

The Comedy of Miscommunication: A Pragmatic Analysis of “Chicken Shop Date” YouTube Interview Series

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ABSTRACT

Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) helps listeners understand both explicit and implicit utterances, allowing them to evaluate a speaker's cooperativeness in a conversation. Although the four Gricean maxims are designed to facilitate communication, they are sometimes deliberately flouted. While maxim flouting has been widely studied in political interviews, its use in entertainment contexts remains underexplored. This paper examines how conversational maxims from Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) are flouted in the popular YouTube series *Chicken Shop Date*. Using a qualitative content analysis, four interviews with Andrew Garfield, Sabrina Carpenter, Ryan Reynolds, Hugh Jackman, and Jennifer Lawrence were transcribed and analysed to identify the types of maxims flouted and explain them using Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Strategies. Findings show that the Maxim of Quality was most frequently flouted, often through humour, irony, and teasing, reflecting both positive and negative politeness strategies. The study contributes to research on pragmatics in unscripted entertainment media while also promoting the importance of media literacy for audiences.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Media Literacy, Grice's Cooperative Principle, Maxim Flouting, Politeness Strategies

INTRODUCTION

Background of Study

Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction. It enables people to build relationships, exchange knowledge, and connect across diverse contexts. Through conversations, we enhance our understanding of ourselves and one another. According to Salamondra (2021), communication is the process of transferring information from a sender to a receiver. The advancement of technology, particularly through mass media, has changed communication by providing access to various formats, including print, radio, television, and the Internet. This shift, however, can lead to misunderstandings caused by misinformation or gaps in media literacy.

To address these issues, analysing online discussions such as those found in talk shows or interviews can deepen our understanding of both honest and dishonest speech. A useful theoretical framework for such analysis is Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), which outlines four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These maxims suggest that effective communication involves providing sufficient and relevant information, being truthful, staying on topic, and expressing ideas clearly (Nordquist, 2019). In informal media contexts, such as interviews, these maxims are sometimes deliberately flouted for humorous effect, emphasis, or other purposes. One example is *Chicken Shop Date*, a YouTube series by Amelia Dimoldenberg, where she interviews celebrities while they eat chicken nuggets (Wong, 2024). This series flips the traditional interview format, often leading to playful exchanges where the Gricean maxims might be flouted. This study focuses on episodes featuring celebrities such as Andrew Garfield and Jennifer Lawrence,

aiming to identify which conversational maxims are ignored and to explore the communicative purposes behind these deviations.

Statement of Problem

Past studies, such as Al-Mazari and Rababah's (2024) investigation of maxim flouting in *Sawt Al-Mamlakah* and Marlisa and Hidayat's (2020) analysis of maxim flouting in *Good Morning America*, primarily employed Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) to examine how and why people convey implicit rather than explicit meanings in semi-scripted or unscripted settings such as talk shows. However, most existing research has focused on applying this principle to analyse the observance or violation of the four maxims in scripted media, such as animated movies. This focus is mainly because scripted media is easier to analyse, as these settings have pre-existing scripts and planned storylines or sequences of events. Due to this, there are fewer studies analysing maxims in less scripted settings, such as talk shows, podcasts, and interviews.

Since fewer studies have analysed Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) in talk shows, podcasts, and interviews, there is a need to expand existing research by examining similar formats, such as a YouTube interview series. Although previous studies, such as those by Ali and Hussain (2023) and Nuzulia (2020), have explored maxim flouting in interviews, primarily political ones, there has been a lack of research on more contemporary and popular interviews. Therefore, this study aimed to contribute to the analysis of maxim flouting in interviews by focusing on the trending YouTube interview series "*Chicken Shop Date*," which combines an interview format with a talk-show vibe. Specifically, this study sought to identify which Gricean maxims were flouted and to investigate the reasons behind these floutings by celebrities such as Andrew Garfield, Ryan Reynolds, Hugh Jackman, Sabrina Carpenter and Jennifer Lawrence in their *Chicken Shop Date* interviews.

