

Flouting Maxim Found in Keeping Up with the Kardashians Season 14

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ABSTRACT: This study examines the flouting of conversational maxims in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, focusing on how the characters intentionally violate these maxims to create humor, emphasize emotions, or steer conversations in particular directions. By applying Grice (1975) theory on the Cooperative Principle, the study identifies instances where the characters flout the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner to convey implicit meanings and engage the audience through humor and drama. A qualitative method was employed to collect and analyze conversational data, focusing on the types of maxims flouted. The findings reveal that all four types of flouting maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner are present, with flouting maxim of relation being the most frequent. These instances of flouting reflect the Kardashians' tendency for indirectness, sarcasm, and playful misdirection in their interactions, which adds to the show's entertainment value. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of flouting maxims in media discourse and how spontaneous unscripted dialogue shapes communication in reality show.

KEYWORDS: Cooperative Principle, flouting maxim, pragmatics, reality show.

INTRODUCTION

Conversations are shaped by more than just words which are directed by unspoken rules that help participants interpret meaning. Pragmatics, the study of how context influences meaning in communication, plays a crucial role in explaining how language is used effectively in different contexts. It highlights how meaning is derived not only from words but also from context and delivery. Without context, conversations are more prone to misunderstandings, often due to differences in background knowledge or perspectives between speakers and listeners. To ensure effective communication, conversations should be clear, concise, and context-appropriate, with speakers expressing ideas explicitly and listeners engaging actively.

The Cooperative Principle, introduced by Grice (1975), is fundamental to successful communication. It consists of four conversational maxims: the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relation, and the maxim of manner. These maxims serve as guidelines for how speakers should share information. However, speakers may intentionally flout these maxims to create specific effects in conversation, such as humor, emphasis, or indirectness. This deliberate violation of conversational norms is known as flouting maxims.

Flouting a maxim occurs when a speaker intentionally breaks the conversational maxims while still expecting the listener to recognize an underlying meaning. According to Levinson, speakers flout maxims not to mislead but to encourage the listener to interpret the intended meaning behind their utterances (Levinson, 1983). Research on flouting maxims has been conducted in various conversational settings, including interviews, talk shows, and films.

For example, Kipya et al. analyzed flouting maxims in *The Ellen DeGeneres Show* and *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, identifying various strategies such as tautology, metaphor, and rhetorical questions (Kipya et al., 2019). Similarly, Marlisa and Hidayat (2020) examined maxim flouting in *Good Morning America*, highlighting how hosts and guests flouted maxims for humor and engagement. Nuzulia analyzed flouting maxims in Donald Trump's interview with *TIME*, revealing that all types of maxims were flouted, with the maxim of quantity being the most frequently flouted (Nuzulia, 2020). Other studies, such as Pratiwi et al. explored maxim flouting in *Alice in Wonderland*, finding that the maxim of relation was the most frequently flouted (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Irawan et al. (2021) examined flouting maxims in talk shows, incorporating Grice's theory and Halliday & Hasan's context of situation framework (Irawan et al., 2021). Similarly, Apriyani & Wiraharja (2023) investigated flouting maxims in the film *Kong: Skull Island*, analyzing both the types of flouting and the characters' motivations (Apriyani & Wiraharja, 2023). Another research was conducted by Wulantari & Maharani which explored maxim flouting in the film *A Man Called Otto*, while Imanuel & Ningsih examined *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, finding multiple instances of maxim flouting (Imanuel & Ningsih, 2023; Wulantari & Maharani, 2023).

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Building on these studies, this research focuses on identifying the types of flouting maxims in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14. Unlike previous studies that have primarily analyzed scripted films or interviews, this research examines flouting maxims in a reality television show. Reality shows capture unscripted, real-life interactions, making them an intriguing subject for analyzing conversational patterns. Hill in Mayagita (2021) describes reality shows as television programs that present dramatic and sometimes humorous situations, often featuring real individuals or celebrities who may be influenced by off-screen production elements (Mayagita, 2021).

Keeping Up with the Kardashians follows the personal and professional lives of the Kardashian-Jenner family, showcasing their daily interactions, conflicts, and relationships. The series is known for its dramatic and engaging conversations, making it a rich source for studying flouting maxims. The study offers a fresh perspective on how conversational maxims are flouted in spontaneous, unscripted interactions. This research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by expanding the analysis of flouting maxims in reality television. Thus, the primary objective of this research is to identify the types of maxims flouted in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, using Grice's framework of conversational maxims (quantity, quality, relation, and manner).

