

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This section explains the analytical framework in this research of *Bottoms* (2023). The researcher first interprets the maxim flouting—Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner—as indicators that the audience should understand a non-literal meaning using implicature and Grice's Cooperative Principle. Second, Berger's verbal humor techniques are used to explain how these indications occur in the wording and context. The researcher may use these frameworks to identify the maxim or multiple maxims that were flouted and explain how they generate humor using Berger's techniques.

2.1.1 Implicature

In *Logic and Conversation* (1975), Grice proposed implicature. Implicature refers to a speaker's implied meaning. Listener interpretation based on context, shared knowledge, and common sense determines meaning. Cutting (2002) says implicature shows how individuals frequently convey more than they say. For example, if someone says, "It's cold in here," the implied meaning may be to close the window.

According to Cutting (2002), there are two main types of implicatures. Generalized implicature, such when "some" means "not all," may be understood without context. However, particularized implicature requires context and background knowledge to be understood. Levinson (1983) notes that implicature

lets speakers to keep their words while still being understood, while Thomas (1995) notes its versatility. Implicature is an essential aspect of daily communication since it helps individuals exchange meanings indirectly.

2.1.2 Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975) proposed the Cooperative Principle, which is very important to pragmatics. The Cooperative Principle says that people work together in conversation to make it clear and useful. Grice used four conversational maxims to explain this: Quantity (give enough information), Quality (say what is true), Relation (be relevant), and Manner (be clear). Conversations flow more smoothly when these rules are followed. For instance, if someone asks, “Where is the library?” and the other person says, “Next to the cafeteria,” that shows cooperation.

However, people do not always obey maxims. Cutting (2002) finds that speakers intentionally break maxims, which makes listeners look for a hidden meaning. Thomas (1995) states that the Cooperative Principle is a guide to understanding communication, not a rule. If someone asks, “How was the meeting?” and the response is, “Well, the coffee was good,” the listener might assume that the meeting was boring or inefficient. This demonstrates how the Cooperative Principle explains direct and indirect meaning in everyday conversation.

2.1.3 Non-observance of Maxims

Grice (1975) proposes four maxims—Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner—that guide cooperative conversation. In practice, speakers do not always follow them. Building on Thomas (1995) and Cutting (2002), non-observance includes

flouting, violating, infringing, opting out, and suspending. People may do this on purpose (to imply, joke, be polite, or mislead) or by accident (because of limits in knowledge or language). Below are brief descriptions and simple examples of each type.

- a. **Flouting:** happens when the speaker intentionally breaks a maxim, causing the listener(s) to look for a hidden meaning (implicature). For example, the statement “What a brilliant idea,” said after a disaster flout the maxim of Quality (obviously not true → irony).
- b. **Violating:** happens when a speaker breaks a maxim when he or she intentionally causes confusion or misleads. It might be seen as hiding truths or intentionally misleading the audience if they are not made aware. For example, the maxim of Quality is violated when the statement “I was home all night” is not truthful.
- c. **Infringing:** occurs when the speaker unintentionally breaks a maxim, which may happen due to anxiety, misunderstanding, or a lack of communication skills. A learner of English, for instance, may use ambiguous language, therefore violating the maxim of Manner.
- d. **Opting out:** is when the speaker makes their disapproval of cooperating obvious. The reasons behind this could be personal, ethical, or related to the law. In a legal context, this may mean something like, “I cannot answer that due to confidentiality.”
- e. **Suspending:** is when the maxims are not to be applied in certain contexts, often as a result of social or cultural standards. In certain cultures, it is considered

polite to avoid giving straight responses, even if this goes against the maxim of Relation or Quantity.

Non-observance may be done on purpose (to create implicature, politeness, or humor) or accidentally. One way to understand speakers' non-literal meaning interpretations is to be aware of the type that is used.

2.1.3.1 Flouting of Maxims

Flouting is to intentionally and blatantly break a Grice's conversational maxim in order to imply some hidden meaning (implicature) to the listener. The speaker is trying to convey the message that the listeners should not accept all information at face value by using indicators like Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner to indicate that something is not entirely accurate. Flouting is not an attempt to be dishonest but rather an indication for reinterpretation that may be used for implicature, politeness, or humor. This research explains the mechanism: flout → implicature → humor result by pairing each maxim flouting with a Berger verbal humor technique (such as irony, sarcasm, exaggeration, pun, etc.).

a. Quantity (too much or too little information)

Speakers often use exaggeration, bombast, or definition humor techniques to convey humor when they withhold or overload information. The humorous aspect is the information imbalance. By providing excessively much or insufficiently less than what is necessary, the listener is encouraged to observe the contrast. For instance, “We saw fifty towns in two days,” a Quantity statement accomplished using Berger's verbal humor techniques, leads to exaggeration/bombast.

