***

The idea of linking pragmatics to semantics and syntax was criticized and even rejected by many scholars, linguists such as Hill, anthropologists such as Dell Hymes, and sociologists such as Goffman (Mey, 2009, p.787). “Another widespread error is made by people who believe that human communication should obey (or actually obeys) the rules embodied in what is usually called grammar (by many linguists interpreted as a device that will generate all the correct sentences of a language)” (Mey, 2009, p.787). Thus, people when communicating need not to adhere to the rules of language (Syntax) but rather to the deliverance and clarity of the message. In fact, what matters for this view is; using the language in communication is only held effective when the addressee understands and grasps well the intended meaning of the addresser. Mey (2009) added that Syntactic structure is held by Chomsky and his followers as an essential and crucial element that inevitably contributes to the well-delivery of meaning in conversation. Chomsky was the first to introduce the syntactic structure and its importance in 1957, this contribution was enormous in the effect it had on linguistics. However, it was refuted or as Mey said:” was publicly denounced as a fallacy”. (p.787). Human communication is the task to deliver meaning and once achieved no one considers the extent to which the used language respects the different rules of grammar and syntax, this latter as Mey described is a “pure fantasy” (2009, p.787). It is salient that the rejection is profound and it is clearly reflected

in the use of words such as 'fantasy'. This strong position is justified by the belief that comprehending a message in conversation is a matter of appropriate interpretation of utterances as well as the context where they are used and this process does not require a certain structure. Moreover, some words might have a certain literal meaning (semantics) but when used, they might refer to some other form of meaning or even the opposite. In order to illustrate this point Mey (2009) proposed the example of the word *democracy* and literally said: "the Greek roots of the word 'democracy' and its original meaning of 'people power' provide a sad example" (p.787). In order to understand this example let us imagine a context of a Russian communist person using the word democracy in conversation with all the negative connotations the word has as an American product, the intended meaning is expected to be far away from people power and close enough to imperialism and political hypocrisy.

This marked the emergence of Pragmatics as a separate entity to study the association of people, context and the process of meaningful language use. In Mey (2009) words: "It is also in this sense that we can define pragmatics as studying the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society" (P.794). The pragmatic turn in linguistics can be described as a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar (in particular, syntax) to the paradigm of the language user (Mey, 2006, p.794).

### ***Pragmatics and Meaning***

Pragmatics approaches the language when it is being used in different contexts and investigates the interaction between the former and the latter in forming meaning. "Pragmatics may be defined as the science of language use (parole) or the discursive functions of language, including its contextual uniqueness and variability (irregularities)" (Mey, 2009, p.767). Thus, pragmatics is the study of meaning outside the boundaries of dictionaries and inside its use in daily life human communication process. In fact, semantics also deals with the concept of meaning but not the way pragmatics does the job. " linguistics may be defined as the science of



the abstract (decontextualizable) regularities that constitute linguistic structure (langue), including *semantics* as a formally encoded system of denotational meanings” (Mey, 2009, p.767). That is, to study the language regardless of the context where and when it is being used, like in semantics where every part in the language is connected to a predefined entity in the world. Morris (1938) assumed that, in semantics, meaning is linked to objects and it is a one to one relationship between *linguistic expressions* and *the world*. However, in pragmatics, meaning is linked to the individual user of the language (interpreter) and it is the way that speakers and writers choose to use these linguistic expressions to communicate (p.6). In semantics, the word is used to deliver a preset conventional meaning whereas in Pragmatics words are contextualized and therefore deployed to mean what is necessary for communication to be successful. To draw a conclusion, the meaning of words or utterances is conventional for semantics but it is only arisen in conversation for pragmatics. Pragmatics in turn, provides the required theoretical frameworks to study the meaning in context. In this respect, Malmkjær (2010) maintained “pragmatics is concerned with aspects of meaning which arise in connection with contexts of utterance – including such parameters as speaker and addressee(s) as well as the time and place of utterance” (p.418).

### ***Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis***

We have seen that Pragmatics is the study of language in use, and it is the case for discourse analysis (DA). “Discourse analysis is the study of language in use” (Gee & Handford, 2012, p.1). Having the same definition does not entail that both disciplines are identical, there is no necessity for that even. However, they are intertwined in the subject matter of study, which is language in context, “moving on to what **pragmatics** and **discourse analysis** are, we can start by saying that they are approaches to studying language’s relation to the contextual background features” (Cutting,2002,p.1). In fact, the expression ‘Language in use’ is misleading in this regard, simply because it reflects more than one meaning. For Pragmatics,

the expression means to look at the context of the utterance so that to grasp the meaning, “Pragmatics is the study of meaning in relation to the context in which a person is speaking or writing. This includes social, situational and textual context. It also includes background knowledge context; that is, what people know about each other and about the world” (Paltridge, 2012, P.38). On the other hand, in Discourse Analysis “We need to know the communicative function of an utterance, that is, what it is ‘doing’ in the particular setting in order to assign a discourse label to the utterance in the place of the overall discourse. (Paltridge, 2012, P.38). For example someone saying ‘The bus was late might be complaining so the genre is complaint or explaining to apologize so the genre is explanation (Paltridge, 2012, p.38).

Another factor that contributes to the differentiation of the two disciplines is how ‘context’ is related to meaning. For DA, language and context have a relation of “**coherence**”, while in pragmatics it is a matter of “**relevance**” (Cutting, 2002, p.2). That is, DA focuses on the relationship between words within the text and how do they together form and deliver the intended meaning. On the other hand, pragmatics considers utterances to be meaningful when they are appropriately chosen and deployed (Cutting, 2002, p.2). Moreover, the two disciplines are different in terms of “**structure**” of the text; DA studies how larger pieces of language “beyond the sentence level”, such as conversations, are organized. (Cutting, 2002, p.2). Conversation analysis for instance examines exchange structure, or “what one speaker says can influence the next speaker’s response”, in other terms, how a piece of language leads to the production of another particular one, in this regard, pragmatics provides an appropriate tool of analysis for conversational analysis (Cutting, 2002, p.2). Thus, pragmatics is a legitimate tool of analysis for DA. Finally, both disciplines are different in terms of the importance given to the “**social principles** of discourse”. In pragmatics, principles like relevance, precision, clarity, sincerity and politeness of interlocutors are at the center of the pragmatic view and study of

language, something that marks the uniqueness of the field and that does not exist in DA. (Cutting, 2002, p.3).

### ***Pragmatics and Conversational Analysis***

The name conversational analysis is indexical; it tells that it is a certain systematic study (analysis) of the language used in human interactions (conversations). Conversational analysis (CA) is:” A form of linguistic analysis which focuses on transcripts of real-life spoken interactions. It is often referred to as the study of talk in interaction” (Baker & Ellece, 2011, p.22). They (2011) added that it covers a wide range of interactions such as: private, informal and institutional interactions like doctor–patient, legal interactions, police interviews and more (p.22). Talk in interaction or conversation as a use of language is, for Pragmatics, an act of communication “All-Important is the fact that people engage in communicative activity whenever they use language. People talk with the intention to communicate something to somebody” (Mey, 2001, p.68). Furthermore, this idea of communicating an intended meaning to somebody is cooperative in nature. “It is understood that people, when communicating, have something to tell each other. Communication, furthermore, requires people to cooperate, the ‘bare facts’ of conversation come alive only in a mutually accepted, pragmatically determined context” (Mey, 2001, p.71). This means that cooperation is a fundamental factor in any successful conversation and that the context as discussed earlier plays a crucial role in this process. A theoretical framework to study cooperation in conversation was presented by Paul Grice (Mey, 2001, p.72), and his theory will be covered in the next section. It is the deployment of Pragmatic theories and principles (Grice theory in our case) to analyze conversation that marks that tie between Pragmatics and CA, where the latter presents the umbrella of such a practice.

**Humor as a CA Subject.** After drawing a conclusion on the relationship between Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis in general and Conversational Analysis in particular, the

aim of this part is to show how humor presents a valid subject to CA. In fact, humor can be either narrative or conversational. “We may find, at least pre-theoretically, a major difference between narrative (or canned) jokes and conversational jokes” (Attardo, n.d, p.61). On the one hand, ”Narrative/Canned jokes are typically told by a narrator who often prefaces the joke with an announcement of the humorous nature of the forthcoming turn, and who holds the floor through the telling and releases it for the reaction turn of the audience” (Attardo, n.d, p.61-62). That is, someone with a clear intention of telling something funny to a person or group of people, who by turn will react by laughing for instance. In the other hand, “Conversational jokes are told as a regular turn in conversation, without prefacing. They are created by the teller “on the fly” and are strongly context-dependent “(Attardo, n.d, p.62).

Jokes present only one type of humor in general or conversational humor in particular. Long and Graesser (1988) (as cited in Dynel (2009)) assumed that conversational humor covers also:

“Irony, satire, sarcasm, overstatement and understatement, self-deprecation, teasing, replies to rhetorical questions, clever replies to serious statements, double entendres (puns), transformations of frozen expressions and puns. It is self-evident that these eleven categories operate on various classificatory criteria, thus representing rhetorical figures or pragmatic types, which could easily overlap” (p.12).

We can clearly notice how vast the field is and how humor is persistent and natural to occur in conversation. The term conversational humor is a ‘Blanket category’ within different categories of conversation typology that refers to all forms of humor (Dynel, 2009, p.12). This clearly leads to consider Humor as a solid entity within CA.

