

SPREADING LAUGHTER THROUGH HUMOR FROM GRICEAN MAXIMS AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract: Humor is essential in maintaining the balance of human life socially and psychologically. Each culture in the world, including Islamic culture, perceives humor differently. Furthermore, from an academic perspective, humor can be constructed using linguistic features. Therefore, this study aims to examine verbal humor construction using linguistics features and evaluate how verbal humor is perceived by different cultures, particularly popular British and Islamic cultures. British popular culture is directed more toward the liberal culture, which is often opposed to the Islamic culture, which is often seen as conservative. By employing a qualitative approach, the study investigates the verbal humor construction in *Black Books* comedy series using Gricean cooperative maxim theory and Marzolph's (2011) concept of Islamic perspectives on humor based on the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. The results of this study point out that verbal humor utterances in the series flout and violate all four Gricean maxims, which are the maxim of quality (54.3%), quantity (14.3%), relevance (11.4%), and manner (20%). This study also found that most verbal humor utterances in the series are appropriate to Islamic perspectives on humor, as 60% of the verbal humor utterances do not contain ridicule, defamation, offensive utterances and name-calling, and some other forbidden acts in Islam such as lies and abusive behaviors. The results of this study are expected to provide more insights into verbal humor construction and different cultures' perspectives on verbal humor.

Keywords: verbal humor, cooperative maxim, Islamic perspective

INTRODUCTION

In human social interaction, humor is essential to keep the communication remaining in a good state and reduce the tension. Humor should possess the tendency to make people laugh because they enjoy the stimulus that triggers their emotional responses (Martin & Ford, 2018). Linguistically, the language of humor is widely discussed and assigned as verbal humor (Dynel, 2009). Verbal humor generally occurs in social interactions that involve more than one person that function as breaking the tension in a nerve-wracking or unhappy situation, or other words, to "break the ice."

The role of humor as one of the essential features in social interaction and

communication has been studied to highlight the significance of humor. These studies generally focus on how societies perceive humor. For example, Demjén (2016) proved that humor contributes to helping cancer patients to cope with their illness by providing the empowerment sense, reducing psychological pressures, facilitating media for them to be able to talk about their conditions in a way that is more socially acceptable, and constructing a sense of supportive and cohesive community. This may be related to Avdagić (2020), who explained that humorous responses to rather emotional situations are the form of defense mechanism that people implement to cope with unpleasant conditions. In the context of black humor, Levisen (2018)

points out that the use of black humor in Danish society establishes solidarity and sociality among the community members and between the natives and newcomers. The studies reflect that humor is essential in maintaining a psychological state (Avdagić, 2020; Demjén, 2016) and social bonds (Levisen, 2018) in human lives. The importance of humor in human life encourages the need to conduct this research to provide some references on how humor is constructed to contribute to expanding people's understanding of humor.

Humor is one of the communication features that researchers have investigated to disclose the way people use humor for specific functions or intentions in general as well as in religious contexts. In a general context, Romadlani and Wijana (2022) found out that the humor utterances used in *Mind Your Language* sitcom fulfill Hay's framework of the functions of humor which are solidarity function, power function, and psychological function. The function of humor is also examined in Islamic contexts. Using the sociology of humor theory, Michael (2013) observed the performance of humor of Muslim American stand-up comedians. The research revealed the intentions of performing the jokes to entertain the audience and direct opinions about Muslims. Another study by Fadhlina (2021) demonstrated that humor is also one of the popular methods used by Islamic preachers in spreading Islamic teachings. These studies are in line with Romadlani and Wijana's (2022) findings concerning humor used for the function of power. Furthermore, Marzolph (2011) explained how Islam perceives humor by exploring Qur'anic verses and Hadith about the approach to expressing humor and the history of Arab Muslims concerning the use of humor in their discourses. To fill the gap in the previous studies, this study juxtaposes the construction of verbal humor in a British sitcom with Islamic approaches to expressing humor.

In constructing verbal humor utterances, various linguistic features or techniques are involved in creating the utterances. Many linguistic researchers have studied humor to reveal the linguistic features used in humor constructions, particularly pragmatic features. Studies carried out by Al-Zubeiry (2020), Aristyanti, Sutopo, and Yuliasri (2020), Inya

and Inya (2018), and Qiu (2019) explored the construction of verbal humor in various contexts using Grice's theory of cooperative principles. The studies argue that the deviations of Gricean maxims effectively create humor utterances. Other than the cooperative principle theory, the use of speech act theory is also often discovered in the construction of humor and is as successful as the previous strategy in establishing humorous expressions and situations (Fitriani, Nasir, & Fonna, 2020; Joshua, 2020). Furthermore, using pragmatic features in creating verbal humor may be more effective if combined with broader functional or practical perspectives (Inya & Inya, 2018).

