



## An Analysis of Grice's Maxims in Finding Nemo and Finding Dory Movies

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**Abstract.** This study explores the application and violation of Grice's conversational maxims in the animated films "Finding Nemo" (2003) and "Finding Dory" (2016). Grice's maxims—quantity, quality, relation, and manner—are key to effective communication in pragmatics. The research analyzes how these maxims are followed or flouted by the characters, affecting humor, tension, and narrative flow. Through a qualitative approach, the study identifies specific instances of adherence and violation, examining their impact on character development and audience engagement. The findings indicate that flouting the maxim of quantity often creates humor, while manipulating the maxim of relation generates suspense. This analysis demonstrates the role of conversational maxims in enhancing storytelling and character interactions in animated films, contributing to their narrative and entertainment value.

**Keywords:** Grice's Maxims, Pragmatics, Conversational Analysis, Animated Films, Character Interaction

### 1. BACKGROUND

Communication is the ability to understand one another, playing a crucial role in human interaction and daily social functioning (Settle, 2018). It goes beyond exchanging ideas; it involves creating and sharing meaning effectively. According to Searle (1969), effective communication requires participants to clearly convey and interpret responses, minimizing misunderstandings and potential conflicts. When communication follows established rules and participants cooperate, it ensures satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment for all parties involved (Hornby, 2010).

Paul Grice's theory of the Cooperative Principle, introduced in his 1975 work "Logic and Conversation," provides a foundational framework for effective communication. It suggests that people generally cooperate in conversation, contributing relevant information based on four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. These maxims guide individuals to communicate truthfully, relevantly, and clearly, fostering shared understanding and minimizing misinterpretation. When participants do not adhere to these principles, they may be seen as violating or flouting a maxim. The study of effective communication extends to various contexts, including media and films. In "Finding Nemo" and "Finding Dory," diverse communication styles and dynamics illustrate the application and manipulation of Grice's maxims, demonstrating how these principles shape interactions and narrative development.

## **2. THEORETICAL REVIEW**

This study draws on several theoretical studies and frameworks to explore effective communication. Settle (2018) defines communication as the ability to understand one another, emphasizing its role in human interaction and the creation of shared meaning. Searle's (1969) perspective on conversation suggests that participants must align their responses to ensure clarity and prevent misunderstandings. Hornby (2010) further argues that successful communication relies on following established rules and fostering cooperation among individuals. Central to this discussion is Paul Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, which posits that effective communication is guided by four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. These maxims encourage communicators to provide relevant, truthful, clear, and adequately detailed information to foster mutual understanding and minimize misinterpretation. The study applies these theoretical frameworks to analyze communication dynamics in the movies "Finding Nemo" and "Finding Dory," where characters like Marlin and Dory exemplify the complexities of adhering to or flouting Grice's maxims, thereby influencing the narrative and character interactions.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methods outline the framework for conducting studies, detailing the plans, procedures, and specific methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). This study employs a qualitative approach, which uses text and image data, follows distinct steps in data analysis, and incorporates diverse designs (Creswell, 2014). The methodology covers four aspects: data sources, data collection methods and techniques, data analysis methods and techniques, and methods for presenting data analysis. Data sources include primary data from the movies "Finding Nemo" (2003) and "Finding Dory" (2016), and secondary data from the original scripts available online. The study uses documentation methods, such as watching the movies, transcribing dialogues, capturing screenshots of relevant conversations, and noting conversational maxims (Creswell, 2012, 2014). The data are analyzed using a descriptive-qualitative approach, which involves classifying and interpreting linguistic and visual materials to understand explicit and implicit meanings (Flick, 2013). The findings are presented descriptively to clearly show the application, flouting, and violation of Grice's maxims based on the context, making the analysis of utterances comprehensible to readers (Creswell, 2013).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

#### 1. Types of Maxim in the Finding Nemo and Finding Dory movies

There were three types of maxims found in The Finding Nemo movie, they were maxim of quantity, maxim of quality and maxim of manner. Whereas in The Finding Dory movie there was only one type of maxim found, that is maxim of quality. The majority findings of maxims were found in the types of maxim quality for both movies. These can be explained further as follows.

##### a) Types of Maxims in Finding Nemo movie

Data 1. Gill applied maxim of quantity

Bloat : “Yeah, why should this be any different?”

Gill : “Cause we've got him.”

Nemo : “Me?”

Gill : “You see that filter?”

Nemo : “Yeah.”

