

## THE FLOUTINGS OF GRICE'S MAXIMS TO CREATE HUMOR ON FRIENDS SEASON 9

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### Abstract

This research concentrates on the floutings of Grice's maxims found in the creation of verbally expressed humor in an American situational comedy entitled Friends season 9. Therefore, this research aimed to find out how flouting Grice's maxims might contribute to create some humorous conversations on Friends season 9. The transcripts of the characters' utterances from Friends season 9 served as the data for this study. In order to answer the research question, the qualitative method is used in analyzing the data in the form of words. The findings show that all of Grice's maxims were flouted in creating some of the humor of the sitcom; there are 86 floutings found. The most frequently flouted maxim was the maxim of Quality (36 times). The results also reveal that by applying the three major theories of humor (incongruity, superiority, psychic release), flouting Grice's maxims might create humor because of three reasons. The first reason is that the floutings illustrate the character's defects or suffering. There are misfortunes or unpleasant experiences of the sitcom's characters that the audience laughs at (superiority-based humor). The second reason is that the floutings go against the expectation from the audience that what happens in the sitcom is different from what is expected (incongruity-based humor). The final explanation is that the floutings present a sexually-related subject. By presenting the subject, laughter is evoked by the relief from the removal, albeit momentary, of the restraint (psychic release-based humor).

**Keywords:** Cooperative Principle, Floutings, Verbal Humor, Friends

### INTRODUCTION

Language has a variety of purposes in addition to its core function, i.e., to communicate ideas or opinions to each other. In his book A Little Book of Language, David Crystal (2010) states that we use language to transfer the ideas in our heads into someone else's, express identity, show emotions, have a friendly relationship with someone, and be playful. The last-mentioned purpose is intended for fun. Crystal confirms that idea by saying "we love to play with language, and we enjoy it when other people play with language. And we're playful in hundreds of different ways. Every area of language that we've discussed in this book can be used for fun, ..." (195). People are able to play with language for fun because they have a sense of humor. It signifies that humor is the ability to think that something is funny or humorous. Another way of defining humor is that it is the quality of something that makes people laugh.

In his book Semantic Mechanism of Humor, Victor Raskin says that humor is a common phenomenon where, in most cases, somebody sees or hears a stimulus (audio or visual) and laughs (1). In the same vein, Alison Ross, in her book The Language of Humor, defines humor as “something that makes a person smile or laugh” (1). Depending on particular contexts, this quality in something that makes it humorous might occur by failing to observe the Cooperative Principle (CP) and its maxims by Paul Grice, a British philosopher of language. Salvatore Attardo, in his book Linguistic Theories of Humor, claims “a large number of jokes involves violations of one or more of Grice’s maxims” (271). According to Betty J. Birner, in his book Introduction to Pragmatics, the fundamental idea of the Cooperative Principle is that speakers, above all else, are attempting to cooperate while having a conversation (41). The CP is divided into four maxims. They are the maxim of Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relation. Each one of them describes what it means to be a cooperative speaker. Nonetheless, Grice says that the CP and its maxims can be failed to observe (non-observance of the maxims). It is when people are not cooperative by not following/obeying the maxims. There are several ways of failing to observe a maxim; a person may flout, violate, opt out of, or infringe a maxim (Grice 49).

By failing to observe the CP and its maxims, humor can be elicited, for example, when speakers exaggerate wildly, say the opposite of what they think, or deceive someone playfully (non-observance of the maxim of Quality). Humor can also arise, by breaking the CP, when an interpretation of a comment, story, or a question-and-answer is switched to a second, usually opposite interpretation as in a punchline (non-observance of the maxim of Manner). Furthermore, breaking the CP by giving an obviously vague or confusing answer (non-observance of the maxim of Manner) can also result in humor (John Morreall 3).

According to The American Dictionary, “[A situational comedy is] a humorous radio or television series featuring the reactions of a regular cast of characters to unusual situations, such as misunderstanding or embarrassing coincidences” (1). The misunderstanding or embarrassing parts in a sitcom are taken from people’s daily activities. In an academic paper entitled History and Characteristics of US-sitcoms, Irina Wamsler asserts “the scripts of comedies imitate real life and fulfill the audience’s needs in everyday lives. It signifies that people like to relax while watching other people’s daily lives including love, friendship, or working life” (3). In other words, a situational comedy is a television series that depicts people’s daily lives to make the audience laugh by creating humorous situations. Because the humor in sitcoms is relatable to people’s lives, sitcoms are well-liked in many countries, and the United States is no exception. Friends is one of the most well-liked sitcoms in the world.