The studies mentioned above present many ways of analyzing and constructing humor and its functions in society, especially in the social interaction and communication dominated by language use. However, none of those studies have explored humor constructions through linguistics combined with Islamic perspectives. Therefore, this study attempts to reveal how senses of humor are constructed in a famous British comedy series, *Black Books*, using the Gricean cooperative principle theory and to what extent the sitcom's humor conforms to the concept of humor in the Islamic perspective, especially from the one explained by Marzolph (2011).

Black Books is a British comedy series that presents the daily life of a bookseller named Bernard Black with his close friends, Manny and Fran, in his bookshop, Black Books. Bernard is a bitter, hateful, lazy Irish man who spends his time reading books in his shop while drinking a glass of wine and smoking. Having a somewhat antisocial tendency, Bernard is abusive to some extent, particularly towards Manny. However, the three of them almost always spend their time together in Bernard's bookshop, given that Manny is Bernard's employee and Fran is Bernard's closest old female friend who lives near the shop. These characters' comedic acts in this series are mainly carried out with the series' slapstick comedy style. The researcher chose this series to be analyzed because it is one of the most famous British comedy series that achieved the British Academy of Film and Television Arts (BAFTA) Awards in 2001 and 2005 for Best Situation Comedy. Furthermore, the series' popularity can represent the British's sense of humor.

This study uses Grice's theory of cooperative maxims to analyze the humorous utterances in *Black Books* series. Cooperative principles deal with the communicative principles one should comply with during the conversation. According to Grice, cooperative principles are the principles that require speakers in a conversation to give their contribution as it is necessary for the contextually accepted direction of the exchange of talk that the speakers are engaged in (Yule, 1996). In other words, the speakers should make their responses in the talk exchange as necessary. Furthermore, Gricean cooperative principles are classified into four maxims, which are maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner (Yule, 1996). In this study, maxim theory is employed to reveal how verbal humor is created through the violation or the flouting of the maxims.

Furthermore, this study also explores verbal humor based on Islamic perspectives on humor. Using Marzolph's (2011) framework related to the approach of expressing humor in Islam, this study aims to determine how verbal humor utterances in *Black Books* series conform or do not conform with Islamic perspectives on humor. Furthermore, the topic was chosen to examine how Islam perceives popular Western standards of humor. Thus, this study is expected to provide insights about humor in different cultures and spread awareness concerning cultural diversity that people should respect to maintain harmony in society through linguistics and religious perspective.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Grice's Cooperative Principles

In a conversational context, each speaker in the conversation assumes that the other speaker is being cooperative with their utterances. Therefore, the other speaker will give responses that are still contextually appropriate to the topic. Grice in Yule (1996) refers to the assumption of cooperativeness in a conversation as cooperative principles which need to be observed. It is crucial to make the conversation flow smoothly and lessen the misunderstanding between the speakers, which may lead to conflicts. Cooperation principles consist of four sub-principles called

maxims: the maxim of quantity, quality, relation/relevance, and manner (Yule, 1996).

As Grice explains in Yule (1996), each maxim has different principles. For example, the maxim of quantity requires the speaker to be as informative as necessary without giving too much or less information. Then, the maxim of quality deals with the principles of delivering truthful and adequate information. Furthermore, as the name suggests, the maxim of relevance requires the speaker to convey relevant information. Finally, the maxim of manner demands unambiguous, clear, brief, and orderly information. During the conversation, each speaker is assumed to follow cooperative principles. However, when a speaker flouts or violates any maxims, the speaker may imply something more than what s/he says. In other words, maxim flouting/violation is considered as delivering a hidden meaning of the utterance.

As human conversation does not always follow cooperative principles, Gricean maxim theory can be applied to reveal the implied meaning of utterances in a conversation that flouts or violates the maxims. It leads to several studies conducted to examine linguistic phenomena, which aim to investigate hidden facts beyond the use of language. For example, Miftachudin (2013) observed the flouted maxims in *Eat Pray Love* novel, which occur in conversations with people from various countries. The study demonstrates that the tendency to flout the Gricean maxim determines communication characteristics in different cultures. Another study was conducted by Radfar, Sudana, and Gunawan (2020), who investigated maxim violations in the utterances of people involved in the murder case of Jamal Khashoggi. Radfar et al. (2020) reveal the ambiguity in utterances expressed by the accused murderer and other revelations concerning the murder case. This study highlights Grice's cooperative principle theory's significance in linguistic forensics to serve justice by investigating crimes through the use of language.

In the context of verbal humor, incongruities often emerge in a conversation to establish unexpected utterances that can stimulate laughter (Scheel, 2017). Therefore, the theory of cooperative principles can be used to reveal the incongruities that structure verbal humor. In addition, studies conducted to

investigate verbal humor in various contexts show that flouting, violating, or opting out of Gricean maxims can be practical tools to construct humor patterns (Aristyanti et al., 2020; Fitriani et al., 2020; Inya & Inya, 2018; Qiu, 2019).

