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# A Pragmatic Analysis of the Comedy Series 'The Big Bang Theory'

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## **Abstract**

*Pragmatics, a branch of linguistics focusing on meaning in context, serves as the basis for analyzing the dialogues within the comedy series 'The Big Bang Theory.' This investigation aims to ascertain whether the conversations among the characters deviate from the co-operative principle of communication, thus leading to a pragmatic analysis of the series. To achieve this, the study applies Grice's theory of conversational implicature to the gathered data. The results demonstrate that the dialogues transgress three out of the four conversational maxims: quantity, relation, and manner. Notably, Sheldon's deliberate infringement of these maxims serves as a comedic tool, generating humor for the audience. Moreover, the study identifies that some actors' pragmatic shortcomings also contribute to the maxims' breaches. In summary, possessing pragmatic awareness is an essential skill for effective communication in diverse social settings, minimizing ambiguity. Furthermore, discerning humor involves the cognitive capacity to recognize, express, or appreciate amusing or unconventional aspects. This exploration highlights the significant role of pragmatics in both communication and comedic expression, underscoring its relevance in various contexts.*

**Keywords:** Pragmatics, context, conversational implicature, humor.

## **1. Introduction**

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that deals with how language is used in context and how people use language to communicate effectively beyond just the literal meanings of words. It focuses on the study of language in action, considering aspects such as speaker intentions, implied meanings, conversational implicatures, and the social and cultural factors that influence communication. In essence, pragmatics explores how people use language to convey meaning, interpret meaning, and navigate the complexities of communication in real-world situations. In many instances, during conversations, the information one intends to convey is not always explicitly expressed through the literal interpretation of one's words. A listener can interpret the explicit meaning through the literal words in the utterance. On the other hand, to determine the implicit meaning, a listener has to look beyond the literal meaning of such an utterance and on the already existing context. The information delivered by a speaker may be done explicitly or implicitly. Thus, in linguistics, the study of those contextual meanings is called pragmatics. To know what people mean, one has to interpret what they say. But interpretation is a tricky affair; misunderstandings are always possible, and sometimes, seem to be the rule rather than the exception (Mey, 2001). As Leech (1983) remarks, "interpreting an utterance is ultimately a matter of guesswork, or to use a more dignified term, hypothesis formation".

In other to do this, one has to be competent in pragmatic knowledge. Lacking competence would result in consistent communication gaps, leading to potential misunderstandings or the emergence of ambiguity. Therefore, this study investigates specific conversation groups within the sitcom "The Big Bang Theory" using a

pragmatic approach. The goal is to identify potential instances of implicatures or deviations from conversation norms and analyze how these contribute to humor and the significance of pragmatic understanding. The motivation behind this research arises from the absence, to the best of my knowledge, of any previous study that employs the same dataset for this specific investigation.

The research attempts, in general terms, the analysis of the selected conversations within Grice's theory of conversational analysis. Thus, the research is meant to; a) find out if there is a presence of conversational implicatures, b) find out if there were violations/flouting of either/all of the four maxims of conversation, c) find out if the presence of implicatures and the violations of the maxims are amongst others, some of the styles adopted by the writer to create humor in the sitcom and d) determine the importance of pragmatic competence in a social setting.

The Big Bang Theory is a sitcom that is made up of twelve (12) seasons and so many episodes. For this study, the first season alone, comprising seventeen (17) episodes, will be used as the primary source of data for the conversation analysis. The overview of the rest of the paper is, hence, divided into four (4) sections. Section two reviews the literature associated with the study, the empirical studies and theoretical framework, section three gives an overview of the methodology adopted in the study, section four presents and analyzes the data collected for the study while section five summarizes and concludes the paper.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Theoretical studies**

#### **2.1.1 Pragmatics**

According to Wijana (1996), pragmatics constitutes a linguistic branch concerned with investigating the external structure of language, specifically how language elements are employed in communication. In

essence, pragmatics delves into context-related meanings, focusing on the intent of the speaker. Leech (1983) viewed pragmatics as one of linguistic fields that has semantic link. This connection is called semanticism, which sees semantics as part of pragmatics and sees semantics and pragmatics as two complementary fields.

