



Flouting the Maxim of Quality as a Humor Strategy in The Bad Guys 2: An Incongruity Theory Perspective

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-04-07 Revised: 2026-05-19 Accepted: 2026-09-21 Keywords: Cooperative Principle; Flouting of the Maxim of Quality; Incongruity Theory; Pragmatics; Humor DOI: 10.24256/ideas.v14i1.11869 Corresponding Author: Achmad Alif Agim Sakai agimsait43@gmail.com Sastra Inggris, Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar	<i>Humor often arises when speakers intentionally depart from conversational norms, particularly by flouting the maxim of quality. Although previous studies have examined the types and communicative functions of maxim flouting, relatively little attention has been paid to explaining how quality-maxim flouting generates humor through the interaction of situational context, conversational implicature, and incongruity. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates how flouting the maxim of quality functions as a strategy for creating humor in The Bad Guys 2 (2025). Adopting a descriptive qualitative design, the study analyzes character dialogues collected through observation of the film. From nineteen identified instances of potential quality-maxim flouting, seven utterances were purposively selected for detailed analysis because they most clearly illustrated the relationship between maxim flouting, conversational implicature, and humorous effects. The analysis applies Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Context of Situation to examine the field, tenor, and mode of the interactions, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to identify quality-maxim flouting and conversational implicature, and Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory to explain the humorous effect. The findings show that the selected utterances employ various pragmatic strategies to intentionally flout the maxim of quality and invite interpretations beyond their literal meanings. Overall, the study demonstrates that situational context supports the interpretation of quality-maxim flouting, which generates conversational implicature, while the discrepancy between</i>

expectation and expression contributes to the construction of humor through incongruity.

1. Introduction

Language is not only used to construct meaning but also to create humorous effects in interaction. Humor frequently depends on expressions whose intended meanings cannot be understood from their literal forms alone. In such cases, listeners need to consider the surrounding context, the relationship between participants, and the communicative situation to interpret what a speaker intends to convey. This relationship between language, context, and intended meaning makes humorous communication an important area of pragmatic study, particularly in audiovisual discourse where dialogue is embedded within specific social and narrative situations.

The interpretation of meaning in context is the primary concern of pragmatics. Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle provides an influential framework for understanding how speakers and hearers coordinate meaning through four conversational maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Although these maxims establish expectations for cooperative communication, speakers may deliberately depart from them while expecting hearers to recognize the apparent non-observance and infer an intended meaning. Such deliberate departures are referred to as flouting of conversational maxims. Through maxim flouting, speakers can communicate meanings that extend beyond the literal interpretation of their utterances and thereby generate conversational implicatures.

The interpretation of maxim flouting requires consideration of the situation in which an utterance occurs. Halliday and Hasan (1985) conceptualize the Context of Situation through three dimensions: field, tenor, and mode. Field refers to what is happening or the social activity in which language is involved; tenor refers to the participants, their roles, and their relationships; and mode refers to the role and function of language within the situation. These dimensions are relevant to the analysis of movie dialogue because the interpretation of an apparently inappropriate or untruthful utterance depends on what is happening in the scene, who is participating in the interaction, and how language functions within that situation. Thus, Context of Situation provides a basis for interpreting the meaning of an utterance before determining how a conversational maxim is being flouted.

Among Grice's (1975) four conversational maxims, the maxim of quality is particularly relevant to humorous communication because it concerns the expectation that speakers should provide truthful contributions and should not say what they believe to be false or lack

adequate evidence for. When speakers deliberately produce utterances that appear inconsistent with the situation or with what can reasonably be considered true, they may flout the maxim of quality rather than intend to deceive the hearer. Such utterances encourage the hearer to move beyond the literal proposition and infer the speaker's intended meaning through conversational implicature. Consequently, the discrepancy between what is literally expressed and what is contextually intended can become an important mechanism in the construction of humor.