Humor in Islamic Perspectives

Islam is known for its strictness in its religious rules to make its followers' lives more organized and peaceful. Because of this strictness, many perceive Muslims as having no sense of humor and taking everything seriously. On the contrary, Muslims are just trying to control themselves to keep themselves from breaking the limit of what is allowed in the religion. The perception that Muslims have no sense of humor is also a fallacy. According to Marzolph (2011), Islamic teaching emphasizes that humor is natural for humans as it is explained in a Quranic verse from Qur'an 53:43, which says, "Moreover, He is the One who brings about joy and sadness." The word "joy" here is also translated as laughter. This verse points out that humor is allowed for Muslims, and even it is the God that bestows laughter and joy to His followers. Therefore, it debunks the assumption that Islam is so restricted that humor is prohibited.

However, Islam still has its own rules regarding using humor for entertainment. The religion firmly holds the guidance God has bestowed upon Muslims in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith. The Qur'an contains the collection of God's orders revealed to Prophet Muhammad to be taught to all Muslims as one of the primary guidance in their life. On the other hand, Hadith consists of Prophet Muhammad's normative utterances and actions, which Muslims also follow as a way of life. In the Qur'an, it is stated that the prohibited humorous expressions are those which consist of mockery towards others.

O, believers! Do not let some 'men' ridicule others; they may be better than them, nor let some women ridicule other women; they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the actual wrongdoers. (Qur'an 49:11)

The verse shows that the allowed humor expressions or utterances based on Islamic perspective from Qur'an are: (1) utterances that do not ridicule others; (2) utterances that do not defame others; (3) utterances that do not offend others; (4) utterances that do not contain offensive name-calling (Marzolph, 2011).

Muslims should also follow Prophet Muhammad's actions and utterances as their role model in the humor context. Marzolph (2011) explains that Prophet Muhammad's humor often occurs in the form of witty anecdotes. The Prophet never expresses jocular utterances containing ridicule, mockery, or even lies towards other people. Based on several famous anecdotes delivered by Prophet Muhammad, it can be seen that his humor tends to contain utterances that are ambiguous and have double meanings (Marzolph, 2011). It is a way to avoid telling lies in humor expressions because Prophet Muhammad firmly discourages using untruthful utterances to express humor, as explained in the following Hadith.

Narrated Mu'awiyah ibn Jaydah al-Qushayri: The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: Woe to him who tells things, speaking falsely, to make people laugh thereby. Woe to him! Woe to him! (Sunan Abi Dawud, Book 42, Hadith 4972)

The Hadith demonstrates that lying is prohibited, although it is only for humor. Therefore, in addition to the Islamic perspective for appropriate humor, it is also encouraged that humor should also conform to other Islamic values, such as expressing truthful utterances.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative method to find out how the characters in a British comedy series, *Black Books*, perform Grice's cooperative principles to create humorous utterances and how the verbal humor in the series conforms with Islamic perspectives on humor. It is supported by Dawson's (2009) definition of qualitative study as the study which investigates in-depth analyzes of the subjects' attitude, experience, and behavior. Furthermore, this study also applies the discourse analysis method by analyzing the spoken discourses of the characters'

conversations in the series. It is in line with Paltridge (2012), who defines discourse analysis as the analysis of language patterns and how they are correlated with the culture or society. Discourse analysis also reveals the underlying meaning of the discourses (Baxter, 2010). In this study, the researchers use Grice's cooperative principle theory to analyze the spoken discourse.

The data were collected from the characters' utterances in the *Black Books* series *Manny Come Home* episode (Series 3 Episode 1). The researchers then transcribed the utterances with the help of the caption feature provided by the YouTube channel on which the series is aired. After transcribing, the researchers conducted the selection process by highlighting the utterances which contained verbal humor from the series' transcription. The humorous utterances were discovered by paying attention to the scenes of the episode followed by the audience-laugh effect. As a result, 52 verbal humor utterances were found in the series episode.

After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the data using Grice's cooperative principles to find out how verbal humor is constructed in the series. The verbal humor utterances were examined concerning violating the Gricean cooperative principle maxims. Furthermore, the first analysis results were investigated based on Marzolph's (2011) concept of Islamic perspectives on humor to answer the second research question. The researchers focused more on analyzing the structure of the utterances rather than the topic. Therefore, this study revealed the connection of Gricean cooperative principles with Islamic perspectives on humor. After sorting the data using Grice's theory, the researchers classified the verbal humor data based on their conformity and non-conformity with Islamic perspectives on humor by referring to several verses related to the Islamic values regulating human social interactions. Following this, the researchers interpreted the results before finally concluding the interpretations.

RESULTS

Flouting/Violation of Gricean Maxims in *Black Books*

Based on the analysis, the researchers discovered that 35 utterances contain verbal

humor expressions constructed by using the violation and flouting of Grice's cooperative maxims in the *Black Books* series *Manny Come Home* episode (Series 3 Episode 1). Those utterances are non-observance towards all of the four maxims, which are: (1) maxim of quality, (2) maxim of quantity, (3) maxim of relevance, and (4) maxim of manner.