b. Quality (obvious lies or impossibility)

If a statement is obviously false, the listener is led to believe the opposite or assume an important stance. This disobedience often goes together with Berger's verbal humor techniques such as facetiousness, irony, sarcasm, or exaggeration. The strategy is in the line's technique for delivering the false message to the listener. As an example of a Quality exaggeration, the statement “This is the best pizza in the universe” might be interpreted as an ironic or exaggerated claim that encourages a non-literal opinion.

c. Relation (obvious irrelevance)

The use of misunderstanding, facetiousness, allusion, ridicule, or repartee to realize humor is common in responses that seem off-topic but really point out the earlier answer. When the listener reconsiders the seemingly unrelated statement to its original context, they are set up for surprise by the relevance breach. Example: Q: “How were your exam results?” A: “Lovely weather, isn’t it?” – flouting of Relation is given as a distraction (and often as a facetiousness).

d. Manner (ambiguity or over-complication)

Wording that is difficult to comprehend, elaborate, or ambiguous may lead to pun/wordplay, over-literalness, misunderstanding, repartee, or bombast—and even allusion in cases when the reference is not obvious. The form of ambiguity or unnecessary complication provokes a humorous misreading or a second reading. Answering with “He produced a series of sounds that matched a melody” rather than “He sang” is an example of a flouting of Manner produced by over-literalness and bombast.

2.1.3.2 Humor

The study of humor by Berger in *An Anatomy of Humor* (1993) identified 45 different techniques in the areas of language, logic, identity, and action. This study focuses on the language area to examine verbal humor in dialogue, specifically: Allusion, Bombast, Definition, Exaggeration, Facetiousness, Infantilism, Insults, Irony, Misunderstanding, Over-literalness, Puns/Wordplay, Repartee, Ridicule, Sarcasm, and Satire. The mentioned techniques are the observable devices that *Bottoms* (2023) uses to create humor.

a. Allusion

Allusion is a humor technique that references popular culture figures, events, and topics. When the audience is familiar with TV series, scandals, or stereotypes, references work better. Berger includes allusion in his language techniques because the audience “gets” the reference is part of the joke's intent (Berger, 1993). Allusion in conversation may flout the maxim of Relation by seeming off-topic until the reference makes sense, giving a nice twist. Meanwhile, a purposely ambiguous reference flout the maxim of Manner. To illustrate how allusion generates humor, Berger analyzes the “Jack the Grapefruit” riddle and finds layered references (such as “fruit” as slang for a homosexual guy) (Berger, 1993).

b. Bombast

Bombast is a humor technique that uses dramatic, formal, or overblown language to make something appear more important than it is. Berger says the style-content mismatch makes the writing humorous. It is obvious when someone employs flowery language to express something unimportant (Berger, 1993). Bombast often

flouts the maxim of Quantity (excessive information) and the maxim of Manner (flowery language). For instance, a garage owner mocks medical language by saying, “Diagnose it as an absence of flatulence of the perimeter...” about a flat tire. Berger defines “rhetorical exuberance,” explaining why inflated language is humorous (Berger, 1993).

c. Exaggeration

Exaggeration creates humor by making something seem much bigger, smaller, better, or worse than it really is. Berger uses it as an important language technique and finds that understatement typically goes with it (Berger, 1993). In practice, exaggeration flouts the maxim of Quality (an obvious lie) and the maxim of Quantity (too much emphasis or detail). Berger quotes a hyperbolic poem, Dryden's “I burn, I more than burn; I am all fire...” to demonstrate how exaggerated language can generate laughter (Berger, 1993).

d. Facetiousness

Facetiousness is when someone jokes or plays with words they do not mean. It is supposed to be funny and not taken seriously. Berger uses it to show how tone and context may convey light humor even when the words are wrong (Berger, 1993). This often flouts the maxim of Quality or the maxim of Relation. Berger considers it a “joking” humor technique rather than an actual commitment (Berger, 1993).

e. Infantilism

Infantilism uses childlike speech, silly behavior, or humorous words to make others laugh. Berger considers it a humor technique since the childish style generates humor (Berger, 1993). Oversimplified words (the maxim of Manner) or tone

improper to serious context (the maxim of Relation) are commonly flouted. Berger connects bombast to “infantile” language play, showing how some adult joking is rooted in childlike play (Berger, 1993).

f. Insults

Insults are humorous when exaggerated, ridiculed, or somehow framed while attacking someone's looks, behavior, or opinions. The technique makes assault fun, particularly in friendly fights, and exposes hypocrisy and incompetence (Berger, 1993). The maxim of Relation (an “irrelevant” attack) or the maxim of Quality (backhanded praise that has the opposite meaning).