## **The Cooperative Principle (CP)**

People co-exist in groups in which they communicate and cooperate with each other. People's ability and willingness to communicate present an important side of the pragmatic view of language. (Mey, 2009, p.791). This cooperation was formulated and presented by The Berkeley philosopher Paul Grice stating the human need for, and extent of, cooperation in conversation, a principle that he detailed further in the four so-called conversational maxims, which guide the speakers and hearers through the conversational maze in a mutually satisfying way (Mey, 2009, p.791). His cooperative Principle goes as follows:

“Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1989, p.26). Thus, according to Grice the individual speaker should contribute effectively in the process of communication in order to help reach the purpose of communication within its natural context. The CP consists of four Maxims :” On the assumption that some such general principle as this [= the CP] is acceptable, one may perhaps distinguish four categories [. . .] Echoing Kant, I call these categories Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner” (Grice, 1989, p.26).

### ***Maxims***

In Grice's own words (1989, p.26-27) the maxims are:

Maxim of Quantity: Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality:

Supermaxim: Try to make your contribution one that is true

Submaxims: Do not say what you believe to be false.

Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relevance (Relation): Be Relevant .

Maxim of Manner:

Supermaxim: Be perspicuous

Submaxims: Avoid obscurity of expression.

Avoid ambiguity. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). Be orderly.

Hence, these maxims are hypothetical tools by which the conversation is considered cooperative or not and yet successful or not. It is clear and beyond discussion that the maxims are instances of the CP, i.e., concrete cases of a more abstract principle. (Attardo,2017,p.176). Attardo (2017) stresses that a conversation is held cooperative when all the four maxims are observed and the violation of one of them leads to a violation of the CP in general (p.176).

### ***NON-Observance/ Violation of the Maxims***

Grice (1989, p.30) put forward:

“A participant in talk exchange may fail to fulfill a maxim in various ways, which include the following

1.He may quietly and unostentatiously *violate* a maxim; if so, in some cases he will be liable to mislead.

2.He may opt out from the operation both of the maxim and of the cooperative principle; he may say, indicate, or allow it to become plain that he is unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires. He may say, for example, *I cannot say more; my lips are sealed.*

3. HE may be faced by a *clash*: he may be unable, for example, to fulfill the first maxim of Quantity (Be as informative as is required) without violating the second maxim of Quality (Have adequate evidence for what you say).

4. He may *flout* a maxim; that is, he may blatantly fail to fulfill it.”

therefore, non-observance of the CP happens in four main types: Violation, opting out, clash of maxims and flout.

### ***Conversational Implicature***

The term *Implicature* was introduced by Grice (1989) “I wish to introduce, as terms of art, the verb *implicate* and the related nouns *implicature* (cf. *implying*) and *implicatum* (cf. *what is implied*) (p.24). Grice (1989) claimed that human conversations are generally a “cooperative effort” in which interlocutors recognize the purpose of the conversation or at least “a mutually accepted direction”. However, “some possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable” (p.26). Flouting a maxim by the speaker is a conversational move as it leads to a “minor problem” of understanding what exactly is meant by the addresser, this flout generates the implicature “this situation is one that characteristically gives rise to a conversational implicature” (Grice, 1989, p.30). Thus, flouting a maxim(s) is creating an implied meaning that the addressee needs to figure out, a meaning that goes beyond the literal meaning of words.

In order to infer the generated implicature (implied meaning), the addressee needs to rely on the following: the conventional meaning of the words used, the CP and the maxims, the linguistic context and the background knowledge that the interlocutors share. The previous elements are based on the supposed fact that they are available in the conversation for participants and that they are aware of that (Grice, 1989, p.31). Let us consider the example provided by Grice (1989):

“A: *I am out of petrol.*

B: *there is a garage round the corner.*” (p.32).

In the example Grice (1989) commented that B is violating the maxim of relevance unless B is quiet sure that the garage is open and has petrol, so “He implicates that the garage is, or at least may be open” (p.32). An ordinary answer to the question might be: there is an open garage at the corner that sells petrol, and the way B answered is implying what has not been said, and this is what implicature is all about. A in this case having the background, context and conventional meaning of words can deduce that the non-mentioned information (the garage is open and sells petrol) are quiet available.

Grice (1989) logic behind implicature is derived from his concern on what people say and what do they actually mean. Grice acknowledged ‘what is said’ reluctantly and with reservations. He admitted towards the end of his life that the exact relationship between linguistic meaning and speaker-meaning was the philosophical question that had given him the most trouble (Chapman, 2010, p.40). He started by claiming, “In the sense which I am using the word *say*, I intend what someone has said to be closely related to the conventional meaning of words” (Grice, 1989, p.25). In this regard, Grice (1989) provided an utterance “*HE is in the grip of a vice*”, and commented that, understanding this utterance relying only on knowledge of English language and the literal meaning of words would lead to grasp either: someone is talking about “a male person or animal x” and that “(1)x was unable to rid himself of a certain kind of bad character trait” or “(2) some part of x’s person was caught in a certain kind of tool or instrument (approximate account, of course)”(p.25). However, for a “full identification” of what the speaker has said, it is necessary to know “(a) the identity of x, (b) the time of utterance, and (c) the meaning, on the particular occasion of utterance” in order to make a decision between (1) and (2) (Grice,1989,p.25).



The concept of implicature provided a critical look to the notion of meaning, Grice put forward a clear distinctive account between “sentence meaning” and “speaker meaning” or intentional meaning (Chapman, 2010, p.40). “Paul Grice developed a conception of meaning which, though tied to use, enforced a distinction between what linguistic expressions mean and what speakers mean in using them” (Chapman, 2010, p.40). Thus, this contribution enforced an insight that meaning is functional and it is user-oriented “it is thanks to him that it became obvious that the meaning of an expression is a function of what speakers do with it” (Petrus, 2010, p.7). Thus, by ways of recapitulating one can analyze the context, background knowledge and participants to understand the meaning generated in all forms of conversation, and it is that implied meaning or implicature that carry the humorous effect we are investigating.

## **The Cooperative Nature of Humor**

### ***Humor as a Violation of the Cooperative Principle***

Different types of humor like jokes involve violations of one or more of Grice's maxims (Attardo, 1994, p.271). “Jokes present a violation of one of the four maxims composing the CP...The violation of the CP is real, and not "mentioned" or otherwise metalinguistically salvaged” (Attardo, 1994, p.271). therefore, humor presents a true violation of the CP. It is a “particularized conversational implicature” generated and created through the non-obedience of one or more of the maxims in a certain context. “Particularized Conversational Implicature- That is to say, cases in which an implicature is carried by saying that *P* on a particular occasion in virtue of special features of the context. (Grice, 1989, p.37). Humor as a conversational implicature is highly dependent on the context of the conversation. Attardo (1994, p.271-272) assumed that Grice himself considered irony (type of humor) as a violation of the CP and as an example of the implicature. Let us consider the following example from Attardo (1994):

(1) “Why did the Vice President fly to Panama?”

"Because the fighting is over."

In the example above the answer indicates that the president could not travel when the war was going on, which implies that he lacks the required courage to do so. The answer could be direct like : because he was not able to travel before due to the fighting and then to deduce that he is not a courageous president. Via violating the Quality maxim, the addressee generates an implicature, which by turn helps creating a humorous situation. "Example (1) is a deliberate infraction of the maxim of quality", that is used to insinuate that the then Vice-President was a coward "(Attardo, 1994, p.273).

Moreover, Puns as another type of verbal humor is another example of violating the CP as in the following example found in Attardo (1994, p.272-273)

(2) Do you believe in clubs for young people?"

"Only when kindness fails."

This example is ambiguous enough to be held as violating the manner maxim. This ambiguity is in fact an almost shared characteristic of the different of puns.

### ***The Relativisation of the CP***

Another point of view on humor was presented by Raskin (1985) who claimed that: Humor is a 'mode of communication' in which every maxim is relativized to the situation of joke telling (cited in Attardo, 2017, p.181).that is, he modified (relativized) the CP and created an updated version that is used only to analyze humor . Raskin (1985) called this mode "non-bona-fide" communication mode, where Bona-Fide mode is" the 'ordinary' information-conveying mode (no lying, acting, joking, etc.)" (attardo, 2017,p.88-89), and "Non-Bona-Fide" ones are "to indicate other modes of communication not entirely dedicated to information-

conveying” (Attardo, 2017, p.181). “non-bona-fide” has the connotation of “bad faith” and bona fide is Latin for “good faith” (Attardo, 2017, p.182).

Raskin (1985, p.103) provided maxims that are tailor-made for jokes telling and that suit the humorous situations:

Maxim of Quantity: Give exactly as much information as is necessary for the joke.

Maxim of Quality: Say only what is compatible with the world of the joke.

Maxim of Relation: Say only what is relevant to the joke.

Maxim of Manner: Tell the joke efficiently.

Hence, Raskin provided a relativized Cooperative principle that is relevant to verbal humor, one that is different from the original one of Grice; a modified version. This view is in a clear accord with the first view that takes humor as a violation of the CP since it provides a theoretical assumption that is clearly deviated from the original one. However, there was an opposition to this view, of those who claim that humor is not a violation of the CP.

