

## INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS OF BENOIT BLANCS CHARACTER IN THE FILM KNIVES OUT

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### ABSTRACT

*Film is one of the art that everyone can enjoy, especially teenagers and adults. The growth of the film industry is so far so good. Film industries begin from a silent films which only showed the expression of the actors to this modern film that shows technology. The conversation in the film is important because we can understand what message is being conveyed, therefore people always choose a film that contains a lot of interaction. A film that contains a lot of communication is a detective film, a film that has an unsolved puzzle inside it. Knives Out is an American crime mystery-drama, film directed by Rian Johnson who also direct Star Wars films. This film was released on Netflix platform in 2019. Rian Johnson makes this film with mystery-thriller, which focuses on the character Benoit Blanc's communication with the other character to solve the murder mystery that happens to Harlan's family. The purpose of this research is to see how interpersonal dynamic communication happened in the film Knives Out. This research uses qualitative descriptive research. By using the five laws of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication Suranto (2011 : 83). The conclusion of this research is Benoit as a center character done a lot of interpersonal communication by paying attention to the five laws of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication.*

**Keywords:** Film Industry Evolution, Detective Films, Knives Out.

### INTRODUCTION

Communication is the most important thing that exists in human being life. Every living creature in this world always communicates with each other, either directly or indirectly. Communication is the process of receiving and exchanging messages between two people or more to achieve a result that is understandable. Communication could happen if there is the same meaning Between communicator (communicant dan communicator). communication can build an understanding, maintain affection, spreading knowledge but it can create disappointment as well, set out hateness etc. (Rahayu, S., Darwis , M. F. . ., Bilah, A. S. . ., & Khikmawanto. (2023).

According to Ramadhan, A. M. (2020) communication is the method of message delivery from a sender message (communicator) to receiver (communicant) that contains information, to inform, change attitude, behavior or good opinion directly verbally or indirectly using such as newspaper, magazine, paper, radio, or television. Therefore communication has many varieties. That is how human beings communicate, a message can be delivered through anywhere. As is happening nowadays communication is done online with Google Meetings. Google meeting is a platform that can connect us all online and share information through meetings that we can make so everyone will join and discuss everything together.

Interpersonal communication for example, the first thing that writer wants to discuss is interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication always happens with everyone, often used in daily life because people communicate with each other. When we have a conversation with someone we always do interpersonal communication. We also exchange our opinions with friends or discuss a hot topic "spill the tea". According to

Maulina, D., & Aslinda, C. (2022) one form that can determine the harmony between human beings is interpersonal communication. When we do direct communication we can minimize the misunderstanding because we doing it face to face. Imagine if we dont do direct communication, because it always happens in general, when a person has a problem with another, they rather not talk about what the problem is, but if the person who has a problem starts to talk and discuss about the problem with each other, everything will be solved.

Interpersonal communication also happens in movies that we watch. Films are a means of entertainment for several groups, because film always represents a real-life event, especially for communication, how we can communicate with each other or even more. We often see that the film always has a communication going around, the communication between the character or even any other creature in the film. Also not infrequently we can learn some morals from the films that we watch. According to Kurnia, Y., & Sari, S. (2023) art in the field of the film industry is increasingly significantly nowadays, because they deliver a wide variety films. For example, when can see a cultural film, comedies, and also not frequently we can find a film that has a religious genre.

Because communication that happens in the film is diverse, especially for interpersonal communication, there are also some interesting communication that going around throughout the film. Marvel's Studios Echo for example, has unique interpersonal communication. This film telling the story about a deaf superhero who communicate with sign language. The film gives the audience a new experience for watching a film. Sign language refers to nonverbal interpersonal communication, which is only using body language. But there are also films that use sign language, A Quite Place. This film is really quite same like as title, and gives more experience because the film genre is horror and thriller. But every film has its unique treatment to discuss.

