



**A STUDY OF HUMOR: THE OUTCOME OF FLOUTING THE MAXIMS IN  
YES MAN MOVIE UTTERANCES**

**THESIS**

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**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
FACULTY OF LETTERS  
JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

**2015**



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YES MAN MOVIE UTTERANCES**

**THESIS**

A thesis presented to the English Department,  
Faculty of Letters, Jember University,  
as one of the requirements to obtain  
the award of Sarjana Sastra Degree  
in English Studies

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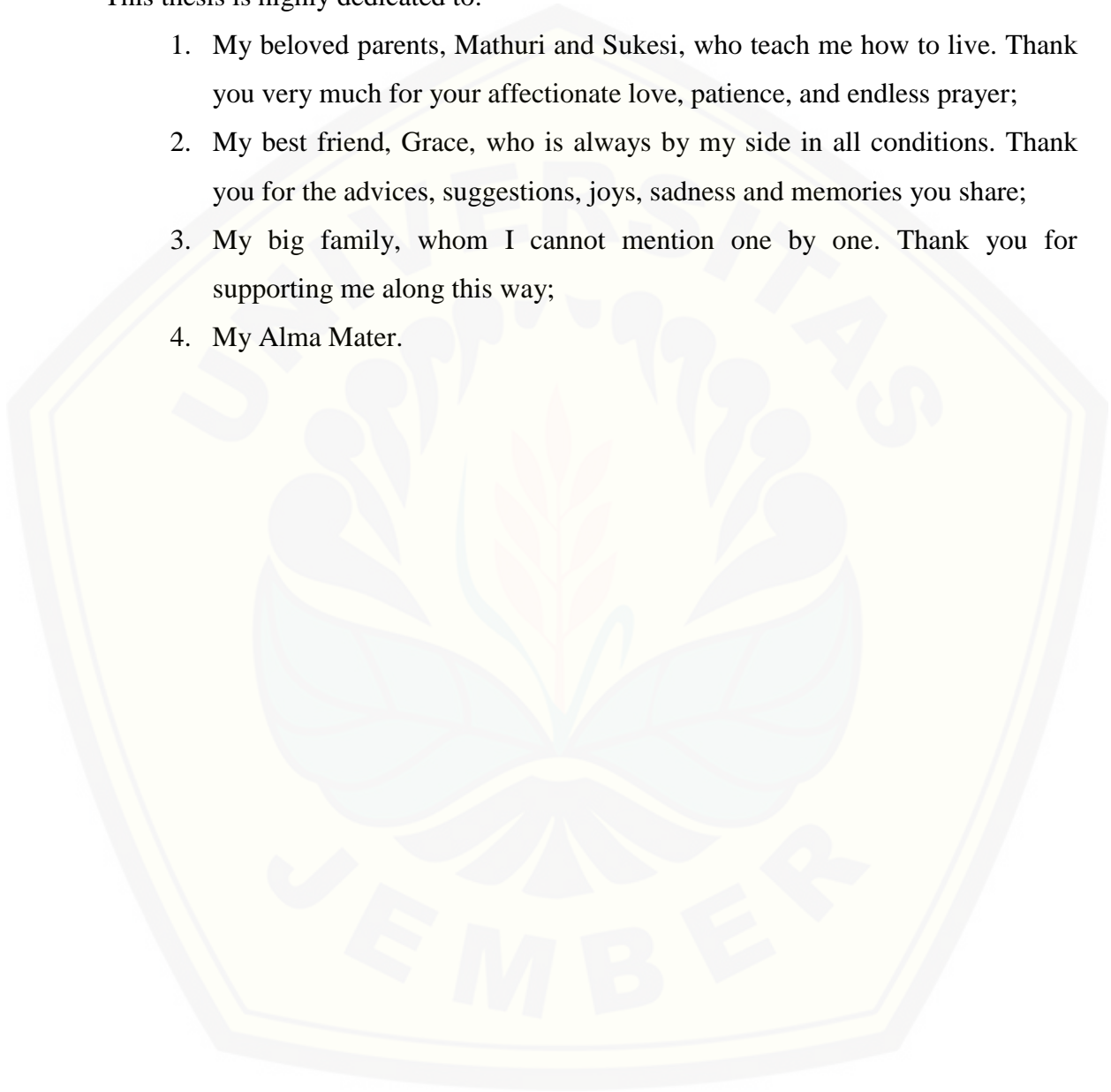
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JEMBER UNIVERSITY**

**2015**

## DEDICATION

This thesis is highly dedicated to:

1. My beloved parents, Mathuri and Sukei, who teach me how to live. Thank you very much for your affectionate love, patience, and endless prayer;
2. My best friend, Grace, who is always by my side in all conditions. Thank you for the advices, suggestions, joys, sadness and memories you share;
3. My big family, whom I cannot mention one by one. Thank you for supporting me along this way;
4. My Alma Mater.



**MOTTO**

*“Everything will be okay in the end. If it’s not okay, then it’s not the end.”*

(Ed Sheeran)



## DECLARATION

I hereby state that the thesis entitled *A Study of Humor: the Outcome of Flouting the Maxims in Yes Man Movie Utterances* is an original piece of writing. I certify that the analysis and the research described in this thesis have not been submitted for any other degree or any publications yet. I certify to the best of my knowledge that all sources used and any help received in the preparation of this thesis have been acknowledged.

Jember, November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2015

The writer,

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**Jember, November 13<sup>th</sup> 2015**

**Saka Bachrul Ulum**



## SUMMARY

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In daily conversation, people do not always say what they mean explicitly. It is sometimes larger than what they say. People tend to make their conversation run smoothly. Therefore, in expressing their intentions and ideas people occasionally use humor to reduce the tensions which potentially ruin their communication. By using humor, it is possible for people to say the truth softly without disturbing someone else's feeling. However, in daily conversation, the use of humor does not always run well. Some people may misunderstand and draw wrong inference. Hence, the more comprehensive the study on humor language in linguistic perspective, the better it will be, particularly from pragmatic outlooks. Considering the phenomenon above, this thesis analyses the use of Flouting the Maxims of Cooperative Principles construct humor in *Yes Man* movie utterances.