The humorous effect of this discrepancy can be explained through Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory. Incongruity occurs when an event, situation, or expression does not correspond to an individual's initial expectations. In humorous communication, an unexpected utterance may create a discrepancy between what is expected and what is expressed. The hearer can then reconsider the utterance by taking its context and conversational implicature into account. When the discrepancy is interpreted as playful rather than problematic, the resulting incongruity can contribute to amusement. Thus, Grice's Cooperative Principle explains how an apparently inappropriate or untruthful utterance can generate an implied meaning, while Incongruity Theory explains how the discrepancy between expectation and expression can contribute to the humorous effect.

Previous studies can be broadly grouped into research on maxim flouting in audiovisual discourse and research on maxim flouting as a mechanism for humor. Studies of animated and film dialogue have demonstrated that maxim flouting contributes to non-literal meaning, character interaction, and narrative development. Astini et al. (2023), for example, identified the intentional flouting of all four conversational maxims in *Raya and the Last Dragon*, demonstrating its contribution to character interaction and narrative development. Dayabhi and Candra (2025) similarly examined flouting of the maxim of relation in *Inside Out 2* and showed how irrelevant responses can generate conversational implicatures. These studies demonstrate the importance of contextual interpretation in understanding maxim flouting in audiovisual discourse.

Other studies have focused more directly on the relationship between maxim flouting and humor. Krisdwiyan and Hanidar (2022) found that deliberate flouting of conversational maxims contributes to humor in *The IT Crowd*, while Maulida et al. (2022) demonstrated that maxim flouting contributes to humorous situations in *Friends*. Nugraha and Tawami (2022), focusing specifically on the maxim of quality, showed that apparently untruthful utterances in *The Truman Show* can function as intentional communicative strategies that encourage the interpretation of implied meanings. Taken together, these studies establish that maxim flouting can support humorous communication by creating a distinction between literal expressions and intended meanings. However, the previous

studies do not systematically trace the sequence from quality-maxim flouting to conversational implicature, expectation–meaning discrepancy, incongruity, and humorous interpretation, particularly in contemporary animated-film dialogue.

The *Bad Guys 2* (2025) was selected because its character dialogue contains ironic, exaggerated, understated, and deliberately non-literal expressions that provide relevant material for examining the relationship between quality-maxim flouting and humor. The film therefore provides a suitable audiovisual context for investigating how conversational meaning is constructed when speakers intentionally depart from expectations of truthfulness.

To address this gap, the present study investigates how flouting the maxim of quality functions as a strategy for creating humor in *The Bad Guys 2* (2025). The analysis applies Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Context of Situation to examine the field, tenor, and mode of selected interactions, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle to identify quality-maxim flouting and conversational implicature, and Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory to explain the humorous effect. Through this framework, the study examines humor as a process in which situational context supports the interpretation of maxim flouting, maxim flouting generates conversational implicature, and the discrepancy between conversational expectation and the actual utterance produces incongruity that contributes to humor.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How does flouting the maxim of quality generate humorous effects through conversational implicature and incongruity in *The Bad Guys 2* (2025)?

2. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to interpret how flouting the maxim of quality functions as a strategy for creating humor in *The Bad Guys 2* (2025). The primary data source of this study was the dialogue produced by the characters in *The Bad Guys 2* (2025), with utterances containing potential flouting of the maxim of quality serving as the unit of analysis. During the initial observation, nineteen utterances were identified as potential instances of flouting the maxim of quality. These nineteen utterances constituted the overall dataset and were subsequently coded according to the humorous strategies identified in the data. The coding resulted in nine descriptive categories: verbal irony, understatement, hyperbole, pretended ignorance, absurd comparison, self-contradiction, exaggerated praise, sarcasm, and overgeneralization.