But we can all agree a film that has a lot of conversation is more interesting to watch than a movie with less talk. Because communication in the movie is important, we can find the meaning, and can find the difference between one person to the other. A film that contains a lot of communication is a detective film, a film that has an unsolved puzzle inside it. To break the puzzle the detective needs to interview the suspect to get more information and finally, the case is over. A detective film that contains a lot of interpersonal communication is Knives Out. Knives Out is an American crime mystery-drama, film directed by Rian Johnson who also direct Star Wars films. This movie was released on netflix platform in 2019. Rian Johnson makes this film with mystery-thriller, which focuses on the character Benoit Blanc's communication with the other character to solve the murder mystery that happens to Harlan's family. This film is filled with lots of Hollywood superstars, Benoit Blanc's character is played by Daniel Craig who also played Agent 007 in the film 007. Daniel always stole the show, 5 films of being James Bond because of his great performance in the film. next is Ana de Armas beautiful being that lives on this earth, always known as a gorgeous performance in every film, of course she will be a great partner for Daniel. The next star is Chris Evans also known as Captain America. The most popular character in Marvel Cinematic Universe, he also played tons of films, so we can all agree that the cast in this film is superb, how not, the film got 16 million hours watched, and earned 309 million dollar. Also the highest IMDB score is 7,9 close to 8, that's why this film is recommended to watch.

The film tells the story of Benoit Blanc who is a detective hired to solve a murder mystery that happened in Harlan's family. Who hired Benoit is still mysterious for his protection and to keep it secret. Benoit is known as the greatest detective that ever lived, he can solve the difficult puzzles and oddities of the cases. The murder happened to the

leader of the family, Harlan Thrombey. To solve the puzzles Benoit needs to collect the information, so Benoit starts to do the interview section with the members of the family, asking them about how close the connection with Harlan, what happened the night when Harlan's death, when the last time family member having a conversation with Harlan. The puzzles a little more revealed because of the interview section and the proof that he got.

Because there is an interview section, a lot of communication happens in this film. same like the other detective doing his job, Benoit done his mission to revealed who is guilty for murdering Harlan Thrombey. interview is an in terpersonal communication, communication is done with the other family member, Harlan's Sons, Harlan's son-in-law, Harlan's grandchild, and Harlan's nurse. Benoit step in when his partner of a police dapartement reach a deadend, because none of the family is telling the truth. When Benoit step in communication went smoothly, because his collecting the proof slowly.

Therefore, the author is interested in discussing the film Knives Out because this film involves a lot of interpersonal communication between the characters. In this research, the discussion will be more inclined and will mostly discuss the dynamics of Benoit Blanc's interpersonal communication with other film characters, and how he solves hidden problems so that it is quickly revealed who actually killed the head of the family in the film. The film has a mystery theme which makes the author join the detective's case in uncovering who the murderer is responsible for the death of the father of the head of the family. Because the film has a lot of interviews, the writer will analyze how Benoit talks to the other characters in order to determine who did the killing.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses qualitative descriptive research. By using five laws of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication Suranto (2011:83). The five laws of effectiveness in interpersonal communication are called REACH. REACH contains (Respect, Empathy, Audible, Clarity, dan Humble). Qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Chairani, M., Wiendijarti, I., & Novianti, D. (2014).

REACH is one of the most important thing in the communication, especially in the interpersonal communication. REACH is contains a lot of aspect that refers to how to communicate with someone, and how we can understand the message that we want delivers to eachother. The first aspect is Respect. Respect is how we act to someone else to appreciate something, we can appreciate someone with a motivation word, admiration, or the way we communicate with someone. Next is Emphaty, is an attitude where we can put ourselves in a place or situation, for example, there are friends who want to share the story about life, we must be able to listen well and position ourselves to what they say. Audible is a comfort for our interlocutors, what we say must be understood well by our interlocutors. Clarity after delivering the message well then we will achieve understanding of a message that we convey. Humble is an attitude that we must have when communicating with others.