This study applies the mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative methods) to analyse the data. Qualitative method is applied to describe the data in the form of sentences in the movie script and quantitative one is used to know the percentage of the result. The data are taken from Moviesubtitle.org website (<http://www.moviesubtitles.org/movie-2098.html>) accessed on February 24, 2015 at 7:30 pm. The data are collected by using purposive sampling.

The findings of this thesis show that the Flouting the Maxims of Cooperative Principles construct humor. The dominant Flouting the Maxims is Maxim of Quantity with 52.6 % (10 utterances), whereas the least Flouting the Maxims is Maxim of Relation 5.2 % (1 utterance). Maxim of Quality and Maxim of Manner respectively follow Maxim of Quantity with 31.5 % (6 utterances) and 10.5 % (2 utterances). Besides, there are 4 utterances that flout double Maxims (Maxim of Quantity and



Maxim of Manner). The result shows that the characters in *Yes Man* movie blatantly flout the Maxims to indicate that they have intended meanings in their conversation.

Keywords: Humor, Cooperative Principles, Flouting the Maxims.



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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the general idea of the whole thesis which consists of seven sub chapters: the background of the study, the problem to discuss, the research questions, the scope of the study, the goals of the study, the significance of the study, and the organization of the study. The background of the study reveals the reason and the general idea in conducting the study. It is followed by problem to discuss which explains the problem of the research analyzed in this study. Research questions are some specific questions which determine where and what kind of research the writer will be looking at, or identify the specific objectives that the study will address. The scope of the study concerns with the limitation of the study. The goals of the study are the goals that the writer wants to achieve in conducting the study. The significance of the study tells about the advantages and the importance of this study in terms of professional applications and positive social change. At last, the organization of the study shows how this study is organized.

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Communication is one of the most important things in life. People do things and activities by communicating with others. We can see it in daily life that people communicate to convey their intention. Learning and teaching are done in the form of communication. Any transaction in a market is always conducted by communication. Moreover, politicians, of course, use communication as one of their strategies to win their political activities. There are lots of examples of this notion that exist in society.

Communication is a social process in which individuals employ symbol to establish and interpret meaning in their environment (West and Turner, 2010). The symbol that transfers the message from the sender of communication to the receiver of communication is language. Language can be classified into two categories: verbal and non- verbal. Both of them carry the meaning that people intend to deliver. Thus, people use language to share their ideas, requests, commands, promises, etc.

In daily activity, consciously or not, people do not always say what they mean explicitly. It is sometimes larger than what they say. People tend to make their conversation run smoothly. Therefore, in expressing their intention and ideas people occasionally use humor to reduce the tensions which potentially ruin their communication. By using humor, it is possible for people to say the truth softly without disturbing someone else's feeling. However, in daily conversation, the use of humor does not always run well. Some people may misunderstand and draw wrong inference. Hence, the more comprehensive the study on humor language in linguistic perspective, the better it will be, particularly from pragmatic outlooks.

Humor does not only happen in real life, but also in a movie because it is a reflection of human life. It is created because humans want to share their story or ideas of life through certain media. In relation with this study, *Yes Man* is a movie that presents language phenomena where humor is used by the characters in the movie. This movie tells about the main character, Carl Allen, who uses humor to get out of his inferior circumstances. Besides, there are also some humorous utterances of other characters that relate to the actions of the main character in this movie. *Yes Man* movie receives some awards in 2009, such as ASCAP Awards for top box office film, BMI Film and TV Awards, Casting Society of America for outstanding achievement in casting, Kid's Choice Awards for favorite movie actor, Teen Choice Awards, and MTV Movie Awards for best comedy performance (imdb.com, 2015).

In this movie, humor shows its importance in communication. However, there is a phenomenon in this movie which cannot be simply understood without analyzing it, that is the use of humor itself. Humor can be understood by considering the three main approaches; incongruity, superiority, and relief theory (Hassan, 2013). Incongruity theory is considered as a linguistic theory, superiority is a sociological approach to humor and relief is psychological one.

Furthermore, an approach in linguistic theory is also used to get more understanding on humor, such as Cooperative Principle which is considered as Implicature theory. Grice (1975:26) states "make your conversational contribution

such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchanged in which you are engaged". This means that the participants in conversation are assumed to say as clearly as possible. Hence, the participants are expected to observe the Cooperative Principles when they want to understand and be understood. Unfortunately, the participants' disobedience to the Cooperative Principles in the conversation has an intended meaning and gains certain purpose, including humor. Therefore, this research applies those theories to analyze humor utterances in the movie.

### 1.2 The Problem to Discuss

In daily conversation, people use humor because of some reasons. They use humor because certain purpose, such as to reduce the tension which potentially disturb their relationship. By using humor, it is possible for people to say the truth softly. But often many addressees do not understand that the speaker is being humorous, therefore it leads to misunderstanding and dispute. That phenomenon can also happen in a movie since movie is a reflection of human life. In *Yes Man* movie, humor shows its importance in communication. However, there is such a captured phenomenon in this movie which cannot be simply understood without analyzing it, that is the use of humor itself. That is why people need to know how humor works, so that the viewers can understand the meaning behind humorous expressions which is conveyed by some characters in *Yes Man* movie.

### 1.3 The Research Questions

This research focuses on four main problems. The research questions are presented as the following questions:

- a. What type of Flouting the Maxims is dominantly found in *Yes Man* movie?
- b. What is the intended meaning of the Implicature that exists in the chosen utterances of *Yes Man* movie?
- c. How does language used by the characters construct humor in *Yes Man* movie?



#### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

In order to avoid strayed explanation in this study, it is necessary to limit the study. This study is a pragmatic analysis based on Grice's Cooperative Principles and Hassan's theory of humor is used as the tool to detect the mechanism of humor. The object of this study is the dialogues of the characters in *Yes Man* movie that flout the Maxims in the form of written text in the movie subtitle. The focus of this thesis is the utterances of the characters that flout the Maxims which trigger humor.