Objectives of the Study

Based on the identified research gap, two research objectives are proposed. This paper aims to:

1. identify the maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle that are flouted in the selected *Chicken Shop Date* interviews
2. investigate the reasons for flouting maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle in *Chicken Shop Date* interviews based on Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

Grice's Cooperative Principle

The primary purpose of Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) is to understand effective communication and mutual understanding in conversations. It explains how speakers generally work together to make conversations effective and meaningful. He proposed four conversational maxims as follows:

1. Maxims of Quantity: Providing the right amount of information.
2. Maxims of Quality: Being truthful and avoiding giving false or unsupported information.
3. Maxims of Relation: Staying relevant to the topic of discussion
4. Maxim of Manner: Being clear, avoiding ambiguity, and presenting ideas in an orderly way

Grice (1989, as cited in Azmi et al., 2024) states that the principle emphasises the collaboration between the speaker and listener to achieve mutual understanding. The principle was also noted by Al-Mazari and Rababah (2024) as a principle that revolved around the notion of expectations between speakers and listeners during communication. For these expectations to be met and for effective communication to happen, both sides must observe or follow the four maxims. When both parties follow the maxims, they will be able to understand one another as intended.

Nevertheless, there are times when people disregard or ignore the four Gricean maxims, a phenomenon known as maxim flouting. Grice (1975, as cited in Cutting, 2002) explains that flouting a maxim occurs when the speaker intentionally or sometimes unintentionally wants the listener to uncover an implicit meaning beyond what is explicitly said. Similarly, Aso and Hemn (2019) define flouting as the purposeful violation of a maxim, not to deceive, but to draw the listener's attention to a hidden meaning. Each of the maxims can be flouted in different ways:

1. Flouting the maxims of quantity: when a speaker provides either too little or too much information (Cutting, 2002).
2. Flouting the maxims of quality: intentionally saying something untrue, often to be humorous or sarcastic. Cutting (2002) notes that this can also include exaggeration (hyperbole), the use of metaphors, irony, or playful banter.
3. Flouting the maxims of relation: when a speaker introduces unrelated comments or shifts topics during a conversation. According to Cutting (2002), when this happens, the speaker expects the listener to understand the implied meaning of the unrelated statement and relate it to what was previously discussed.
4. Flouting the maxims of manner: when a speaker uses obscure or ambiguous language and is neither brief nor orderly in their utterances during a conversation (Cutting, 2002).

Understanding these strategies is essential for analysing informal interviews such as *Chicken Shop Date*, where maxim flouting often plays a central role in creating the show's distinctive humour and interactional style.

Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies

This study employed Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies (1987) as the secondary theoretical framework to investigate the reasons behind maxim flouting by celebrities in *Chicken Shop Date*. The framework revolves around the notion that speakers use politeness strategies to minimise potential threats to their own "face" or the "face" of others during a conversation. Although Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies (1987) outlines four types of politeness strategies—positive politeness, negative politeness, bald on record, and off record—this study will focus exclusively on positive politeness and negative politeness, as these are the two most applicable strategies for understanding why speakers flout conversational maxims in interviews, given that some positive and negative politeness strategies are interrelated with maxim flouting.

Positive politeness is commonly used in interactions within friendly settings, such as among friends, family members, or peers of similar age. These strategies aim to convey a sense of closeness or familiarity between the speaker and listener, reflecting a comfortable and informal dynamic. In such exchanges, formalities are minimised, and the tone becomes more casual and less courteous. Negative politeness, in contrast, focuses on respecting the listener's boundaries and preventing rudeness or imposition. These strategies are often employed in interactions between strangers or individuals with a distant relationship, where maintaining respect is crucial due to the social distance between them. Negative politeness helps individuals avoid overstepping boundaries, particularly when they are not close with the listener, ensuring conversations remain polite and considerate.