A truly pragmatic consideration has to deal with the users in their social context; it cannot limit itself to the grammatically encoded aspects of contexts, as the ‘grammaticalization requirements’ seems to imply (Mey, 2001). Communication in society happens mainly by means of language. However, the users of language as social beings communicate and use language on society’s premises; society controls their access to the linguistic and communicative means. Pragmatics, as an exploration of how humans employ language in communication, is rooted in investigating these foundations and assessing how they influence and shape language utilization. Therefore, pragmatics examines how language is utilized in human interaction, influenced by the societal context in which it occurs (Mey, 2001).

Individuals who adopt a pragmatic stance or exhibit pragmatic behavior typically lean toward a practical, straightforward, and realistic approach when dealing with immediate issues and managing daily matters, rather than adopting a theoretical, speculative, or idealistic approach. In simpler terms, they embrace a hands-on, context-driven approach that emphasizes action and application, as opposed to an abstract, context-independent, and systemic viewpoint (Bublitz & Norrick, 2011).

Unlike syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics and other linguistic disciplines, pragmatics is defined by its point of view more than by its objects of investigation. Pragmatics is fundamentally concerned with communicative action in any kind of context. In the pragmatic perspective, language use and language users in interaction are primary, as opposed to language as a system of signs or a set of rules. The pragmatic perspective

scrutinizes neither just individual words nor sentences nor even isolated texts, but rather whole speech events or language games in real social contexts, considering both the present state of affairs and its connectedness with prior and succeeding actions (Bublitz & Norrick, 2011).

Pragmatics primarily focuses on communicative actions and their appropriateness within a given context. It delves into the nature of actions, what qualifies as an action, its components, the prerequisites for an action to be appropriate, and the connection between action and context. These inquiries and the subject of study encompass the interplay between action and context, the interaction between communicative actions, the connection between communicative actions and participants in a conversation, and the relationship between participants and their verbal expressions within a context. (Fetzer in Bublitz & Norrick, 2011).

Pragmatics is frequently conceptualized as the science of language use, the study of context-dependent meaning and the study of speaker-intended meaning, presupposing the existence of language, language user and context on the one hand, and context-independent meaning on the other (Fetzer in Bublitz & Norrick, 2011).

Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as a study of the meaning of utterances using context-bound meanings. Whereas treating language pragmatically is treating language by considering its context, that is, its use in communication events. One of the most important concepts in pragmatics and the one that emphasizes pragmatics as a branch of language is the concept of conversational implicature.

In conclusion, the study of pragmatics offers us a valuable lens through which to understand how language functions in communication, particularly in social contexts. Pragmatics, as defined by Wijana, Leech, and others, goes beyond the structural aspects of language and investigates the nuanced ways in which language elements are used to convey

meaning. This involves considering the intent of the speaker, the social context, and the practical implications of language use. Pragmatic behavior, as discussed by Bublitz, Norrick, and Mey, underscores the preference for practicality and realism over abstract theoretical approaches in addressing everyday situations. The central focus of pragmatics revolves around communicative actions and their appropriateness within a specific context. This entails exploring the nature of actions, the conditions for their appropriateness, and the intricate relationship between actions, context, and participants. The study of pragmatics, as highlighted by Yule and Fetzer, extends beyond language as a static system and delves into language as a dynamic tool for interaction. The concept of conversational implicature further emphasizes how context-bound meanings and speaker intentions shape the way we interpret language in conversations.

Applying the principles of pragmatics to the analysis of the comedy series "The Big Bang Theory" allows us to uncover the subtleties of language use that contribute to humor and meaning creation. By examining how characters in the series navigate conversational implicatures, context, and speaker intentions, we gain insight into how pragmatic elements shape both the comedic effect and the overall communication dynamics. This analysis not only enriches our understanding of the show but also demonstrates the real-world applicability of pragmatic theories in understanding language in action.