### **Attempts of Denying the Violation**

Many voices arisen to claim that humor and joke telling is not a violation of the CP. “There have been [a few] attempts to claim that humor is not a “real” violation of the CP, either by claiming that the violation is merely mentioned, or attributed to a character in the text” (Attardo, 2017, p.182). One of these attempts is Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986) (cited in Attardo, 2017, p.182). Relevance Theory revolves around the assumption that humor in all its types cannot violate the maxim of relevance and that the latter “cannot be violated” (Attardo, 2017, p.182). This claim was refuted by Attardo (2017, p.182) claiming that different bodies of language might carry more than one interpretation and if one is considered relevant the others will not and thus considering only one as relevant inevitably leads to consider the

others as violating the maxim of relevance . Attardo in this regard questioned the different interpretations or in other words, implicatures of one body and which of them is the relevant one, that is, since there is more than one interpretation and each one is relevant in a specific context, each one plays a violation to the other. Criticism was very briefly mentioned in this section and we used only Attardo (2017) words because first, he presents an authority in the field and second he claimed, “I suspect that the term “non-cooperative” is to blame in this case” (p.182). Attardo (2017) suggested that the opposition of the view that humor is a violation to the CP is only because of the word non-cooperative, he added, “Non-cooperative is interpreted as aggressive or disruptive, as in ‘an uncooperative subject’, or worse as antisocial, as in someone not helping out” (p.182). In this sense, he concluded, “This is why I avoided the term ‘non-cooperative’ and ultimately ‘violation’ and prefer the use of ‘non-observance’, which has less negative connotations. I must stress, however, that I still maintain that humor is a violation of the CP and not some other form of non-observance” (Attardo, 2017, p.182).

The View of Attardo and Raskin, supported by Grice himself is a strong point of view, and presents a valid framework by which to treat verbal humor. They do justify their assumption and it is mainly the reason to adopt their theoretical assumption in this work.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter is a tool kit to treat utterances and analyze them. Humorous utterances in our case that happen in conversations as a form of communication. People do communicate with an intended message, they cooperate in order to achieve the communication purpose and reach the intended meaning. Whenever, there is a flout/ violation of one or more of the maxims, the implicature generated should be inferred so that to understand what meaning is exactly raised. The context of the communication act is crucial in the process of understanding what meaning is intended. In fact, via the breaking of the maxims, people create a meaning of their own that goes beyond the literal meaning of words and expressions. Hence, within this

process humor is present and salient. In the next chapter, the application of the cooperative principle is set to reveal how humor can be a product of breaking the cooperative principle.

One might argue that failing to maintain the four maxims leads eventually to the failure of the communication process. However, it is not the case; breaking the maxim(s) whether intentionally or not, takes the conversation in a certain direction. Paul Grice devised that violation is an *intentional* act by which people for example opt out of a conversation. Moreover, flouting is *unintentional* in nature, it creates implicature that needs to be inferred so that to grasp the meaning and that by turn decides what direction the conversation is going, and it is mainly where humor is born.

## Chapter Two: The Fieldwork

### Introduction

The Cooperative Principle frames cooperation in communication; checking whether participants adhere or not to the different maxims is the practice by which to comment if the conversation is cooperative or not. However, the breaking of the CP does not always lead to the failure of the communication process, instead, it might lead to the generation of funny and laughable situations. Humor is one of the products of not adhering to the maxims. In this chapter, we will analyze the British sitcom *Mind Your Language* with the aim to find out how flouting/ violating the maxims generates humorous events.

The chapter starts with an explanation and justification of the adopted methodology accompanied with a detailed description of the subject of analysis. Concerning the latter, we shall provide first the information of the full work and later the selected subject of analysis. After that, the analysis takes place with all the required information relevant to the analysis process. The findings will follow where we mention what we could deduce from the analysis; pieces of information trying to answer the research question of the current study. Finally, a conclusion is drawn where all the parts of the research are connected.

## **Section One: Research Methodology**

### **Data Collection**

Our data type is the content of one of the episodes of the British sitcom 'Mind Your Language' that was primarily retrieved from the famous website YouTube. It is the script of the series, that is, the contributions of characters when interacting with each other. Due to the reason that we could not find the written script of the show, we relied on our listening when watching the series to write it down. Moreover, information such as the cast and episodes number were retrieved from 'The Internet Media Database (IMDb)'. IMDb is a trusted data base website that contains information about almost all series and movies in the world.

### **Population**

In this paper, the population is the episodes of Mind Your Language series. Series are divided into episodes, and Mind Your Language is not an exception; it contains forty two (42) episodes. In fact, analyzing conversations is working on the script of the show; characters do not improvise or create what they say; the producers give them a script. Thus, producers build the script to serve the genre of the show. Our show is a comedy one, that is, the script is created to maintain such a genre which makes it valid as a subject of analysis to check whether the verbal humor is generated by not adhering to the CP or not. In the next lines a full description of the series is provided, it is worth mentioning that the summary of the series is our own product after having watched the work.

### ***Mind You Language***

Mind your language is a four (4) seasons British Sitcom that was produced and broadcasted between 1977-1986 on ITv. The First three seasons were produced by London Weekend Television (LWT) and the final one by Tri Films. The work was directed by Stuart Allen and written by Vince Powell. The genre of the series is Comedy where the medium length of an

episode is approximately 30 minutes. Each episode of the series has a title, and most episodes take place in the classroom of a private language school with few exceptions (IMDb, 2021)

### ***Summary***

The show is about a group of immigrants who came from different parts of the world: Japan, China, Italy, Greece, Spain, India, Pakistan, Germany, Sweden, Hungary and France. Having different mother tongues as well as cultural and religious backgrounds, students struggle to cope with each other and to learn English. Jeremy Brown is the teacher, who presents a caring and patient character, finds it a burden to teach his students English where language interference and an apparent low intellectual capacity are his major challenges. Moreover, the director of the private school Ms. Courtney, who is in favor of a female teacher believing that females are more resistant and strong in teaching, is not satisfied with the teacher and always keeping an eye on him especially when considering the low level of the students who fail the level exam several times.

### ***Main Characters***

#### **The School Staff.**

***Barry Evans.*** playing the role of *Jeremy Brown* , present in the 42 episodes of the work(IMDb, 2021). A young teacher who makes living by working in the private school, he expresses a friendly attitude toward his students regardless of their carelessness. Mr. Brown was hired and put under test until he proves competent, and at the first day of his job he was told that the last teacher lost his mind because of the students and he would better be prepared for this class.

***Zara Nutley.*** in the role of *Dolores Courtney*, present in the 42 episodes(IMDb, 2021). An over the 40's woman who is not married and who has a mean and dominating character. She finds the male teacher useless in teaching and doing her best to prove that, she only accepted him in the job because she did not find a female teacher and she is always pointing that once she finds



one she will immediately replace Jeremy. The teacher backed up by his students, managed to keep the job several times.

**Tommy Godfrey.** as *Sid*, present in 20 episodes (IMDb, 2021). Sid is the school caretaker who is mostly acting cleaning. He is an old person with hearing problems who mostly uses rhyming slang that students find difficult to understand. He is an alcoholic man who always works to sell students drinks that he manages to take from school supplies.

**Iris Sadler.** acting *Gladys*, present in 20 episodes (IMDb, 2021). She works at the school cafeteria serving hot drinks. She always flatters Jeremy Brown and gets his back in different occasions when he needs to get away from Miss Courtney.

### **Students.**

**George Camiller** .the Italian student *Giovanni Capello*, present in 42 episodes (IMDb, 2021). He is a Christian Italian young man who works as a cook at an Italian restaurant in London. He always plays funny in answering questions and he always tries to play a monitor and a leading person in class. He has a problem with understanding the English Metaphors.

**Jacki Harding.** or *Anna Schmidt* present in the 42 episodes (IMDb, 2021). Anna is a Christian German au pair who is presented as a serious and hard working person, she pointed that this is because she is German and they are always efficient. Anna's main problem is the mixing of /v/ and /w/ sounds producing weird language pieces.

**Ricardo Montez.** in the role of *Juan Cervantes*, in 42 episodes (IMDb, 2021). He is a Christian Spanish bartender who always has an endless faith in his answers even though they are wrong most of the time. When he first joined the class, Juan speaks almost no English answering any question in Spanish using the expression *por favor* and complaining when people around him do not understand.

**Albert Moses.** as *Ranjeet Singh*, present in 42 episodes (IMDb, 2021) . He is a London underground employee from Punjab, India. Ranjeet's religion is Sikh who often clashes with his neighbor Muslim from Pakistan Ali. This student has a considerable vocabulary but he mistakes deploying and using them and he is famous by holding his hands together and say *Thousand Apologies* when he is corrected.

**Jamila Massey.** playing the role of *Jamila Ranjha*, present in 29 episodes (IMDb, 2021). A Christian Indian housewife who always brings her knitting tools to class. Jamila did not have any English when she first joined the class. She tends to use Urdu whenever she is asked and she needed Ali to help her translate what she is asked.

**Dino Shafeek.** acting as *Ali Nadim*, present in 28 episodes (IMDb, 2021). Ali is a Pakistani Muslim unemployed student who always fights with Ranjeet because of the different religious backgrounds. Ali is presented as an honest hardworking student. He is famous by using the expression "Oh Blimey!" whenever he discovers a mistake or something wrong he commits, as well as, "Jolly Good" when he wants to express appreciation or good understanding. Ali was the very first student who was presented in the show along with Miss Courtney.

**Françoise Pascal.** playing *Danielle Favre*, present in 29 episodes (IMDb, 2021). Danielle is a French Christian young lady who works as an au pair. She never fails to attract the attention of man, and male students occasionally fight over who sits with her or who helps her do her homework especially Giovanni and Max, however she clearly expresses a certain admiration to the teacher who always tends to struggle pushing her away. She is known by the use of French accent to pronounce English.

**Pik Sen Lim.** in the role of *Chung Su-Lee*, present in 27 episodes (IMDb, 2021). She is a typical communist Chinese who is strongly inspired by Chairman Mao. Lee never misses taking Little Red Book of Mao whenever she goes and she always uses his sayings when talking in different

occasions even when it is not relevant. She is a secretary at the Chinese Embassy in Britain, and she never misses an occasion to show her disagreement with capitalism. The student also expresses a rivalry with her Japanese classmate, and she is famous by mixing the /r/ and /l/ sounds.

