

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

Communication plays a crucial role in human interaction, primarily expressed through language. The use of language enables individuals to effectively articulate their ideas, feelings, and insights (Anjorin-Ojewole & Idowu, 2024). In any communication, there are always at least two participants involved: the speaker and the listener, who continuously exchange roles throughout the conversation. Consequently, speakers have the option to choose from a variety of responses based on the context and their intent. While people tend to use direct language to express their thoughts, indirect or subtle communication is also prevalent. In such cases, speakers may imply more than what is explicitly stated, aiming to convey deeper or additional information. This can lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations, as individuals may come from different cultural backgrounds or possess varying communication styles that influence their understanding.

Misunderstandings in communication can be common and frequently caused by ambiguous language, cultural differences, or the listener's expectations. Although these misconceptions usually happen accidentally, there are instances in which they are purposefully caused. For example, speakers may intentionally break conversational rules in criminal discourse circumstances to blur meaning, mislead, or manipulate interpretation. Thus, communication does not always aim to produce clarity but can also be used to deceive others. As a result, understanding the intention of speakers becomes crucial when examining conversations, particularly when language is being used to alter perception, transfer blame, or defend oneself.

Considering the inherent challenges of communication that often occur, it is essential to implement guiding principles that encourage clarity and mutual understanding. Thus, to facilitate effective communication, in his 1975 work "Logic and Conversation," philosopher Herbert Paul Grice established the cooperative principle to guarantee that our conversations proceed as intended. Grice's Maxims theory helps us understand how effective communication happens by following four basic principles: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The speaker needs to convey sufficient, truthful, relevant, and clear information, while the listener must also actively listen and understand the message being conveyed. If any of these principles are not met, Grice characterizes the uncooperative behavior as a violation of a maxim, which often leads to misunderstandings and multi-layered interpretations. These maxims guide speakers to provide relevant information, avoid ambiguity, and contribute to the conversation in a manner that is necessary given the context. However, in everyday communication, individuals sometimes fail to cooperate, either due to their inability to communicate clearly or because they intentionally choose to deceive.

While such violations may occur unintentionally in daily interactions, they take on a different role in high-stakes situations. In criminal contexts, for instance, maxim violations are often deliberate and strategic. In line with the manipulative purpose of lying, criminal offenders deliberately violate conversational maxims to fabricate false narratives, confuse their interlocutors, or deflect from the truth. Criminal offenders consciously employ these strategies, particularly when they feel threatened or exposed. As Bacin (2022) argues, lying should not be narrowly understood as the act of deceiving others but more fundamentally as the intentional

misrepresentation of the speaker's own beliefs or mental state. In other words, deception begins not with misleading others, but with a deliberate choice to say what one knows to be false.

Therefore, in this research, Interpersonal Deception Theory is examined through conversations in the Netflix series *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story*. Lyle and Erik Menendez are regularly shown in situations where deception turns into a key strategy for managing their interpersonal interactions, especially in the context of therapy sessions and legal proceedings. These conversational strategies are neither random nor casual but rather reflect a deliberate effort to mislead. Therefore, in examining maxim violations, it is essential to acknowledge the speaker's intentionality. Although the series depicts them as people who are prone to lying, it also shows moments in which they face the truth and expose their true motivations when under pressure or when directly confronted. However, both brothers frequently turn to lying when opportunities occur, using it as a tool to control views and protect themselves from negative outcomes.

From this perspective, forensic linguistics offers a useful framework for investigating the ways in which language is used in criminal and legal contexts. In forensic linguistics, pragmatic analysis plays an important role in examining how the use of language in a particular context can reveal hidden meanings that are not always directly stated (Amalia et al., 2024). As mentioned by Malcolm Coulthard in Ali (2020), forensic linguistics is a field of applied linguistics that studies the interaction between language and legal systems. It involves the analysis and implementation of linguistic concepts in three areas: legal documents, spoken communication in legal settings, and linguistic evidence in civil and criminal

investigations, including court proceedings. According to Olsson (2008), forensic linguistics examines the connection between language and legal matters, including law enforcement, legislations issue, disputes, or legal proceedings that may involve law violations or require legal resolutions. Crimes that involve language can be examined from a linguistic perspective, as language often serves as a tool in criminal activities. These crimes may include insults, threats, deception, or the use of language in a manipulative way. Even cases like robbery, abduction, and murder, when preceded by verbal communication, can be considered language crimes (Kusumasari, 2024).

Recognizing that this phenomenon is common in everyday conversation, it is useful to explore it in realistic dialogues, which frequently appear in audiovisual media. TV series serve as rich resources for pragmatic analysis due to their focus on dialogues and interactions. They provide a wide range of examples that can be used to apply and assess different pragmatic theories (Sorlin, 2023). As noted by Bruti (2016) TV series have a greater language diversity than films. This variation increases the possibility of students encountering practical daily language, allowing them to have a greater understanding of how language functions in real life communication. This brings us to *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* (2024), a newly released Netflix anthology series that dramatizes actual events, providing an extensive amount of authentic and intense dialogues.