According to Time (2007), Friends is one of the most popular television shows of all time. This situational comedy itself is a ten-season American comedy created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman that aired on NBC from September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1994, to May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Each season has 22 to 24 episodes, and the length of each episode varies from 20 to 22 minutes. The story of this sitcom

is about six best friends in their 20s who live in Manhattan. They are Ross Geller (a paleontologist), Rachel Green (a waitress who hopes to work in fashion), Monica Geller (a chef), Joey Tribbiani (a struggling actor), Chandler Bing (Statistical Analysis and Data Reconfiguration), and Phoebe Buffay (a masseuse/musician). Over ten years and seasons, these characters go through life lessons, family, love, drama, friendship, and comedy. According to [emmys.com](http://emmys.com), the show has received numerous awards, including six Primetime Emmy Awards out of sixty-two nominations.

By addressing the explanation above, the writer expresses an interest in analyzing how flouting Grice's maxims contribute to creating humor in *Friends*. For this reason, the title of this undergraduate thesis is The Floutings of Grice's Maxims to Create Humor on Friends Season 9. The problem formulated in this paper is: How may flouting Grice's maxims create humor on *Friends* season 9? This study focuses on humor on *Friends* that (a) occurs from one (out of four) type of non-observance of the maxims (flouting) and (b) is expressed verbally. This study also analyzes the verbally expressed humor in the sitcom with the help of three major theories of humor (incongruity, superiority, and psychic release).

To answer the problem statement of this study, the writer uses three main theories—namely, the Cooperative Principle (CP), non-observance of the maxims (flouting), and three major theories of humor (incongruity, superiority, and psychic release). The Cooperative Principle was first introduced by Grice in his theory of Implicature in 1976 while giving the William James lectures at Harvard University (a shorter version of which was published in 1975 in a paper *Logic and Conversation*). This principle says “make your 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 45). Moreover, “the principle is explicated by a set of maxims, defining what it means to cooperate in a conversational manner” (Alan Cruse 356). The maxims are:

The maxim of Quality—giving enough information

The maxim of Quantity—telling the truth

The maxim of Relation—being relevant

The maxim of Manner—being unambiguous and orderly

However, Grice greatly emphasized that the CP is not a strict way of behaving in conversations, “which speakers have a moral obligation to obey” (Paul R. Kroeger 141). It is just assumptions people make that they are giving enough information, telling the truth, being relevant, and avoiding being ambiguous for a conversation to happen. As further explained by Ralph W. Fasold, the Cooperative Principle is a guideline for a speaker to calculate another speaker's meaning based on semantic meaning and the assumption that that other speaker is behaving rationally and cooperatively (160). By making these assumptions, a speaker can go “from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning” (Jenny Thomas 56).

The second theory used in this study is the non-observance of the maxims. It is when speakers are not following/obeying the maxims. There are several ways of failing to observe a

maxim; a person may flout, violate, opt out of, or infringe a maxim (49). In this study, the writer only focuses on floutings. Flouting a maxim is “when speakers appear not to follow the maxim but expect hearers to appreciate the meaning implied, ..., we say that they are ‘flouting’ the maxims” (Joan Cutting 37). It means that a speaker who flouts a maxim deliberately fails to observe a maxim in order to create an implicature and believes the hearers are aware of it. A speaker can flout the maxim of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