#### **1.5 The Goals of the Study**

This study has specific goals. These are:

- a. To figure out the Flouting the Maxims which dominantly occur in *Yes Man* movie
- b. To find out the intended meaning of the Implicature exists in the chosen utterances of *Yes Man* movie
- c. To describe language used by the characters that constructs humor in *Yes Man* movie

#### **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

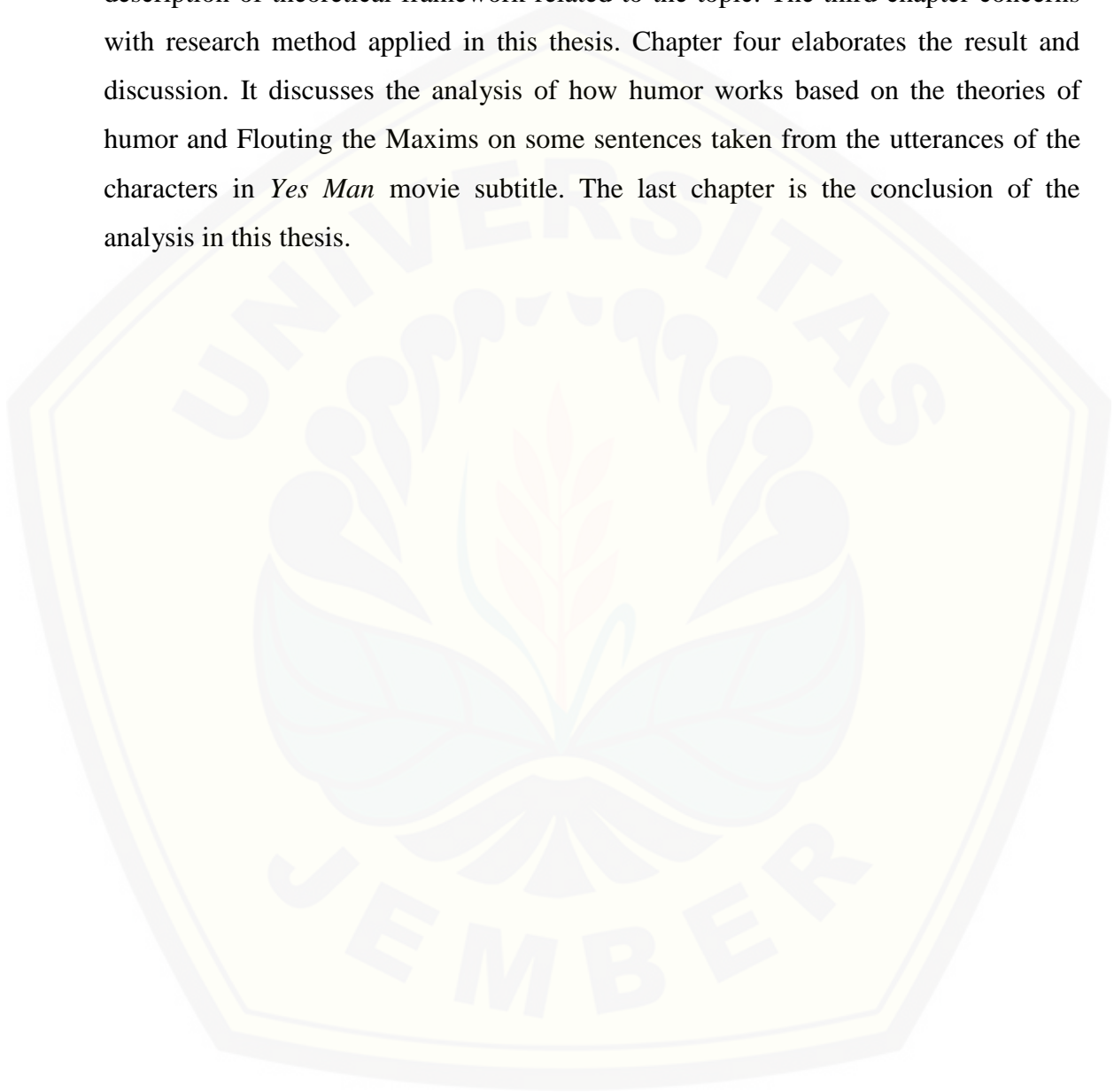
This study is expected to give a contribution in the field of Pragmatics, particularly for the information of using Flouting the Maxims. The findings of this thesis hopefully will provide knowledge about the intended meaning and how Flouting the Maxims triggers humor in utterance. Therefore, people will know the mechanism of humor based on pragmatic outlooks in order to avoid unpleasant and confusing feeling in their conversation.

#### **1.7 The Organization of the Study**

This study contains five chapters: introduction, theoretical review, research method, discussion and conclusion. The first chapter presents the general view of the study, it consists of the background of the study, the problem to discuss, the research



questions, the scope of the study, the goals of the study, the significance, and the organization of the study. The second chapter, theoretical review, provides brief description of theoretical framework related to the topic. The third chapter concerns with research method applied in this thesis. Chapter four elaborates the result and discussion. It discusses the analysis of how humor works based on the theories of humor and Flouting the Maxims on some sentences taken from the utterances of the characters in *Yes Man* movie subtitle. The last chapter is the conclusion of the analysis in this thesis.



## CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter consists of two sub chapters: previous researches and theoretical framework. The previous researches tell the readers about the former researches that are related to the topic of this study. The theoretical framework provides the theories which are used in this study: theories of humor (Hassan, 2013), Flouting the Maxims of Cooperative Principles by Grice (1975), and the last is context of situation by Malinowski (1923).

### 2.1 Previous Researches

In this subchapter, researcher reviews some previous researches about the study of humor based on Pragmatics outlooks. By doing that, this will be useful to understand the theories that should be involved in this study. Besides, these researches can also be the references to solve the main problems of this study on the next chapter. The first research is conducted by Hassan (2013) entitled “The Pragmatics of Humor: January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution and Occupy Wall Street”. The research investigates the use of humor by the Egyptian demonstrators in January 25<sup>th</sup> Revolution and the American demonstrators in Occupy Wall Street Movement. It answers the questions how and why demonstrators use humor. This research explores how humor can be used as a strategy of nonviolent resistance to oppression and dictatorship. The study aims to recognize the pragmatic nature of humor and its explanation according to Grice’s Cooperative Principles. It combines theories of humor and theory of speech act. Humor is considered in the study of speech act of declaring resistance to oppression. As a comparative research, it tries to find out the similarities and differences in the two events. Humor seems to have a powerful potential in facilitating outreach and mobilization. The findings of the research provide an outline of the functions of humor as a form of resistance.