***Kevork Malikyan.*** playing the role of *Maximillian Andrea Archimedes Papandrious (Max)*, present in 29 episodes (IMDb, 2021). Max is playing role of a Christian Greek who works for a shipping agency, Max adds a /h/ sound to almost every word he says, his accent is a heavy one mainly due to his origins. Max frequently competes with Giovanni over Danielle although the two are close friends.

***Anna Bergman.*** as *Ingrid Svenson*, present in 21 episodes (introduced at the beginning of season 2) (IMDb, 2021). A Swedish au pair who presents a threat to Danielle once she joins class, as she expresses a clear and direct attraction to the teacher. Anna has a serious problem in word order and she always mixes up words ending up with meaningless combinations.

***Robert Lee.*** in the role of *Tarō Nagazumi*, present in 29 episodes (IMDb, 2021). Working as a representative of the British branch of an electronics japan-based company, Taro always praises his country man for being the most efficient people, because of that, he has an issue with Anna who claims that Germans are more efficient. Moreover, he frequently has a clash with Lee due to the rivalry between their countries. Taro is a fluent English speaker but he has a tendency of ending words with an “o” sound, and replying with “Ah-So!” whenever he is called without forgetting to bow in such occasions.

***Gabor Vernon.*** as *Zoltán Szabó* only present in season 2 (8 episodes) (IMDb, 2021). He is a Hungarian student with a very low level of English. He is famous by using the Hungarian word pronounced *bochanot* which means sorry in English.

In this section, only the main characters are mentioned with a brief description of each one of them, because such pieces of information are necessary to understand the general plot of the work as well as the context. In the data analysis section, the background of each character helps explain the language production as well as their interpretation.

### **Sampling**

Sampling happened in two levels in which we used two different Sampling strategies. The first sampling strategy used is purposeful sampling; it is a selective non-probability one. We have selected the most rated episode in all the seasons in IMDb, it is the episode nine (9) season one (1) which has the rate 8.3/10 (IMDb, 2021). The selection is made on the belief that the most rated episode is the most ironic, laughable and humorous one especially that the genre of the work is comedy. Furthermore, Due to the limited number of pages of our work, we could not go for another episode because the analysis took a considerable number of pages more than the allowed number. This type of analysis is qualitative in nature, in which there will be no means of data quantification or generalizable conclusions. We will be looking for a certain quality (humor) in our subject of analysis. The analysis of conversations within the episode is aimed at answering the former mentioned research question. The selection of the episode is subjective, and it is made according to the relevance of the material for our research.

The second sampling strategy was deployed in order to select a limited number of scenes from the episode and again the reason is the limited number of pages we have. The episode contains four (4) main scenes from which we have selected three (3). Within every scene, all the conversations are subject to analysis. After analyzing the first conversation, we noticed that it requires a considerable number of pages and that the analysis of a full episode is to exceed the allowed number of pages. Therefore, we adopted the simple random sampling strategy to select a number of scenes, which is a probabilistic sampling strategy where all scenes have the same chance to be picked.

### **Grice's Model of Analysis**

The used technique to treat the conversation(s) in every scene is qualitative content analysis. We analyzed conversations aiming at finding violations/flouts of the maxim(s) in order to discover the quality of humor in each of them. The analysis was carried on the basis of Grice's cooperative principle, which states that people are cooperative when they respect and adhere to the four different maxims of Quality, quantity, relevance and manner. We looked for the intentional breaking of the maxims, that is *violation*, as well as, the unintentional *flouting* of them to check whether there is a humor effect as a result. Therefore, the terms violation and flout will be carefully used and the reason of the violation as well as the *implicature* of the flout is to be described and explained. The general summary of the work and the plot of the episode provided the required context by which to understand and analyze the different conversations. However, we provided the specific context of every scene and the participating characters prior to the analysis and whenever required. Before starting the analysis, general information of the selected episode is provided.

## Section Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section starts with a description of the selected episode.

### Season one (1) episode nine (9)

#### *General Information*

**Title.** Kill or cure.

**Time of the episode.** 25 minutes and 38 seconds.

**Locations.** The school (office of the headmaster and the classroom)/ the flat of the teacher.

**Release date.** 24 February 1978 (IMDb, 2021)

**Cast.** Miss.Courtney.

Mr. Brown.

Giovanni.

Ranjeet.

Ali.

Danielle.

Jamila.

Lee.

Max.

Anna.

Taro.

Juan.

**Plot.** The episode starts with a phone call from Brown to Miss.Courtney telling her that he is ill and cannot make it to class. Having no substitute, the manager took charge of the class asking students different questions but ending up with very stupid answers. Miss. Courtney feeling disappointed with the class level left Anna in charge of the class and returned to her office after a while she visited the class again to find out that Anna sent the students home.

After leaving the school, the students decided to visit the sick teacher at his home. Max, Giovanni, Jamila and Danielle grouped together and went to the teacher's house, they knocked the door and he answers to go away and leave him alone. The students tried the backdoor because they did not hear the answers and found it open, at the same time Jeremy Brown opened the front door and found no one. Then, he went to the corridor trying to find out who was knocking, and the students closed the front door they found open, so the students are inside the flat and the teacher is outside. Ali arrived at that moment finding Mr.Brown at the corridor and, the teacher is suspecting that there are burglars inside the house and once he looked through the peephole, he looked at Max's eyes who was suspecting that there is a burglar outside and they both commented that they are looking at "evil eyes". Mr. Brown decided to take some steps backward and run over the door in an attempt to break it, when he almost reached the door, Giovanni opened it and the teacher ended up landing in his bed and caused it to fold up into the wall.

The students rescued the teacher and due to the shock Danielle spilled some milk over her dress, so Mr. Brown asked her to go to the washroom and clean herself up. Miss. Courtney arrived to collect the students' home works at the moment Danielle left the washroom not dressed properly and the situation was embarrassing. Jamila by turn went to the school to explain the situation to the manager, and when she realizes the truth, she went back to apologies to the teacher. Meanwhile, Taro, Juan and Ranjeet arrived bringing a bottle of wine to the teacher, who received different types of wine from his students. When Miss Courtney arrived

she found the teacher dancing with his students, she warned him that any other incident this type will cause his contract to be terminated. She accidentally pushed Mr. Brown who grabbed her hand, and they both fell over the bed that folded with both of them in it.

## **Data Analysis**

### ***Scene one (1)***

The first conversation of the episode happened between the teachers (J) and Miss.Courtney on the phone when he called to let her know that he is sick and can not come to class.

The phone rings...

Courtney: Yes.

Brown: "heavy breathing" and then strong sneeze!

Courtney: How dare you, you dirty old man! Then hanged the phone immediately (1:10).

The normal situation that Miss.Courtney expected is that someone would talk and reveal the reason of the phone call, but the teacher is sick and could not talk at this very moment, so he accidentally and unintentionally flouted the four maxims all together providing a non-sense. Miss.Courtney took it as something inappropriate and responded aggressively. Her answer by turn flouted the maxims creating an implicature that something wrong is going on. people who are watching would laugh at the misunderstanding. In order to make the situation clear the teacher called again and Miss.Courtney answered.

Courtney: Hello!

Brown: hello

Courtney: whoever you are, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Brown: it's me, Jeremey Brown.



C: what are you doing, making obscene phone calls?

J: I'm in bed with flu.

C: in bed with who!

J: FLU!

C: well this is most inconvenient. Typical of the weaker sex. I shall expect you to be better by Monday. In the meantime I suppose I shall have to take you class. Then hanged the phone (1:26).

After the greeting, the manager started the conversation feeling confident that someone is doing something inappropriate; this is a clear flout to all the maxims again because she does not provide anything to the teacher to make her position clear. She could have explained that she heard strange noises on the first call that led her to think that the caller is doing something inappropriate. In order to bring back the situation to the normal stream Jeremy Brown stated that he is the teacher. His answer did the trick and abstained her from producing more insult. Then, after realizing that the caller is the teacher who would not do anything bad, she insisted that the noises she heard are quiet suspicious and claimed that still his phone call is "obscene". This is a flout of all the maxims because Jeremy Brown did not realize why she is saying and yet she is not sure that he is doing something unacceptable (quality), as a result she provided unnecessary information (quantity). her answer is not relevant (relevance) and yet obscure (manner). Moreover, the teacher answered that he is in bed with flu, indicating the reason of his call, but again this answer is flouting the maxim of quality because he could have said that he called because he is sick, so he is asking for an excuse from class and that he does not have any intention for something mean. The last answer of Miss.Courtney contains extra information like "Typical of the weaker sex", implying that she finds female teachers more resistant, so the maxim of quantity is flouted by providing unnecessary extra information. Furthermore, telling

him that she expected him to be better by Monday is a flout of quality, because we never know when we heal from an illness. This flout is an implicature that his excuse is limited to the weekend no more. The misunderstanding happened in this scene is very laughable because those who are watching are aware that nothing obscene is going on.

*Scene two (2)*

This conversation happened between the manager Miss.Courtney and Giovanni and Max. After the phone call Courtney went immediately to the classroom and found the students dancing, she immediately asked

Courtney: Now, what is the meaning of this?

Giovanni: it's to improve our English. We learn all the English dances. We are learning to be twisters, to trot like foxes, and mashed potatoes.

Max: Also, we learn English phrases like do you come here often, and who is taking you home tonight?

Courtney: there are more useful phrases to learn than those. Now, you kindly tidy up this mess and sit down at once. All of you, Hurry! (2:17).