The last theory is theories of humor. They are the Incongruity, Superiority, and Psychic Release theory of humor. According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online, “Incongruity is the fact that something is strange, unusual or unsuitable in a particular situation”. In the book Linguistics of Humor, Attardo says “incongruity is basically defined as divergence from expectations” (64). It can be concluded that incongruity is something strange or absurd that happens unexpectedly. As the name implies, the incongruity theory claims that there is an element of surprise that contributes to humor creation. Ross states “the incongruity theory focuses on the element of surprise. This accounts for the most obvious feature of much humor: an ambiguity, or double meaning, which deliberately misleads the audience, followed by a punchline” (7). There is also the psychic release theory of humor which says that the release that comes from the removal of a restraint (presenting taboo topics) causes laughter. This theory explains “the triggering of laughter by the sense of release from a threat being overcome—such as a reduction of fears about death and sex” (Ross 61). In other words, this theory claims that laughter can be evoked by presenting taboo topics (sex, death, religion, or even excreta). Sex is, by far, the most common taboo topic associated with humor. “Once a particular object has sexual connotations, that word can be enough to trigger the laugh; *bananas, cucumbers*” (Ross 65). The last major theory of humor is the superiority theory of humor. This theory claims that humor occurs because people laugh at misfortunes or unpleasant experiences of others. “This could explain why people laugh at many variations of the slipping-on-a-banana-skin scenario” (Ross 51). Correspondingly, Derrick James Taberski says “superiority theories contend that we do not laugh with, but rather laugh at people. We laugh at them because of some falling or defect that they may possess or because they suffer some sort of misfortune” (18).

## **METHOD**

### **Research Method**

This research is descriptive qualitative research. According to Sharan B. Merriam, “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning of what people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (13). Therefore, this study tries to describe the phenomenon in conversations related to the creation of humor as a result of flouting Grice's maxims. The qualitative research was chosen because this research examines data that is in the form of words. In qualitative research, According to John W. Creswell,

in his book Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, “the researcher is an instrument of data collection who gathers words or pictures, analyzes them inductively, focuses on the meaning of the participants, and describes a process that is expressive and persuasive in language” (14). In this research, the writer is an instrument that collects the data in the form of words. Then, the writer analyzes and presents them in descriptive language.

### **Object of Study**

The object of this research is the conversations between the characters of an American situational comedy entitled Friends season 9. There are 24 episodes in the season. The data, however, are limited to the first five episodes of the situational comedy only. They served as the representative of season 9. Friends was chosen because it falls into the comedy genre, and it is one of the most popular television shows of all time (Time 2007). Because the genre is comedy, there are a lot of humorous conversations to examine, particularly in terms of failing to observe Grice’s maxims to make humorous conversations. That is because, in a comedy, there is a high probability that the characters will fail to observe Grice’s maxims to create humor as Attardo claims “a large number of jokes involve violations of one or more of Grice’s maxims” (272). That is what happens in Friends. This situational comedy provided the writer with a great amount of data.

Moreover, this situational comedy is a ten-season American comedy created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman that aired on NBC from September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1994, to May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Each season has 22-24 episodes, and the length of each episode varies from 20 to 22 minutes. The story of the situational comedy is about the personal and professional lives of six best friends in their 20s who live in Manhattan. Those best friends are Ross Geller (a paleontologist), Rachel Green (a waitress who hopes to work in fashion), Monica Geller (a chef), Joey Tribbiani (a struggling actor), Chandler Bing (who hates working in data processing), and Phoebe Buffay (a masseuse/musician). These individuals go through life lessons, family, love, drama, friendship, and comedy over the span of ten years and seasons.

### **Data Collection**

The first step the writer took to gather the data for this study was to download the first five episodes of season 9 of the sitcom from a Telegram group chat. Then, the writer downloaded the transcripts of the five episodes from the internet. Next, the writer watched the sitcom with the help of English subtitles using a laptop to understand the plot of the sitcom. After that, the writer watched the sitcom again to match the transcripts with the characters’ utterances.

The fourth step was to categorize which conversations contained floutings of the maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner) —next, the writer classified which of those conversations were humorous and which were not. The presence of canned laughter was used as the indication that a particular conversation was meant to be funny. Only humorous conversations that contained

floutings were used in this research data. To make the data simpler and easier to read, the writer encoded them into tables.

### Data Analysis

In order to analyze how flouting Grice's maxims may create humor on Friends season 9, there were four steps to be done. First, after transcribing the conversations from the selected episodes of the sitcom, the writer classified the conversations into two categories; cooperative and non-cooperative. The categorization was based on the theory of the Cooperative principle. A conversation is not cooperative when it does not observe Grice's maxim(s) (Quantity, Quality, Manner, and Relation). In this research, the writer focused only on non-cooperative conversations.