Another research is conducted by Wahyuningsih (2013) entitled “An Analysis of Particularized Implicature in the Dialogues among the Characters of *The Dark*

*Knigh Rises* Movie as the Result of Flouting Maxim”. This research elucidates what Maxims are flouted by the characters in the movie, analyzing what type of Maxims flouted dominantly by the characters and revealing the reason of the characters flouting the Maxims in *The Dark Knigh Rises* movie. The investigation is based on Grice’s theory of Flouting the Maxims and Halliday’s theory of context of situation. This study employs qualitative and quantitative method. Qualitative method is applied to describe the data in the form of sentences in the movie script and quantitative one is used to know the percentage of the result. The result presents that the four Maxims are flouted and the dominant Flouting the Maxims is Maxim of Relation. Besides, there are also some utterances that flout two Maxims (Maxim of Quantity and Maxim of Manner).

The next research is conducted by Andresen (2013) entitled “Flouting the Maxims in comedy: An analysis of flouting in the comedy series *Community*”. The research explores how Flouting of the Gricean Maxims is used to create comedy in the television series *Community*. The aim of the research is to find out what Maxims are flouted the most to create comedy and what Maxims the different characters flout in order to create comedy. The research examines the use of flouts in different situations and explores in what situations the different characters flout the Maxims for comedy. The research is based on transcription of eight episodes of the series. The results show that the Maxim of Quantity flouted the most often, and some characters use more flouts than others.

The first research assists in understanding the three main theories of humor. These are Incongruity, Superiority, and Relief theory which elaborate how humor works. The second research uses mixed method. This method is also used in this research, but applied to different object. In addition, the third research assists in focusing on one kind of non-observance of the Maxims which is called Flouting the Maxims.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter elaborates theories and supported explanation about the fundamental base of the analysis of this study. It is very important to look back to the theories before exploring the main case of this study, which is about a study of humor focusing on the outcome of Flouting the Maxims in *Yes Man* movie utterances. Therefore, the following part of the study discusses the definition and the classification of Cooperative Principle and the supportive exploration about humor (Incongruity, Superiority, and Relief theory).

### 2.2.1 Theories of Humor

Humor is everything that can generate laughter (Raskin, 1985). It can be visual or audio stimulus. Humor can be presented verbally. Verbal humor according to Raskin is humor expressed in language. There are three main theories of humor (Hassan, 2013). They are: Incongruity, Superiority, and Relief theory.

#### a. Incongruity Theory

Incongruity theory is considered as a linguistic theory. It states that humor is created out of a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in humor. It focuses on the element of surprise which contains ambiguity and inconsistency. This accounts for the most obvious feature of many humor: an ambiguity which deliberately misleads the audience, followed by a punchline (Hassan, 2013). Since it seems to work in most cases of humor, Incongruity theory is the dominant theory of humor (Latta 1998: 106). Humor is said to have the following elements:

- a. A conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke.
- b. An ambiguity at some level of language with semantic or pragmatic meaning or both.
- c. A punchline which resolves the conflict.

The example of humor can be seen in the following sentence; friends don't let friends do stupid things...alone (pinterest.com, 2015).

The example above is funny because of pun and the element of surprise. We expect that the sentence would be ended by the word “things”, but the addition of the word “alone” is incongruent with our expectation. Hence, the incongruity in the example above triggers laughter.

#### b. Superiority Theory

Superiority theory is considered as a sociological approach (Hassan, 2013). According to Monroe, as it is cited in <https://www.msu.edu/~jdowell/monro.html>, superiority theory is the theory of humor that states that the pleasure we take in humor is derived from our superior feeling over those we laugh at. For example people laugh when someone slips over a banana skin. The originator of this theory is Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes cited in Raskin (1985) states that:

The passion of laughter is nothing else but *sudden glory* arising from sudden *conception* of some *eminency* in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly: for men laughs at the follies of themselves past, when they come suddenly to remembrance, except they bring with them any present dishonor.

In addition, Plato cited in Raskin (1985) states that "malice or envy is at the root of comic enjoyment and that we laugh at the misfortunes of others for joy that we do not share them". Hence, the core of the superiority theory is that laughter is provoked by our pleasure of being superior to the people we laugh at.

#### c. Relief Theory

The relief theory is psychological approach of humor. According to Freud (1960), people who are depressed will burst into laugh if the thing that makes them depressed are removed. He sees humor as a means of reducing the depression in life.

In relief theory, humor expresses some sort of battle within our self. Humor is a way to release or save energy generated by repression (Freud cited in Hassan, 2013). For example when we are nervous or ashamed, we laugh to reduce or releasing our energy.



Since relief and superiority theories provide the reasons or the functions beyond the use of humor, incongruity theory is the main approaches to humor because it explains the mechanism of humor occurrence.

In addition, people may have different definition about humor. Sometimes what we considered to be funny may not be funny for others (Raskin, 1985). Furthermore, he states that humor occurs in a certain society with a certain culture, in this society they share humor that may not be understood by other society. Furthermore, Mulkay, as it is stated in Popescu (2008:90), presents two terms *the serious mode* and *the humorous mode*. He distinguishes the humorous mode and the serious mode as what described below:

Serious mode:

- *a unitary mode*
  - a) which takes for granted the existence of *one* real world
  - b) in which ambiguity, inconsistency, contradiction and interpretative diversity are potential problems

Humorous mode:

- a mode of interpretative *multiplicity*
  - a) in which people interact and collectively create in the production of controlled nonsense
  - b) in which everything has more than one meaning (interpretative duality)
  - c) different plausibility requirements (e.g. for jokes) operate than in the serious mode

Based on the description above, it can be seen that in the serious mode people share the same world and take for granted that other people see the world as they do. Any contradictions which are considered problematic are treated as a failure in communication. Vice versa, in the humorous mode contradictions are not problematic because incongruity is employed for a certain purpose: which is a humor.