Table 1. Frequency Percentage of Maxim Flouting/Violation

Maxim Flouting/Violation	Frequency	Percentage
Maxim of quality	19	54.3%
Maxim of manner	7	20%
Maxim of quantity	5	14.3%
Maxim of relevance	4	11.4%
Total	35	100%

The table presents the frequency and the percentage of maxim flouting or violation used to create verbal humor in *the Black Books* series. The table shows that the maxim of quality is the most frequently flouted or violated by the characters in the series in producing humorous utterances with a frequency of 19 utterances and a percentage of 54.3%. Following the maxim of quality, the flouting or violation of the maxim of manner occurs in 7 utterances with a percentage of 20%, making it the second most frequent maxim flouting or violation. Then, the flouting or violation of the maxim of quantity occurs in 5 utterances with a percentage of 14.3%. Finally, the least frequent maxim flouting or violation is that of the maxim of relevance which occurs in 4 utterances with a percentage of 11.4%. Presented below are the more detailed results of how the four maxims are flouted or violated in the *Black Books* series *Manny Come Home* episode analyzed from the utterance transcriptions of the series.

Flouting/Violation of Quality Maxim

The dialogue below occurs when Fran encourages Bernard and Manny to fix their friendship by apologizing to each other so things will return to normal. However, Bernard and Manny assume that Fran does that for her selfish needs. Then, Bernard and Manny emphasize that their friendship can never be fixed as it used to be.

[1]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/14:20 – 14:26)
Bernard: It's never going to be like it was, Fran.
Manny: Never, I agree.
Bernard: *We agree. Manny and I are opposed on every point.*

Dialogue [1] shows that Bernard flouts the maxim of quality because he unintentionally utters contradictory statements but intends to imply actual information from the statements to Fran. In the last utterance, Bernard says that he and Manny agree with each other. However, Bernard continues by stating that he and Manny are always in disagreement about anything. It is ironic and contradictory to the previous statement. Nevertheless, Bernard expects Fran to understand that he attempts to say the last statement, implying that he and Manny are not meant to be friends anymore. The ironic statements create a humorous effect due to the incongruity between the two statements.

Another example of humor creation by violating or flouting the maxim of quality can be seen in the following dialogue. This dialogue occurs in the Goliath Books shop, the competitor of Bernard's Black Books, which is newly built beside Black Books, between Manny and Evan. Manny works in Goliath Books after his conflict with Bernard started. Evan is the manipulative manager of Goliath Books, who has hired Manny. In this dialogue, Manny has just been evicted from Bernard's flat, making him homeless. Having nowhere to go and sleep, Manny decides to sleep in the shop without Evan's knowing.

[2]
(S03E01/Manny Come Home/18:06 – 16:34)
Evan : Good morning, Manny.
Manny: *Morning, Evan, just popped in to do my yoga. I do it every morning in my yoga bag. Just running through a few positions. This is the worm ((doing a pose)), worm saluting the sun ((doing another pose)), anaconda ((doing another pose while hissing like a snake)).*

In dialogue [2], Manny violates the maxim of quality by deliberately lying to Evan about what he is doing in the shop very early in the morning. Manny attempts to hide the fact that he slept in the shop last night and tries to make

Evan think that he just came early and does yoga in the shop as if it is his daily habit. The verbal humor is created by Manny's deceitful utterances and his actions. The audience believes that a person like Manny is unlikely to do yoga because, in the series, Manny's lifestyle is depicted as not healthy. Therefore, Manny's utterances and actions are considered unexpected and stimulate laughter.

Flouting/Violation of Quantity Maxim

The following utterances are from the voiceover of Fran reading her letter to Bernard and Manny at the very beginning of the episode. Fran, who has just returned from her vacation in Cornwall, wants to inform Bernard and Manny about her activities. So she writes some things about Cornwall in her letter to let her friends know what Cornwall looks and feels like.

[3]
(S03E01/Manny Come Home/0:27 – 0:54)
Fran: ((voiceover)) Dear Bernard, Dear Manny, see, I told you I'd write. *Cornwall is, well, you've seen the pictures, it's like the pictures except a lot more boring. Everybody is at least three-hundred, and they all speak some kind of medieval English, the most important word being "urrrr." Can't wait to see you, get a bottle open. Love, Fran..."urrrr."*

In part [3], Fran flouts the maxim of quantity by providing too much insignificant information about Cornwall while delivering less information about the place. Fran only states in the letter that Cornwall looks like the picture but is "more boring." It does not help the audience or Bernard and Manny know how Cornwall is since the information is limited. Fran does not explain more about Cornwall being uninteresting to her. However, Fran also provides some insignificant information about Cornwall, which is related to the word "urrrr" which is described as being the most important word for Cornwall people and the way Cornwall people speak. By giving such information, however, Fran intends to tell Bernard and Manny that she does not enjoy her visit to Cornwall. The way Fran describes Cornwall by flouting the maxim of quantity contributes to the humorous effect of the utterances. It is because of her peculiar way of

describing the eccentric place. The closing statement of the letter: "Love, Fran... 'urrr'" also adds to the comical stimulation.