g. Irony

Irony involves saying the opposite of what is intended. By contrasting appearance with reality, it often reveals a character's true intentions. Sometimes people pretend to be ignorant (Socratic irony), say opposite of what they intend (verbal irony), or the audience knows something the characters do not (dramatic irony). Berger lists irony, sarcasm, and satire as common elements (Berger, 1993). Usually, it is used to flout the maxim of Quality where the claim is obviously false given context, and the maxim of Relation is used to avoid directness.

h. Puns/Word Play

Puns and word play use word sounds and meanings to produce humorous and unexpected outcomes. Wordplay uses homophones, homonyms, morphology, or specific words to convey two ideas at once. Berger describes puns as language-play that surprises with timing and simplicity (Berger, 1993). It flouts the maxim of Manner by suggesting a second reading. Berger discusses a classic farther/father

pun (“no father” vs. “won’t go any farther”) and how humor create combinations like “cinemactor” (Berger, 1993).

i. Repartee

Repartee is a humor technique used to respond to insults or put someone in their place. As in verbal fighting, the speaker answers rapidly and humorously with creativity and timing. Berger emphasizes fast and targeted verbal fighting that entertains through reversal (Berger, 1993). It may flout the maxim of Manner and Relation by interrupting the conversation or using stylized speed. Noel Coward vs. Lady Diana Manners (“Not very amusing.” / “Very amusing.”) is a classic repartee (Berger, 1993).

j. Ridicule

Ridicule makes fun by directly and exaggeratingly ridiculing someone or something. The target may feel dumb or worthless if teased, mimicked, or criticized. Berger (1993) describes how ridicule supports many jokes and satire. It often flouts the maxim of Relation (an insensitive comment) or the maxim of Quality (sarcastic praise).

k. Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a humor technique in which someone aggressively opposes himself to ridicule or disapprove. Berger emphasizes the importance of how one's delivery, tone, and timing may reverse its intended meaning (Berger, 1993). Sarcasm is “hotter” than irony and flout the maxim of Quality (the exact claim is obviously incorrect given context). Berger's classic sarcasm is the traffic-cop comment to a stopped vehicle, “Don't we have any colors you like?” (Berger, 1993).

2.2 Research Method

The researcher analyzes *Bottoms* (2023) using descriptive-qualitative methods. According to Creswell (2012), descriptive-qualitative research explains the phenomenon in order to comprehend it through observation. This method was used to find and explain flouting of Grice's conversational maxims and examine their humorous effects using Berger's verbal humor techniques. This research explains and analyzes the language of film rather than only measuring it using numbers.

2.2.1. Data, Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

This research examines *Bottoms* (2023)'s humorous utterances from the Apple TV release. The population includes every line uttered by PJ, Josie, Hazel, Brittany, Isabel, Annie, Sylvie, Jeff, Tim, Mr. G, and Principal Meyers throughout the film. This research used purposive sampling to include utterances that (i) flouted a Gricean maxim (Quantity, Quality, Relation, or Manner) and (ii) had a humorous effect that Berger's verbal humor techniques could identify and analyze. Based on these criteria, 65 excerpts with speaker names and time stamps were selected for further examination. Visual humor, audience response, and words without a recognizable implicature were excluded.

2.2.2. Method of Collecting Data

The researcher used the observation method as outlined by Creswell and Creswell (2018). The researcher watched *Bottoms* (2023) from Apple TV release, made notes on time stamps, speaker names, and lines, and then immediately transcribed the conversation. The researcher used a fan-made English subtitle to find ambiguities, overlaps, and proper names. The next step was to look for cases when Grice's

maxims were flouted in the transcript. The researcher chose utterances that flouted a maxim while still obviously generating humorous effects. The researcher then used Berger's verbal humor techniques to analyze these timestamp- and speaker-labeled utterances.

2.2.3. Method of Analyzing Data

This study uses a distributional method by examining meaning through patterns of occurrence (Sahlgren, 2008) to see how often each maxim is flouted and which humor techniques correspond to those flouts. The steps are:

1. Transcribe the dialogues from *Bottoms* (2023).
2. Identify utterances that flout Grice's conversational maxims.
3. Classify each humorous utterance by the maxim flouted (Quantity, Quality, Relation, or Manner).
4. Label each utterance with the verbal humor technique used, based on Berger's (1993) framework.
5. Count the frequency and percentage of each maxim and humor technique (and summarize the combinations in a simple table).
6. Interpret the patterns to explain how maxim flouting generates humorous effects in the film, then analyze the humorous effects using Berger's (1993) verbal humor techniques.