Second, with the aid of the theory of non-observance of the maxims, the writer classified the non-cooperative conversations based on what types of non-observance of the maxims they were (flout, violation, opt-out, or infringing). This research only focuses on floutings. Then, the writer used the same theory (non-observance of the maxims), issues with Grice's theory, implicature, and context to determine what maxims were flouted in those non-cooperative conversations.

Third, the writer reduced the conversations that contained floutings of the maxims by selecting the conversations that were humorous only. The presence of canned laughter (Humor) was used to determine whether or not a conversation was humorous. Lastly, the writer analyzed how humor was created in the humorous non-cooperative conversations by using the theories of humor (Incongruity, Superiority, and Psychic Release).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Maxim Floutings Resulting in Humor

In this study, the writer found that the characters of Friends in the first five episodes of season 9 flouted Grice's maxims 86 times, resulting in humor. The following table shows how many times each maxim was flouted.

Table1  
Number of Maxims flouted

Maxim	Quality	Quantity	Relation	Manner
# of times flouted	36	24	16	10

As can be seen from table 1, flouting Grice's maxims accounts for at least some of the humorous conversations in the five selected episodes of Friends season 9. The maxim of Quality, in this case, is the one that was flouted the most (36 times). This maxim is followed by the maxim of Quantity (24 times), Relation (16 times), and Manner (10 times) respectively. However, these numbers do not all represent a one flout-one laugh correlation, as there are some humor events in

which the floutings of maxims overlap and trigger only one laugh. As stated by Thomas, “it is not always possible to determine which maxim is being invoked – the maxims of Quantity and Manner, in particular, seem to overlap and to co-occur” (91). It is not always possible to say which maxim is being failed to observe, and it would be more precise to say that there are two or more operating at once.

### How Humor Might Come through Flouting Grice’s Maxims

Recalling from the previous explanation, there are three primary sources of humor (superiority, incongruity, and psychic release), it is possible for situation comedy writers to create ways for humor to exist by flouting Grice’s maxims. The floutings of Grice’s maxims can be utilized to expose character defects and/or illustrate their suffering, resulting in superiority – based humor. By flouting the maxims, it is also possible to create an element of surprise that violates the audience’s expectation that what happens in reality is different from what is expected (incongruity – based humor). Lastly, flouting the maxims might as well create humor when they present a sexually-related subject. This subject is generally avoided because it is considered taboo (embarrassing or rude) in most societies. By presenting this subject, laughter is evoked by the relief that comes from the removal, albeit momentary, of the restraint (psychic release – based humor). Furthermore, it is also found that some humor in the data can be analyzed using more than one theory of humor. That is because the three theories of humor “do not at all contradict each other – rather they seem to supplement each other quietly nicely” (Raskin 40).

#### 1. Flouting the Maxim of Quality to Create Humor

Since the maxim of Quality concerns truth-telling, this maxim is flouted because a speaker deliberately says (a) something s/he believes to be false or (b) something for which s/he lacks adequate evidence with the intention to convey an extra/implied meaning. Moreover, when someone flouts this maxim, they believe his hearer will understand the implied meaning. Following are some examples of flouting the maxim of Quality that creates humor on Friends season 9:

Table 2

Examples of flouting the maxim of quality

Code	Characters	Utterances
EP3/FL17	Mary Ellen	Wow, you’re a lot nicer on Days of Our Lives.
	Mike	Days of Our Lives! That’s why you look so familiar!
	Phoebe	What?
	Mike	What?
	Joey	What? [Laugh Track]
	Phoebe	Do you not know each other? (Laughs) Of course we do! Mike is playing a game that we used to play in high school. Yeah, where we pretend we don’t know each other. We played all kinds of games. (To Mike) <b>Hey, remember the one where I punch you in the face for not being cool?!</b>
	Joey	[Laugh Track]

<b>Phoebe</b>	Mike, let me ask you something. How many sisters does Joey have?
<b>Mike</b>	(Joey holds up six fingers) Six!
<b>Joey</b>	What are you doing? I said seven! (Holds up six fingers) [Laugh Track] (Realizes his mistake) Argh!!! [Laugh Track]
<b>Phoebe</b>	Joey, why did you set me up with a stranger?
<b>Joey</b>	Because I forgot about our date. I'm sorry.