The following example is taken from the continuation of dialogue [2]. In this dialogue, Manny tries to deceive Evan that he happens to be in the shop early in the morning and does yoga activities to spend a little leisure time before starting to work. He thinks that if Evan knows he slept in the shop last night, Evan will reprimand him or, in the worst scenario, fire him.

[4]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/18:08 – 16:34)

Manny: Morning, Evan, just popped in to do my yoga. I do it every morning, in my yoga bag. Just running through a few positions. *This is the worm ((doing a pose)), worm saluting the sun ((another pose)), anaconda ((another pose while hissing))*.

Manny's last utterance in dialogue [4] indicates a violation of the maxim of quantity. Providing information about his yoga positions after saying he is doing yoga in the shop is unnecessary because it is insignificant and abundant. However, Manny tells Evan about the positions while acting them out because he intends to strengthen his deceitful reasoning so that Evan will believe him. This utterance is humorous because of Manny's abundant information, complemented by the unusual types of positions and how Manny acts each position out.

Flouting/Violation of Relevance Maxim

The following dialogue occurs in Goliath Books when Evan asks Manny to wear more proper working apparel to show that he is a part of the team members in Goliath Books. However, Evan uses a somewhat confusing and inconsequential approach to talk to Manny about the rules. Evan analogizes the clothing rules with football players in a team who need to wear uniform jerseys during the game before he finally requests Manny to wear a plain shirt with a pair of shoes. However, Manny misunderstands Evan's words.

[5]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/12:10 – 12:21)

Manny: But we're not actually playing football—.

Evan: *Great*.

Manny: I mean, it's a floor, it's not like I'm on—

Evan: *Good, so long as we're happy*.

Manny: It's not like we have oranges at half time—

Evan: *Great!*

In dialogue [5], Evan flouts the maxim of relevance in responding to Manny's utterances. Manny thinks Evan is still talking about football and misunderstands Evan's request to wear a formal shirt for work. However, Evan only answers with "great" or "good," which is irrelevant to Manny's utterances. Evan's non-observance towards the maxim of relevance implies that he does not accept any queries regarding the clothing rules and does not want to discuss it any further because it wastes his time. Evan's responses create humorous effects because they are unexpected to the audience.

Another example occurs in Manny's dialogue with Bernard when Bernard evicts Manny from his place. Since having a conflict with Bernard and moving to work in Goliath Books, Manny always ignores Bernard. On the other hand, Bernard considers Manny's behavior to betray him. When their conflict becomes worse, Bernard decides to expel Manny. Below is Manny's reaction to Bernard's decision.

[6]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/8:56 – 9:02)

Manny: Bernard, no, look at yourself, *who's going to look after you? You can't survive on the mushrooms in your hair*.

Maxim of relevance is flouted in this dialogue because the mushrooms in Bernard's hair are seemingly irrelevant to how Bernard will survive and how Manny is evicted from Bernard's flat. However, the utterance is not entirely meaningless. Manny has always been the one who keeps the place clean and tidy. He also takes care of Bernard's lifestyle and prepares everything for Bernard. The mushroom in Bernard's hair indicates that Bernard never takes care of himself. Therefore, Manny assumes that if he leaves Bernard, Bernard will not be able to survive because he cannot control himself alone. The utterance

seems rather heartwarming due to Manny's considerateness towards Bernard. However, what makes the utterance amusing is Manny's relevance maxim flouting about the mushroom in Bernard's hair because it constructs incongruity, bringing about the unexpected sense that the character will say such utterance.

Flouting/Violation of Manner Maxim

An example of the violation of the maxim of manner occurs in the following dialogue. In this dialogue, Fran visits Bernard's shop and flat and finds that everything is disorganized. She finally meets Bernard, but she does not see Manny. Bernard tells Fran that Manny has left.

[7]
 (S03E01/Manny Come Home/2:09 – 2:23)
 Fran: You mean you sacked him
 Bernard: *There may have been an incident involving a kitchen item and a hand. And maybe the hand was Manny's, and maybe the item was a sandwich toaster, and maybe I introduced them to each other.*

Bernard's utterance in dialogue [7] violates the maxim of the manner by not providing the information straight to the point because he does not want to admit his mistakes. First, Fran tries to clarify Bernard's words by saying that Bernard fired Manny from the job in Black Books. Then, Bernard tells Fran that he injures Manny's hand with a sandwich toaster which starts the conflict between the two. However, Bernard intentionally uses confusing words in his utterance. Bernard does not want himself to be blamed for hurting Manny. The way Bernard explains the situation obscurely stimulates a humorous utterance because it is quite unusual since he personifies Manny's hand and the sandwich toaster as if those are living things.

Maxim of manner is also flouted in the following dialogue. This dialogue precedes and results in the utterances in dialogue [5] which flouts the maxim of relevance. In Goliath Books, this dialogue shows how Evan asks Manny to change his appearance by wearing a proper shirt for work to highlight Manny's involvement in the working team.