In practice, politeness strategies and maxim flouting often interact. A speaker may flout a maxim not simply for humour or creativity but also to manage face needs. In an attempt to understand the reasons behind maxim flouting by celebrities such as Andrew Garfield, Ryan Reynolds, Hugh Jackman, Sabrina Carpenter, and Jennifer Lawrence in their *Chicken Shop Date* interviews, Brown and Levinson's Politeness Strategies (1987); particularly positive and negative politeness strategies were used as a framework to explore why they deliberately disregarded Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975). This study investigated whether the guests flouted Gricean maxims to demonstrate a friendly and close relationship with the host, Amelia Dimoldenberg (positive politeness), or to maintain a respectful social distance from her (negative politeness).

The following diagrams illustrate the theoretical frameworks underlying this study. It demonstrates how Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) is used to identify flouted maxims and how Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies (1987) are applied to interpret the reasons behind these floutings in the *Chicken Shop Date* interviews.

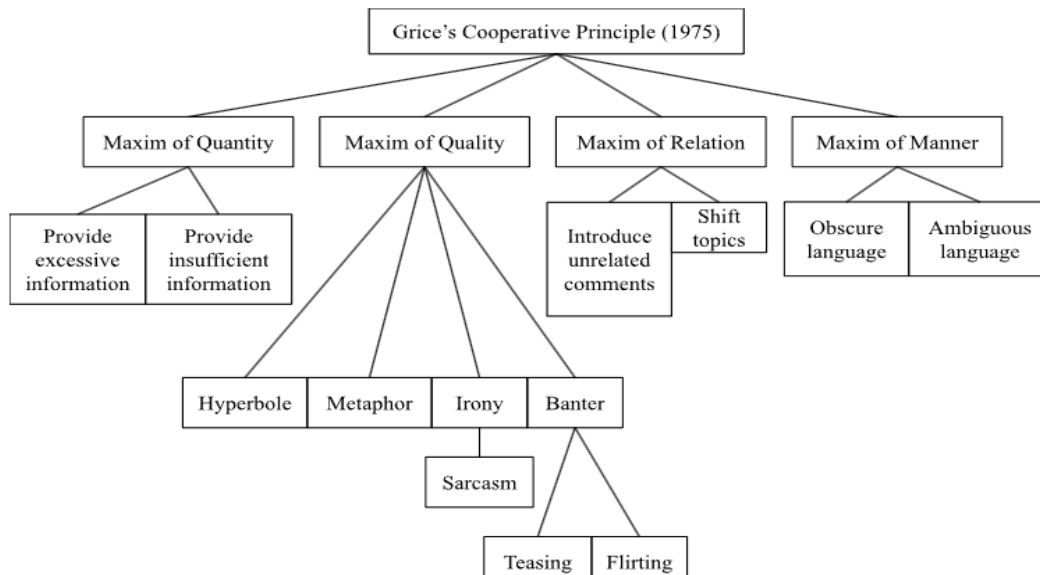


Figure 1: Maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle When Flouted (Grice, 1975)