METHOD

The method of research is one of the most crucial aspects in conducting a research. Method of research gives some guidance to understand the object that is being observed. This research used qualitative method. In qualitative research, the process involves investigating a problem deeply to gain a comprehensive understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012: 16). The data source for this study is obtained from conversations in the reality show "*Keeping Up with The Kardashians* Season 14". *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14 is a season of the popular reality TV series which follows the lives of the Kardashian-Jenner family, focusing on their personal, professional, and social dynamics.

The research method of this research is classified into two main parts: data collection and data analysis. There were few steps to collect the data. The first step in collecting the data was watching the reality show on Netflix. Secondly, the utterances which contain flouting maxims were collected using note-taking technique. The collected utterances were organized systematically to ensure that all relevant data is prepared for analysis.

In the data analysis stage, the utterances were classified based on the type of maxim being flouted: quantity, quality, relation, or manner. From the collected data, ten representative utterances were selected for detailed examination. These instances were then analyzed descriptively using Grice's theory of conversational maxims.

DISCUSSION

This study revealed that the reality show *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* contains various instances of flouting maxims. A total of 10 instances of flouting maxims were analyzed and described in this study which are categorized based on the four types of flouting maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. It can be highlighted that certain conversational patterns in the show often break the expected rules of communication (the Cooperative Principle) by intentionally providing too much or too little information, making exaggerated or untrue statements, being irrelevant, or using unclear language, which result the flouting maxims.

Flouting maxim of quantity

Flouting the maxim of quantity occurs when a speaker provides either too much or too little information in a conversation, which forces the listener to infer the intended meaning. This maxim, part of Grice's cooperative principles, suggests that speakers should be as informative as necessary but not more informative than required (Grice, 1975: 45). Instances of flouting the maxim of quantity are shown in the following data.

Data 1:

Context: In episode 13 of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, Khloé and Kourtney, who are gym buddies striving for their ideal bodies, discuss their workouts. Khloé notices that Kourtney's arms look more toned, which is a result of their training sessions. Joe, their personal trainer, has been working with them to help them achieve their fitness goals.

Kourtney : "Joe's been doing the craziest arms on me. "

Khloé : "Like what? "

Kourtney : "Just crazy."

[2:10 – 2:13]

Kourtney's response, "Just crazy," is an example of flouting the maxim of quantity because it lacks the detail needed to properly answer Khloé's question. When Khloé asks, "Like what?", she is expecting a specific explanation about the exercises Kourtney has done. However, Kourtney's vague answer does not provide real information and instead of giving a clear response, Kourtney deliberately keeps it short, possibly assuming Khloé will understand without further explanation or that the intensity of the workouts is self-explanatory. Her choice to be brief could also suggest she does not feel like discussing it in detail. Khloé understands Kourtney's flouting of the maxim of quantity because of their shared context and prior experiences. Since both of them have been training together under Joe's guidance, Khloé already has a general idea of the types of workouts they do. Although

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Kourtney's response, "Just crazy," lacks detail, Khloé can infer that Kourtney is emphasizing the intensity or difficulty of the exercises rather than avoiding the question entirely. If Kourtney had given a more specific answer like "He's been making me do heavy bicep curls and push-ups"), she would have followed the maxim of quantity.

Data 2:

Context: In *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, Episode 9, Kim and Kourtney's dogs somehow get switched, but Kim does it on purpose because she likes Kourtney's dog more. She tries to keep it a secret and does not tell Kourtney the truth. However, Kourtney already knows. Later, when Kim is at home, Kourtney suddenly shows up, demanding to know where her dog is.

Kim : "How did you even know I was home?"

Kourtney : "I have my sources."

[7:16 – 7:22]

Kourtney's response, "I have my sources," flouts the maxim of quantity because she does not provide enough information for Kim to fully understand how she knew she was home. Instead of directly answering the question, Kourtney gives a vague and mysterious response which suggest that she has inside information but refusing to reveal her exact source. This creates an implication that she has ways of finding things out without Kim knowing how. Her response also adds a sense of playfulness to make it more dramatic. Kim, as the listener, likely understands that Kourtney is deliberately withholding details rather than being uncooperative. Because of this, the conversation still works effectively despite Kourtney not following the maxim. In this case, Kourtney's flouting of the maxim serves a purpose builds curiosity and emphasizes that she has been keeping an eye on Kim's actions. A response that follows the maxim of quantity would provide enough information for Kim to understand how Kourtney knew she was home. A better response could be "I saw your car parked outside."