From the nineteen identified utterances, seven utterances were purposively selected for detailed analysis because they most clearly demonstrated the relationship between flouting the maxim of quality and humorous effects. The selection was based on the analytical richness of the utterances, including the

clarity of the maxim flouting, the contextual support for identifying conversational implicatures, and the relevance of the utterances to explaining humor through Incongruity Theory. The seven selected utterances were therefore treated as analytical examples rather than as a statistically representative sample of the nineteen utterances.

The seven selected utterances were not intended to represent all nine descriptive categories identified in the nineteen-item dataset. Instead, they were selected based on their analytical richness and their ability to illustrate different ways in which quality-maxim flouting contributes to humorous effects through situational context, conversational implicature, and incongruity. Therefore, the absence of a particular category from the seven detailed examples does not indicate that the category was absent from the overall dataset. The remaining twelve utterances were retained as part of the overall dataset and were included in the descriptive distribution of the nine categories.

The data were collected using the observation method. The *Bad Guys 2* (2025) was observed repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the storyline, character interactions, and conversational contexts in which the utterances occurred. Throughout the observation process, utterances potentially containing flouting of the maxim of quality were identified, recorded, coded, and systematically organized. The situational context of each selected utterance was also examined using Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Context of Situation, consisting of field, tenor, and mode. An English subtitle transcript was used as a supporting reference and carefully verified against the corresponding movie scenes to ensure the accuracy of the dialogues before the selected utterances were analyzed further.

The coding process began after repeated viewing of the film and identification of utterances that appeared inconsistent with the conversational situation. Initial descriptive codes were assigned based on recurring pragmatic and humorous characteristics of the utterances. The codes were then compared across the nineteen utterances and grouped into descriptive categories according to their dominant characteristics. Similar or potentially overlapping interpretations were reviewed in relation to the surrounding context and intended meaning to maintain distinctions among categories such as verbal irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, exaggerated praise, and understatement. The nine categories were treated as descriptive categories emerging from the data rather than as an established theoretical taxonomy of humor.

Table 2. Operational Definitions of Observed Humor Strategies

Humor Strategy	Operational Definition
Verbal Irony	An expression in which the intended meaning contrasts with the literal expression

Understatement	A deliberate presentation of a situation as less serious or significant than it actually is.
Hyperbole	A deliberate exaggeration beyond what is literally or realistically expected.
Pretended Ignorance	A deliberate presentation of oneself as unaware of information that is already known.
Absurd Comparison	A comparison between unrelated things that creates an unexpected or unreasonable contrast.
Self-Contradiction	A statement that is immediately contradicted by the speaker's subsequent statement.
Exaggerated Praise	Excessive positive evaluation that goes beyond what the situation reasonably supports.
Sarcasm	An apparently positive or approving expression used to convey a mocking or critical meaning.
Overgeneralization	Extending a specific behavior or event to an unnecessarily broad category.

To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the selected utterances were repeatedly checked against the corresponding film scenes, English subtitle transcript, conversational context, and theoretical criteria throughout the analytical process. The researcher also revisited the coding and interpretation of each utterance to ensure consistency between the identified quality-maxim flouting, conversational implicature, situational context, and humorous effect. This repeated checking process was conducted to reduce interpretive inconsistency and strengthen the credibility of the qualitative analysis.

The data were analyzed through four sequential stages. First, each selected utterance was examined using Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Context of Situation to identify the field, tenor, and mode of the interaction. Second, Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle was applied to determine whether the utterance constituted an instance of flouting the maxim of quality. Third, the utterances were interpreted within their conversational and situational contexts to identify the speakers' intended meanings and the conversational implicatures generated through maxim flouting. Finally, Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory was employed to explain how the discrepancy between the contextual expectation and the actual utterance contributed to the humorous effect. These analytical stages enabled the study to explain the relationship between situational context, quality-maxim flouting, conversational implicature, and incongruity in the construction

of humor.

The findings were first presented through analytical tables to provide an overview of the nineteen identified instances and their distribution across the nine descriptive categories. The frequency and percentage were used descriptively to show the distribution of the qualitatively coded data and were not intended for statistical generalization. Subsequently, each selected utterance was discussed in detail by explaining its situational context, quality-maxim flouting, conversational implicature, and humorous effect based on Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory.