### 2.2.2 Implicature

In understanding linguistic phenomena, Implicature is an example of pragmatic explanation. Implicature provides explicit description of the utterances which is possible to mean more than what is actually said (Levinson, 1983: 97).

According to Yule (1996:35) “Implicature is an additional conveyed meaning. Something must be more than what the words mean”. This means that the speaker may have more intended meaning than what is uttered. The utterances do not only mean as they are, but they have something larger than that. Consider the following example:

A: Can you tell me the time?

B: Well, the milkman has come.

(Levinson, 1983: 97)

From the example above, it can be seen that B answer A’s question by using Implicature. Actually, B want to convey that he cannot tell the exact time of the moment, but he tries to help A by informing that the milkman has come with the consideration that A is able to deduce or predict the exact time by using the information. Therefore, by saying “Well, the milkman has come” B implicates that he does not know what the exact time at that moment is, but he has information which A can conclude or predict the exact time from.

There are two kinds of Implicature (Grice, 1975). They are Conventional Implicature and Conversational Implicature. Firstly, Conventional Implicature is an additional conveyed meaning which is simply derived from the particular words used in a sentence. This Implicature does not depend on special context for its interpretation.

- a. Yesterday, Mary was happy and ready to work.
- b. She put on her clothes and left the house.

(Yule, 1996: 46)

When two statements containing static information are united by “and”, as in (A), the Implicature of “and” is simply “in addition” or “plus”. While (B), the Implicature of ‘and’ is ‘and then’ which indicates a sequence of action. The subject puts on her clothes first, after that she left the house.

Secondly, Conversational Implicature is a type of pragmatic inference in which meaning is conveyed through non-conventioanal means. Conversational



Implicature is an additional conveyed meaning drawn from the Cooperative Principle including its Maxims (Yule, 1996:40). This Implicature gets far more attention in pragmatics. Usually, people use the term Implicature as shorthand to refer to the Conversational Implicature.

Paltridge (2000) states “Conversational Implicature (Implicature as the shorthand) refers to the inference a hearer makes about a speaker’s intended meaning that arises from the interpretation of the literal meaning of what is said, the conversational principle and its Maxims”. This means that the utterance of the speaker has wider and deeper interpretation than what is said. It arises many interpretations because of the utterances and the context. Therefore, to interpret the intended meaning of the speaker, the addressee should consider the context in which the conversation happens, otherwise the utterances of the speaker can be confusing. For Example:

Rick: “Hey, coming to the wild party tonight?”

Tom: “My parents are visiting”

(Yule, 1996:43)

In the dialogue above, Tom flouts the Maxim of Relation because Tom’s answer is not relevant to Rick’s question. Tom’s answer is “my parents are visiting”, whereas Rick’s question needs answer “Yes” or “No”. The inference drawn from that utterance is that Tom’s parents visit Tom’s apartment, hence he cannot come to the party.

Since Conversational Implicature is the kind of Implicature that requires specific context to be understood, it is a compatible kind Implicature to be analyzed because the dialogues in *Yes Man* movie need context to make the utterances easy to understand.

That kind of Implicature happens in *Yes Man* movie where the utterances of the characters require context to be understood. For example:

Peter: “Do you even know my fiancée’s last name?”

Carl : “Yeah. Fisher. Fishman. –Wait. Fishwall?”

(Moviesubtitles.org, 11.21)

In the dialogue above, Carl flouts Maxims of Manner because he does not give a brief answer. Carl revises his answer three times. The correct last name of Peter's fiancé is actually 'Burns'. The inference drawn from that utterance is that Carl does not know the correct last name of Peter's fiancé.

### 2.2.3 Cooperative Principles and the Maxims

Grice (1975) outlines a theory of Conversational Implicature which is built on what he called the Cooperative Principle. He proposed that participants in conversation observe some principles to ensure successful communication (Levinson, 1983:101). Grice (1975) states "make your conversational 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". Thus, Grice (1975: 45-46) outlines four cooperative principles: Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relation, and Maxim of Manner.

To fulfill Maxim of Quality, the speaker is required to tell the truth. He is not allowed to say something that he knows that it is false. The second Maxim is Maxim of Quantity. To accomplish this Maxim, the speaker should make the utterances as informative as required for the topic being discussed. The speaker is not allowed to make his utterance more informative than are required. The next Maxim is the Maxim of Relation where this Maxim necessitates the speaker to make utterances relevant to the topic being discussed. The last Maxim is Maxim of Manner. The speaker should make his utterances unambiguous, concise and neat to execute this Maxim.

The Cooperative Principles and the Maxims theory are used to analyze the utterances of the characters in *Yes Man* movie whether they observe Cooperative Principle or not. By using this theory, researcher can separate the character's utterances that observe the Cooperative Principle with the utterances that do not.

### **a. Non-observance of the Maxims**

People usually obey Cooperative Principles when they want to understand and be understood (Grice, 1975). When they deliberately disobey these principles, it means that they want to imply something. According to Grice (1975), there are five ways of failing to observe the Maxims (Thomas, 1995:64). The first one is *flouting a Maxim*, where a participant in a conversation chooses to ignore one or more of the Maxims by using a conversational Implicature. Ignoring Maxims by using conversational Implicature means that the participant adds meaning to the literal meaning of the utterance. The second is *violating a Maxim*. Violating Maxim is when someone in a conversation fails to observe one or more Maxims with the intention to deceive the recipient. The third type of non-observance of a Maxim is *infringement*. A participant who is infringing a Maxim in a conversation has no intention to use an Implicature, nor does he have the intention to deceive the recipient of the conversation. Instead, infringement occurs when someone is learning a language. The speaker may be a child or an adult learner. The fourth type of non-observance of a Maxim is *opting out* of a Maxim. Opting out of a Maxim occurs when someone is indicating that they are unwilling to cooperate in the way a Maxim operates. The opting out of a Maxim often occurs when someone wants to withhold the truth for reasons that are ethical or private. The last is *suspending Maxim*, which happens when participant in a conversation is not expecting the Maxims to be fully fulfilled, since the participants are withholding information that is culturally necessary.