Flouting maxim of quality

Flouting Maxim of Quality happens when the speaker makes a statement that is obviously false or for which they lack sufficient evidence. Since the speaker does not seem to be attempting to mislead the listener, the listener is forced to seek an plausible interpretation (Thomas, 1995: 67). This may involve making contradictory statements or expressing something that is impossible, indicating a lack of interest in the conversation. The followings are two data which are classified as flouting maxim of quality.

Data 1:

Context: Kim and Jonathan are sneaking to Khloe's closet and packing some outfits for Khloe for her trip to Santa Barbara. Kim chooses some black fits which is her favorite color to match her taste in fashion.

Kim : "Okay, okay. Hold on. This is a look. This, open with this
and just a simple bodysuit."

Jonathan : "That's beautiful, for a funeral."

[15:41 – 15:48]

Jonathan's comment flouts the maxim of quality by being sarcastic. While he says, "That's beautiful, for a funeral," he does not literally mean it. His statement is meant to indirectly criticize the outfit choice, implying it is too somber or serious because it is all black, a color commonly associated with funerals. Jonathan's comment, "That's beautiful, for a funeral," is considered irony because it involves a contrast between the expected meaning and the actual meaning conveyed. Kim is excited about the outfit, and she uses the word "beautiful" to express her appreciation for it. However, Jonathan's response flips this expectation by stating the outfit would only be suitable for a funeral which is a negative and somber context. Jonathan's answer creates irony because the word "beautiful" is usually positive, but it is being used to describe something inappropriate for the situation, which is the opposite of what Kim intended.

Data 2:

Context: On a sunny day in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, Episode 8, Kim spends time at Khloé's house, enjoying a casual day together. As they chat, Khloé brings up about Kim's diet, asking how it is going. Kim responds positively, saying it has been good so far.

Kim : "You know, I had a few gluten-free pretzels today, which threw me off, 'cause that's
carbs, but it's fine."

Khloe : "Gluten-free, it's like you're eating air."

[7:33 – 7:39]

Khloé's statement "Gluten-free, it's like you're eating air." flouts the maxim of quality because it is not literally true. Gluten-free pretzels still have substance, calories, and nutritional value, so saying they are "like air" is an exaggeration. According to Grice's theory of conversational maxim, speakers flout the Maxim of Quality when they intentionally say something untrue, expecting the listener to recognize the exaggeration and infer the intended meaning. In this case, Kim and the audience understand that Khloé does not mean her statement literally but is instead implying that gluten-free food feels unsubstantial or unsatisfying. The flouting maxim becomes noticeable due to common knowledge which is people know that gluten-free food is not truly weightless. The tone and context contribute to the humorous effect. Since this conversation takes place in a casual setting between siblings, Khloé's

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statement can be seen as playful teasing rather than serious criticism. Hence, in this case, Khloé exaggerate reply with underlying intention but still noticable for Kim makes it a clear example of flouting maxim of quality.

Flouting maxim of relation

Flouting the maxim of relation happens when a speaker offers irrelevant or unrelated responses. The maxim of Relation (be relevant) is exploited by giving a response or remark that is clearly irrelevant to the topic at hand (such as abruptly changing the subject, or by overtly failing to address the other person's goal in asking a question) (Thomas, 1995: 70). The data presented below demonstrate examples of flouting the maxim of relation.

Data 1:

Context: This conversation shows in Keeping Up with the Kardashians Season 14, Episode 10 where Larsa and Khloé visit Kourtney's house to eat together and catch up on a nice morning. As they arrive, Kourtney welcomes them and invites them to sit and eat, setting the scene for a relaxed conversation.

Larsa : "Are we sharing salads?"

Kourtney : "Yours is in the fridge."