3. Result

The analysis identified nineteen utterances that potentially flouted the maxim of quality in *The Bad Guys 2* (2025). These utterances were first categorized according to the humor strategies identified through qualitative coding. The coding resulted in nine descriptive categories: verbal irony, understatement, hyperbole, pretended ignorance, absurd comparison, self-contradiction, exaggerated praise, sarcasm, and overgeneralization. As presented in Table 1, verbal irony was the most frequently observed strategy, followed by understatement and hyperbole, while the remaining strategies occurred less frequently.

Although all nineteen utterances were identified during the analysis, seven utterances were purposively selected for detailed discussion because they provided particularly clear examples of quality-maxim flouting and offered sufficient contextual information for interpreting their conversational implicatures and humorous effects. The seven selected utterances therefore function as analytical examples rather than as a statistically representative sample of the nineteen utterances. The remaining twelve utterances were retained in the overall dataset and contributed to the descriptive distribution presented in Table 1. The seven detailed examples were selected for analytical richness rather than to represent every category in the nineteen-item dataset; therefore, the absence of a category from the detailed discussion does not indicate its absence from the overall dataset.

The nine humor strategies presented in Table 1 are descriptive categories that emerged inductively from the qualitative coding process based on recurring characteristics of the utterances. They are used to organize the findings and do not represent an established theoretical taxonomy of humor. The frequency and percentage values are descriptive measures of the distribution of the coded utterances and are not intended for statistical inference.

Table 1. Distribution of Observed Humor Strategies in the Flouting of the Maxim of Quality

No	Observed Humor Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
1	Verbal Irony	8	42.11%
2	Understatement	3	15.79%
3	Hyperbole	2	10.53%
4	Pretended Ignorance	1	5.26%
5	Absurd Comparison	1	5.26%
6	Self-Contradiction	1	5.26%
7	Exaggerated Praise	1	5.26%
8	Sarcasm	1	5.26%
9	Overgeneralization	1	5.26%
	Total	19	100%

As shown in Table 1, nine observed humor strategies were identified across the nineteen utterances that potentially flouted the maxim of quality. Verbal irony was the most frequently observed strategy, accounting for eight occurrences (42.11%), followed by understatement with three occurrences (15.79%) and hyperbole with two occurrences (10.53%). Pretended ignorance, absurd comparison, self-contradiction, exaggerated praise, sarcasm, and overgeneralization each occurred once, accounting for 5.26% of the dataset, respectively.

The predominance of verbal irony suggests that quality-maxim flouting in the film frequently involves a discrepancy between the literal expression of an utterance and the meaning intended within its conversational context. This pattern is relevant to the present study because the apparent mismatch encourages interpretation beyond the literal proposition and provides a basis for identifying conversational implicature. At the same time, the presence of the other eight categories demonstrates that quality-maxim flouting is realized through diverse pragmatic forms rather than a single humorous strategy.

The distribution in Table 1 is descriptive rather than statistical. The frequencies indicate how often each coded strategy occurred among the nineteen identified utterances, while the percentages describe their relative distribution. The seven selected utterances are subsequently examined in detail to demonstrate how situational context, quality-maxim flouting, conversational implicature, and incongruity interact in the construction of humor.

4. Discussion

Data 1

Snake: "Don't worry. We brought you a little parting gift."

Tarantula: **"We're classy like that."**

(The Bad Guys 2, 00:04:23)



Figure 1. Tarantula ironically describes the Bad Guys as "classy" after stealing Soliman's luxury prototype car.

