

**The Analysis of Violation Maxim to Create Adult Humor in  
*Amphibia* Animated TV Series**

Undergraduate Thesis

*Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for Bachelor Degree Requirement of English Department*



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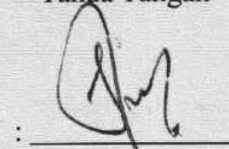
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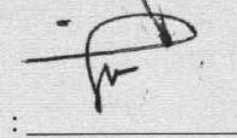
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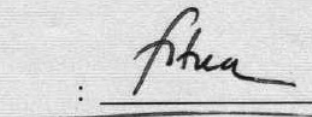
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## ABSTRACT

Reforman, M. G. 2023. The Analysis of Violation Maxim to Create Adult Humor in *Amphibia* Animated TV Series. Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

In the US animation industry, there is an increasing trend of incorporating adult humor into children's entertainment. This research investigates how adult humor is created by violating Grice's cooperative principles (maxims) in *Amphibia* animated series. The research is analyzed by identifying the type of violating maxim and how each violated maxim co-occurs with rhetorical techniques using Grice's cooperative principle theory (1975) with Tupan and Natalia's violating maxim criteria (2008) and Berger's humor techniques (1993, 1997). This research found that violating the maxim of quality is the most common way to make adult humor at 28.26%, followed by violating the maxim of manner at 15.22% and relation at 10.87%. However, other types of maxim violations were below 10%. The dominant type of rhetorical technique used in *Amphibia* involves irony/sarcasm, with 28.26%. Exaggeration is the second most common type, with 19.57%. While absurdity and ridicule each with 17.39%. Nevertheless, the rest of the rhetorical techniques were below 10%. These findings conclude that violating the maxim can lead to indirectness and leads to unconventional methods of communication. Adults tend to understand this better than children, who often take things literally. Additionally, the characters in *Amphibia* violate multiple maxims simultaneously, possibly to appeal to an adult audience. The show also uses difficult rhetorical techniques for children to grasp, such as irony/sarcasm, exaggeration, absurdity, and ridicule.

**Keywords:** *Violating Maxim, Cooperative Principle, Rhetorical Techniques, Adult Humor, Children Animation*

## ABSTRAK

Reforman, M. G. 2023. The Analysis of Violation Maxim to Create Adult Humor in *Amphibia* Animated TV Series. Padang: English Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

Di Amerika Serikat, kartun atau animasi yang biasa diasosiasikan sebagai hiburan anak-anak telah semakin banyak disisipi oleh humor dewasa. Penelitian ini mencoba menginvestigasi bagaimana humor dewasa dapat masuk kedalam tontonan anak-anak dengan cara melanggar prinsip kerjasama Grice (maxim) pada serial animasi *Amphibia*. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi tipe pelanggaran maxim dan bagaimana tiap pelanggarannya dapat turut bersamaan dengan teknik retorika. Dengan menggunakan teori prinsip kerjasama Grice (1975), Tupan dan Natalia kriteria pelanggaran maxim (2008), dan teknik retorika Berger (1993, 1997). Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa *quality* merupakan tipe maxim paling banyak dilanggar sebesar 28,26%. Diikuti oleh maxim *manner* sebesar 15,22%, dan maxim *relation* sebesar 10,87%. Namun, tipe pelanggaran maksim lainnya hanya berada di bawah 10%. Berkaitan tentang penggunaan teknik retorika, *irony/sarcasm* adalah jenik teknik retorika paling banyak digunakan yaitu 28,26%. Diikuti oleh *exaggeration* dengan 19.57%, *absurdity* dengan 17.39%, dan *ridicule* dengan 17.39%. Namun, teknik retorik lainnya berada di bawah 10%. Hasil penelitian ini mengkonfirmasi adanya humor dewasa dalam hiburan anak-anak. Pelanggaran maxim menciptakan ujaran tidak langsung yang mudah dipahami orang dewasa tapi sulit bagi anak-anak. Karakter melanggar lebih dari satu maxim sebagai indikasi bahwa penggunaannya bertujuan untuk menghibur penonton dewasa. Dan teknik retorika yang paling banyak ditemukan adalah teknik yang sangat sulit dicerna anak-anak, seperti *irony/sarcasm*, *exaggeration*, *absurdity*, dan *ridicule*.