Kourtney flouts the maxim of relation by giving an indirect response to Larsa's question. Larsa expects a straightforward yes-or-no answer. However, instead of directly addressing the question, Kourtney replies, "Yours is in the fridge." This response does not explicitly confirm or deny whether they are sharing but implies that Larsa already has her own salad and therefore does not need to share. The underlying meaning is that they are not sharing, but Kourtney does not state it outright. This flouting of the maxim forces Larsa to infer the intended meaning rather than receiving a clear response. Larsa likely notices the flout because it follows a general way of implying a message, which is a common conversational strategy where indirect responses still convey relevant information. In everyday communication, people often imply meanings instead of stating them clearly, especially in casual or familiar settings. Hence, the implied message is that they are not sharing salads, but Kourtney chooses to communicate this in an indirect way, reflecting both personal and cultural communication styles within the show.

Data 2:

Context: In the final episode of Keeping Up with the Kardashians, Khloé receives a text from her doctor confirming that her baby's genetic results are normal. Since she struggles with anxiety, she asks the doctor to share the baby's gender with Kylie first. Eager to find out, Khloé anxiously waits for Kylie's call for about 30 minutes. When Kylie finally calls, instead of revealing the gender right away, she bombards Khloé with questions to test her patience.

Kylie : "Okay, are you sitting?"

Khloe : "Kylie, say it!"

[27:07 – 27:10]

In this conversation, Khloé's response fits into flouting maxim of relation. Instead of responding directly to Kylie's question, she completely ignores it and shifts the conversation to what actually matters to her, which is the baby's gender reveal. A relevant answer would be "Yes, I'm sitting" or "No, I'm not", but Khloé chooses to ignore the expected reply. Kylie realizes that Khloé is flouting the maxim because her response does not logically follow the question and she understands that Khloé is pushing her to skip the dramatic pause and get straight to the point. Rather than engaging with Kylie's questions, Khloé cuts straight to the point, making it clear that she has no interest in small talk. She subtly conveys her impatience and eagerness to hear the news by doing this. Through this flouting, Khloé implies that Kylie's question is unnecessary. Her response indirectly expresses that she does not care whether she is sitting or not and wants Kylie to tell the baby's gender already. Without explicitly saying it, she manages to communicate frustration and urgency. In short, the way Khloé answers disrupts the flow of the conversation by ignoring the topic Kylie introduces. Her impatience is evident, and Kylie knows that she should stop delaying and reveal the gender immediately.

Data 3:

Context: This conversation takes place between Khloé and Kourtney in Episode 19 of Keeping Up with the Kardashians. The three Kardashian sisters plan a trip to Alcatraz. While getting ready at their hotel, Khloe and Kim end up waiting forever for Kourtney, who is running late again. Khloe gets so tired of waiting that she nearly falls asleep. After some arguing, Khloe gives Kourtney five more minutes to finish up. But just as she rushes to get ready, Kourtney accidentally gets makeup all over her sweater.

Kourtney : "Do you have a... a wipe, anyone?"

Khloe : "I would look in the glam room if I were you."

[17:10 – 17:13]

Khloé's response to Kourtney can be seen as flouting the maxim of relation because she does not directly answer Kourtney's request for a wipe. Instead of saying "Yes, I have one," or "No, I don't have one," Khloé tells Kourtney where she might find a wipe. It requires Kourtney to figure out that Khloé is suggesting she check the glam room rather than giving a direct answer. By speaking this way, Khloé might also be expressing some impatience or frustration. Since Kourtney has already caused a delay by taking too long to get ready, Khloé's indirect response could imply that she does not want to help and that Kourtney should solve the problem on her own. If Khloé were strictly following the maxim of relation, she could have said, "There are wipes in the glam room," or "I don't have one, but you might find one in the glam room." It would make her response clearer and more directly connected to

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Kourtney's question. However, because she chooses to phrase it indirectly, she flouts the maxim, which might suggest an underlying meaning beyond just providing information. As a listener, Kourtney notices Khloé's impatience from her tone or phrasing and she can infer that Khloé is suggesting where to look rather than answering the question directly.

Flouting maxim of manner

Flouting the maxim of manner occurs when a speaker uses ambiguous language. Such ambiguous responses require the listener to delve deeper to recognize the speaker's true meaning, which could lead to misunderstandings. People who break the maxim of manner by being unclear often do so to prevent a third party from understanding the conversation (Cutting, 2002: 39). Below are selected data demonstrating the flouting maxim of manner.

Data 1:

Context: In Episode 5 of *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, Kourtney prepares for her trip to Cannes by trying on outfits and discussing fashion choices with Khloé in her room. While trying some outfits, she wants to know Khloé's thoughts on her choice.