### **2.1.2 Humor**

Humor is often viewed as the social achievements for the process of a social interaction. Humor in the social interaction usually emerges in casual talk even though it is puzzling and complex. Basically, humor is

something that triggers someone to laugh or smile (Ross, 1998:1). Another definition of humor is delivered by fine (in Robinson and Smith-Lovin, 2001:124) who says that a humorous talk is a term that intends to result in amusement. Thus, he suggests that it is better to examine the production of humor than its outcome by excluding unintended humor and including failed humor. Consequently, many researches prefer studying humorous interactions in context to discovering non-contextual humor. They also consider humor as remarks that aim to elicit and have amusement effects. A main condition to create an amusement effect from humor is an incongruity theory, a disruption of expectation produces a humorous situation. Afterwards, Hassan (2013:552) interprets the definition of the incongruity and the nature of humor. Therefore, an incongruity is the element of surprise that encourages the entertaining effect.

Nevertheless, the effects of humor do not always result in amusement to the hearer due to its ambiguity. An intended humor frequently evokes an ambiguity for the hearer because it contains the duality of meanings. Eggins and Slade (1997:156-157) claim that humor is considered as having dual meanings which direct the speaker to tell the unspoken message in an unserious manner which actually is a serious topic. Subsequently, the speaker will automatically find multiform of humor types that are suitable with the current context and circumstance. Besides, in consequence of its ambiguity, humor is often used by the speaker to achieve some purposes in the society. Consequently, humor is widely believed to have several functions. The functions are received by the hearer, feasibly, in positive or negative ways. According to Ross (1998:2), there is a possibility that humor has a target such as a person, a belief or an institution where actually the underlying goal is extremely serious. That is a proof that humor influences many parties which make it a necessary element in the society.

In conclusion, humor plays a significant role in social interactions, often serving as a source of amusement and engagement. It emerges naturally in casual conversations, adding complexity and entertainment to communication. Humor triggers laughter and smiles, as defined by Ross and Fine, making it a valuable aspect of human interaction. Researchers emphasize the importance of studying humor within its context, focusing on its production and its impact on creating an amusing effect. Incongruity theory, as highlighted by Hassan, explains how unexpected twists or disruptions of expectation contribute to the creation of humor. However, the effects of humor can be ambiguous, leading to multiple interpretations and sometimes failing to amuse due to its dual meanings. As noted by Eggins and Slade, humor often involves delivering serious messages in an unserious manner, contributing to its diverse forms. The ambiguity of humor gives speakers the flexibility to tailor their use of humor to suit different contexts and situations. Importantly, humor serves various functions, impacting both positive and negative ways, as stated by Ross. It can target individuals, beliefs, or institutions, sometimes concealing serious intentions behind its lighthearted façade.

Relating this to the topic under discussion, it becomes evident how the intricacies of humor, its context-dependent nature, and its communicative impact align with the goals of pragmatics. Analyzing the humor in the series from a pragmatic perspective allows us to uncover the deliberate use of incongruity, dual meanings, and context to create amusing effects, showcasing how humor is an integral part of effective communication within the show's social interactions.

### **2.1.3 Context**



Context is more than just reference - it is about understanding what things are for, what gives our utterances their true pragmatic meaning and allows them to be counted as true pragmatic acts (Mey, 2001). Pragmatics relies on context for the interpretation of individual utterances. Since the interpretation of a particular function of a speech act expression relies heavily on the context in which it is used, the description of such contexts becomes a vital part of its functional profile (Adolphs, 2008:31). Context refers to an immediate linguistic environment (rarely detached or isolated) in which a particular word occurs (Dash, 2008). Since it is not always explicit, it may be hidden within the neighboring members of a word used in a piece of text. In Nouraldeen (2015), meaning and context are interdependent, that is, meaning cannot be communicated without context, and context cannot be established without meaning. The meaning of an utterance can be inferred by context. It plays an important role in determining meaning in communication.

The role of context in understanding language and communication is highly relevant. Just as context is essential for interpreting individual utterances and deriving their true pragmatic meaning, the analysis of humor and communication in the comedy series relies on context. In the show, characters often use humor and engage in social interactions that require an understanding of the situational context to fully appreciate the intended meaning.