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The extract above is from episode 3. During dinner the four of them are having, Joey does not want Phoebe to know the fact that Mike is just a random guy he met in a coffeehouse. Joey forgot that he had to set Phoebe up with one of his acquaintances as he promised. Long story short, there was not much time left for him to find Phoebe a date as he realized he does not have many male friends. As a result, he picked Mike, a stranger he met at a coffeehouse, to be Phoebe's partner. Joey asked Mike to play along with him by pretending as if they had known each other since high school. Mike agreed to do so as Joey promised him a free dinner. In the middle of dinner, Mike said something that made Phoebe doubt Joey and Mike's friendship dating back to high school. Phoebe then inquires as to if they are acquaintances. Joey, who does not want their disguise to be discovered, flouts the maxim of Quality by saying something obviously false or for which he does not have sufficient evidence.

Mike is, Joey claims, recreating a game they used to play in which they pretended they did not know each other. Joey also claims that he once struck Mike in the face for not playing the game the way Joey desired. The utterance from Joey is false. Joey is well aware that the two of them have never played a game, and he has never punched Mike in the face before since they two have just recently met. He is merely implying to Mike that he is not happy with Mike's acting and that he should be careful with what he says. When Joey flouts the maxim of Quality, he shows his unhappiness towards Mike by uttering the flout in a menacing tone. It can be said that the utterance where Joey flouts the maxim of Quality shows that Joey is suffering an unpleasant experience.

The audience laughs at this unpleasant situation where Mike is not playing along with Joey. The superiority theory of humor claims that humor occurs because there are misfortunes or unpleasant experiences of others that people laugh at. Ross says "the philosopher Thomas Hobbes characterized laughter as a 'sudden glory' at a triumph of our own or at an indignity suffered by someone else" (51).

## 2. Flouting of the Maxim of Quantity to Create Humor

The maxim of Quantity is concerned with the amount of information an utterance conveys. This maxim is flouted when a speaker deliberately makes his contribution (a) more informative or (b) less informative than is required for the current purposes of the exchange in order to convey an implied meaning. Moreover, the speaker believes that his hearer will likely understand the implied

meaning. The following is an example of flouting the maxim of Quantity that create some humor of the sitcom:

Table 3  
Examples of flouting the maxim of quantity

Code	Characters	Utterances
EP1/FL33	Phoebe	(Taking Ross aside) Have you umm, have you thought anymore about you and Rachel?
	Ross	Oh, well yeah, actually, I was going to talk to her when you guys all came in the room.
	Phoebe	Yay! It's so exciting! Wow, you could've done that with us there [Laugh Track]
	Ross	Yeah right.
	Phoebe	Oh, sure okay. You can touch yourself in front of us [Laugh Track]. But you can't talk to Rachel [Laugh Track]
	Ross	What?! When have I ever touched myself in front of you guys? Oh, please! Just before when you were asleep in the lounge! [Laugh Track] <b>That Armenian family was watching you instead of the TV.</b> [Laugh Track]
	Phoebe	Oh, that reminds me that Mr. Hasmeje still has my Game boy. [Laugh Track]

In the above example taken from episode 1, the occasion is Rachel's giving birth to her daughter, and Ross is the father of the daughter. However, they are not a couple. They used to go out. Now, they are just friends. Phoebe, their best friend, knows that Ross is still in love with Rachel. Ross, on the other hand, was not sure that getting back together with Rachel is a good idea. However, Phoebe successfully talked him into it. Later, when Phoebe asks Ross if he has thought more about him and Rachel, Ross replies that he was going to talk to Rachel about their relationship when Phoebe and the other friends entered the room Ross and Rachel were in. Phoebe gets excited when she hears that. She says that he should have done that when they were there. Ross does not think that is a good idea. He does not want to do it with everyone watching him. Phoebe is confused by Ross's words because she witnessed Ross touch himself in front of them earlier (something one usually does with no one watching).

In this context, Phoebe is ridiculing Ross by saying that since he could touch himself while others were looking, he should be able to communicate his feelings to Rachel in front of them (something that may be done privately or openly). Ross does not feel that he touched himself and asks Phoebe when he has ever touched himself in front of them. Phoebe replies that he did it when he was about to sleep in the lounge. Apparently, Ross was not aware that he touched himself because he did it while he was sleeping. Phoebe continues by saying that the Armenian family was watching him instead of the TV. For this current purpose of exchange, that statement that includes the Armenian family by Phoebe is not necessary. It is a flout of the maxim of Quantity.