The dialogue occurs immediately after the Bad Guys steal Soliman's luxury prototype car. Snake refers to the stolen car as a "parting gift," while Tarantula describes the group as "classy." In this context, the expression "classy" is inconsistent with the group's criminal behavior. The situational context can be understood through Halliday and Hasan's (1985) framework: the field involves the gang leaving after stealing a luxury vehicle, the tenor involves the interaction between the criminal group and the victim, and the mode is an informal spoken exchange. Within this context, Tarantula's description of the group as "classy" deliberately conflicts with the reality of their behavior.

From Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, the utterance flouts the maxim of quality because Tarantula presents a description that is not consistent with the observable situation. The conversational implicature is that the speaker is being ironic by contrasting the gang's criminal conduct with the positive and sophisticated image associated with the word "classy." The humor therefore does not depend on the literal meaning of the adjective but on the discrepancy between the expression and the situation.

This discrepancy can be explained through Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory. The context establishes an expectation that the characters' behavior will be acknowledged as criminal or inappropriate, whereas Tarantula unexpectedly presents the group as "classy." The contrast between criminal behavior and respectable self-description creates the incongruity that contributes to the humorous effect. Thus, the data demonstrate how quality-maxim flouting can transform an apparently inappropriate description into humor through ironic reinterpretation.

Data 2

Craig: "Uh, you robbed us three times."

Wolf: "**That was this bank?**"

(The Bad Guys 2, 00:09:35)



Figure 2. Wolf pretends not to recognize the bank after Craig reminds him of the gang's previous robberies.

The exchange occurs when Craig reminds Wolf that the Bad Guys have previously robbed the same bank three times. Wolf responds, "That was this bank?" Although grammatically formulated as a question, the utterance functions as a pretended expression of ignorance because Wolf already knows which bank Craig is referring to. The field involves Wolf applying for a position at the bank while being confronted with his criminal history, the tenor involves an interaction between Wolf and Craig in which Craig confronts Wolf about his past actions, and the mode is informal spoken dialogue.

The utterance flouts Grice's (1975) maxim of quality because Wolf deliberately presents himself as unaware of information that he already knows. The conversational implicature is that Wolf is attempting to reduce the seriousness of the accusation by pretending not to recognize the bank. Rather than directly admitting or denying the robbery, he avoids the accusation through feigned ignorance.

The incongruity arises from the contrast between the seriousness of Craig's accusation and Wolf's deliberately casual response. A direct explanation or denial would be a more expected response, whereas pretending not to recognize a repeatedly robbed bank creates an unexpected shift in the interaction. The humor therefore emerges from the discrepancy between known criminal history and performed ignorance, illustrating how quality-maxim flouting can function as a playful strategy for avoiding an uncomfortable conversational situation.

Data 3

Kitty: "I wish I could stick around to see how it ends, but we've got a rocket to steal. Ciao."

Shark: **"See? This is why I'm not a cat person."**

(The Bad Guys 2, 01:03:36)

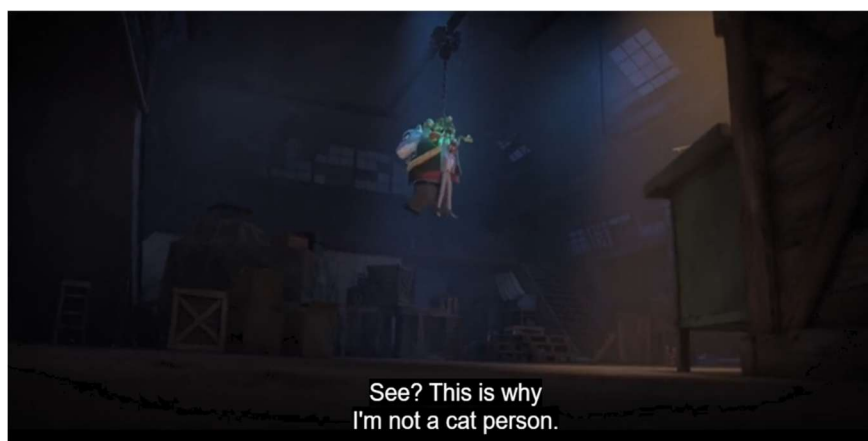


Figure 3. Shark humorously overgeneralizes Kitty's betrayal to all cats.