Pragmatics, as a field that investigates how language is used in communication, emphasizes the significance of context in the interpretation of speech acts and expressions. The context within which a particular word or phrase is used influences its functional profile, determining its intended meaning and effect. In the same way, humor in "The Big Bang Theory" gains its full comedic impact through the context

in which it is delivered. The interactions, relationships, and situations that characters find themselves in contribute to the humorous effects created by incongruity, dual meanings, and unexpected twists.

The interdependence of meaning and context, as discussed by Nouraldeen, holds true for both linguistic analysis and the analysis of humor within the show. Just as meaning cannot be fully communicated without context, the humor in the series gains depth and effectiveness through the contextual cues that inform the audience's interpretation. Therefore, understanding the pragmatics of humor in the context of "The Big Bang Theory" involves recognizing the intricate relationship between language use, context, and the creation of comedic effects.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

### **2.2.1 Grice's conversational implicature**

During his William James lectures presented at Harvard University in 1967, parts of which were later published in 1975 and 1978, H. P. Grice developed his theory of 'conversational implicature'. He postulated that individuals engaged in communication follow a principle that governs how language is employed for optimal efficiency and impact, aiming to achieve effective rational communication. Grice identified these principles as closely linked to certain general characteristics of discourse. These characteristics encompass specific expectations shared by participants in the conversation. Having knowledge about these expectations enables both the speaker and the listener to draw conclusions about each other's communicative actions – a concept that Grice perceived as purposeful and logical. This guiding principle is referred to as the Cooperative Principle.

Grice formulates these 'basic assumptions about the rational nature of conversational activity' in his cooperative principle: 'Make your

conversational contribution such as is required, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged'. This principle is constituted by 4 maxims:

1. The maxims of quality

- - Do not say what you believe to be false
- - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

2. The maxims of quantity

- - Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)
- - Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

3. The maxim of relation

- Be relevant

4. The maxims of manner

- Avoid obscurity of expression
- Avoid ambiguity
- Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- Be orderly

Following the cooperative principle and its maxims ensures that in an exchange, the right amount of information is provided and that the exchange is conducted in a truthful, relevant, perspicuous fashion.

Grice suggests that there is an accepted way of speaking which is widely accepted as standard behavior. When we produce, or hear, an utterance, we assume that it will generally be true, have the right amount of information, be relevant, and will be couched in understandable terms (Davies, 2000). If an utterance does not appear to conform to the principles, then we do not assume that the utterance is nonsense; rather, we assume that an appropriate meaning is there to be inferred. In Grice's

terms, a maxim has been flouted, and an implicature generated (Davies, 2000).

### **2.3 Empirical Studies**

Hu (2012), in *“An Analysis of Humor in the Big Bang Theory from pragmatics perspectives”*, analyzed the verbal humor in The Big Bang Theory employing the theories of maximal relevance and optimal relevance so that the Chinese audience can have a better understanding of the sitcom.

Putri (2017) utilized a pragmatic approach to analyze humor in "The Big Bang Theory: Season 6" sitcom, aiming to uncover underlying American social issues. Employing the Speech Act Theory, the study's objectives were to identify humor types, describe humor functions, and reveal social issues conveyed through humor. Utilizing a descriptive qualitative method, results showcased humor types like anecdote, fantasy insult, irony, joke, observation, quote, roleplay, self-deprecation, vulgarity, and wordplay. Three humor functions emerged: expressing superiority, relieving tension, and interpreting incongruity, while identified issues encompassed racial/ethnicity, bullying, gender, and religion. In conclusion, it addresses significant social concerns alongside lighter topics for entertainment.

Igwedibia (2017), in *“Grice’s Conversational Implicature: A Pragmatic Analysis of Selected Poems of Audre Lorde”* sought to discover the extent to which the four maxims of Grice’s cooperative principle could be applied to the reading of the selected poems of Lorde. It also sought to ascertain the degree to which Lorde’s selected poems violated or adhered to these maxims. The study found that Audre Lorde, in some of her poems, violated the maxims as well as adheres to them both in the same breath.