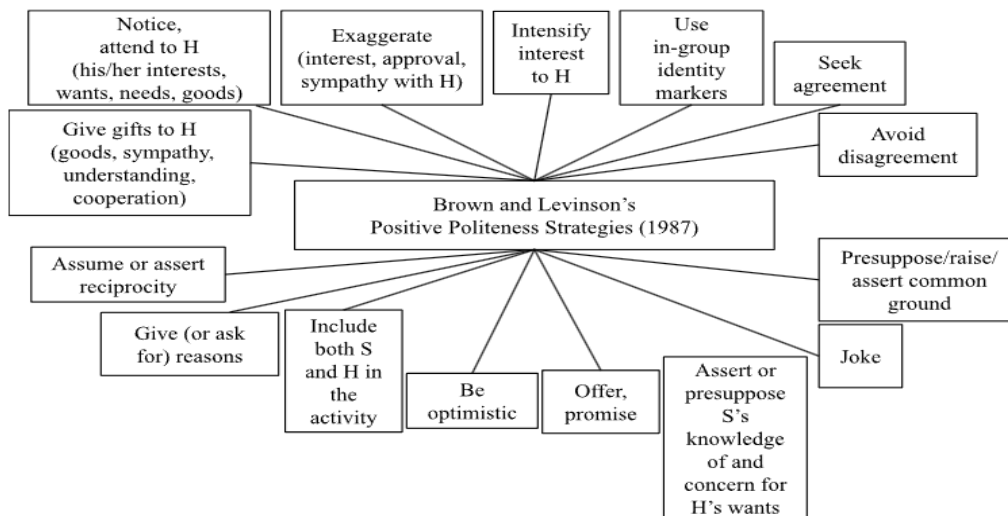


Figure 2: Brown and Levinson's Positive Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

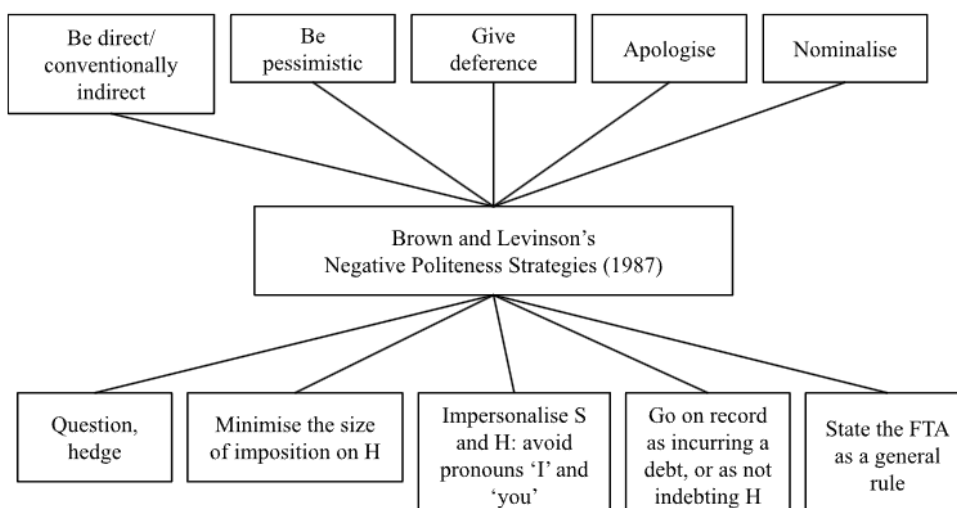


Figure 3: Brown and Levinson's Negative Politeness Strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

Past Studies

Previous studies on maxim flouting in the media were done to analyse talk shows, podcasts and political interviews. Marlisa and Hidayat (2020) and Al-Mazari and Rababah (2024) studied maxim flouting in talk shows like *Good Morning America* and *Sawt Al-Mamlakah*. They found that all four maxims were violated, with quantity being flouted most often and quality being flouted least. This suggests that in talk shows, people often give too much or too little information while still being honest. Abd Hadi and Mat Isa (2023) studied Syed Saddiq's maxim flouting in a podcast. They found that all four maxims were flouted, with quantity being most frequently flouted and quality being least frequently flouted. This aligns with the findings of Marlisa and Hidayat (2020) and Al-Mazari and Rababah (2024), suggesting that quantity is the most frequently flouted maxim across various media.

There are also past studies that have examined the reasons behind maxim flouting, showing how these purposes differ across contexts. In entertainment-focused talk shows, Marlisa and Hidayat (2020) found that flouting was often used to entertain and express enthusiasm. Similarly, Al-Mazari and Rababah (2024) in their study noted that clarifying ideas, strengthening relationships, and demonstrating politeness were the reasons of flouting maxims in conversation. In political contexts, however, flouting the maxim tends to be a strategic move. Abd Hadi and Mat Isa (2023) observed that Syed Saddiq flouted maxims to control his public image. Ali and Hussain (2023) found that Malala Yousafzai employed flouting to divert attention and establish an emotional connection. Meanwhile, Nuzulia (2020) reported that Donald Trump's excessive information served to project nationalism.

