

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework used in this study, which explains previous research and relevant theories that contribute to explaining how humour is constructed in Trevor Noah's stand-up comedy.

2.1 Previous Studies

Several studies have investigated humour from different pragmatic perspectives. However, most previous studies focused on identifying linguistic features such as conversational implicatures or flouted maxims rather than explaining the process of humour construction. Therefore, this section reviews three previous studies that are closely related to the present study.

The first research was conducted by Adila et al. (2024). The researchers used a pragmatic approach to investigate how conversational maxim violations were used to create humour in a collection of jokes from Plato and a Platypus Walk into a Bar.... In this research, the researchers applied Grice's (1975) theory of conversational maxims, specifically the theory of non-observance of maxims, to analyze the data. By using a descriptive qualitative method, this research revealed twenty-five jokes containing maxim violations. Interestingly, all data were categorized as infringing maxims caused by language performance and cultural impairment, while no data were classified as cognitive impairment. However, the study focused on infringing maxims and joke structure without explaining how flouted maxims and incongruity work together to construct humour, which is the focus of the present study.

The second research was conducted by Nurrohmah and Suyatman (2025). This research focused on identifying conversational implicatures and classifying them as generalized or particularized. By using descriptive qualitative method and Grice's Cooperative Principle, this research revealed that a single utterance can simultaneously violate multiple maxims. Specifically, 15 general implicatures and two specific implicatures were identified. This study also found that seven utterances violated the maxim of quality, four utterances violated the maxim of

quantity, and five utterances violated the maxim of relevance. However, the study focused on conversational implicatures rather than the humour construction through the integration of Cooperative Principle and Incongruity Theory.

The third study was conducted by Sifa et al. (2023). The study aimed to investigate the forms of flouting maxims in *Lapor Pak!* that support humour creation and their application as teaching materials for anecdotal texts. In this research, the researchers applied a descriptive qualitative approach using Grice's Cooperative Principle, specifically the theory of flouting maxims. The results demonstrated that all four categories of flouted maxims were used to generate humorous effects, with each maxim making a different contribution. Additionally, the study proposed that the results could be used as teaching material for anecdotal texts in senior high school. However, the study focused on identifying the types and functions of flouted maxims and their use as teaching materials, instead of focusing on how humour is created through flouted maxims and incongruity.

Based on these three previous studies, most researchers have focused on identifying conversational implicatures, flouted maxims, or maxim violations in humorous conversations. Although these studies have made significant contributions to the linguistics of humour, the pragmatic phenomena that contribute to humour constructions remain unexplained. Therefore, by integrating Grice's Cooperative Principle and Incongruity Theory, this study seeks to provide a more comprehensive explanation of how humour is constructed by examining how unexpected responses are categorized as flouting maxims and how these trigger incongruities that contribute to the humorous effect.

2.2 The Theoretical Framework

This subchapter is used as a theoretical basis that guides the researcher in developing this research.

2.2.1 Humour

Some scholars have defined humour in various ways, however it is generally understood as anything intended to make people laugh. Ruch (2008) stated that

humour was separated into several forms, such as verbal humour (e.g., jokes, wit, and riddles), visual humour (e.g., cartoons), behavioural humour (e.g., pantomime), and auditory humour (e.g., music). Likewise, McGhee (1979) states that humour is closely related to the concept of mirth, referring to the feeling of amusement that arises when individuals perceive something as funny. He also argues that humour involves a playful way of thinking, allowing people to interpret situations differently depending on their experiences and perspectives. Therefore, humour is considered a subjective phenomenon because the same humorous event may be perceived differently by different individuals (Jiang et al 2019).

Morreall (1983) states that humour often arises when people encounter situations that differ from their expectations. Similarly, Suls (1972) explains that humour involves a cognitive process in which individuals first form an expectation about a situation and then recognize an unexpected outcome that does not match that expectation. This argument is particularly relevant to the present study since the humour in Trevor Noah's *How the British Took Over India* frequently arises when the colonized respond to the colonizer in ways that are not in line with the audience's expectations. This mismatch between expectation and the actual response creates incongruity, which the audience then perceives as humorous. Consequently, Incongruity Theory provides an ideal framework for understanding why these unexpected reactions result in humorous effects.