Several studies have delved into the pragmatic analysis of humor and communication in the context of popular media. Hu (2012) employed

maximal and optimal relevance theories to analyze verbal humor in "The Big Bang Theory," aiming to enhance the Chinese audience's comprehension of the sitcom. Putri (2017) utilized a pragmatic approach to dissect humor in "The Big Bang Theory: Season 6," aiming to expose underlying American social issues. Applying the Speech Act Theory, the study identified humor types, functions, and associated social concerns. Furthermore, Igwedibia (2017) explored the application of Grice's conversational implicature to selected poems of Audre Lorde, investigating adherence to and violations of Grice's cooperative principle. These studies collectively underscore how pragmatic frameworks contribute to unraveling deeper meanings and implications within various forms of communication, be it sitcoms or literary works.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative approach in its analysis. Qualitative research is geared towards determining the quality of a particular attribute like quality of relationships, activities, or events (Agu, 2018). The central focus of qualitative research is to provide an understanding of a social setting or activity as viewed from the perspective of the research participants (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). This was chosen because the researcher is interested in describing and analyzing the various selected conversations among the actors in the comedy series. The qualitative approach describes phenomena in words instead of numbers whereas the quantitative approach describes phenomena in numbers and measures instead of words.

The sample for this study comprises conversations of the actors grouped under the four (4) conversation maxims. These select conversations were gotten from the comedy series on Netflix. These conversation groups were gotten from the first season which comprises seventeen (17) episodes. The videos were watched/listened to and the

groups of conversations were selected, transcribed and analyzed. Grice's conversational implicature and cooperative principle (the four conversational maxims) forms the basis for the analysis. The selected conversation groups vary in length and number of sentences.

#### **4. Data presentation and analysis**

In this chapter, the data is presented in a textual form. The researcher undertakes an analysis of the data gathered for the analysis of these 20 conversation groups in total to identify the implicature and violations of maxims. The data presentation was also organized according to each maxim of conversation. All the data are analyzed descriptively. The data presentation at each level is followed by an analysis.

##### **A. The violation of the maxim of quantity**

1) **Penny:** So, what do you guys do for fun around here?

**Sheldon:** Well, today we tried masturbating for money.

**Implicature:** Penny's definition of fun in this statement and according to the context was misunderstood by Sheldon who thought what she meant was to know what they did besides their work/studies as they were at a high IQ sperm bank earlier in the day to donate sperm and get paid. It is clear from Sheldon's reply that he gave away too much information than was required of him.

2) **Penny:** Wow, cool tiger.

**Howard:** Yeah, I've had him since level 10. His name is buttons. Anyways, if you have your own game character we could hang out and be going on quests.

**Penny:** Sounds interesting (with an uninterested facial expression)

**Howard:** So you'll think about it?

**Penny:** Oh, I don't think I'll be able to stop thinking about it (with a pat on the shoulder that says otherwise)

**Rajesh:** Smooth....

**Howard:** (exhales, grins and nods in affirmation)

**Impicature:** Penny commented on Howard's game without the intention of indicating interest in playing it or even hanging out with him. It was all in a bid to say something in an awkward situation. Howard on the other hand, who has been trying to get Penny's attention, was excited and asked her out on a 'game date'. Howard and Rajesh interpreted the responses Penny gave as her agreement to the date; meanwhile, she just wanted to excuse herself from their presence. All Penny expected as an initial reply from the onset was a 'thank you'.

3) **Leonard:** Hi, again.

**Penny:** Hi

**Sheldon:** Hi

**Leonard:** Hi

**Penny:** Hi

**Leonard:** Anyway, we brought home Indian food and I know that moving can be stressful and I find that when I'm undergoing stress that good food and company can have a comforting effect. Also, curry's a natural laxative and I don't have to tell you that, you know a clean colon is just one less thing to worry about.

**Sheldon:** Leonard, I'm no expert here but I believe in the context of a lunch invitation you might wanna skip the reference to bowel movements.