Since flouting is the non-observance that requires the person who speaks to make a deliberate choice not to adhere to the Maxims, the study will focus on the Flouting the Maxims in the movie.

#### **1) Flouting the Maxims**

The failure in observing the Maxim of Cooperative Principles gains the humorous effect (Wijana, 1996). When people blatantly disobey the Cooperative Principles there are misunderstanding, incongruity, and duality. This sort of

misunderstanding or incongruity is made for a certain purpose. When the speaker gives less information, this means that the information he gives is not enough. In this case, the speaker flouts the Maxim of Quantity. Vice versa, being too informative in a conversation leads a speaker to flout the Maxim of Quantity and Maxim of Manner. The speaker is considered flouting the Maxim of Quantity because he gives information more than is required and the excessive information can cause ambiguity that leads the speaker to flout Maxim of Manner. Giving irrelevant information to the topic discussed leads the speaker to flout the Maxim of Relation, while giving untrue information leads the speaker to flout Maxim of Quality.

a) Flouting the Maxim of Quality

The first Maxim is Maxim of Quality. In this Maxim, the speaker is not allowed to say what he believes to be untrue. The speaker should make a true contribution and he should say something that he has evidence for it. When the speaker does not say true information, it means that he flouts the Maxim of Quality.

For example:

A: "Teheran's in Turkey isn't it, teacher?"

B: "And London's in Armenia I suppose"

(Levinson, 1983:110)

In the dialogue above, B does not say true information that A needs. B's answer is not suitable with A's question. B is regarded flouting the Maxim of Quality since he gives wrong information that London is in Armenia, whereas the true information is that London is in England. Other example:

Carl : "I can't believe I tripped like that."

Allison: "It seemed like you fainted."

Carl : "No, I told you my foot caught a nail."

(Moviesubtitles.org, 01.11.50)

In the dialogue above, Carl flouts the Maxim of Quality because he gives wrong contribution by saying "No, I told you my foot caught a nail" to the Allison's



utterance (“It seemed like you fainted”). The truth is that Carl fainted in the chicken slaughter factory because he is disgusted about chicken’s head removal.

#### b) Flouting the Maxim of Quantity

The second Maxim is Maxim of Quantity. To fulfill this Maxim, the speaker should make the quantity of the information as informative as it is required. Meaning, the speaker is not allowed to give utterance or information more or less than is required. When the speaker does not do so, this means that the speaker flouts the Maxim of Quantity. For instance:

A: “How are we getting there?”

B: “Well we’re getting there in Dave’s car.

(Thomas, 1995:68)

In this case B stresses *we* in a way that signals to A that she is not included, which through its Implicature tells A that B's friend Dave has a ride arranged for them, and that A is not going to travel with them to designated destination (Thomas 1995:68). The information given in the example is not enough for the interlocutor to understand at a direct level. Thus, B’s answer is regarded flouting the Maxim of Quantity. Other example:

Carl : “Hey. I came.”

Advertisement man: “Great.”

(Moviesubtitles.org, 42.01)

In the conversation above, the advertisement man flouts the Maxim of Quantity because his contribution is less than what Carl required. In this case Carl cannot come to the music show which is offered by the advertisement man for many times. When Carl eventually comes to the music show, he greets the advertisement man in the bar and expects a huge response. But the advertisement man gives less contribution by only saying “Great”.

#### c) Flouting the Maxim of Relation

The third Maxim is Maxim of Relation. To fulfill the Maxim of Relation, the speaker should make his contribution relevant to the interaction. This means that the

question or answer should be relevant to the topic being discussed. If the speaker makes a contribution which is out of the topic being discussed, it means that he flouts the Maxim of Relation. For instance:

Army Officer : “Name?”

Neddy Seagoon: “Neddy Seagoon”

Army Officer : “Rank?”

Neddy Seagoon: “Private”

Army Officer : “Sex?”

Neddy Seagoon: “Yes, Please”

(Flowerdew, 2012:98)

In the example above, Neddy Seagoon flouts the Maxim of Relation since he say “Yes, please” as an answer to the Army Officer’s question (“Sex?”). Army Officer needs Neddy Seagoon to answer about his gender, but Neddy Seagoon gives irrelevant answer by saying “Yes, please”. Other example:

Nurse : “Sir, you need to get back to your room.”

Carl : “No, I don’t.”

Security: “Sir, stop right there.”

Carl : “Eat me.”

(Moviesubtitles.org, 01.31.04)

In the example above, Carl flouts the Maxim of Relation since his respond is not relevant with the topic being discussed. The security just wants Carl to stop running and gets back to his room because he is still a patient in the hospital. Instead of saying “Eat me”, it would be proper if Carl says “Yes” or “No”. The inference drawn from that utterance is that Carl does not care about what the security says and intends to run away from the hospital.

#### d) Flouting the Maxim of Manner

The last Maxim is Maxim of Manner. To fulfill this Maxim, the speaker should make his contribution unambiguous, orderly, brief, and clear as it is required. For example:

Interviewer: “Did the United States Government play any part in the Duvaliers’ departure? Did they, for example, actively encourage him to leave?”

Official : “I would not try to steer you away from that conclusion”

(Thomas, 1995:71)

In the example above, the official flouts the Maxim of Manner since he gives ambiguous answer. The Implicature in this case tells the interviewer that the official does not want to admit to their involvement directly, but does so indirectly by not being direct with the answer (Thomas, 1995:71). Other example:

Terrance: “Let me guess, Carl. Someone talked to you into coming here today, didn’t they?”

Carl : “Yes”

Terrance: “And you are not sure about this, are you?”

Carl : “No”

Terrance: “You’re dead, Carl”

(Moviesubtitles.org, 17.05)

In the conversation above, Terrance flouts the Maxim of Manner since he gives ambiguous respond by saying “You’re dead, Carl”. Terrance utterance is unclear. This makes Carl curious about what Terrance actually means by saying that. As a motivator, Terrance actually wants to emphasize how important the seminar for Carl is. Based on the theory of cooperative principle, Terrance should give unambiguous response by saying “Ok. Listen to me thoroughly. You will not regret it”.

The Flouting the Maxims theory is used to classify the utterances according to what Maxim they flout and to find out the type of Maxim that is dominantly flouted by the characters in *Yes Man* movie, thus the humor can be linguistically detected.