[8]
 (S03E01/Manny Come Home/11:40 – 12:11)

Evan: *Manny, we love your style ok, the shirts, the sandals, heh-heh, it's funky. But imagine we're all on a football team, okay? And the guy on the wing he's wearing a crazy shirt. Nobody knows what team he's on. Can I pass it to him? I don't know. And look, his sandal has come off on the muddy ground. Damn it! ((hits the table)) We've lost five nil!*

Manny: Oh.
 Evan: So tomorrow, plain pastels if you please, and if you'd be so good, a pair of shoes.
 Manny: But we're not actually playing football.

In dialogue [8], Evan flouts the maxim by not being straight to the point to deliver the information. Instead of directly telling Manny to wear a plain pastel shirt and shoes, Evan talks about the importance of wearing uniform shirts in a football game. He intends to be polite to Manny to make the latter feel comfortable in his new working space. However, his politeness leads to Manny's misunderstanding instead. Manny fails to observe the implication of Evan's confusing utterances. In this context, the response emerging from the flouting of the maxim of manner becomes the main point that creates the verbal humor.

Black Books Humor in Islamic Perspectives

Verbal humor utterances in the *Black Book* series *Manny Come Home* episode, constructed using the flouting or violation of Grice's cooperative maxims, were also analyzed based on Islamic perspectives on humor. Furthermore, the utterances were classified into the types of utterances that conform with Islamic perspectives on humor and those that do not conform with Islamic perspectives on humor.

Table 2. Frequency Percentage of Verbal Humor Conformity with Islamic Perspectives

Types	Frequency	Percentage
Conforming with Islamic perspectives on humor	21	60%
Not conforming with Islamic perspectives on humor	14	40%
Total	35	100%

The data presented in the chart show that 60% of verbal humor utterances (21

utterances) occurring in the series conform with humor in Islamic perspectives. On the other hand, verbal humor utterances which do not conform with humor in Islamic perspectives only occur in 40% of the verbal humor utterances (14 utterances). Therefore, it indicates that most verbal humor utterances in the series are appropriate to Islamic perspectives on humor.

21 utterances are considered to conform with Islamic perspectives on humor. Those utterances do not contain the five prohibited humor utterance types. Given that the percentage of utterances conforming to Islamic perspectives is higher than that of the non-conforming ones, it can be considered that verbal humor utterances in *Black Books* series tend to be appropriate to Islamic perspectives. An example of an utterance that conforms with Islamic values on humor in the series is as follows.

[9]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/7:27 – 7:49)

Evan: We're your friends now, Manny.

Manny: Yes, I know, thank you, Evan.

Evan: *Okay, now one of our valued younger customers has blocked up the toilet with monster munch. Now I need that toilet back in play, lets approach that as a team, shall we? How can WE make that happen?*

Manny: OK, er, we could er phone for er a plum...

((Evan hands Manny a bucket and rubber gloves))

Evan: Go, team!

In this dialogue, Evan intends to ask Manny to clean the toilet. However, Evan tends to sugarcoat his utterances, including in dialogue [9] which makes him violate the maxim of manner numerous times to gain Manny and his employees' trust. Despite having a specific intention, the italicized utterance in dialogue [9] is considered to conform to the Islamic perspective on humor. The utterance does not contain ridicule/mockery, defamation, offensive context, or offensive name-calling. Furthermore, the intention of the utterance is just to command the interlocutor without being impolite. Therefore, there is no sign of the utterance of other prohibited acts in Islam, such as lying or abusing the other person. In

defense of manner maxim violation, being ambiguous and circumlocutory does not indicate lying because it still conveys the truth using another manner of delivering the utterance.

Furthermore, verbal humor utterances which do not conform with Islamic perspectives consist of: (1) utterances that ridicule others, (2) utterances that defame others, (3) utterances that offend others, (4) utterances that contain offensive name-calling, and (5) utterances that do not conform with other Islamic values such as containing lies and abusive or unpleasant treatments towards others. Therefore, verbal humor utterances with the flouting and violation of quality maxim dominate the list of non-conforming humor based on the Islamic perspectives. The more detailed results of verbal humor, which do not conform with Islamic perspectives, are presented as follows.

Utterances that Ridicule Others

One of the types of jocular utterances prohibited in Islamic teaching is the utterance that ridicules others (Marzolph, 2011). This study found that only two verbal humor utterances contain expressions that ridicule other people. The example of an utterance that ridicules others is presented as follows.

[10]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/2:24 – 3:07)

Fran: So he's gone?

Bernard: Oh no, he still sleeps here, burrowed in like the little tick he is. But he leaves every day, every day is another betrayal.

Fran: What, what, what, what do you mean?

