

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the background which brings the researcher to conduct a study entitled *An Analysis of Maxim Flouting in the Dialogues of The Life List* (2025). It includes the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, scope and limitation of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

In everyday communication, people use language not only to convey information but also to express ideas, feelings, and goals to others. It is the presence of language that enables people to comprehend each other and build cooperation. However, our everyday conversations are rarely that clear. We do not always convey our intentions bluntly, and the people we talk to do not usually take what they hear at face value. Hence, the most important part of our communication is often hidden behind the words that are not spoken directly (Jones et al., 2023). A speaker may give information that is irrelevant, too little, too much, or unclear (Amartya & Al Rosyidah, 2025). Despite this, the other person usually manages to grasp the true meaning. It can be realized because a conversation is shaped by many supporting factors, not just based on the literal meaning of the words spoken. One reason is that speakers pay attention not only to the information they want to convey, but also to the context, social relationships, and emotions they address when speaking (Nasution et al., 2025; Si, 2020). What is appropriate to say, how much to say, and how directly to say it all shift depending on who is speaking to whom, on what occasion, and to what end. The same words can have different meanings depending on the situation. The true meaning of a statement can only be properly understood if we pay attention to the surrounding circumstances of the conversation (Doyle, 2007). These are the reasons why people often choose to speak indirectly.

When people want to avoid conflict, are reluctant to answer directly, or want to convey a sensitive message, they tend to deviate from their usual conversational habits (Hasan et al., 2026). However, this is not a form of failure in communication. These deviations are usually done intentionally, and the person you are speaking to generally understands that there is a special meaning behind the statement. It is precisely this difference between what is said and what is actually meant that makes conversation interesting to study as an activity that has its own structure and rules.

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines how context influences the meaning of an utterance. In contrast to semantics, pragmatics examines how people use language in real situations to achieve certain goals. Pragmatics is the reason why people can grasp codes, sarcasm, and implied meanings when having conversations. Another pillar of pragmatics is Cooperative Principle and its maxims. Grice's Cooperative Principle is a basic concept that has been adopted in pragmatics. Based on Grice (1975) cooperative principle is:

“Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (p.45)”

In this case, Grice argues that participants in a conversation implicitly agree to cooperate with one another in order to communicate effectively, even when what is said does not fully match what is meant. This principle rests on the assumption that both speaker and listener share a mutual understanding that communication is a joint effort, guided by shared norms of rationality and cooperation. As participants in conversation, humans always stand on the basic assumption that every utterance complies with the following principles: (1) maxim quality insists on providing as much information as necessary, no more and no less; (2) maxim quantity insists that people only say what they are convinced is true and have enough proof to support; (3) maxim relation has the principle of relevance to the topic of conversation; (4) and maxim manner is concerns with clearness of expression through avoiding complexity, ambiguity, and verbosity, and delivering information in a structured way (Grice, 1975). However, if someone says something that sounds indirect or irrelevant, people do not consider it to be meaningless. Instead of that, people

automatically think they have a specific meaning in mind, and it is up to them to guess what that meaning is. According to Grice (1975), this condition happens when the rules of conversation are breached on purpose to create implied meaning. At this point, if people have no belief that there is meaning behind indirect speech, people will not bother attempting to figure it out. This technique is called “flouting a maxim,” which then produces an “implicature” (Grice, 1975). The impulse to carry out this effortful process of interpretation arises from the belief that there must be an intended meaning. For case in point:

A: Can you help me carry these boxes?

B: I hurt my back yesterday.

In the example from the conversation above when A asks B to help carry the boxes, B answers by saying that he hurt his back yesterday to show that he cannot do what A is asking. He gives this response to let A know that he cannot do what A asks because of his condition. This example shows that B flouts the maxim of relation because his answer is not directly related to the request, but it explains why he cannot help. Hence, maxim flouting is important to understand because it helps us recognize the hidden meaning in a conversation.

Grice (1975) notes that the phenomenon of maxim flouting is a condition where the speaker clearly breaks a conversational maxim. Indeed, because this flouting is so conspicuous, the hearer will realize that the speaker meant not to fail to communicate, but to have other purposes. It is this awareness that prompts the hearer to infer a meaning that is not literally pronounced, which is conversational implicature (Cutting, 2002). Grundy (2020) takes a similar stance on maxim flouting as proposed by Grice (1975), where he defines maxim flouting as a way to prompt the hearer to take away inferences and find the implied meaning.