The flout is considered funny as there is a laugh track after it. By giving too much information to create an extra meaning, humor in this conversation comes by highlighting the flaw of the character Ross and showing his suffering when Phoebe mocks him. According to Taberski, "superiority theories contend that we do not laugh with, but rather laugh at people. We laugh at them because of some falling or defect that they may possess or because they suffer some sort of misfortune" (18). The superiority theory of humor claims that humor occurs because there are misfortunes or unpleasant experiences of Ross's that the audience laughs at.

### 3. Flouting the Maxim of Relation to Create Humor

The maxim of Relation, as mentioned in chapter 2, simply states "be relevant". This maxim is flouted when a speaker deliberately makes his contribution irrelevant to the conversation in which he is participating. The flout of this maxim is done in order to convey an implied meaning. In this case, the speaker believes his hearer will understand the implied meaning. The following are some examples of how the maxim of Relation was flouted by the characters *Friends* Season 9:

Table 4  
Examples of flouting the maxim of relation

Code	Characters	Utterances
EP2/FL64	Monica	Alright, here's something. It says to try holding the baby close to your body and then swing her rapidly from side to side.
	Rachel	Ok. (Starts swinging Emma rapidly and she stops crying)
	Monica	It worked!
	Rachel	Oh! (happy) Oh no, just stopped to throw up a little bit. (Emma starts crying again) Oh, come on, what am I gonna do? It's been hours and it won't stop crying.
	Monica	Oh. Not it. She.
	Rachel	Yeah, I'm not sure. [Laugh Track]
	Monica	Oh my god, I am losing my mind.
	Phoebe	Yeah, no kidding, <b>this just proves no good can come from having sex with Ross!</b> [Laugh Track]

This extract is taken from episode 2. The situation is in Ross and Rachel's apartment. Some time ago, Rachel made her baby daughter cry by waking her up. She does not know how to make the baby stop crying. Phoebe and Monica, who are in the apartment, try to help Rachel. They have tried several ways to make the baby stop crying, but nothing worked. Over time, they begin to lose patience with the situation as they do not know what to do anymore. When Monica says that she is losing her mind, Phoebe says something that indicates she is too. However, she continues by saying that "this just proves no good can come from having sex with Ross!".

At the surface of what is said, the utterance from Phoebe is irrelevant to what is being discussed. Clearly, from the extract, they are not discussing something that has to do with having sex with Ross. They are discussing how to make the baby stop crying and how the situation is starting to drive them crazy. Phoebe's utterance implies that Ross should be held responsible for

the unpleasant situation they are facing. Moreover, the irrelevant utterance by Phoebe also flouts the maxim of Quantity “since to say something irrelevant is generally to say too much, and to say too much often involves saying something irrelevant” (57). If the irrelevant utterance is taken out, Phoebe will still provide enough contribution in her “yeah, no kidding”. Therefore, the irrelevant utterance is not necessary. Furthermore, the flout of the maxim of Relation and Quantity by Phoebe is considered humorous as it is followed by a laugh track.

The humor occurs because the flouting was a surprise to the audience. Ross says “the incongruity theory focuses on the element of surprise. This accounts for the most obvious feature of much humour” (7). When someone says something irrelevant, it is usually not expected by the hearer as it is not in the area they are talking about. Moreover, a surprise can be humorous when it is strange, and it keeps the hearer in a happy frame of mind. In order for a surprise to be humorous, the receiver must be in a frame of happy mind (Charles Darwin 209). Furthermore, the element of surprise becomes humorous because the utterance contains a taboo topic (sex). “By joking about these things, repressed impulses can be aired. Laughter is evoked by the relief that comes from the removal, albeit momentary, of a restraint” (Taberski 22). The taboo topic in the utterance is sex. “Once a particular object has sexual connotations, the word can be enough to trigger the laugh” (Ross 65).