Bernard: Come on ((Bernard shows Fran his spy hole into Goliath Books where Manny is working)). *There! There he is, half Iago, half Fu Man Chu, all bastard.*

The dialogue occurs when Bernard and Fran talk about Bernard and Manny's conflict, which causes Manny to leave Black Books but still stay in Bernard's place. In the underlined utterance, Bernard shows Fran where Manny is through the hole in the wall separating Black Books and Goliath Books while describing Manny as "half Iago, half Fu Man Chu." It refers to Manny's physical appearance, characterized

by long hair and beard, that makes him look like the fictional characters Iago and Fu Man Chu. Bernard also calls Manny "all bastard" due to his hatred towards Manny after the latter moves to work in Goliath Books. The utterance "half Iago, half Fu Man Chu, all bastard" ridicules Manny's appearance and personality, which may offend him. Therefore, this utterance does not conform with Islamic perspectives.

Utterances that Defame Others

Islam also teaches that humor must not contain utterances defaming other people (Marzolph, 2011). This kind of utterance only occurs once throughout the episode of the series. It is constructed in the following utterance.

[11]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/13:35 – 14:02)

Bernard: *Manny, I'm sorry... I'm sorry I ever let you in here to rob me of my best years before leaving me a burnt-out husk.*

Fran: Well, that, that gives us somewhere to work from, don't you think, Manny? Manny, I think you would like to tell Bernard just how much you'd like to come back and make it all nice again.

Bernard's utterance in dialogue [11] indicates that he blames Manny for his deterioration in life. Manny has always assisted Bernard in everything that actually improves Bernard's life. Manny always takes care of Bernard and his place. Bernard's derogatory remark about Manny reflects that he never appreciates Manny's existence. Therefore, this verbal humor utterance also deviates from Islamic perspectives on humor.

Utterances that Offend Others

Islamic perspectives on humor encourage people, mainly Muslims, not to deliver humorous utterances offensive to others (Marzolph, 2011). For example, in the *Black Books* series *Manny Come Home* episode, there is only one verbal humor utterance that generally offends others. It is shown in the following dialogue.

[12]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/9:03 – 9:17)

Manny: Bernard, no, look at yourself, who's gonna look after you? You can't survive on the mushrooms in your hair.

Bernard: I'm fine ((picks a mushroom from his hair and eats it)). *Go on, get out, go to him, go to your fancy man, I don't need you anymore.*

The italic utterance in dialogue [12] presents Bernard's exaggeration about Manny and his new manager, Evan. He delivers the utterance as if Manny cheats on him with Evan. Despite the comical aspect of this utterance, it contains offensive remarks toward Manny. Similar to the previous dialogue, the utterance in this dialogue also shows that Bernard does not appreciate Manny, particularly when he says he does not need Manny anymore. Contextually, the utterance is created to mark Bernard's over-dramatic inclination. However, it still does not conform with Islamic perspectives since it offends Manny as a person and disrespects his positive behavior.

Utterances that Contain Offensive Name-calling

Islam also prohibits explicitly using utterances containing offensive name-calling for humor (Marzolph, 2011). In the *Manny Come Home* episode, the researcher also discovered only one verbal humor utterance consisting of offensive name-calling presented in this dialogue.

[13]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/23:13 – 23:41)

Manny: Bernard, he wants my hair!

Bernard: How dare you. Don't you touch a hair on that boy's head, have you no respect? *He's mine, get your own human plaything, you quartz-brained little cream puff* ((aims a punch at Evan, misses, and falls on the floor, Fran and Manny run to help)).

Dialogue [13] portrays the situation when Evan confronts Manny because Manny refuses to cut his hair as a requirement of being a Goliath Books employee. At this moment, Bernard and Manny's relationship has improved since they gradually forget about their conflict. Bernard tries to defend Manny from Evan, who attempts to cut Manny's hair. Although the situation

highlights a positive development of Bernard and Manny's friendship, the verbal humor utterance delivered by Bernard contains name-calling towards Evan, "you quartz-brained little cream puff," which has a negative connotation referring to the mockery of Evan's physical appearance. Thus, the utterance is considered offensive and shows non-conformity toward Islamic perspectives on humor.

Utterances that Do Not Conform with Other Islamic Values

Other than the types mentioned above of verbal humor utterances prohibited in Islamic teaching, some other utterances do not contain the previously mentioned types. However, they still do not conform to Islamic values, such as utterances containing lies and abusive treatment. This study revealed nine verbal humor utterances consisting of evil deeds that are forbidden in Islam. One of the examples of such utterances is presented below.

[14]

(S03E01/Manny Come Home/24:18 – 24:53)

Bernard: Manny, I'm so sorry you had to go through that abuse. We're a little hungry now, so fetch up some wine, would you.

Fran: Oh, yes, Manny, go on get something nice, we're really famished.