In short, entertainment settings use flouting to amuse and engage audiences, whereas political settings employ it to persuade, influence perception, and assert identity. However, most existing research has focused on political figures and formal or semi-formal contexts, leaving contemporary, informal celebrity interviews underexplored. This study addresses that gap by analysing *Chicken Shop Date*, a trending YouTube interview series hosted by Amelia Dimoldenberg. The analysis aimed to provide new perspectives on maxim flouting in a candid and playful interview setting, where discussions could move beyond politics. It featured celebrities rather than politicians and presidents.

METHODOLOGY

Four "*Chicken Shop Date*" interviews were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) celebrity status of guests (Andrew Garfield, Ryan Reynolds & Hugh Jackman, Sabrina Carpenter, and Jennifer Lawrence), (2) video recency (July 2023 - October 2024), and (3) sufficient duration for analysis (totaling 32 minutes, 51 seconds). These interviews provide adequate data while representing the show's typical format and guest demographics. The selected interviews were transcribed using YouTube's transcription feature, supplemented by manual verification for accuracy. This created written records that facilitate the identification and analysis of conversational rule violations without requiring repeated review of video content. The data analysis occurred in two stages:

1. Coding: Instances of maxim flouting were categorised into tables based on Grice's four conversational maxims (quantity, quality, relation, manner) and Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies.
2. Interpretation: Coded findings were analysed to determine types of maxim violations and reasons behind celebrities' deliberate conversational rule-breaking.

FINDINGS

This section will be presented based on the two research objectives mentioned earlier.

The types of Gricean maxims flouted in the selected *Chicken Shop Date* interviews.

This section presents the types of Gricean maxims that were flouted in the selected *Chicken Shop Date* interviews, highlighting the types of maxims flouted in the four interviews, as well as determining which maxims were flouted the most and which were flouted the least.

The first pie chart, which showcases the frequencies of the types of Gricean maxims flouted, is shown below:

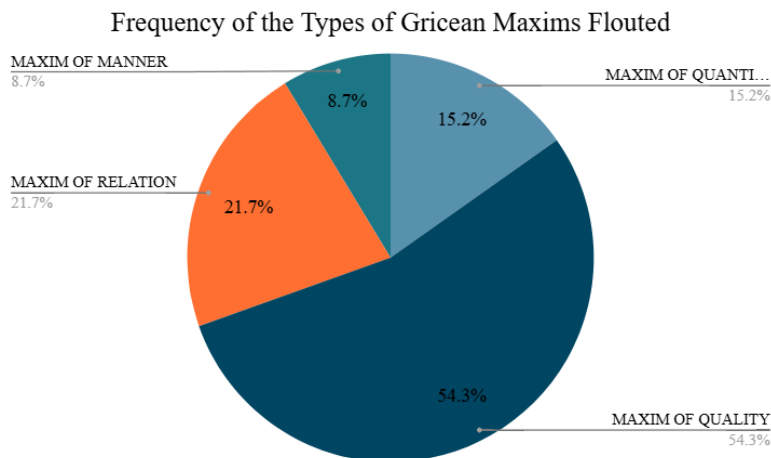


Figure 4: Frequency of the Types of Gricean Maxims Flouted

Based on Figure 4, it was shown that all four Gricean maxims were flouted across the four *Chicken Shop Date* interviews. In the first interview with Andrew Garfield and in the second interview with Sabrina Carpenter, all four Gricean maxims were flouted. However, in the third interview with Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman, only the Maxim of Quantity was not flouted. Finally, in the fourth interview with Jennifer Lawrence, only the Maxim of Manner was not flouted.