The dialogue occurs after Kitty decides to leave the Bad Guys and continue with the plan to steal the MoonX rocket. Shark responds by saying, "This is why I'm not a cat person." The field involves Kitty's decision to continue the criminal plan and leave the group, the tenor involves Shark reacting to Kitty's betrayal as a member of the same group, and the mode is informal spoken dialogue.

The utterance flouts the maxim of quality because Shark extends the behavior of one individual, Kitty, to an entire category of cats. The conversational implicature is that Shark is expressing his disappointment with Kitty through an intentionally exaggerated generalization rather than making a literal claim about all cats. The statement therefore functions as a humorous way of expressing annoyance without directly confronting Kitty.

Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory helps explain the humorous effect because the response creates a mismatch between the specific event and the broad conclusion. Kitty's individual behavior is unexpectedly generalized to all cats. The incongruity lies in the disproportion between one character's betrayal and Shark's judgment of an entire category. The humorous effect consequently emerges from the playful transformation of personal frustration into an unreasonable generalization.

Data 4

Wolf: **"In hindsight, that was a little reckless."**

(The Bad Guys 2, 01:16:51)



Figure 4. Wolf humorously understates an extremely dangerous situation after narrowly escaping disaster.

The utterance occurs after Wolf and the other characters survive a dangerous situation. The field involves Wolf reflecting on a recently survived dangerous event, the tenor involves Wolf commenting on the experience within the context of the group's interaction, and the mode is informal spoken dialogue. Wolf describes the event as “a little reckless,” although the seriousness of the situation extends far beyond a minor act of carelessness.

The utterance flouts the maxim of quality because Wolf deliberately minimizes the severity of the event. The conversational implicature is that he recognizes the seriousness of what happened but intentionally presents it in a mild and casual way. This understatement allows him to reflect on the dangerous event without adopting an equally serious tone.

The incongruity arises from the contrast between the magnitude of the danger and the mildness of Wolf's description. A serious event would normally invite a serious evaluation, yet Wolf characterizes it as only “a little reckless.” The humorous effect therefore results from the deliberate reduction of a highly serious situation to an ordinary or minor inconvenience.

Data 5

Pigtail: "What do you think giant rocket is for?"

Pigtail: **"Is not for science fair."**

(The Bad Guys 2, 01:01:46)



Figure 5. Pigtail humorously uses an absurd comparison between the MoonX rocket and a school science fair.

The exchange occurs while the characters are discussing the purpose of the MoonX rocket. Pigtail responds by contrasting the rocket with a school science fair. The field concerns the characters' discussion of the rocket and its intended use, the tenor involves Pigtail responding to another character's question within the group, and the mode is informal spoken dialogue.

The statement flouts the maxim of quality because the comparison between an advanced rocket and a school science fair is intentionally unreasonable. The conversational implicature is that the purpose of the rocket should already be obvious from the circumstances, making the question unnecessary. Rather than provide a literal explanation, Pigtail uses an absurd comparison to ridicule the obviousness of the question.

The incongruity is created by placing a technologically advanced rocket and a school science fair within the same comparison. These concepts are unrelated in scale and function, and their deliberate combination produces an unexpected conceptual contrast. The humorous effect therefore emerges from the absurdity of the comparison and its implied criticism of the question.

Data 6

Luggins: "Okay, let's say, hypothetically, I believe you..."

Luggins: "Which I don't."

(The Bad Guys 2, 01:11:12)



Figure 6. Commissioner Luggins humorously employs self-contradiction while questioning the Bad Guys.

Luggins initially presents a hypothetical acceptance of Wolf's explanation before immediately contradicting herself. The field involves Luggins questioning the Bad Guys about their explanation, the tenor involves an authority figure interacting with the characters under suspicion, and the mode is spoken dialogue used to express skepticism.