Manny: Okay, what sort of thing would you like

Bernard : *((Pushes Manny into the back room and closes the curtain on him)) Don't ask questions, just do it! And clean this place up it's a disgrace. And boil my eye bath, and polish the stair rods, de-louse the duvets, and tumble dry our doilies, and Hoover the roof and whistle down the chimneys.*

In dialogue [14], Bernard and Manny finally fix their problem and return to their everyday life with Fran in *Black Books*. Bernard's first dialogue shows that he seems caring to Manny and that he feels sorry after seeing how Evan treated Manny manipulatively by forcing him to cut his hair. However, the following utterances highlight the irony of Bernard's first utterance. Bernard cannot accept when Manny is abused. Still, at the same time, he becomes one of the people who abuses and exploits Manny by asking Manny to do anything he wants without being appreciated and

respected. Therefore, the contradictory attitudes of Bernard shown in his utterances can be considered untruthful. Besides, Bernard is abusive and manipulative and treats Manny in many unpleasant ways. So then, untruthfulness and abusiveness become aspects of constructing verbal humor. Thus, dialogue [14] does not conform to Islamic humor perspectives.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that verbal humor utterances in *Black Books* series are constructed from the flouting and violation of all four Gricean maxims, with the maxim of quality being the most often flouted and violated maxim. It is different from Aristyanti et al.'s (2020) findings reporting that the maxim of quality is the least flouted or violated maxim among the other four maxims in *Incredibles 2* movie. It may be because of the different movies and the series analyzed in this study. *Incredibles 2* movie is intended for children who tend to consider using family-friendly humor, while *Black Books* is for older audiences inclined to present some more sophisticated humor. Children tend to prefer affiliative humor (Dowling, 2014), whose intention is to create a sense of happiness. *Black Books* is not targeted at children.

Furthermore, the frequent flouting and violation of quality maxim found in the analysis are also caused by the frequent use of irony, mockery, and sarcasm in the series. The three types of humor rely on the flouting of the maxim of quality. Their utterances reflect the opposite of the situational or contextual truth. Hence, the findings of the current research, which are inconsistent with the results of Aristyanti et al.'s (2020) study, may enrich the existing information that maxim violation to create humor might be different depending on the audience or the interlocutor.

Regarding the Islamic perspectives, the result indicates that the verbal humor in the series tends to conform to the rules of humor in Islamic teaching. Ironically, the non-conforming utterances are mainly constructed using the flouting or violation of the maxim of quality, which is the most frequent verbal humor in the series. The flouting or violation of the maxim of quality is considered an improper technique of humor construction in Islamic perspectives. It is because the quality maxim

flouting or violation points to the occurrence of untruthful statements (Yule, 1996). However, other maxim floutings and violations appear numerous times and are as effective as the quality maxim flouting and violation to construct humor.

Other than the maxim of quality, the deviations of other Gricean maxims incline us to conform to Islamic perspectives on humor, particularly the deviation of the maxim of manner because it also denotes Prophet Muhammad's style of humor. Marzolph (2011) explains that Prophet Muhammad's humor usually consists of anecdotes with double meanings. It is precisely the description of the deviation of the maxim of manner related to ambiguous utterances. Therefore, although the flouting and violation of maxim of quality as the most frequent maxim flouting/violation apparent in the series, and most of them do not conform with Islamic perspectives, the series, in general, is still considered to conform with Islamic perspectives on humor due to the utilization of other maxim flouting and violations that outnumber the deviation of the quality maxim. Additionally, these results show that despite the differences between Islamic and British cultures, humor in the British series can still conform to Islamic values, debunking the prejudice of Islam being too strict and having no sense of humor. Hence, this is the contribution of the current study to the existing discussion on Islam-Western cultures.

Although the deviation of the maxim of quality becomes the most frequent type occurring throughout the episode, it does not mean that creators should only rely on flouting or violating the maxim of quality to create humor. Since Islam forbids the use of untruthful utterances in humor implemented by the deviation of the maxim of quality, other techniques can still be employed to create humor, that is, by using other types of maxims. Thus, the technique of maxim flouting and

violation in constructing verbal humor is still deemed effective from the linguistics and religious perspectives. A similar suggestion was also offered by Aristyanti et al. (2020), Al-Zubeiry (2020), Inya and Inya (2018), and Qiu (2019). They also proposed that playing with Gricean cooperative maxims is an appropriate strategy for creating verbal humor.

CONCLUSION

This study's results highlight that 35 verbal humor utterances are constructed by flouting or violating the four Gricean maxims. The most frequent maxim flouting or violation is that of the maxim of quality, with a percentage of 54.3%. The least frequent maxim is the maxim of relevance, with a percentage of 11.4%. The series tends to use sarcasm and irony to create humorous utterances. The most frequent maxim flouted or violated in this series is a maxim of quality that does not conform with Islamic values due to its tendency to create untruthful statements. Nevertheless, humor in this series is still appropriate to Islamic perspectives on humor, given that there are 60% of utterances conform with the Islamic perspectives.

The results of this study are expected to enhance people's ability to comprehend and create verbal humor since humor is an essential aspect of human life. This study also spreads cultural diversity awareness and provides insights that different cultures can still be assimilated and developed side by side without discrediting certain cultures or going beyond the border of another culture's values. Furthermore, viewed from the academic perspective, this study is still limited to exploring verbal humor construction using cooperative principle theory and Islamic perspectives on humor. Thus, it is necessary to conduct further studies about other types of humor using other cultural or religious perspectives on humor.

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