**Penny:** Oh, you're inviting me over to eat?

**Leonard:** Yes

**Penny:** Oh, that's so nice. I'd love to.

**Leonard:** Great.

**Implicature:** In this context, because of his social awkwardness and lack of self-expression especially when it comes to talking with women, Leonard did not know how to pass a simple lunch invite message and went ahead to give out too much unnecessary information before his friend, Sheldon, stepped in to help, and that was when Penny got the message he tried to pass.

### **B. The violation of the maxim of relation**

4) **Sheldon:** Hey, you wanna hear an interesting thing about tomatoes?

**Penny:** Uh...no...no not really. Listen, didn't you say you needed some eggs

**Sheldon:** Yes, but anyone who knows anything about the dynamics of bacterial growth knows to pick up their refrigerated foods on the way out of the supermarket

**Penny:** Oh! Okay...well maybe you should start heading out then

**Sheldon:** No! This is fun.

**Implicature:** Despite Penny's lack of interest to Sheldon's question and an effort to change the topic, he went ahead to give an unsolicited answer. Also, Sheldon was beginning to get on Penny's nerves and she literally suggested he leaves her alone in the supermarket and heads out to wait for her outside, but, in a polite manner. However, Sheldon did not get the message and thought she wanted them to leave together because she was probably done with shopping and insisted they shop for more stuff because he considered it a 'fun' activity.

5) **Penny:** (Enraged) You came to my apartment last night while I was sleeping?

**Leonard:** It was but only to clean.

**Sheldon:** Really more to organize, you're not actually dirty per say.



**Penny:** Give me back my key

**Leonard:** I'm very very sorry

**Penny:** Do you understand how creepy this is?

**Leonard:**Uhhh...yes we discussed it at length last night

**Penny:** In my apartment while I was sleeping

**Leonard:**.....and snoring. And that's probably just a sign of infection. But it could be sleep apnea; you might wanna see an otolaryngologist

**Penny:** (silence)

**Sheldon:** The throat doctor

**Penny:** And what kind of doctor removes shoes from asses?

**Sheldon:**....depending on the depth...that's either a proctologist or a general surgeon.

**Penny:** (stares at Sheldon with irritation and anger)

**Leonard:** (holds up a paper written 'sarcasm')

**Implicature:** Penny wanted an apology to the breach in her privacy and break of trust when she asked the first question, however, Sheldon and Leonard went ahead to explain why they went into her apartment. Also, Sheldon thought Penny did not understand him when he asked her to see an otolaryngologist and also went further to answer her question of the kind of doctor that removes shoes from asses which was clearly a sarcastic comment.

6) **Rajesh:** Somebody give me a computer with a webcam

**Penny:** Okay. Sweetie I think that's the grasshopper talking.

**Implicature:** Rajesh, who has never spoken to Penny, in his drunken state thought that Penny mentioned another name in place of his but in the actual sense, she was referring to the alcohol he was consuming.

7) **Sheldon:** (knocks on the door) Penny, Penny, Penny

**Penny:** (opens door and sighs)

**Sheldon:** Good morning

**Penny:** Do you have any idea what time it is?

**Sheldon:** Of course, I do. My watch is linked to the atomic clock in Colorado. It's accurate to one-tenth of a second.

**Implicature:** In this case, Sheldon did not realize he was asked a rhetorical question because of how early in the morning he knocked on Penny's door.

8) **Penny:** Okay, let's see, what else? I guess that's about it. That's the story of Penny.

**Leonard:** Well, it sounds wonderful.

**Penny:** It was, until I fell in love with a jerk. (starts crying)

**Sheldon:** (whispers) What is happening?

**Leonard:** (mouths) I don't know.

**Penny:** Oh God, you know, four years I lived with him. Four years. That's like as long as high school.

**Sheldon:** It took you four years to get through high school?

**Implicature:** Because Sheldon is a Brainiac, blunt and is socially awkward, especially around beautiful women, his comment was irrelevant at the time because Penny needed some form of comfort instead of some kind of judgement on how long it took her to finish high school, which was, in fact, not the focus of the conversation.