However, it was also evident that **the most flouted Gricean maxim** was the **Maxim of Quality**, which, according to Cutting (2002), occurs when a speaker says something untrue through hyperbole, metaphors, irony such as sarcasm, or banter such as teasing or flirting. This maxim was flouted in all four *Chicken Shop Date* interviews, resulting in a total percentage of **54.3%**. The findings then revealed that **the second most flouted Gricean maxim** was the **Maxim of Relation**, which was also flouted in all four interviews, resulting in a total of **21.7%**. Next, the **Maxim of Quantity** was **the third most flouted maxim**, being flouted in only three interviews, accounting for a total of **15.2%**. Lastly, the **Maxim of Manner** was **the least flouted**, appearing in only three interviews, resulting in a total of **8.7%**.

Given that *Chicken Shop Date* is a YouTube interview series that involves a lot of light-hearted back-and-forth exchanges between the interviewer and her celebrity guests, it was reasonable that all four Gricean maxims were flouted across the four interviews. In short, this outcome reflected the laid-back, informal and humorous setting of the programme.

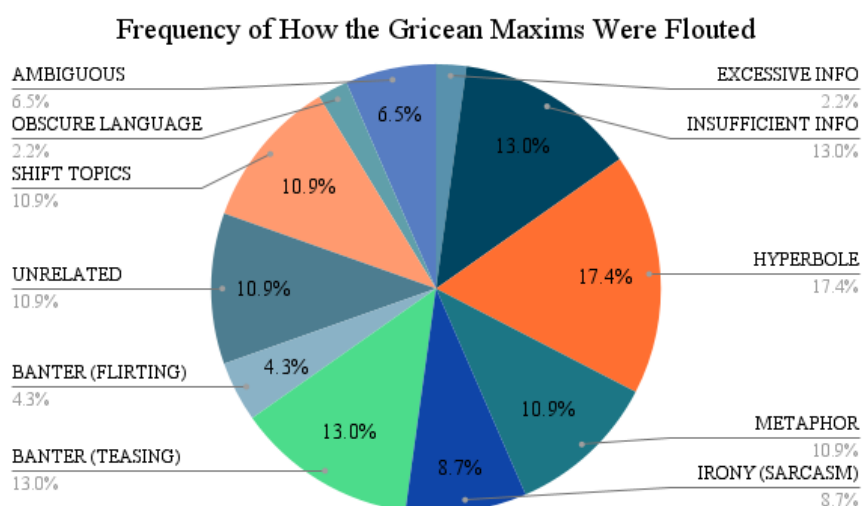


Figure 5: Frequency of How the Gricean Maxims Were Flouted

Based on Figure 5, all eleven subcategories of how the Gricean maxims were flouted were present across the four *Chicken Shop Date* interviews. **The most frequently used method** was **hyperbole**, under the Maxim of Quality, with eight occurrences, accounting for **17.4%**. Following this, there was a tie for **the second most common method** between **providing insufficient information** under the Maxim of Quantity and **bantering through teasing** under the Maxim of Quality, with six occurrences each at **13%**. Next, **the third most frequent method** was shared equally among **metaphors** under the Maxim of Quality, **introducing unrelated comments** and **shifting topics** under the Maxim of Relation, with five occurrences each, accounting for **10.9%**. **Irony through sarcasm** under the Maxim of Quality **ranked fourth**, with four occurrences at **8.7%**. **The fifth most utilised method** was the use of **ambiguous language** under the Maxim of Manner, with three occurrences at **6.5%**. Meanwhile, **bantering through flirting** under the Maxim of Quality **occurred twice**, resulting in a **4.3% rate**. Finally, **the least used methods** were **providing excessive information** under the Maxim of Quantity and using **obscure language** under the Maxim of Manner, which occurred once each, resulting in a **frequency of 2.2%**.

In the first interview with Andrew Garfield, the maxim-flouting methods that appeared included providing excessive and insufficient information, using metaphors, bantering through teasing and flirting, shifting topics, and employing ambiguous language. In the second interview with Sabrina Carpenter, the methods identified were providing insufficient information, using hyperbole and metaphors, irony through sarcasm, bantering through teasing and flirting, introducing unrelated comments, and using obscure language. In the third interview with Ryan Reynolds and Hugh Jackman, the flouting methods present were hyperbole, irony through sarcasm, bantering through teasing, introducing unrelated comments, shifting topics, and using ambiguous language. Finally, in the fourth interview with Jennifer Lawrence, the observed methods included providing insufficient information, using hyperbole, and shifting topics.