Kourtney : "Wait. Do you guys like this?"
Khloe : "I'm not mad at this at all."

[24:02 – 24:02]

In this conversation, Kourtney is seeking Khloé's opinion on her outfit by asking, "Wait. Do you guys like this?" Instead of providing a direct answer, Khloé responds with, "I'm not mad at this at all." This response flouts the maxim of manner, which requires speakers to be clear, unambiguous, and orderly in their communication. Khloé's response is not a straightforward yes or no but rather a less direct and sound like unconventional way of expressing approval. The phrase "I'm not mad at this" is an idiomatic expression that means she thinks the outfit looks good or acceptable. However, for someone unfamiliar with this phrase, the statement might seem unclear or ambiguous. Instead of explicitly saying "Yes, I like it" or "No, I don't like it", Khloé uses a more casual and indirect way of conveying her opinion, making her response less precise. Since Kourtney and Khloé are sisters and frequently communicate in a playful and informal manner, Kourtney is most likely familiar with this type of phrasing so she understands what Khloe meant. If Khloé wanted to follow the maxim of manner, she could have replied with something clearer, such as, "Yes, I like it. It looks great on you."

Data 2:

Context: In *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, Episode 16, Khloé and Kourtney are relaxing on the basketball court at Kourtney's house, sipping tea and enjoying their time together. Suddenly, Kim arrives, revealing her new blonde hair, which she excitedly shares took 12 hours to dye.

Kim : "Do you guys like it?"
Khloe : "Wowzas. Holy..."

[8:14 – 8:16]

Khloé's response to Kim can be categorized as flouting maxim of manner because it is vague and incomplete, making it unclear whether she likes Kim's new blonde hair. Instead of giving a direct answer, such as "I love it" or "I'm not sure about it," Khloé responds with exclamations, which do not explicitly state her opinion. This lack of clarity forces Kim to interpret the meaning behind Khloé's words. Kim likely notices the flouting because she asks a direct question expecting a straightforward response, but instead, she receives a reaction that is open-ended and noncommittal. Since Kim understands the context and Khloé's usual way of speaking, she can infer that Khloé's reaction conveys surprise, hesitation, or even an attempt to be playful. The unfinished of Khloé's statement suggests that she is either overwhelmed by the transformation or unsure how to react, which requires Kim to consider whether Khloé is impressed, uncertain, or just avoiding a direct answer. This indirectness aligns with the Kardashians' conversational style, where they often use exaggeration and playful rather than straightforward statements. Khloé leaves room for interpretation, relying on Kim to pick up on the implied meaning rather than stating her opinion clearly.

Data 3:

Context: In *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Episode 16, Kris senses that something is off with Scott, noticing changes in his behavior. While shopping together, Scott is buying something for a woman. Curious about his love life, Kris finally confronts him, directly asking if he is dating someone new and she wants to know who the girl he is dating with.

Kris : "Is it Sofia?"
Scott : "Huh? Well, I mean, guess you know who it is."

[36:58 - 37:01]

Scott flouts the maxim of manner, which means he does not speak in a clear and direct way. Instead of simply saying "Yes, I'm dating Sofia" or "No, it's someone else," he gives an unclear and indirect answer: "Huh? Well, I mean, guess you know who it is." His response is not straightforward and makes Kris figure it out herself. He also uses hesitation words like "Huh?" and "Well, I mean," which make him sound unsure or uncomfortable. His answer "guess you know who it is," sounds like he avoids saying it directly and makes Kris do the work of confirming it. This flouts the maxim of manner because his words are ambiguous to

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understand. He creates vagueness, making Kris and the audience infer the real meaning instead of hearing a clear answer. Scott might do this because he feels awkward about the topic or does not want to talk about it openly.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that all types of conversational maxims are flouted in *Keeping Up with the Kardashians* Season 14, with the maxim of relation being the most frequently flouted. These instances contribute to the show's humor, tension, and drama, allowing the characters to convey meanings beyond their literal words. The characters in reality show invite the audience to interpret context and underlying messages to make their interactions more engaging. This analysis emphasizes how the unscripted media such as reality show encourages natural and spontaneous conversations, which often filled with implied meanings. Ultimately, this study enhances the understanding of flouting maxims in media discourse, demonstrating how reality show interactions provide a rich source for examining flouting maxims.

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