The contribution of the manager to this conversation is very cooperative, being a regimental person she is clearly requesting an explanation to the mess she found at the classroom when the teacher is away. The students did not expect her to come and are caught red handed, they tried to mislead her and make their situation normal. Giovanni and Max on behalf of the group are trying to mislead her and escape any bad comments. Giovanni violated the quality and quantity maxims because dancing is by any means not a way to learn the language and here what he said is clearly not true (violation of quality). Moreover, he went explaining dancing moves; such pieces of information are not required and do not contribute to

the conversation (violation of quantity maxim). Max teamed up with Giovanni and went further, he claimed that they are learning useful English phrases and it is clear that he is not sincere, so he violated quality maxim. Furthermore, he added extra unnecessary information as loaded questions; here it is a violation to the quantity maxim. The first loaded question is ‘do you come here often’, this one entails that they did not expect her to come, especially that they did not have a clue that the teacher is sick and is not making it to class as the teacher is likely to tolerate their reckless behavior. The second one is ‘who is taking you home tonight?’ which indicates that they want her to go away and leave them do what they want. Courtney by turn responded in a way that expresses that she understands their attempt to mislead her saying ‘there are more useful phrases to learn than those’. She implies that even what they are saying is not useful neither it is acceptable; here she violates the quantity maxim because she provided information that is not required as she could simply say to Max that what he is saying is not true. The second part of her answer is respecting all the maxims stating clearly that they ought to stop what they are doing and be seated. In this conversation, viewers found the way students are trying to escape the manager as funny and laughable, and again, it is the effect of breaking the maxims that creates such humorous situation. This conversation would have no funny effect if it went serious. Let us imagine a situation where answers are respecting the maxims, students’ answer to Courtney question would be that they are just having some fun until the teacher arrives, in this case no laughable effect is likely to be present

In this conversation Ali(A), Ranjeet(R) and Anna(An) joined Courtney, Max and Giovanni. The students arranged the tables and are seated, Courtney standing beside the desk of the teacher started the conversation.

Courtney: I have to tell you that Mr. Brown will not be with us tonight. I hear that he has a virus.

Giovanni: Oh, is that his girlfriend?

Courtney: He has the flu, he has laid up in bed.

Ali: Excuse please, how can he be laid UP in bed? Surely you are meaning 'He is laid DOWN'!

Courtney: The term 'to be laid up' means to say that he's been struck down.

Max: what a language!

Courtney: Here is nothing wrong with the English language. It is the most widely spoken language in the world. Does anyone know the origin of the English language? Come along, where did English come from?

Ranjeet: England!

Courtney: not quiet, the early Britons were Celtic.

Giovanni: from Glasgow.

Courtney: I beg your pardon!

Giovanni: there's Glasgow Rangers, Glasgow Celtics, football!

Courtney: I was not referring to football, I was talking about the race.

Giovanni: No, no, no is not a race, is football. I see them play at the Milano in the cup.

Courtney: don't contradict me, and if I have anymore of your stupid remarks, I shall send you out of the class. The Celts were a race of people, then came the Gauls...

Giovanni: You see I was right! You have the goals in football.

Courtney: Alright, Mr. Capello. I did warn you, kindly leave the class.

Giovanni: where do I go to?

Courtney: well, I suggest that you go home and study your books.

Giovanni left the class...

Courtney: now, where was I?

Ali: you were standing there, and you are still standing there!

Courtney: Silence! Now take heed, because I shall not tell you again. Anyone who persists in uttering idiotic nonsense will be sent home. Now, the Romans invaded Briton in 43 A.D, can anyone tell me what A.D means?

Ali: After Dark!

Courtney: right Mr. Nadeem, come along, off you go!

Ali: what am I going for?

Courtney: don't argue, just go!

Ali: excuse please...

Courtney: OUT!

Ali left the class...

Courtney: To continue...A.D means Anno Domini, which refers to time since the birth of our lord. The time before his birth we refer to as 'BC', does anyone know what BC means?

Max: Before Christmas.

Courtney looking at him shocked

Max: Ok, I go!

Max left the class...

Courtney: The Romans were supplanted by the Angles, Saxons and Jutes...who brought with them a new language...

Ali came back to class and interrupted: excuse please!

Courtney: I thought I told you to go.

Ali: yes, I go but I come back. You are wanting on the telephone. Mr. Brown is wishing to speak with you.

Courtney: Oh, very well...

Ali: excuse please...

Courtney: NO!....

Ali left again

Courtney: Anna!

Anna: ya...

Courtney: you will take charge of the class in my absence. I shall not be long...and don't stand for any nonsense!

Anna: don't worry I shall be standing for nothing, I shall be sitting down! (2:48).

This conversation is a long one, it is a dialogue between Courtney and some students in which she is trying to teach students new information in the form of question and answer. Students are ignorant in the areas she questioned and they did not clearly declare that, they went providing stupid answers that are based on what they literally understand from the terms of the question, their answers are full of flouts.

Courtney started the conversation telling the students that the teacher is sick and is not able to make it to class, she stated that she heard he has virus. Regardless of the fact that she seems quiet unsure if the teacher is sick or not, her contribution is clear enough respecting the cooperative principle.. Even though, she was standing in the position of the teacher while

talking to students, she did not mention that she would be in charge of the class, missing such information is considered, as a violation of the quantity maxim, may be her motive was to surprise the students and test them. Once she declared that the teacher has a virus, Giovanni responded “is that his girlfriend” implying that he obtained the infection from her. Giovanni stated information that he is not sure about; in this case, he flouted the maxim of quality. If he is asking, the question should logically be or at least starts with from where was he infected? Furthermore, what he mentioned contained a vicious indication, something that is found irrelevant in classrooms, so it is a flout to the relevance maxim. In order to make the situation clearer, Courtney answered him that he has a flu. Her answer to Giovanni look straightforward and clear, it is informative. However, considering the answer of Giovanni, she should have mentioned that he is wrong and that what he said makes no sense at all, so she flouted the quantity maxim.

When answering him, Courtney stated that the teacher is ‘laid up in bed’ and here Ali intervened questioning the use of the adverb ‘up’ to describe something that is clearly down. Ali added that she is wrong and she should have used the adverb ‘down’ instead. Considering the fact that Courtney is a native speaker, so she holds a better manipulation of the language and that Ali has a very limited knowledge compared to her, he flouted the quality maxim because the information he provided is not right and he could have asked the teacher directly about the meaning. The manager reacted in an explanatory way letting Ali and the rest of the students learn the meaning of ‘laid up’ and that it is correctly used in this regard, her response is respecting all the maxims.

Max joined the conversation saying ‘what a language’, expressing that he is surprised with such a language that deploys expressions in a weird way, at least for him. his answer has nothing to do with the ongoing conversation, the way he reacted is based on what he heard without mentioning that, he missed to express clearly that what he heard astonished him and he

went directly to express his astonishment implying that something might be wrong, so here he flouted the quality maxim. Again, Courtney responded stating that ‘nothing is wrong’ here, and adding that English is the most spoken language in the world. Such information is not necessary in this context. As a result, she flouted the quantity maxim providing unnecessary information. She mentioned it as an introduction to her next question, implying the importance of English as the number one spoken language in the world motivating students to learn it more. Then, she went on asking about the origins of the language. The transition introduced here is missing a linking information, she could have stressed the importance of English, and declare that they have to learn more about it and that they should start from the origins of the language, and in this case another flout of the maxim of quantity is present.

To answer the question about the origins of English, Ranjeet and in an abrupt and direct way said ‘England’. Ranjeet is implying that such question is clear, and since its name is derived from the country’s name, so it starts there. Moreover, Ranjeet implied that he is surprised by the question that seems logically clear and needs no thinking to answer. Ranjeet flouted the quantity maxims having missed to include required information that justifies his answer. His position is clearly weak after he heard from Courtney that England has nothing to do with English origins, and that it is rather Celtic. Her contribution in this context is in favor of the cooperative principle.

Giovanni participated again in the conversation after hearing the word Celtic, saying Glasgow. His answer was a shock to the manager, it is not relevant in this regard and Giovanni in this situation has not provided any clue why he said it, so he flouted quantity and relevance maxims. The implicature is made clear later when he said ‘there’s Glasgow Rangers and Glasgow Celtics, football’. He abruptly took the conversation into another area that has nothing to do with the original one, he clearly flouted the relevance maxim. Giovanni based his answer on the fact that, there is a football club that bears the name Glasgow, so for him it is the same



entity, his contribution here is not right so he flouted the maxim of quality, especially that even for him it is clear that they are discussing a topic that has nothing to do with football. Moreover, he did not express how he linked pieces of information, so he flouted also the quantity maxim. After that, Courtney clearly mentioned that she is not talking or even referring to football, and that she is talking about 'race'. Giovanni once more said that it is not a race, insisting that he is right and considering race to mean a competition rather than origin. Giovanni in this regard is misled by the fact that term 'race' has more than one meaning, and to prove himself right he said that he watched them playing football back home in Milano. In this case, he flouted the quality and relevance maxims: quality because he is saying what he is not sure about, and relevance because he is insisting to talk about a topic that is far away from the original one. The next answer of the manager is again straightforward, she expressed clearly that she had enough of stupid answers and that she is going to send out any student who provides stupid answers. She immediately then went on with her explanation introducing the fact that the Celts were followed by the Gauls. Her contribution is clear enough holding accountable to the cooperative principle. Yet, Giovanni came again claiming that he was right and that Gauls are a specifically something that is found in football, he clearly meant Goals which is something again out of the topic. He implied that the teacher is persisting in proving him wrong while he is right, and he is clearly misled by the similar pronunciation of Gauls and Goals. Courtney drew the attention of Giovanni that he was wrong and he is playing deaf, he flouted the quality maxim by providing untrue information, and due to his mistake, he was sent home in a clear direct way. The manager ordered him to leave the class because he kept providing stupid answers, and he blatantly asked 'where do I go?' His answer is weird because he is simply requested to leave the class with no attention to where to go, he implied that he has nowhere to go and such information is wrong because viewers realize that he has a place to go. Giovanni violated the quality maxim by asking

such a question, he also flouted the manner maxim as he provided a question that logically does not require an answer, simply go home Giovanni.