### 2.2.4 Context of Situation

Communication is complex. To hold a good and understandable communication, speaker and hearer need to understand the situation and the environmental senses of an utterance. Malinowski (1923) proposes *context of situation* approach which represents the whole circumstance in an utterance (in Halliday and Hassan, 1989:6). Here are the examples of the context of situation analysis:

- a. *Speaker*: a young mother, *hearer*: her mother-in-law, *place*: park, by a duckpond, *time*: sunny afternoon in September 1962. They are watching the young mother's two-year-old son chasing ducks and the mother-in-law has just remarked that her son, the child's father, was rather backward at this stage. The young mother says: I do think Adam's quick.
- b. *Speaker*: a student, *hearers*: a set of students, *place*: sitting round a coffee table in the refectory, *time*: evening in March 1980. John, one of the group, has just told a joke. Everyone laughs except Adam. Then Adam laughs. One of the students says: I do think Adams's quick.

(Brown and Yule, 1983:36)

Both examples above have the same comment from the hearers ("I do think Adam's quick"), but if we notice the context or the background information given, each of them has a different sense. In the first example, the young mother says that her two-year-old son, Adam, is quick as a reply to her mother-in-law's remark. This means that the utterance has an actual meaning of what is stated. Meanwhile, in the second example, the utterance means a sarcastic comment of the situation. This means that Adam is too slow to respond his friends' joke because each of them in the refectory laughs except him.

Based on the illustration above, we can see that an utterance can possibly contain a different meaning depending on the circumstance and the situation it is stated. Therefore, this study involves the context of situation to comprehend the utterances in *Yes Man* movie dialogue.

## CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter talks about research method. The study implements a particular research method of research to achieve an objective result. This chapter contains five subchapters. Firstly, the type of the research will be explained. Then, the research strategy is described in the second subchapter. The third subchapter presents how the data are collected. Next, the fourth subchapter elaborates how the data are processed. Finally, the data analysis is illustrated in the last subchapter.

### 3.1 The Type of Research

This study applies qualitative and quantitative research. “Quantitative research tends to be associated with numbers as the unit of analysis” (Denscombe, 2007:248). According to Mackey and Gass (2005:2) Quantitative research starts with an experimental design in which a hypothesis is followed by the quantification of data and several sort of numerical analysis. Meanwhile, “Qualitative research tends to be associated with words or images as the unit of analysis” (Denscombe, 2007:248). Mackey and Gass (2005:2) suggest that qualitative research is not set up as experiments in which the data cannot be easily quantified and the analysis is interpretative rather than statistical. The qualitative and quantitative method are applied in this study as they are needed to analyze the data in the chosen utterances in *Yes Man* movie to describe how humor in the chosen utterances in *Yes Man* movie works, find out what the types of maxims flouted by the characters, and figure out the Flouting the Maxims which dominantly occur.

### 3.2 The Research Strategy

The strategy applied in this study is the mixed-method. Denscombe (2007:107) states “a mixed methods strategy is one that uses both qualitative and quantitative methods.”. The use of qualitative and quantitative approaches within a single research project is one of the characteristic features of mixed method approach

(Denscombe, 2007:108). Qualitative-interpretative analysis of the data in the form of selected utterances in *Yes Man* movie includes Flouting the Maxims and provides the interpretations of the implied or intended meaning. On the other hand, qualitative-statistical analysis of the data in the form of the number of Flouting the Maxims found in *Yes Man* movie provides result based on statistic.

### 3.3 The Data Collection

Blaxter (1996) states that purposive sampling is “handpicking supposedly typical or interesting cases”. Purposive sampling is applied to the situation where the researcher already knows something about the specific data because they are seen as instances that are likely producing the most valuable data (Denscombe, 2007). This means that the researcher selects the data which is relevant to the topic of the investigation. Hence, purposive sampling is compatible to apply in this study because the researcher only selects dialogues which contain humor and the Flouting the Maxims. In consequence, from 1520 utterances, only 27 utterances in *Yes Man* movie are picked to be analyzed. In addition, the subtitle of *Yes Man* movie is downloaded from <http://www.moviesubtitles.org/subtitle-40237.html>.

### 3.4 The Data Processing

After classifying the data found, the data tabulation of *Yes Man* movie that flout the maxim is made to make it easy to analyze the categories. One datum can flout more than one type of Maxim. It is also possible that each type only has one datum found. After finding the types of Flouting the Maxims of the utterances and classify them, they are counted to know what type of maxim are dominantly used by the characters and find out the implied meaning of the characters with the support of the context in the movie.

### 3.5 The Data Analysis

Dey (cited in Gray, 2004:327) states that “analysis involves the process of breaking data down into smaller units to reveal their characteristic elements and structure”. Dealing with that, this study applies descriptive, statistical, and interpretative method. Descriptive method is used to apply the theory of humor and the theory of Cooperative Principles and the Maxims proposed by Grice (1975) on the selected sentences taken from the characters’s dialogues in *Yes Man* movie. It is used to analyse the sentences that flout the Maxims and the type of Flouting the Maxims. Then, statistical method is applied to classify and count the type of Flouting the Maxims in the sentences used by the characters as well as count the frequency of the type. Last, interpretative method is used to find out the implied meaning of the utterances in *Yes Man* movie based on the type of Flouting the Maxims and the context.

## CHAPTER5. CONCLUSION

This last chapter provides the conclusion of what have been analyzed in the previous chapter. From the analysis, it is found that there are 19 sentences that flout one Maxim which consist of 6 sentences Flouting the Maxim of Quality, 10 sentences Flouting the Maxim of Quantity, 1 sentence Flouting the Maxim of Relation and 2 sentences Flouting the Maxim of Manner, 4 of the sentences flout two Maxims (Maxim of Quantity and Maxim of Manner).

The reasons of the characters flout the Maxims are various according to what Maxims they flout. They are obtained by the help of context of situation in the movie. Malinowsky (cited in Halliday and Hassan, 1989:6) stated that context of situation is needed to comprehend the environmental senses of an utterance. The context of situation gives information about who the speaker is, who the hearer is, where and when the conversation takes place.