**Keywords:** *Violating Maxim, Cooperative Principle, Rhetorical Techniques, Adult Humor, Children Animation*

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In the end, the researcher acknowledged that this thesis still has a great deal of room for improvement. As a result, comments and advice pertaining to areas of potential improvement are eagerly anticipated.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study

At this point in time, the line between adult-oriented and children-friendly humor is increasingly blurry. Akers (2013) observed that the number of adult humor in American animation increased by roughly five times. According to him, the money invested in animated films would not be sufficient to maintain the production businesses if children were the only target. Consequently, cartoons and other animations that are considered kid-friendly may suddenly be inappropriate. This trend is even more concerning as more than 60% of children change their language and accent after watching cartoons because children become attracted by the cartoon character and begin to imitate them in every way possible (Habib & Soliman, 2015). Therefore, it is crucial to re-reviewing whether or not a certain animation is suitable for children.

In order to widen its audience, the animation industry has employed a certain dimension of violation to create adult humor. According to Morreal (1986, p. 130), the basis of humor is a violation of expectation, which is when the ideal perception of the world, such as things, properties, and events, becomes disorganized or violated. Thus, humor is established when the expectation of a particular situation is violated. In the case of adult humor, Goel and Dolan (2007) claim that adult humor frequently

relies substantially on violating social norms. Social norms themselves are rules that most people expect in behavior (Bell & Cox, 2015). Thus, the expectation is the first dimension of the violation in order to generate humor. On the other hand, adult humor emerges when the efforts of violation go so far as to break social norms.

The degree of effort to which expectations has violated is the key criterion separating adult humor from children's humor. Adult humor may incorporate taboo topics such as death or murder, religion or ideology, political affairs, and even sex humor (Akers, 2013; Ross, 2005, as cited in Firmansyah & Ariyanti, 2021). Due to these characteristics, the effort of violation required to attract an adult audience is significantly greater, whereas attracting children is lower. According to Stenius et al. (2022), children's humor was emergent, collaborative, and unexpected; it was not a discrete activity but a part of play and playfulness. Children's humor typically involves laughter at the attachment figure through games such as peek-a-boo, mistaking one object for another, misnaming objects or actions, and playing with words, riddles, and jokes (McGhee, 2002, as cited in Cunningham, 2004). Thus, the level of violation in children's humor is simpler and less likely to address potentially offensive or harmful topics.

In communication, the sense of violation occurs when the speaker is unwilling to follow cooperative principles. Grice (1975) explains the cooperative principle as the way both speaker and recipient should make only the necessary contribution at the time required, by the agreed-upon goal or direction of the conversation. In order to



act in accordance with the cooperative principles, four maxims must be followed (Grice, 1975). First is the *quantity* maxim, which refers to how the speaker provides just the right number of information. Second is *quality* maxims, related to providing accurate information. The third is the *relation* maxim which is how participant limits their contribution as relevant to the context of the conversation. Another maxim is the *manner*, which is the commitment of the speaker to communicate briefly and orderly. Nonetheless, humans are fallible and often fail to follow these maxims, and the breach of these maxims refers to the violation of maxims.

Violation of maxims is simply a situation when a speaker purposefully disregards the maxims of the cooperative principle. According to Tupan and Natalia (2008), violation of cooperative principles arises when speakers violate the quantity maxim by not providing enough information, violating the quality maxim by providing false information, violating the maxim of relation by making the dialogue irrelevant to the topic, or violating the manners maxim by using ambiguous language. Therefore, the violation maxim is entirely uncooperative and opposes the cooperative principle. Nevertheless, the indirect nature of violation maxims accommodates humor by manipulating linguistic features, such as phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics (Romadlani, 2021; Krisdwiyan & Hanidar, 2022).

The manipulation of linguistic features to create humor is realized through rhetorical techniques. A rhetorical technique is a linguistic device that employs a specific type of sentence structure, sound, or meaning pattern to elicit a certain response from an audience (Shah & Saher, 2019).

In order to use rhetorical techniques to elicit humor response, Berger (1993) proposes a list of rhetorical techniques that he claims are the source of all humor. However, Rochmawati (2017) claims that *irony/sarcasm*, *exaggeration*, *misunderstanding*, *satire*, and *puns/wordplay* are the only main of his humor techniques. *Irony* involves the disparity between what is stated and what is intended. *Exaggeration* is an overstatement of what someone claims to have seen or heard. *Misunderstanding* is language ambiguity that leads to misinterpretation. *Satire* refers to deriding or ridiculing a person. Furthermore, *Puns* involve playing with the sound and meaning of words.

One animation that displays typical characteristics of children's entertainment is *Amphibia*. It tells the story of Anne Boonchuy, who discovers a music box that transfers her to a world dominated by talking amphibian creatures. The talking amphibian creature is one example of a fantastical feature that is typically associated with child-friendly entertainment. According to Parlakyıldız et al. (2022), cartoons will exhibit a great deal more fantastical elements with the help of available software in an effort to impress children. However, one review by Sawhney (2022) indicates that *Amphibia* is also targeting adults, expressing that this animation is "peppered with witty humor and dark jokes for the adults too, making it a wholesome family experience." Hence, the target audience for *Amphibia* is broader than merely children's entertainment. As Akers (2013) points out, what was once considered children's entertainment is now intended for the whole family.