Overall, the variety and frequency of the maxim flouting methods, particularly hyperbole, teasing, and shifting topics, highlighted the light-hearted and spontaneous nature of the conversations between Amelia Dimoldenberg and her celebrity guests. The widespread presence of these methods across all four interviews illustrated how the informal and comedic format of *Chicken Shop Date* naturally encouraged playful and unconventional communication.

Reasons for flouting maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle in *Chicken Shop Date* interviews based on Brown and Levinson's Positive and Negative Politeness Strategies.

Building on the analysis of the types of maxims flouted, this section addresses the second research question by exploring the reasons behind these floutings, interpreted through Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness strategies. The table below shows the types of Gricean maxims flouted in the selected *Chicken Shop Date* interviews, according to Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness strategies.

Table 1: Types of Gricean maxims flouted in selected *Chicken Shop Date* interviews and the reason

Type of Maxim Flouted	Politeness Strategy (Brown & Levinson)	Reason / Communicative Purpose	Example from Interview	Frequency (n)
Quantity	Positive Politeness	Create humour and entertain the audience by giving more (or exaggerated) information than required.	The interviewee provides an overly detailed and playful story that is unrelated to the actual question.	12
Relevance	Positive Politeness	Build rapport and maintain a light tone by introducing an unrelated but amusing topic.	Responding to a dating question with a joke about food preferences.	10
Manner	Positive Politeness	Maintain a casual, informal tone and make conversation entertaining.	Using slang, inside jokes, or deliberately vague wording.	6
Quantity	Negative Politeness	Avoid direct answers to protect self-image or avoid awkwardness.	Dodging a personal question with a humorous deflection.	5

Relevance	Negative Politeness	Minimise potential offence by steering the conversation away from sensitive topics.	Changing the subject when asked about a controversial topic.	4
Manner	Negative Politeness	Reduce the force of a statement by being indirect or ambiguous.	Giving an unclear response to avoid sounding critical.	3

As shown in Table 2, the maxim of **Quantity** was the most frequently flouted (17 instances), followed by the maxim of **Relevance** (14 instances). These findings suggest that interviewees often flouted these maxims to enhance humour, create a relaxed conversational atmosphere, and strengthen interpersonal rapport—core elements of *Chicken Shop Date*. In contrast, the maxim of **Manner** was the least flouted (9 instances), indicating that deliberate vagueness or ambiguity was used more sparingly, often to maintain politeness or avoid potential discomfort. The use of positive politeness strategies was identified as attempts to build rapport, create shared humour, signal in-group identity, and primarily reduce social distance. Negative politeness strategies, on the other hand, were used to avoid imposition, suggest ideas indirectly, and maintain respectful social distance.

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings and Discussions

This study aimed to explore the types of maxims flouted and the reasons for flouting them in the *Chicken Shop Date* interviews, with particular attention to how these instances align with Brown and Levinson's positive and negative politeness strategies. The findings of this study revealed that the Maxim of Quantity was the most frequently flouted, while the Maxim of Manner was the least. This outcome contrasts with earlier studies by Marlisa and Hidayat (2020), Al-Mazari and Rababah (2024), and Abd Hadi and Mat Isa (2023), which all found the Maxim of Quantity to be the most commonly flouted and the Maxim of Quality the least. Their research suggested that speakers in talk shows and podcasts tend to provide either excessive or insufficient information, while generally remaining truthful. In contrast, this study showed that Amelia and her celebrity guests often used untrue or implicit statements through hyperbole, teasing, metaphor, sarcasm, and flirting to match the playful and humorous nature of *Chicken Shop Date*, where the host and guests joke and banter to keep their interactions engaging, lively and fun.