Gill : **“You're the only one who can get in and out of that thing. We need you to take a pebble inside there and jam the gears. You do that and this tank's going to get filthier by the minute. Soon the dentist will have to clean the tank. When he does, he'll take us out of the tank, put us in individual baggies, then we'll roll down the counter, out of the window, off the awning, into the bushes, across the street and into the harbour. It's foolproof.”**

(00:39:28 - 00:40:03)

Data 2. Marlin applied maxim of quality

Dory : “Stop following me, okay?”

Marlin : “What? **You're showing me which way the boat went.**”

Dory : “A boat? I've seen a boat. It passed by not too long ago. It went this way. Follow me.”

Marlin : “Wait a minute. **What is going on? You already told me which way the boat was going.**”

Dory : “I did? Oh, no.”

(00:17:59 - 00:18:19)

Data 3. Dory applied maxim of quality

Marlin : “No. No more whale. You can't speak whale.”

Dory : **“Yes, I can.”**

Marlin : “No, you can't.”

(01:12:36 - 01:12:42)

Data 4. Marlin applied maxim of quality

Marlin : "Hey, guess what?"

Nemo : "What?"

Marlin : **"Sea turtles... I met one. And he was 150 years old."**

Nemo : "150?"

Marlin : "Yep."

Nemo : 'Cause Sandy Plankton said they only lived to be 100.

Marlin : "Sandy Plankton? Think I would cross the ocean and not know as much as Sandy Plankton? He was 150! Not 100."

(01:30:18 - 01:30:46)

Data 5. Fish School applied maxim of manner

Dory : "Guys."

Fish School : "Is he bothering you again?"

Dory : "No, he's a good guy. Go easy on him. He's lost his son Fabio. Heard of P. Sherman, 42 Wallaby Way, Sydney?"

Fish School : "Sydney? Oh, sure. Ted here's got relatives in Sydney. Don't you, Ted? Sure do."

Dory : "Hey, they know Sydney! You wouldn't know how to get there?"

Fish School : **"Follow the EAC. That's East Australian Current. Big current. You can't miss it. It's in that direction. Then you got to follow that for about... What do you guys think? Three leagues? That baby's going to float you right past Sydney."**

Marlin : "Great! That's great! Dory, you did it."

(00:43:09 - 00:43:50)

## b) The types of maxims in Finding Dory movie

Data 6. Wife fish applied maxim of quality

Dory : "Hi, I'm Dory. Can you please help me?"

Wife Fish : "What? Um... **Honey, you just said that.**"

Dory : "I did?"

Wife Fish : "Mm-hmm."

Dory : "I'm sorry. I suffer from short-term remembory loss."

Wife Fish : "Oh, how awful."

(00:04:03 - 00:04:22)

Data 7. Dory applied maxim of quality

Marlin : “No, he's gone.”  
Dory : “It's all right.”  
Marlin : “He's gone.”  
Dory : “It'll be okay.”  
Marlin : “No, no, they took him away. I have to find the boat.”  
Dory : “A boat? **Hey, I've seen a boat!**”  
Marlin : “You have?”  
Dory : “Uh-huh. It went this way! Follow me!”

00:06:29 - 00:06:40

Data 8. Destiny applied maxim of quality

Destiny : “Dory!”  
Dory : “Yes.”  
Destiny : “**You and I were friends!**”  
Dory : “No!”  
Destiny : “Dory, it's me! Destiny!”  
Dory : “You know me?”  
Destiny : “Of course! **We talked through the pipes when we were little. We were pipe pals!**”  
Dory : “We were?”  
Destiny : “Aw, you're so pretty.”  
Dory : “So you know where I'm from?”  
Destiny : “Yep, you are from the Open Ocean exhibit.”

00:31:48 - 00:32:04

Data 9. Dory applied maxim of quality

Dory : “Mom? Dad? Where are my parents?”  
Blue Tangs : “Dory? Are you really Jenny and Charlie's girl?”  
Dory : “**Yes, I am! That's me!** Where are they?”  
Blue Tangs : “Uh, well, Dory, right after you disappeared, they thought you... Well, they thought you must have ended up here, in quarantine.”

01:02:45 -01:03:03

## 1. Flouting of Maxim in the Finding Nemo and Finding Dory movies

There was only one type of maxim that flouted in The Finding Nemo movie, that is maxim of quality. Whereas in The Finding Dory movie there were three types of maxims that flouted, they are maxim of quantity, maxim of quality, maxim of relation. The majority findings

of maxims were found in the types of maxim quality and relation for both movies. These can be explained further as follows.