The utterance flouts the maxim of quality because Luggins deliberately introduces a hypothetical statement of belief and immediately contradicts it. The conversational implicature is that Luggins does not actually accept Wolf's explanation and uses the first clause as a rhetorical setup to emphasize her disbelief. The immediate contradiction makes her skepticism more explicit while creating a humorous effect.

The humorous effect results from the abrupt reversal between the two clauses. The first statement temporarily creates an expectation of acceptance, while "Which I don't" immediately removes that expectation. According to Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory, the sudden shift creates a discrepancy between the anticipated interpretation and the subsequent meaning. The humor therefore emerges from the immediate contradiction within the same conversational turn.

Data 7

Diane: "Wolf, what were you thinking?"

Wolf: **"Diane, listen. We hit a little bit of trouble."**

Diane: "Oh. Which part? Assaulting the police commissioner or stealing a priceless belt in front of thousands of people?"

(The Bad Guys 2, 00:34:46)

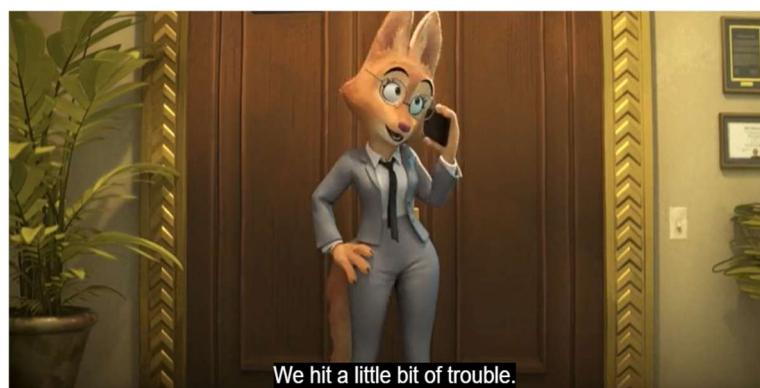


Figure 7. Wolf humorously downplays a disastrous situation by describing it as only “a little bit of trouble.”

The exchange occurs after the Bad Guys cause a serious incident at the Lords of Lucha competition. Diane directly questions Wolf about his actions, while Wolf responds by describing the situation as “a little bit of trouble.” The field involves the consequences of the group's actions during the competition, the tenor involves Diane confronting Wolf about the incident, and the mode is informal spoken dialogue used to respond to criticism.

Wolf's utterance flouts the maxim of quality because “a little bit of trouble” substantially minimizes the seriousness of the events. The conversational implicature is that Wolf is attempting to soften Diane's reaction rather than accurately describe what happened. His understatement functions as a way of maintaining a calm and light tone despite the seriousness of the situation.

The incongruity emerges from the contrast between serious criminal actions and the mild expression “a little bit of trouble.” Diane's immediate follow-up question reinforces this contrast by explicitly listing the severity of the actions. Unlike Data 4, where Wolf minimizes a dangerous event retrospectively, Data 7 uses understatement directly in response to another character's confrontation. In both cases, however, the humorous effect is produced by reducing a serious situation to an unexpectedly mild expression.

The findings are consistent with previous studies showing that conversational maxim flouting can contribute to humorous communication. Krisdwiyani and Hanidar (2022) found that deliberate flouting of conversational maxims contributed to humor in *The IT Crowd*, while Maulida et al. (2022) demonstrated that maxim flouting contributed to humorous situations in *Friends*. Nugraha and Tawami (2022), focusing specifically on the maxim of quality, showed that apparently untruthful utterances can function as intentional communicative strategies that encourage the interpretation of implied meanings. The present study extends these findings by focusing specifically on quality-maxim flouting and by tracing the relationship between situational context, conversational implicature, and incongruity in animated-film dialogue.