The headmaster wanted the conversation to keep going and she went saying, “where was I”, asking about the last point they were discussing. She could have said where was I in the lecture or what point did we reach, so she flouted the maxim of quantity implying that students are following and focusing enough to contribute. Ali took the literal meaning of her words claiming that she was and still standing at the same position. Courtney apparently did not mean her actual position, she does not even need to ask about it. Ali’s contribution is not necessary in this case; he introduced irrelevant information so he flouted the relevance maxim, reflecting his impulsiveness and lack of concentration. Courtney reintroduced her warning that she will dismiss any students who says nonsense from the class. She went on with her explanation cooperatively bringing new information about the Roman invasion to Britons, and asking what A.D stands for. Ali answered that AD means after dark, he has no proof of his answer and he is clearly saying nonsense, he flouted quality maxim as a reason and was sent home because of that. Ali inquired why he was dismissed from class, and the manager abstained him from arguing without any explanation. She implied that he realizes well that he was expelled because of his stupid answer; missing this information Courtney flouted the quantity maxim, because the CP dictates that all the required information should be clearly mentioned .Eventually Ali was the second student to leave the classroom.

Courtney as usual went back to the lecture explaining what AD means contrasting it with BC and then asking if any one of the students knows what BC means. Max abruptly said ‘Before Christmas’, in fact students are pictured here as people who just answer without making sure that their answers are right. Therefore, Max here flouted the maxim of quality, and the way Courtney looked at him explains best the whole situation and Max understood that he provided a stupid answer so immediately pointed that he is leaving the class at the spot. Even though,

Courtney did not utter a single word, what she wanted to communicate was clear; she flouted the quantity maxim in this case having not said a single word.

The dialogue is going on with the manager always taking the lead in reenacting it, providing new pieces of information every time one of the students breaks down the flow with a stupid answer. This time she was talking about the three tribes that took over after the Romans and how they brought a new language. Her contribution is cooperative as it talks about the topic clearly and directly. Once Ali returned to the class she immediately talked to him stating that she has already asked him to leave the class, and he responded quickly that he came back because Jeremy Brown wants her on the phone. This conversation is respectful to the cooperative principle. There was no background laughter at this one. Background laughter were present every time a conversation is meant to be ironic, in the last conversation there was none. The absence of laughter in this case is associated with a conversation that contains neither a flout nor violation of a maxim. However, the last two sentences were an exception, Ali after telling her about the phone call said 'excuse me' and he immediately received a 'no'. Courtney understood that Ali is going to ask a favor of getting back to the classroom for instance, Ali implied that by talking after his objective of delivering the news to her is realized. He flouted the quantity maxim, as there is no clear indication on what he wants, there is less information delivered than required. The manager by turn, answered very shortly, she flouted both the quality and quantity maxims. Quantity because she did not mention the required information so that to make clear what and why she is refusing Ali and quality because he did not clearly say what he wanted and she is refusing something she did not hear, so not sure about.

The last part of this conversation was between Courtney and Anna. The manager called Anna and she responded 'ya', they both cooperate. Then, Courtney asked her to monitor the class in her absence and recommended that she should not tolerate any nonsense saying "don't stand for any nonsense". In this case, the manager via flouting the quantity maxim implied that

students will keep their irresponsible behavior, but how is she sure that such a thing might happen? Especially that Anna is not supposed to ask questions so that to receive stupid answers, such answers is what she referred to before as 'nonsense'. Anna responded that she is not going to stand anything and that she is going to be seated, Anna literally understood the word 'stand' as opposed to 'sit', and yet, here it is a flout to the relevance maxim providing an irrelevant answer. Anna is misled by her short knowledge in English and answered in a way that does not make sense at all, because the manager clearly asked her not to tolerate any unacceptable behavior which by turn have nothing to do with Anna be seated or not.

### *Scene Three (3)*

Participants in this conversation are: Ranjeet and the teacher. This scene starts with Ranjeet ringing the doorbell of the teacher's flat who opened the door and Ranjeet goes

Ranjeet: Good night Mr. Brown Sir

Brwon: Good evening Ranjeet! What are you up to?

Ranjeet: I am coming here to be making you over the weather/

Brown: Over the weather!

Ranjeet: yes, because I am hearing you are under the weather.

Brown: Come in and sit down.

Ranjeet: Are we going to be sitting down together?

Brown: No, I still do not feel too well, I think bed is the best place.

Ranjeet: whatever you say.

After that, the teacher went to the bed and R accompanied him!

Brown: I did not mean the two of us!

Ranjeet: thousand apologies (14:52).

Ranjeet knowledge about the English language seems insufficient because he is using the literal meaning of words like when he said good night to mean good evening, and that he heard that the teacher is under the weather and he is going to make him over the weather. He implied that he is going to help the teacher get well. In this case, Ranjeet short knowledge saved him from flouting any maxim because when we consider the literal meaning of words we can understand what he directly wants to say. Later on, the teacher asked Ranjeet to sit down and the latter inquired if they both are going to be together sitting. Jeremy Brown answered that he is still sick and that bed is better without asking Ranjeet again to sit, the teacher implied that he cannot sit and he would better be in bed as well. Ranjeet was misled by the answer understanding that the teacher is asking him to lie in the bed next to him. Thus, the teacher provided less information than required flouting the quantity maxim, he later on added the missing information stating that he did not mean the two of them.

Juan joined Ranjeet and the teacher in this conversation. The doorbell rang again the teacher asked Ranjeet

Brown: See who that is, Ranjeet?

Ranjeet opened the door and found Juan

Ranjeet: Ah Juan pleased to come in.

Juan: I come to see how Mr. Brown is.

Juan (looking at J): are you okay?

Brown: terrible!

Juan: never mind I come to cheer you up.

Brown: Oh good, I could do with cheering up.

Juan: I think....you not look very well!

Juan (talking to R): I think he look very white!

Ranjeet (surprised): he IS white!

Juan: but he look more white than before.

Juan (to J): I think you have what we call in Seville 'the three day reaper'.

Brown: I don't like the sound of that!

Juan: only last three day, on the first day fever like you have, on the second day white as you are, and on the third day...

Brown: you get better!

Juan moving his head: No, you die!....finito, finite

Brown: Oh, thank for coming to cheer me up! (15:28).

Juan claimed that the teacher does not look well after the teacher said clearly that he is in a *terrible* situation. Therefore, he provided unnecessary information and flouted the quantity maxim. Moreover, Juan stated that he came to cheer up the teacher and help him feel better, after that, he told him that in a matter of three days he is going to die. Such information is shocking and has nothing to do with helping the teacher feel better so he provided wrong information flouting the quality maxim. Furthermore, his words are not relevant to be told to a sick person, so he flouted relevance maxim as well. Jeremy Brown answered literally thanking him for the cheer up which is clearly wrong, he violated the quality maxim providing wrong information implying that he did not like what Juan said.

Juan: is alright, I bring you something...

Brown: don't tell me it is some Spanish medicine recommended for rubbing on chests!

Juan: No medicina...FONTADOR!

Brown: FONTADOR?

Juan: Si, Spanish brandy (a type of wine). Un Momento (opened the bottle and served J)...It's a good taste.

Brown tasted it and coughed: It is strong!

Juan: kill all germs

Brown: not household germs!

Juan: any germs.

Brown: I must say it is warming me up already, can I have some more!

Juan: sure, sure! (16:34).

Juan escaped the annoying situation he created by talking about the death of the teacher by stating that he brought him something. The teacher, who had received a medicine from Ali and could not resist it (happened earlier in one of the scenes that does not belong to the current study's sample), expressed that he does not like any other one. The teacher did not express his dissatisfaction directly, he implied that via expectation or something that he is not sure about and later we discover that he is not right. Therefore, he flouted the quantity maxim. Juan was cooperative in clearly claiming that he did not bring a medicine but a bottle of Spanish wine. The teacher tasted it and said that it is strong, but failed in clearly associating this strength to taste, as a result, he flouted the quantity maxim causing Juan to be misled and not sure what strong refers to. Juan immediately attributed a good quality to 'strong' claiming that it kills all germs. In fact, wine is not meant to kill germs, so Juan violated the quality maxim sharing false

information implying that this wine is good by all means. As an answer, the teacher asked if it kills household germs, he insisted on the wrong information to deliver that if it kills germs it must be used to disinfect households referring to the fact that it is strong; again, he violated the quantity maxim. Juan persisted on this piece of information saying that it kills all type of germs indicating that what he brought is something of quality and yet violating the quality maxim sharing information that apparently is not true. At last, Jeremy Brown explained that he enjoyed the drink without clearly saying so but by claiming that he starts feeling warm, he implied that he likes it via flouting quantity maxim not saying that he is enjoying clearly, and he asked for more as a clear reference to his enjoyment.

Taro joined the group. The door rang again and Ranjeet said: I go, he opened the door to find Taro at the door.

Brown: Ah, Taro!

Taro: Aso!

Brown: come in, sit down, have a drink...Ranjeet?