On the other hand, previous studies on maxim flouting in political interviews by Ali and Hussain (2023) found that the Maxims of Relation and Quantity were mainly flouted, whereas Nuzulia (2020) discovered that the Maxim of Quantity was the most frequently flouted. This trend suggests that, across different media, speakers often provide too much or too little information, regardless of the context. However, the findings of this study show that the setting and tone of a programme can strongly shape conversational dynamics. Each talk show, podcast, or interview carries its theme and atmosphere that both host and guests must navigate, which ultimately influences how they communicate and which maxims are flouted. Thus, these differences underscore how the context and format of a programme can significantly influence which maxims are most likely to be flouted.

Besides that, the findings showed that all five guests on *Chicken Shop Date* mainly used maxim flouting methods that aligned with positive politeness strategies. This suggests that Andrew, Sabrina, Ryan, Hugh, and Jennifer aimed to demonstrate closeness and build rapport with Amelia, treating her more as a friend or potential romantic interest than a stranger. They intended to foster a friendly dynamic while entertaining both Amelia and the audience. In comparison, Marlisa and Hidayat (2020) found maxim flouting was used to entertain and express enthusiasm, while Al-Mazari and Rababah (2024) noted that it helped clarify ideas and strengthen relationships. Meanwhile, Abd Hadi and Mat Isa (2023), Ali and Hussain (2023), and Nuzulia (2020) have highlighted its strategic use in politics, emphasising its role in persuading, gaining public sympathy, and asserting identity. These differences demonstrate how maxim flouting varies depending on the context and the speaker's intent. Unlike the more strategic or persuasive uses, *Chicken Shop Date* interviews showcased maxim flouting as a conversational device to create a connection and entertain viewers. It also demonstrates that the flouting of Gricean maxims in this show is intentional and functional, often linked to humour and social bonding.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has the potential to enhance our understanding of Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) and its application in interviews, particularly in cases of maxim flouting. Firstly, it benefits language, linguistics, and communication students by exploring how and why celebrities flouted the Gricean maxims in an entertainment-focused interview series, an area less explored than political interviews. The findings examined not only the types of maxims flouted but also incorporated Cutting's (2002) observations on flouting methods, offering a more detailed and structured analysis of how the maxims were violated. As a result, students can refer to this study when analysing maxim flouting in different interview contexts, as it provides flouting methods not covered in earlier research. Overall, the analysis and findings support students in refining their communication analysis skills and motivate them to pursue underexplored areas, much like this study.

This study also contributes to research on Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) in interviews by addressing the lack of studies on maxim flouting beyond political contexts. By examining a contemporary and popular YouTube series such as *Chicken Shop Date*, it broadens existing knowledge by exploring how different interview contexts and formats influence maxim flouting. The findings showed that the unique context and informal format of *Chicken Shop Date* shaped both the types of maxims flouted and the reasons for their use, highlighting the study's value in deepening our understanding of the principle.

Future studies could analyse a larger sample or longer interview videos to gather a more substantial dataset, which would enable richer perspectives and deeper insights into the phenomenon. To address the challenge of video categorisation, researchers are encouraged to analyse interviews with clearly defined themes or consistent categorisation. This would allow for a more systematic comparison and strengthen the validity and reliability of their findings. Lastly, future researchers are encouraged to conduct similar studies on interview formats beyond political and entertainment contexts to expand further research on Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlights how speakers strategically flout Gricean maxims to achieve humour, emphasis, politeness, or other communicative goals. The findings show that maxim flouting is a purposeful conversational strategy rather than a mere violation of rules, reflecting speakers' intentions and social awareness. This demonstrates that maxim flouting is not merely a linguistic error but a purposeful conversational strategy that reflects speakers' intentions and social awareness. Overall, these insights contribute to an understanding of pragmatic competence in spoken discourse and suggest avenues for future research, including the use of diverse interview formats and cross-cultural contexts.

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Conflict Of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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