#### 4. Flouting the Maxim of Manner to Create Humor

By the maxim of manner, participants in a conversation should be perspicuous. Therefore, this maxim is flouted when a speaker deliberately does not (a) avoid obscurity of expression, (b) avoid ambiguity, (c) be brief, and (d) be orderly in order to convey an implied meaning. In this case, the speaker believes his hearer will understand the implied meaning. The followings are examples of how the maxim of Manner was flouted by the characters in the *Friends* transcript:

Table 5  
Examples of flouting the maxim of manner

Code	Characters	Utterances
EP1/FL51	Phoebe	Hey!
	Rachel	Hi
	Phoebe	Are you alright?
	Rachel	Um...uh...I think I just got engaged.
	Phoebe	Oh my God! He did it?
	Rachel	What? Did you know he was gonna ask me?
	Phoebe	Are you kidding? I'm like the one who talked him into it. [Laugh Track] I like to think of myself as the puppet master of the group. [Laugh Track]
	Rachel	And you really think this is a good idea?
	Phoebe	<b>I just talk him into it, don't tell me I have to do you too.</b> [Laugh Track]
	Rachel	<b>The puppet master gets tired people.</b> [Laugh Track]
	Rachel	I just don't know! It just doesn't feel right

This extract is from episode 1. The situation is in the hospital where Rachel has just given birth to Ross's daughter. However, Ross and Rachel are not together. They are just friends who used to date. In this extract, Phoebe is in Rachel's room to see how she is doing. When Rachel says that she has just gotten engaged, Phoebe gets excited. She thought she managed to persuade Ross to propose to Rachel. Phoebe previously encouraged Ross to propose to Rachel because she believes Ross is still in love with Rachel. On the other hand, Rachel does not mean that she is engaged with Ross because she thought Joey proposed to her. She is, however, not sure that being engaged with Joey, Ross's best friend, is a good idea at the moment. Hence, she wants to know what Phoebe thinks about it. Phoebe, who thought Rachel is engaged with Ross, says that it is a good idea. However, she does not say that directly. She implies that in a long-winded response. In her long-winded response, Phoebe has flouted the maxim of Manner by not being maximally brief. She could have answered by saying "Yes, I think so". However, she chose not to be maximally brief for reasons best known to herself.

Her long-winded reaction appears to be amusing as there is a laugh track after it. It is considered humorous since the audience did not expect her to respond in such a long and ludicrous manner, positioning herself as a puppet master controlling her pals (the puppets). There is an element of surprise that creates the humor. Ross says "the incongruity theory focuses on the element of surprise. This accounts for the most obvious feature of much humour: an ambiguity, or double meaning, which deliberately misleads the audience, followed by a punchline" (7). The element of surprise in this respect deals with an expectation being violated.

## **CONCLUSION**

As for the conclusion, floutings of Grice's maxims account for at least some of the humorous conversations in the first five selected episodes of Friends season 9. There is a total of 86 of them. The maxim of Quality was the most frequently flouted maxim (36 times), resulting in humor. Following this maxim are the maxims of Quantity (24 times), Relation (16 times), and Manner (10 times). These figures, however, do not always reflect a one-flouting-one-laughter correlation as there are some utterances in which floutings of the maxims overlap.

Following an analysis of the 86 floutings using the three theories of humor (incongruity, superiority, psychic release), the writer concludes that humor on Friends season 9 might arise from flouting Grice's maxims when the floutings expose the character's flaws or portray their suffering (superiority-based humor). The humor might also occur because the floutings break the audience's expectation by creating an element of surprise that what happens in the sitcom differs from what is expected (incongruity-based humor). Lastly, the floutings create humor because they present a sexually-related subject. Most societies avoid discussing this subject because it is considered taboo (Psychic release-based humor). By presenting the subject, laughter is evoked by the relief from the removal, albeit momentary, of the restraint. Moreover, the three theories "do not at all

contradict each other – rather they seem to supplement each other quietly nicely” (Raskin 40). It means that it is possible for humor to have the nature of the three theories of humor at the same time.

For those who want to research a similar study, the writer recommends that they focus on different types of non-observance of the maxims. They are violations, infringing, and opting out. Future researchers could also use different data sources, such as comedies in movies, comic books, and other media. It would also be better if future scholars could discover other theories of humor and apply them to determine the role of non-observance of the maxims in the creation of humor.

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