Ranjeet: yes please Mr. Brown!

Brown: I need some glasses.

Ranjeet: are your eyes bad as well?

Brown: I mean glasses to drink from!

Ranjeet: thousand apologies.

Brown: bring three.

Brown (asking Juan to fill his glass again): may I please?

Juan: 'Si Hombre' (talking in Spanish).



Ranjeet (brought the glasses): here you are Mr.Brown.

Brown: thank you.

Juan (serving the drink): One for Taro.

Taro: thank you!

Juan: One for Ranjeet...and one for Juan!

Brown: Bottoms up!

Ranjeet: what is bottoms up?

Brown: It is an English phrase used when having a drink.

Ranjeet bent down until touching the floor and said: I am thinking it is not easy to be drinking with bottoms up!

Brown: Ranjeet, it refers to the glass, the bottom of the glass, tip it up!

Juan: Ah Si, as you say, up the hatch.

Brown: DOWN the hatch!

Juan: Down the hatch.

Ranjeet: Now, I am understanding, I am also knowing another saying...(singing) Round the teeth and through the gums, look out tummy here it comes!

Brown: very good...(then, talking to Ju) Do you mind if I have another one, (checking the bottle) look you finished the bottle, I was just beginning to enjoy myself!

Taro (interrupted): I have brought genuine Japanese Sake!

Brown: Oh, Sake I have heard of that! It is what those Geisha girls give you isn't it?

Taro: Geisha girls give you much more!

Brown: yes I understand! (17:19).

When the teacher asked Ranjeet to bring some glasses, he immediately asked if the teacher has another problem with his sight. In this case, the term 'glasses' that means spectacles as well as cups misled Ranjeet. The teacher did not mention that the glasses are for the drink, so, he flouted the quantity maxim, and as a result, he made Ranjeet think of another meaning rather than the intended one.

After each one of the group has a glass filled, the teacher said 'bottoms up' and again Ranjeet literally tried to perform that, failing to do so he claimed that it is hard to drink with bottoms up! The teacher in this case used an idiom but failed to express his meaning of holding the glasses up until they see the bottom to Ranjeet. Hence, he flouted the quantity maxim missing information that helps making the intended meaning clear.

Juan contribution to this conversation is held flouting the manner and relevance maxims having talked in Spanish. Both maxims stand for the fact that any contribution should be clear and makes sense in the conversation, Juan is the only one who speaks Spanish and other members of the group do not understand it. Thus, he is providing information that he only understands, and this is a clear failure in contributing to the conversation.

Lee and Anna joined. Someone is ringing the doorbell and the teacher asked Ranjeet to open the door.

Brown: Ranjeet, leave the door unlocked, so if somebody comes they can walk straight in.

Lee and Anna at the door.

Lee: good evening, Ml. Blown!

Brown: Ah! Su Lee and Anna.

Anna: we bring you something to make you well.

Brown: Oh, that's very kind of you, but I am feeling a lot better.

Anna handing some pills to Brown and said: These will clear your head instant, TAKE!

Brown: well, I have tried everything else, I am sure a couple of pills won't make any difference!

Anna: Now, we need some hot water.

Brown: It is all right, I will take it with the Sake!

Brown immediately put the pill in his mouth and swallowed it with Sake.

Anna: what for you do that!

Brown: You said that will clear my head!

Anna: you are supposed to put them in the hot water, and breathe-in the fumes!

Brown (crying): Oh, I don't feel well...! (20:13).

The teacher received the pills from Anna and said that he has tried everything else and that the pills will not make any difference. He literally said ' I am sure a couple of pills won't make any difference!', here the teacher flouted the quality maxim saying information that he is not sure about because the medicine is strange to him and he has never tried it. He is implying that he has taken several types of medicines and that trying another will not have an effect. After that, Anna stated that he needs 'hot' water to take the medicine and the teacher said that he will take it with 'Sake', which is a wrong way to take the medicine that is supposed to be inhaled. Anna failed to provide him with this information and only asked for hot water, so she flouted the quantity maxim. The teacher having less information than required swallowed the pill, and Anna immediately declared that such types of pills are not supposed to be taken via mouth but instead should be inhaled. The teacher, who is shocked, stated immediately that he

is not well anymore. He contradicted himself because when the two ladies arrived he told them he is feeling well, and he did not clearly provide any information why he is not well anymore. The teacher via flouting the quantity maxim implied that the misuse of this medication is sickening him again.

Brown: what about you Su Lee have you brought some Chinese medicine for me?

Lee: Oh, this is not medicine, it is vely ancient Chinese treatment.

Brown: it is anything like the Geisha Girls.

Lee: Oh, much better.

Brown: Oh, well in that case!

Lee: first, you must lay.

Brown: yeah alright!. He immediately started taking off his trousers!

Lee: only to waist!

Brown: Ah ok.

Lee: Lie down on stomach.

Brown performed that and said: like this?

Lee: Yes.

Brown: I am ready!

Lee (brought out a needle from her purse): VERY GOOD!

Ranjeet (looking at the needle): Oh, BLAME ME!

Brown: What's the matter?

Ranjeet: Oh, nothing, nothing what is so ever!

Lee checking on his back to mark where to put the needle and Brown said: Ah, it is lovely, can you do the other side as well?

Brown looked at Lee to find her trying to put the needle on the back and immediately moved to avoid it shouting: I have heard of kill or cure but that is ridiculous, what are you doing?

Lee: Acupuncture! Very old Chinese custom, I got it from honorable ancestors!

Brown: well, honorable ancestors can jolly well have it back! (21:02).

The teacher, who is receiving either a medicine or treatment from every student, asked Lee if she by turn brought anything. Lee stated that she did not bring a medicine but an old Chinese treatment, she did not mention anything about such treatment and thus she flouted the quantity maxim. She asked him to lay, and the teacher immediately started to take off his clothes, he was misled because she did not clearly point what he is supposed to take off. Hence, her contribution is again short of information failing to maintain the quantity maxim. Lee later on, explained that he should only remove his upper side clothes and that he should be laying down. He performed what she asked and once she brought up the needle Ranjeet was shocked, the teacher asked him why is he shocked, and he said that nothing is going on. Ranjeet clearly violated the quality maxim by providing something that is clearly wrong, how there is nothing while Lee is approaching the teacher with a sharp needle in hand. The teacher does not have any clue on the medicine, and once Lee started touching his back, he clearly thought of a massage and he asked her to do the other side as well. In fact, this happened due to the fact that Lee did not tell the teacher anything about the medicine (the first flout). Once the teacher noticed the needle, he moved out avoiding it and claiming that it is ridiculous. The teacher is driven by his instinct that this needle can cause harm not cure, while Lee is quiet sure about the treatment. The teacher here is saying something he is not sure about, as the needle for Chinese

is indeed a cure, so he flouted the quality maxim. Finally, Lee made clear that this is an old Chinese traditional treatment and that she received the needle from her ancestors. The teacher who did not like the treatment said that her ancestors can receive back their needle which is something impossible, he flouted the quality and quantity maxim. Quality because the ancestors are gone and cannot receive anything and quantity because he did not clearly state that he does not like the treatment.

The door was open, Giovanni accompanied with Ali, Max, and Danielle arrived.

Ali: we all bring you something to cheer you up...Jamaica Rum.

Danielle: French wine.

Max: Greek Booze!

Giovanni: Italian Trapa! Hey, you taste that (22:04).

The teacher received the gifts and was very happy, and this little conversation seems cooperative. However, Giovanni by insisting to taste the drink he brought, is implying that his own is the best. He flouted the quantity maxim via missing to mention directly that his drink is better than what others brought. Moreover, the teacher might like his drink and might not, so Giovanni is not clearly sure that his drink is the most wanted, as a result, he flouted the quality maxim stating something that he is not sure about.

This conversation is between Jamila and the manager. In a previous scene Danielle was at the apartment of the teacher, she accidentally spilled some milk over her dress. She went to the bathroom to clean herself up and Miss. Courtney arrived the moment she left the bathroom with her top dress little opened. The director immediately thought that something vicious was going on. Jamila went to her office to explain the situation.

Courtney: You say it was an accident!

Jamila: ha accident, Danielle spill milk on her dress!

Courtney: Ah, I see. It appears that for once I have misjudged Mr. Brown. Well, I suppose I had better call in and apologize on my way home (22:22).

In fact, viewers of the series know well that Courtney misjudged Jeremy Brown in several occasions, so admitting that she misjudged him only 'for once' is a flout to the quality maxim. She never misses an occasion to express how dissatisfied she is with male teachers, who according to her prove incompetent compared to female ones. She is clearly biased to female teachers, and this is mostly the reason behind her frequent bad comments and misjudgment.

The manager joined the students in this conversation. Meanwhile, the students and the teacher were enjoying their time dancing.

Brown (shouted): who wants another drink eh?

They all shouted back: YEAH!

A good music was playing at the radio.

Giovanni: hey everybody, it is the CONGA (type of music)! (22:41)

They all lined up one after the other led by the teacher and they were moving all over the flat like a train until they went to the corridor through the backdoor. At this very moment, Courtney arrived and rang the doorbell, the music was so high and they could not hear that, she tried the door and found it open so she entered calling Mr. Brown and finding no one at the flat. She went searching at the backdoor when the group turned and entered from the front door. They all accidently met in the flat and the teacher was clearly shocked.

Brown: Hello Ms. Courtney!

Courtney: This is disgraceful!

Ali: No please! This is CONGO!

Courtney: Silence! I suggest you all leave immediately.

All the students left.

Courtney: As for you Mr. Brown words fail...