In the dialogues of the characters in *Yes Man* movie, Carl tends to flout the Maxim of Relation because he would like to be ignorance. Another Maxim flouted is Maxim of Quality. The reason is that some characters would like to be sarcastic. The characters flout the Maxim of Quantity to indirectly emphasize their discomfort. One of the reasons why the characters flout the Maxim of Manner is to satirize their interlocutor. This shows that the types of Flouting the Maxims determine the reasons of the characters Flouting the Maxim.

It is also found that the characters flout two Maxims to emphasize their implied meaning they want to deliver to other characters. The characters do not explicitly say what they want to say, but they implicitly emphasize their implied meaning by Flouting the two Maxims.

Further, the characters in *Yes Man* movie dominantly flout the Maxim of Quantity to make a pun. Therefore, Carl Allen, as the main character, is shown as a withdrawn and spontaneous person since he involves in the dialogues which are flouted the Maxims. By giving less information than is needed, Carl is shown as a



withdrawn man. Whereas, by giving more information than is required, Carl is shown in *Yes Man* movie as a spontaneous person which still look funny.

In line with the genre of *Yes Man* movie which is included as a comedy-romantic movie, the analysis finds that the characters do not follow Grice's cooperative principles as a purpose to generate laughter. This is proved by the implementation of the theory of humor in each dialogue. As a sub theory of humor, the incongruity theory dominantly occurs in the humorous dialogues. According to the incongruity theory (Latta as cited in Hassan, 2013), laughter is generated by the element of surprise which contains ambiguity and inconsistency which deliberately misleads the audience, followed by punchline, Therefore, the pun is the dominant element which constructs humor in *Yes Man* movie since the incongruity theory is considered as a linguistic approach to humor. Nevertheless, the main character (Carl Allen) which is shown as a spontaneous person also supports in generating laughter.

In conclusion, the formula of humor in *Yes Man* movie is constructed by 19 sentences that flout one Maxim which consist of 6 sentences Flouting the Maxim of Quality, 10 sentences Flouting the Maxim of Quantity, 1 sentence Flouting the Maxim of Relation and 2 sentences Flouting the Maxim of Manner, 4 of the sentences flout two Maxims (Maxim of Quantity and Maxim of Manner). Therefore, the Flouting Maxim of Quantity is the dominant formula which constructs humor in *Yes Man* movie.

Lastly, by comprehending the formula of humor in *Yes Man* movie, this study is expected to give a contribution in the field of Pragmatics, particularly for the information of using Flouting the Maxims. The finding of this study hopefully will provide knowledge about the implied meaning and how Flouting the Maxims triggers humor in utterance. Hence, people will know the mechanism of humor based on pragmatic outlooks in order to help avoiding unpleasant feeling resulting from misunderstanding humors used by interlocutors.

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## APPENDIX 1. The Plot of *Yes Man* Movie

Carl Allen is a Bank loan officer. He has become introvert since his divorce from ex-wife Stephanie. He has a more and more negative perspective on his life and often ignores his friends Pete and Rooney. Someday an old friend of him suggests that he goes to a motivational “Yes!” seminar, which encourages its attendants to seize the opportunity to say “Yes!”. Carl comes to the seminar and meets inspirational motivator Terrence Bundley. Bundley forces Carl to promise to say “Yes!” to every opportunity, invitation, or request.

Later, Carl says yes to a homeless man's request and gets his car run out of gas in Elysian Park. Disappointed, he hikes to a gas station where he meets Allison, an eccentric young woman. She gives him a ride back to his car on her scooter and kisses him before leaving. After this positive experience, Carl feels more optimistic about saying yes. However, he refuses oral sex from his elderly neighbor Tillie, and then falls down the stairs and is nearly attacked by a dog. Seeing the repercussions of saying no, he goes back to Tillie.

Carl starts to seize every opportunity that comes his way. He renews his friendships with Pete and Rooney; builds a bond with his boss, Norman; assists Pete's fiancée, Lucy, with her bridal shower; attends Korean language classes; and much more. He earns a corporate promotion at work and, making use of his guitar lessons, plays Third Eye Blind's song "Jumper" to persuade a man not to commit suicide. Accepting a band flyer outside of a coffee shop, he sees an individual band called Munchausen by Proxy; the lead singer is Allison. He is charmed by her eccentricity; she is charmed by his spontaneity and the two begin dating.

Carl and Allison meet at the airport for a spontaneous weekend trip. They come to Lincoln, Nebraska. Allison asks Carl to move in with her and he agrees. While checking in for the return flight, Carl and Allison are under arrest by FBI agents who have suspected him as a terrorist because he has taken flying lessons, studied Korean, approved a loan to a fertilizer company, met an Iranian, and



bought plane tickets at the last minute. Pete, his lawyer, travels to Nebraska to explain Carl's odd habits, lessons, and decisions. As she finds out about Carl's motivational covenant, Allison begins to doubt whether his commitment to her was ever sincere. Deciding that she can no longer trust him, Allison leaves Carl and refuses to return his phone calls.

Carl's life becomes worse and he almost forgets about Lucy's shower. He manages to arrange a major surprise shower, set his friend Norm up with Soo-Mi, a Korean girl, and Rooney with Tillie. After the party, Carl receives a tearful phone call from Stephanie, whose new boyfriend has walked out on her. When Carl goes to Stephanie's apartment to comfort her, she kisses him and asks him to spend the night with her. After Carl emphatically says no, his luck takes a turn for the worse and he decides to end his commitment to the "Yes!" covenant.

Carl goes to the convention center and hides in the backseat of Terrence's car so that he can beg to be released from the covenant. Carl emerges as Terrence drives off, and an oncoming vehicle collides with Terrence. The two are taken to a hospital. After Carl recovers consciousness, Terrence tells Carl that there was no covenant. The starting point was merely to open Carl's mind to other possibilities, not to permanently take away his ability to say no if he needed to. Freed from this restraint, Carl finds Allison teaching a sports-photography lesson and admits that he is not ready to move in with her just yet, but that he genuinely loves her, and they reconcile with a kiss as Allison's students take pictures.

(imdb.com, 2015)