Cross-Case Discussion

The seven selected data demonstrate that flouting the maxim of quality can generate humor through different pragmatic strategies, including verbal irony, pretended ignorance, overgeneralization, understatement, absurd comparison, and self-contradiction. Despite their differences, the data share a recurring mechanism in which the utterance creates a discrepancy between the meaning expected from the conversational situation and the meaning expressed by the speaker. The surrounding context provides the basis for interpreting the speaker's intended meaning, while the resulting discrepancy contributes to the incongruity underlying the humorous effect.

A comparison between Data 4 and Data 7, both categorized as understatement, further demonstrates the importance of situational context. In Data 4, Wolf describes a dangerous experience as “a little reckless,” thereby minimizing the severity of an event that has already occurred. In Data 7, he describes a series of serious actions as “a little bit of trouble.” Although both utterances minimize serious circumstances, their conversational functions differ. Data 4 functions as a light retrospective comment on a dangerous experience, whereas Data 7 functions to soften the seriousness of Wolf's actions while responding to Diane's confrontation. Thus, the same humorous strategy can produce different pragmatic effects depending on the context and relationship between the participants.

The comparison also shows that the humorous effect does not result from understatement alone. In both cases, the literal expressions are insufficient to represent the seriousness of the situations. The difference between the actual circumstances and the mild descriptions creates an incongruity that encourages reinterpretation of the utterances as playful rather than literal evaluations. This supports Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory, in which humor emerges from the recognition of a discrepancy between expectation and what is actually expressed.

Across the seven examples, the findings suggest a recurring analytical mechanism: literal untruth or contextual incompatibility → recognition of deliberate quality-maxim flouting → conversational implicature → expectation–meaning discrepancy → recognition of incongruity → humorous interpretation. The situational context established through field, tenor, and mode provides the basis for interpreting why an utterance appears inappropriate or inconsistent. Grice's Cooperative Principle then explains how the apparent departure from the maxim of quality encourages the inference of an intended meaning, while Morreall's Incongruity Theory explains how the resulting discrepancy contributes to humor.

This pattern is broadly consistent with previous research on conversational humor and maxim flouting, but the present study extends previous findings by connecting pragmatic interpretation with the cognitive recognition of incongruity. The findings therefore suggest that the humorous function of quality-maxim

flouting depends not only on the linguistic form of an utterance but also on its interaction with the situational context and the inferred meaning generated through that context.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that flouting the maxim of quality functions as an effective pragmatic strategy for creating humor in *The Bad Guys 2* (2025). Among the nineteen utterances identified as instances of potential quality-maxim flouting, seven utterances were purposively selected for detailed analysis because they most clearly illustrate the relationship between quality-maxim flouting, conversational implicature, and humorous effect. The findings show that the characters deliberately produce utterances that are inconsistent with the immediate conversational context, not to deceive the hearer, but to encourage interpretation beyond their literal meanings.

The findings further demonstrate that humor is constructed through the interaction between situational context, conversational implicature, and incongruity. Halliday and Hasan's (1985) Context of Situation provides the contextual basis for interpreting each utterance through field, tenor, and mode; Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle explains how flouting the maxim of quality generates conversational implicatures; and Morreall's (1983) Incongruity Theory explains how the discrepancy between expectation and expression contributes to the humorous effect.

Across the seven selected examples, the analysis identifies a recurring process in which situational context supports the recognition of quality-maxim flouting, maxim flouting generates conversational implicature, and the resulting expectation–meaning discrepancy contributes to incongruity and humor. This study contributes to pragmatic research by demonstrating how quality-maxim flouting can function as a humor strategy through the interaction of contextual interpretation, non-literal meaning, and incongruity in contemporary animated-film dialogue.

However, the study is limited to one animated film, one conversational maxim, seven selected analytical examples from the nineteen-item dataset, researcher-based interpretation, and the absence of audience-reception data. Future studies are recommended to examine other conversational maxims, compare different film genres or media, or investigate how different contextual settings influence the relationship between maxim flouting and humor.

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