The selection of *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* as the main data source is based on its blend of dramatization and realism, which provides a compelling ground to examine maxim violations with a focus on deception and motives behind lying. Unlike purely fictional narratives, the series offers a more



authentic portrayal of high-stakes interactions, such as police interrogations, courtroom exchanges, and family conflicts. The show centered on two brothers who have committed a major crime, the dialogues reveal how language is used to justify, conceal, or distort facts, shaping perceptions of guilt and innocence. This complexity makes the series a valuable case for exploring how truth and deception are negotiated through language. By analyzing these interactions, the study uncovers linguistic strategies within Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) and their implications in avoiding blame and punishment.

To properly contextualize this research academically, it is essential to examine previous studies in the similar focus. Prior studies on Grice's Maxims have explored various contexts, but only a few closely align with the focus of this research on violations as deception in movies or TV series using applicable approaches and objects. For instance, Madhi & Rushd (2021) stands out as the most relevant. The researcher conducted the journal entitled "*The Use of Deception in Selected Literary Texts: A Comparative Pragmatic Study*". This research examined two plays from different periods, "*The Tragedy of Hamlet*" and "*Murder in the Cathedral*", detecting deception strategies using Grice's maxim violations and Searle's speech theory. The discovered strategies, such as fabrication, equivocation, ostensible promise, and dissociation, are grouped according to the maxims violated (Quality, Manner, Quantity, Relevance). While this research demonstrated the link between maxim violation and deception in literary works, it does not actively incorporate the Interpersonal Deception theory (IDT). Furthermore, the interactional background in the form of realistic communications, such as those found in documentaries or crime dramas, has not been thoroughly discussed.

Additionally, in a journal article titled “*Deceptive Utterances Captured in Rian Johnson's Knives Out*”, Khoiroh (2021) also carried out comparable research. This research combined Bell & Whaley (2017) and Dynel (2018) strategy classifications, including simulation, withholding, red herring, equivocation, and lying, to analyze 23 misleading utterances from five characters in the 2019 film *Knives Out*. Moreover, the research includes the dimension of lying motives, specifically lies to achieve goals and lies to protect their own from unpleasant events. This research is significant because it investigates the linguistic behavior of suspect and non-suspect characters during interrogation. However, this research does not explicitly link the deception strategies with Grice's maxim violations and do not serve as a basis for strategy classification. It also has not used IDT theory as the main analytical framework to understand the dynamics of lying in interpersonal interactions.

Based on the two journals above, it is possible to conclude that, while they have made significant contributions to the linguistic understanding of lying in literary text and film script, they have not systematically combined Grice's Cooperative Principle theory with Buller and Burgoon's Interpersonal Deception Theory. As a result, this thesis fills the research gap by applying both theories to analyze deception strategies in the crime series *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* (2024). This approach allows for a more comprehensive knowledge of the various types of cooperative communication violations, as well as how deceptive strategies are consciously used in criminal and legal communication. By analyzing how the perpetrators use language to distort truth,

avoid responsibility, or create alibis, this research offers a deeper understanding of Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) within a narrative based on real events.

## 1.2 Research Question

1. What types of Grice's maxims violations are present in the character interactions in *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez*?
2. How do the characters in *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* violate Grice's Maxims in relation to deception strategy?
3. What are the implications of these violations on the characters' psychological and legal consequences?

## 1.3 Objective of The Study

1. To identify the types of maxim violations found in the dialogues of the series.
2. To analyze how the characters in the series engage in violating each of the four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner) in relation to deception strategy.
3. To analyze the implications of these violations on the psychological and legal process across character interactions.

## 1.4 Scope of The Study

This research focuses on the Netflix series *Monsters: The Lyle and Erik Menendez Story* (2024), examining its dialogues through Grice's Maxims alongside Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT). It is limited to verbal interactions as portrayed in the narrative, excluding visual or non-verbal elements. The research identifies and classifies maxim violations, distinguishes between deliberate or non-deliberate, and connects them to specific deception strategies based on IDT.

Additionally, this research also looks at the implications of such violations for psychological impact and the legal process as depicted in the dramatized events of this true crime case. The legal consequences refer to how deceptive utterances affect investigation, interrogation, and character credibility, while the psychological aspect concerns emotional strain and interpersonal breakdowns shown in the narrative. Although supported by theoretical references, this analysis does not offer formal legal assessment or psychological diagnoses, but rather describes the affects as portrayed in the narrative.

### **1.5 Significance of The Study**

#### **1) Theoretical significance**

This research shows how Grice's Maxims and IDT can work together to reveal how deception operates in legal interactions. By analyzing a true crime series, it contributes to pragmatic and media linguistic studies, offering insights into how conversational rules are broken to hide truth and influence legal outcomes. Additionally, it advances understanding of how maxim violations create subtext and hidden meanings in dialogues, bridging the gap between pragmatics and its application in legal and psychological storytelling.

#### **2) Practical significance**

This research may be useful for students and scholars of linguistics, communication, and media studies who are interested in how language is used to deceive in legal contexts. By applying Grice's Maxims and Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) to real-case-based dialogues, this research provides a reference for analyzing verbal deception pragmatically in scripted representations of true crime.