9) **Penny:** I just.... I can't believe I trusted him.

**Leonard:** (to Sheldon in a low tone) Should I say something? I feel like I should say something.

**Sheldon:** You? No, you'll make it worse.

**Penny:** You wanna know the most pathetic part? Even though I hate his lying, cheating guts, I still love him. Is that crazy?

**Sheldon:** Yes.

**Leonard:** No, it's not crazy. It's a Paradox. Paradoxes are part of nature. I mean, think about light. If you look at Huygens, light is a wave, as confirmed by the double-slit experiments. But then, along comes Albert Einstein and discovers that light behaves like particles too. (silence...) Well, I didn't make it worse.

**Implicature:** Because Leonard is less blunt with his words and tries so hard to create a good impression for his beautiful neighbor Penny, he didn't want her to feel worse about herself than she already felt with her questions and feelings towards her ex. But because he is also socially awkward, instead of using the right words, he ended up confusing Penny with his explanation, thereby, making a lengthy irrelevant comment.

### **C. The violation of the maxim of manner**

10) **Penny:** What's Sheldon supposed to be?

**Leonard:** Oh, he's the Doppler Effect.

**Sheldon:** Yes. It's the apparent change in the frequency of a wave caused by relative motion between the source of the wave and the absolver.

**Penny:** Ohh...sure. I see it now...the Doppler effect!

**Implicature:** Here, Sheldon gave a completely unnecessary explanation to Penny which she did not understand at all because she is not a physicist. In order words, he gave an ambiguous explanation of his costume outfit for Penny's Halloween party which she pretended to understand to prevent him from any further explanations.

## **5. Summary and conclusion**

From the analysis, one can see that there were conversational implicatures and three (3) out of the four (4) maxims of cooperative principles were violated with the maxim of relation being the most violated. It can also be seen that these violations formed the basis for the

creation of humor in the sitcom (situation comedy). Also, Sheldon, who is a brilliant physicist, is the most socially challenged of all his other colleagues. That is, he is not competent in pragmatics, and this led to a lot of conversational violations with his replies despite having a Masters' degree and two PhDs. Other violations were also borne out of the social awkwardness of the physicists. This goes to show how important it is to gain pragmatic competence, especially in social situations. Also, it is evident that the flouting of these maxims was a part of the writers' style adopted to create humor in this sitcom.

The use of pragmatic structures in conversations that contain humor is widespread in everyday life which can be in the form of satire, ridicule or humorous flattery. It is evident that one's knowledge of pragmatics is not dependent on one's academic achievement but on one's ability to decode a message being passed across in a particular context. In conclusion, the knowledge of pragmatics is a very important skill that everyone needs to possess in every social setting. Most importantly, understanding humor is the ability to discover, express or appreciate something funny or something really unusual. This research hopes to contribute to the existing knowledge of the importance of pragmatics especially when related to comedy and to serve as a reference point for further similar studies.

The analysis of "The Big Bang Theory" from a pragmatic perspective sheds light on the presence of conversational implicatures and the violation of three out of the four cooperative principles' maxims, with the maxim of relation being the most frequently violated. These violations play a significant role in creating humor within the sitcom. Interestingly, the character Sheldon, despite his intellectual prowess as a physicist, struggles with social interactions due to his lack of pragmatic competence. This results in numerous conversational violations in his responses,

highlighting the importance of pragmatic skills in social situations. Additionally, the study underscores that pragmatic competence is not solely tied to academic achievements but rather to the ability to comprehend messages within specific contexts.

Conversations incorporating humor, whether through satire, ridicule, or humorous flattery, often utilize pragmatic structures. The research underscores the universal significance of pragmatic knowledge, emphasizing its relevance in diverse social settings. Furthermore, the study recognizes that comprehending humor involves the capacity to perceive or express something amusing or unconventional. Ultimately, this investigation contributes to the broader understanding of pragmatics' significance, particularly within the realm of comedy. It also serves as a valuable reference for future research endeavors exploring similar themes.

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