**a) Flouting Maxim in Finding Nemo Movie**

Data 10. Marlin flouting maxim of quality

Bruce : “Anyone else? How about you, mate? What's your problem?”

Marlin : “Me? **I don't have a problem.**”

(00:21:58 - 00:22:05)

**b) Flouting Maxim in the Finding Dory Movie**

Data 11. Dory flouting maxim of quantity

Dory : “Oh! Can you help me? I've lost... them.”

Fish : “Uh, can you be more specific?”

Dory : “**My... My... Them! Them! Them!**”

01:05:02 - 01:05:09

Data 12. Jenny and Charlie flouting maxim of quality

Dory : “Did I forget again?”

Both : “**No, no. No.**”

Jenny : “No, sweetie. Don't worry about it.”

Charlie : “No biggie, kelpcake.”

00:02:13 - 00:02:17

Data 13. Dory flouting maxim of relation

Stan : “Hi, kid. Over here. Hello?”

Wife Fish : “Hello? Hi.”

Dory : “Hi. I'm Dory. Can you please help me?”

Wife Fish : “Hi, Dory. Are you lost?”

Stan : “Yeah, where are your parents?”

Dory : “Um... I can't remember.”

Wife Fish : “Oh.”

Stan : “Well we'll look around. Are any of these fish your parents?”

Dory : “**Hi, I'm Dory. Can you please help me?**”

00:03:39 - 00:04:06

Data 14. Dory flouting maxim of relation

Kathy : “Where'd you grow up, Dory?”

Dory : “Me? Um, I don't know. My family. Where are they? **Can I help you?** I'm sorry. Did I forget again? You see, I suffer from...”

Students: “Short-term memory loss.”

## 2. Violating of Maxims in the Finding Nemo and Finding Dory movies

There was only one type of maxim that violated in The Finding Nemo movie, that is maxim of quantity. Whereas in The Finding Dory movie there were two types of maxims that violated, they are maxim of quality and maxim of manner. These can be explained further as follows.

### a) The Implicit Meaning of Violating Maxims in Finding Nemo Movie

Data 15. Coral violating maxim of quantity

Coral : “You did good and the neighbourhood is awesome.”

Marlin : “So you do like it, don't you?”

Coral : “No, no, I really do like it. **But, Marlin, I know that the Drop Off is desirable, great schools, amazing view, but do we really need so much space?**”

(00:01:27 - 00:01:53)

### b) The Implicit Meaning of Violating Maxims in The Finding Dory Movie

Data 16. Marlin violated maxim of quality

Dory : “Hey, Marlin.”

Marlin : “Oh, hey. Hello, Dory.”

Dory : “You all right? You look worried.”

Marlin : “**No, no, no. I'm fine. It's how I always look.**”

01:25:09 - 01:25:17

Data 17. Marlin violating maxim of manner

Marlin : “Uh... Dory.”

Dory : “Yeah.”

Marlin : “Mr. Ray has too many fish to keep an eye on today. **So it would be best if today you weren't exactly with the class.**”

Dory : “Oh. Why not?”

Marlin : “**Well, you know, you have problems remembering things sometimes.**”

Dory : “That's the one thing I can remember.”

Marlin : “Yes. Okay. **And sometimes it's not your fault, but it can cause you to wander. And Mr. Ray doesn't really have time to worry about fish who wander. In other words, he doesn't have enough help.**”

Dory : “Poor guy. You know, he's so overworked.”

Marlin : “You understand.”

Dory : “I totally understand now.”

Marlin : “Okay.”

Dory : "Mm-hmm. He wants me to be the teacher's assistant."

Marlin : "Uh... No, not exactly."

Dory : "I am so honoured. I have never been a teaching assistant before."

Marlin : "Mr. Ray! You got help."

00:08:29 -00:09:16

## **Discussion**

### **Types of Maxims in the Finding Nemo and Finding Dory movies**

In "Finding Nemo," characters effectively use communication principles to overcome challenges. For example, Gill provides a clear and concise escape plan, stating, "You're the only one who can get in and out of that thing. We need you to take a pebble inside there and jam the gears... It's foolproof." This approach adheres to the maxim of quantity, offering just enough detail for everyone to understand. Similarly, Marlin, while searching for Nemo, interacts with Dory, whose memory issues complicate their communication. Marlin's honest inquiries, like "You're showing me which way the boat went," help clarify the situation despite Dory's confusion. Additionally, Dory follows the maxim of quality by accurately claiming she can speak whale, which is validated when her communication with a whale helps them reach Sydney. A school of fish further aids their journey by giving clear directions: "Follow the EAC... It's in that direction," demonstrating the maxim of manner.