Hence, *Amphibia* is an animation that has violated maxims in order to create adult humor. Adult humor is created when the degree of violation is significantly greater, such as involving taboo topics or surprising concepts that are most likely to attract an adult audience. In the dimension of communication, the highest degree of violation occurs when the speaker violates the maxims. According to Cutting (2002, p. 40), violation of maxims occurs if the speaker is very aware that the audience will not grasp anything beyond the literal sense of their words. Therefore, rather than expecting the hearer to consider the additional meaning of their words, the speaker corrupts the cooperative principle that even makes communication becomes the most uncooperative. As a result, *Amphibia* represents one linguistic phenomenon which is the violation of maxims.

Several studies investigate the production of humor through the breaking of the cooperative principle. The first is Amianna and Putranti's (2017) research on the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* identified that violation and flouting led to humorous situations. The second research by Al-Zubeiry (2020) aims to discover how humorous consequences are created from the violation of Grice's Maxims in the Arabic comedy *Madraset Al- Mushaghbeen*. The third is by Agus and Yustiani (2020), focused on the non-observance of the cooperative principle's maxim to create humor during Barack Obama's appearances on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* and *JimmyKimmel Live*.

Therefore, previous studies indicated that the breaking of the cooperative principle and the maxim is a typical tactic used to generate verbal humor. This research is similar to the previous study because it explores the same topic as the breaking maxim phenomena especially dealing with the violation of the maxim in creating humor. However, the main novelty of this research is how children's animation incorporates adult humor by using violating maxim and rhetorical techniques in *Amphibia*.

The animation industry is unlikely to make children their primary demographic, instead blurring the lines between humor aimed at adults and that aimed at children. Cartoons and other forms of animated media are still often thought of as a product of children's entertainment, but this perception is no longer the primary emphasis of the industry. As a result, the animation industry is making efforts to include adult elements, especially in language through humor. So, there must be an approach for the viewers to recognize adult humor in animations. Using the *Amphibia* Animated TV Series as a case study, this research will attempt to identify adult humor as the intentional violation of established norms, including those of violation maxim and rhetorical techniques. In order to identify the violation of a maxim, the researcher utilized Grice's cooperative principle theory (1975) along with Tupan and Natalia's criteria for violating a maxim (2008). When categorizing rhetorical techniques, this research employed Berger's rhetorical techniques (1993, 1997).

## **1.2 Research Focus**

Following the study background that has been presented, the researcher assumed that the *Amphibia* animated TV series had violated maxims and used various rhetorical techniques to produce adult humor. Therefore, the researcher focused the research on analyzing the violation of maxims in each character's dialogue by using Grice's cooperative principle theory (1975) and Tupan and Natalia's violating maxim criteria (2008) to examine the violation of the maxim. While classifying the rhetorical techniques, the research applied Berger's rhetorical techniques (1993, 1997).

## **1.3 Research Question**

The following issues are the main emphasis of this study:

1. What types of maxim violation are employed to create adult humor in *Amphibia*?
2. What rhetorical techniques are used to produce adult humor *Amphibia*?

## **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The following are the primary objectives of this study:

1. To identify types the maxim violation used to generate adult humor in *Amphibia*.

2. To discover the rhetorical techniques employed to produce adult humor  
*Amphibia*.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This research is significant because it has the potential to benefit a wide variety of people. Everyone will be able to know the construction of adult humor from violation of the communication principle. The implications of benefits are as follows:

#### **A. Theoretical**

1. The findings of the study will prove the existence of the integration of adult humor into children's entertainment on the basis of linguistic perspective.
2. Since children are most likely to replicate the language styles of their favorite cartoon and animation characters, this research will depict various negative forms of communication that they potentially imitate.

#### **B. Practical**

The study's findings are also used to help parents assess the content of entertainment to determine whether a particular animation/cartoon is appropriate for their children.

## 1.6 Definition of the Key Terms

**Humor** is an attempt or stimulus generated from the violation of expectation to evoke a sense of pleasure and enjoyment.

**Adult humor** is the type of humor constructed from the violation of social norms and cooperative principles.

**Breaking maxim** is the failure to observe cooperative principles motivated by various situations.

**Violation maxim** is one situation of breaking the maxim created from the intended purpose.

**TV Series** is a collection of narrative-driven episodes that can be aired on a television set or via a streaming service.