This process of interpreting meaning also plays an important role in works of fiction, where each character's utterance in the story has been designed by the author to emphasize character, encourage the development of the plot, and support the overall narrative. Based on the results of research by Ramadanti et al. (2024)

the flouting of maxims can strengthen characterization, clarify conflicts, or signal the presence of information that is not disclosed directly. Since its inception, film has been a means of entertainment and emotional escape for people around the world. Films function as a platform that instantly brings people to forget their real-life difficulties. In the 1930s, films acted as entertainment amid the economic crisis, and during wartime, they turned people's attention away from their suffering (Bergan & Ganeri, 2006). This trend continued for decades, which leave films as a means of refreshing people from their daily routines.

The Life List is a rom-com drama about Alex. It was hit #1 on Netflix in the US the week of April 8, 2025. Alex is a woman who believes her life is not going as she planned. The film opens with Alex struggling to get through her day-to-day life working at her mom's cosmetics company. It is her first job after giving up on her dream of trying to become a teacher. Alex's life changes significantly when her mother passes away from her cancer. At the reading of the will, Alex is not given control of the family business. Instead, the legacy she receives is a DVD and her "Life List". To receive the actual legacy, Alex is posed a challenge from her deceased mother, where she must complete every item on the list before the end of the year. Throughout the year, she tries to check off each of her childhood dreams, from simple things like being part of a mosh pit at a concert, trying stand-up comedy, to finding true love. Whenever she finishes a task, she ends up with a new DVD containing a personal message from her mother, who guides and empowers her to keep going. Because of her mother's DVDs, Alex regains her sense of self and the courage to fight for the life she wants. In this film, Sofia Carson won 2025 *Imagen Awards* for her stunning performance in the role of Alex.

This film was chosen because it presents Alex's story, which contains issues of women's empowerment and self-discovery filled with emotional turmoil and chaos. At this point, Alex's conversations with other characters in this film are used as objects of analysis to see how Alex handles conflicts that are often used by her that cross the line or do not resolve the problem. Therefore, the researcher examines this phenomenon through Grice's flouting maxim. This is because Grice's theory is able to explain why people use unclear answers or attacks the conversation of the

person they are talking to. Based on the researcher's initial observations, the main character in the film use several flouting maxims. It can be seen in scenes where the main character avoids topics, gives short or excessive answers, and use irony to convey feelings that are difficult to express. It is through this flouting maxim that the main character's emotional conflict is expressed. These maxim flouting take the form of inaccurate information, irrelevant answers, and long-winded speech. Each maxim flouting carries a specific strategy. Thus, the researcher also employs Cutting's (2002) theory to identify the strategies that occur when the main character breaks the maxims. Cutting (2002) specifies nine main strategies of maxim flouting, which are overstatement, understatement, metaphor, hyperbole, irony, banter, sarcasm, being ambiguous/obscure, and changing the topic (being irrelevant). Every strategy hints at how the speakers use language to achieve certain goals, whether it is to maintain social relationships, avoid emotional pressure, create humour, or express attitudes indirectly.

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the introduction of the research, the researcher will attempt to formulate the following research questions:

1. What types of maxim flouting can be found in the main character utterances throughout the film *The Life List* (2025)?
2. What strategies of maxim flouting are identified in the film *The Life List* (2025)?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the introduction of the research and the research questions above, this research seeks to:

1. To identify the types of maxim flouting that appear in the main character utterances throughout the film *The Life List* (2025) based on Grice's (1975) theory.
2. To describe the strategies of maxim flouting that use by the main character in the film *The Life List* (2025) based on Cutting's (2002) theory.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In theoretical terms, this research gives a contribution to the comprehension related to pragmatic studies. Where the comprehension of the relationship between Grice's Cooperative Principle and Cutting's flouting strategy has a connection. Hence, it can be a reference for other research that considers implicature in film media.

In practical terms, this research is beneficial for the students who learn pragmatics, or film studies because it can help them see how the concepts of maxim flouting are applied in the main character conversations and how flouting strategies construct meanings that are not directly expressed. This research can also be a guide for the students in conducting systematic conversation data analysis. Besides that, the university can use this research as a model for the development of interdisciplinary studies that combine linguistics with media and cultural studies.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this research is maxims, specifically analyzing the types of maxim flouting based on Grice's (1975) theory and the strategies of maxim flouting based on Cutting's (2002) theory in the film *The Life List* (2025). This research will focus on analyzing the utterances produced by the main character in the film *The Life List* (2025). Thus, this research has limitations because it only analyzes the dialogues of the main character in *The Life List* (2025) that show flouting maxims, with the focus limited to one main character, namely Alex. Other dialogues that do not contain flouting maxims are not analyzed, so this research only focuses on this specific aspect.