Transitioning to "Finding Dory," Dory's short-term memory loss leads to repetitive interactions. When she repeatedly asks for help, the female fish gently says, "Honey, you just said that," adhering to the maxim of quality by providing honest feedback. Later, Dory meets Marlin, who is searching for Nemo. Her truthful statement, "I have seen a boat!" becomes a crucial clue, showing how honesty helps guide their actions. As Dory continues her quest, she encounters Destiny, who recalls their past friendship, saying, "We were pipe pals!" Destiny's honest memory aids Dory's search. Eventually, Dory finds herself among blue tangs and confirms her identity with, "Yes, I am! That's me!" This honest response facilitates her reunion with her parents, underscoring the importance of truthful communication throughout her journey.

### **Flouting of Maxims in the Finding Nemo and Finding Dory movies**

In "Finding Nemo," Marlin's interaction with the sharks highlights a violation of the maxim of quality. When asked to speak about his problems during the shark event, Marlin lies, saying, "I don't have a problem," to avoid deeper involvement and expedite their escape. This lie is driven by his urgent need to continue searching for Nemo rather than any intention to deceive maliciously. Marlin's dishonesty underscores the tension between immediate needs and



social expectations, revealing his struggle to balance his urgent quest with the potential risks posed by the event.

In "Finding Dory," her short-term memory loss leads to several instances where she flouts communication maxims. For example, after being separated from her friends, Dory tries to seek help but her distress results in unclear communication, exemplified by her frantic and incomplete plea, "My... My... Them! Them! Them!" This lack of clarity stems from her emotional state and memory issues, preventing other fish from understanding and assisting her. Similarly, her childhood memories reveal a flouting of the maxim of quality by her parents, who lie to protect her feelings despite her repeated mistakes. Finally, in her role as Mr. Ray's teaching assistant, Dory's memory challenges cause her to respond irrelevantly to a question about her past. These instances highlight how Dory's memory issues affect her communication, demonstrating the difficulties and misunderstandings that arise from her condition.

### **Violating of Maxims in the Finding Nemo and Finding Dory movies**

In *Finding Nemo*, Coral's conversation with Marlin about their new house reveals her subtle violation of the maxim of quantity. While she acknowledges the benefits of their new location, Coral expresses her underlying concern about the necessity of the spacious home. Her question, "But do we really need so much space?" serves as a gentle critique rather than a direct confrontation, reflecting her attempt to balance honesty with sensitivity. By initially highlighting the positives before voicing her concerns, Coral aims to address her worries without creating conflict, demonstrating a strategic approach to maintaining harmony in their relationship.

Moreover, in *Finding Dory*, Marlin's interactions illustrate his struggle to manage his protective instincts while maintaining trust. When Dory returns to the ocean with her family, Marlin continues to monitor her due to his concern over her memory loss. This is evident when Marlin, attempting to disguise his worry, tells Dory, "No, no, no. I'm fine. It's how I always look," thus flouting the maxim of quality by being less than truthful about his feelings. Furthermore, Marlin's attempt to inform Dory about not attending class—by over-explaining the situation—leads to confusion and a misinterpretation of his message. His excessive detail results in Dory misunderstanding the real issue, highlighting his violation of the maxim of manner. These moments emphasize the complexity of their communication and the impact of Marlin's overprotectiveness on their interactions.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In summary, all problems have been resolved in the results of the analysis in this study, this research identified a total of 17 data of conversational maxims in both movies. The findings reveal a significant difference. In the application of types of maxims, Finding Nemo produced more diverse data, while Finding Dory showed a higher occurrence of flouting maxims. This difference is due to the variation in the movies' plots. In Finding Nemo, the conversations of supporting speakers like Dory and Marlin are more prominent, rather than Nemo himself, even though he is the main speaker. The goal of the movie is to find Nemo, and it is the journey of these speakers that leads to a diverse application of the maxims. On the other hand, in Finding Dory, the main goal is to find Dory's lost parents. The reason for the flouting of maxims in Finding Dory was that the film focuses more on conversations directly involving Dory, who is the main speaker in this movie. Dory's short-term memory loss sometimes causes her to unintentionally flout the maxims.

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