2.2.2 Cooperative Principle

H.P. Grice, an English philosopher, developed the concept of the Cooperative Principle (CP) in pragmatics. In his work, Grice (1989) explained that conversations can go normally if the speakers contribute to provide sufficient information. Grice divided this principle into 4 categories, which are called maxims: maxim of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

1. Maxim of Quantity:
 - a) Give as much information as required.
 - b) Do not give too much information than is required.
2. Maxim of Quality

- a) Say what you believe to be true.
 - b) Give sufficient evidence to support your statement.
3. Maxim of Relation
- a) Be relevant.
 - b) Stay on topic that is being discussed.
4. Maxim of Manner

This last category requires the speaker to 'Be perspicuous.' The category involves the submaxims, such as:

- a) Avoid obscure language and express your ideas clearly.
- b) Avoid ambiguity.
- c) Be brief
- d) Present what you want to say in an organized way.

(Grice, 1989: 26-27)

2.2.3 Flouting the Maxims

According to Grice, flouting maxims is known as a situation that occurs in conversation when the speaker intentionally refuses to adhere to one or more conversational maxims while expecting the listener to understand the intended meaning. In this case, the speaker does not intend to mislead the listener's interpretation, but rather encourages the listener to discover meaning beyond the literal meaning. Therefore, flouting maxims gives rise to conversational implicature, which refers to the implied meaning assumed by the hearer from the speaker's outburst and its context (Grice, 1989).

Thomas (1995) distinguishes between flouting maxims and violating conversational maxims. A speaker is categorized as violating the maxim if he provides misleading information without expecting the hearer to notice the deception. On the other hand, a speaker is categorized as flouting a maxim if the speaker intentionally disobeys the rules however still expects the listener to make an effort to understand the true meaning of the utterance. Thus, violating a maxim does not completely damage communication. However, it encourages the listener to understand the actual message from the speaker.

According to Grice (1989), all types of conversational maxims can be violated. (1) If a speaker provides more information than necessary, they are flouting the Maxim of Quantity. (2) By saying something whose truth is in doubt, they are flouting the Maxim of Quality. (3) If a speaker provides a response that is not relevant to the context of the conversation, they are flouting the Maxim of Relevance or Relation. (4) If a speaker expresses an idea in a vague, unclear, or unnecessarily complicated way, they are flouting the Maxim of Manner. Even though these responses seem to go against the Cooperative Principle, they push the hearer to look for a meaning beyond the literal one.

In humorous discourse, flouting of maxims works as a linguistic strategy for creating humour. By intentionally giving responses that do not match conversational expectations, speakers create implied meanings that make the audience rethink the utterance. In this study, flouting of maxims explains how Trevor Noah builds humour through language, while Incongruity Theory explains why those unexpected responses are seen as funny.

2.2.4 Incongruity Theory

Incongruity Theory is one of the most widely accepted theories for explaining the construction of humour. This theory originated from the ideas of Kant (1790). In his book, he stated, "Laughter is an affection arising from the sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing." This opinion was later developed by Schopenhauer (1818), who stated that the humour existent is caused by the phenomenon of inconsistency between the concepts and reality accepted by individuals. Agreeing with this, Suls (1972) also said that humour can be created because of two cognitive stages: first, individuals give expectations to a situation, then, they recognize unexpected results that differ from their initial expectations. Therefore, humour can be felt when individuals realize there is an inconsistency between expectations and reality.

However, incongruity is known as an individual's perception of something unexpected or inconsistent with expectations, which then creates amusement rather than confusion. This unexpectedness often arises when the speaker responds

inconsistently to the listener's expectations. The concepts of this theory can be found in this study, as the humorous effect is constructed through the audience's expectations being disrupted by the colonized's response to the colonizer, ultimately creating a humorous effect for the audience.