Brown interrupted: Oh, come on Ms. Courtney they are only coming her to cheer me up!

Courtney: I warn you Mr. Brown that if this sort of things ever occurs again in the future, YOU ARE OUT! (23:32).

She was talking to him and poking his shoulders hardly with finger causing him to fall on his bed dragging her, the bed eventually folded up against the wall with both of them inside, and that was the last scene of the episode.

The manager and because of her rigid personality considered that act of the teacher dancing with his students as disgraceful. However, the group were out of class having a casual friendly meeting that has no official dimension. Hence, her comment was not relevant, she flouted the relevance maxim implying that she did not like what she found and she later went further warning the teacher that she would end his contract if they repeat this act. Ali's answer to the teacher is also held irrelevant, the director was expressing her dissatisfaction with their act and Ali replied to her when she said 'disgraceful' claiming that it is 'CONGO', naming the music. The teacher did not clearly talked about the music, and 'disgraceful' has nothing to do with that. The short knowledge of the language might be the reason behind his answer.

### **Findings and Discussion**

During the analysis of the selected scenes, we have noticed that a background laughter is introduced whenever there is a situation that is intended to be laughable. Moreover, such indicator was always present in all the cases of breaking the cooperative principle. In the



selected episode, not adhering to the maxim(s) is found to generate humor, and it creates a funny and enjoyable mood. The purpose of this analysis is to answer the research question with no intention or even possibility to generalize the result to all episodes. Hence, the claim that humor is a violation of the CP for this episode is valid.

The unintentional failing to follow the CP (flout) creates an implicature that triggers laughter. Furthermore, characters when intentionally violate maxim(s) to mislead for example generate what cause the viewers to laugh. In fact, the characters are given scripts that dictate what they say and in what way, it is the intention of the script-write and the producers of the series to create a comedy show that is educational at the same time. Characters are presented as having short knowledge of English language without having them admitting that, and because of that, they tend to provide impulsive unsupported answers and contributions and this is mainly the main reason behind their breaking of the CP. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates the crucial role that the context plays to understand the intended meaning, and that the literal meaning of words might be misleading.

The cooperative principle holds that people should mention the required information to state what is true, and their contribution should be clear enough and relevant to the conversation. However, people via violating the CP *imply* what they intend to say for several reasons. One of the reasons is to create a funny situation, and this is the case with our subject of study. The verbal humor in the conversations we have analyzed was extensively created via flouting/ violating the maxims along with the other tools of creating humor in general like body and face gestures. In media, Humor is not solely verbal; it can be conveyed through non-verbal instruments such as misunderstandings, gestures and so on.

## **Limitations of the Study**

When we first considered the topic of this research, we thought of selecting and analyzing a sample of several episodes. However, after starting the analysis we noticed that working on a single conversation requires a considerable number of pages, and that a full single episode is likely to overpass the authorized number of pages. Hence, due to this limitation, we resorted to a solution of studying a limited number of conversations in only one episode.

## **Recommendations**

In this present research work, we have analyzed and described some selected conversations and found out that they are humorous because they do not respect the CP. there is a possibility to draw a generalizable conclusion about the phenomenon of creating verbal humor through breaking the CP in any media work through conducting a quantitative research. Taking “Mind Your Language” as an example, one can consider all of its conversations as a population from which to select a sample that is representative, and then doing the analysis of this sample. In this case, whatever conclusion is valid to generalization, and may be the sum of a considerable number of works leads to the formulation of a general rule that breaching the CP is a technique of creating verbal humor in the entertainment industry.

## **Conclusion**

The phenomenon of verbal humor is from one side an interesting topic of study and research and from another side a popular genre in media. Comedy movies, series and shows are a popular genre and a successful business trend in media. Verbal humor specifically is a salient feature of comedy in the entertainment industry. This paper investigated the relationship between breaking the cooperative principle by Paul Grice and the quality of humor in one of the episodes of the British Sitcom ‘Mind Your Language’. It is a qualitative investigation which

revealed that it is valid to consider verbal humor in the selected episode as a product of breaking the CP.

## General Conclusion

The theory of Paul Grice set clear the foundational criteria by which to analyze conversations. It entails that people when communicating are cooperative as soon as they respect the different maxims. In fact, the process of communication is more than a mere exchange of information; it also conveys feelings and emotions by which participants leave an impression on each other. The sense of humor leaves a positive impression on people, it makes the communicative act runs smoothly and it helps delivering information and ideas effectively. It is present in conversations for several reasons; sometimes people use it to alleviate the tension in some situations or to attract people and seek attention and so on. Humor in conversations is sometimes a product of not adhering to the cooperative principle, such as the ones analyzed in this paper.

Verbal humor as a field of study is considerably a modern one: it is until the 1980's that the first linguistic theory aiming at studying humor was formulated. Although, verbal humor like jokes, is traced back to the time of the Greeks, but only some types of it were studied. The lexeme humor itself witnessed a considerable change to acquire its contemporary meaning and before its presence, there was no umbrella term that covers all of its types. However, even the contemporary meaning is still disputed; scholars did not reach an agreement to figure out what exactly humor is. In pragmatics, verbal humor is associated with the intended meaning, that is, what is behind the literal meaning of jokes for instance. In fact, in most cases jokes go beyond the literal meaning providing another one that is highly context dependent, in which the context of the joke as well as the cultural background play a crucial role in determining the intentional meaning. Therefore, the analysis of this type requires a good understanding of the context.

In order to study and analyze humorous conversations in media from a pragmatic point of view, we investigated the link between the two entities (discourse analysis and pragmatics). We found out that they have a relationship of relevance, that is, the pragmatic theory is relevant

to accomplish the task of discourse analysis when it has any relationship to areas of intentional and implied meaning. Moreover, humor was particularly presented as a subject of conversational analysis, and in order to perform the analysis, we used the cooperative principle theory of Paul Grice.

The pragmatic theory of Paul Grice is the tool of analysis to study a number of conversations in the most rated episode from the British Sitcom 'Mind Your Language'. The task of analyzing the content of the episode looking for the quality of humor as a product of breaking the cooperative principle revealed that laughable conversations are indeed violating the CP. One might argue that people do not have an agreement on what is funny, what might triggers a laughter for some people might fail to do so for some others. However, in order to tackle this issue we relied on the background laughter associated with conversations that are aimed to be funny and enjoyable. Hence, this laughter technique was present whenever there is a violation or flout of maxim(s).

To sum up, the presence of verbal humor in the sitcom relied extensively on breaking the CP. Not adhering to the different maxims in this case does not cause any failure of the communication process, but it created enjoyable and funny situations that are educative at the same time, which respects the general objective of the show of teaching foreigners more about English language. therefore, we can conclude that in our case the violation of the CP generates a humor and funny effect in verbal interactions of characters, and that humor in conversations in the episode nine (9), season one (1) of the British sitcom 'Mind Your Language' is a product of breaking the 'Cooperative Principle'.

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## Résumé

Ce mémoire consiste à étudier le Non-respect du principe de coopération dans les conversations des personnages pour produire des dialogues humoristiques dans les productions cinématographiques. Le principe de coopération est la théorie du philosophe américain "Paul Grice", qui affirme que les individus au cours du dialogue respectent ce principe et le suivent pour atteindre l'objectif du dialogue. Cette recherche qualitative étudie un épisode de la série humoristique britannique "Mind Your Language" pour tenter d'analyser les dialogues comiques pour savoir s'ils respectent ou non le principe de coopération et en quoi ils résultent d'un non-respect. Ce sujet est fait en sélectionnant l'épisode le plus noté sur le site Web "IMDb" et en étudiant et en analysant un certain nombre de conversations qu'il contient pour arriver à une réponse à la question de recherche : l'humour verbal est-il un produit du non-respect du principe de coopération ? Finalement, après avoir terminé l'étude et l'analyse, il a été constaté que l'humour verbal dans les conversations étudiées est en fait le produit du manque de respect du principe de coopération. Ce travail contribue à enrichir le domaine des études de l'humour en général et le principe coopératif Gricean en particulier.

*Les mots clés* : principe de coopération, conversation, non-respect, humour verbal

## المخلص

تتلخص هذه المذكرة في دراسة عدم احترام "مبدأ التعاون" في المحادثات لإنتاج حوارات هزلية ومضحكة في الإنتاج السينمائي. حيث أن مبدأ التعاون هي نظرية الفيلسوف الأمريكي "بول غرايس" والتي تنص على أن الأفراد حال الحوار يحترمون هذا المبدأ ويسبغون على ضوئه لتحقيق غاية الحوار. يقوم هذا البحث النوعي بدراسة حلقة من المسلسل البريطاني الكوميدي "Mind Your Language" في محاولة لتحليل الحوارات الكوميديا لمعرفة مدى احترامها من عدمه لمبدأ التعاون وكيف أنها نتاج لعدم الالتزام بها. يتم هذا البحث عن طريق اختيار الحلقة الأكثر تصنيفا في الموقع الإلكتروني "IMDb" ودراسة وتحليل عدد من المحادثات فيه للوصول الى إجابته لسؤال البحث: هل أن الفكاهة اللفظية هي نتاج لعدم الالتزام بمبدأ التعاون؟ بعد الانتهاء من الدراسة والتحليل تبين أن الفكاهة اللفظية في المحادثات المدروسة هي فعلا نتاج لعدم احترام مبدأ التعاون. ويساعد هذا العمل على إثراء مجال دراسات الفكاهة بشكل عام ومبدأ التعاون بشكل خاص.

*الكلمات الدلالية: مبدأ التعاون، الحوار، بول غرايس، الفكاهة اللفظية*