The sample of research will be taken is focused on each scene cut within the 2 hour and 10 minutes of the film. The discussion will show how Benoit Blanc communicates with the other characters in the film. writer will divide this research into several discussion, according to the five laws of the effectiveness of interpersonal communication, includes Respect, Empathy, Audible, Clarity, dan Humble. Existing pieces of material will be separated and explained in detail. Writter also use the other journal as a reference. Ofcourse the same journal that disscus about the same thing, article, and cases studies on the film.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Communication is the initial process of socialization, especially communication between individuals (interpersonal communication). More or less interpersonal communication affects the interpersonal relationship of a person or community group. Kurnia, Y., & Sari, S. (2023). When the communication already happens we can easily analyze how the situation happened. Same as the opposite is when the communication doesn't happen it will lead you to dead end, and the true meaning of the message will never be received. In Knives Out film will be a discussion of how the communication flow going according to REACH theory.

In this result the writer will discuss every aspect that contains 5 effectiveness of interpersonal communication. Benoit Blanc Character will be the main figure that will be discussed. How he communicate with other character. As for some pieces of scenes that will be discussed and present a table as a reference to how many scenes contain the 5 aspects of interpersonal communication. The research that will be shared by the author is as follows.

### 1. Respect

- a. The communication happens to one of Harlans Thrombey daughter, Linda Drysdale. In this scene linda is asking about Benoit presence thats little bit odd and not doing anything. Linda says "why are you here", this is some of the question that will come out when someone noticed when something odd happening. Benoit answer with "I'm here at the behest of a client." He admit secretly hired by someone. Also linda curious with that statement, she reply "who", benoit also reply "i cannot say". this is clearly how detective respect the client privacy, because if the identity of someone who hired detective leaked, that would be dangerous for client safety. Also for respecting Linda, Benoit finally got up a little from the sofa where he was sitting, at first he sat in a slightly asleep position. He sat and describe about, "But let me assure you this, My presence will be ornamental", and he continue with saying, "You will find me a respectful, quiet, passive observer. of the truth." he said in a calm tone that she would not disturb, he just want to be the passive observer the truth that happens to this case, he also explained using the body language of the hands that is usually used when someone is explaining something.

Image minute 00:12:21 - 00:12:46



Linda : "Why are you here?"

Benoit : "I'm here at the behest of a client."

Linda : "Who?"

Benoit : "I cannot say."

Benoit : "But let me assure you this, My presence will be ornamental."

Benoit : “You will find me a respectful, quiet, passive observer. of the truth.”

- b. In the following cut scene Benoit Blanc is getting curious about the case that he handle, because he find the case slowly exposed about who is killer of Harlan Thrombey. In this communication, Benoit wanted to listen to the direct testimony of Harlan Thombrey's mother, because Benoit began to wonder what testimony Harlan's mother would release. But Harlan's mother chose to remain silent because she still didn't want to talk about her son's death. Finally we can see how Benoit respects Wanetta Thrombey's decision by sitting together and saying "In fact, I find it quiet pleasant sitting here with you." He appreciates what Wanetta Thrombey's decision to remain silent and finally slowly open for discussion.

Image minute 01:25:10 – 01:25:20



Benoit : But I'll happily wait.

Benoit : I'm in no rush.

Benoit : In fact, I find it quiet pleasant sitting here with you.

- c. This is the last scene of Benoit's communication with Martha, here Benoit appreciates Martha because she has won this case, not in Harlan's way but in her own way which slowly reveals the mystery of Harlan Thrombey's suicide case. Even though Martha doesn't want all of Harlan's wealth and possessions. Benoit reminds Martha that she is also a good person and she will follow where her heart leads. So here Benoit shows very high respect for Martha by saying "You're a good person." And "but I have a feeling you'll follow your heart." It's very clear that this compliment is a respect for someone for what they have achieved or what they have gone through.

Image minute 02:03:24- 02:03:58



Benoit : “I want you to remember something that's very important.”

Benoit : “You won, not by playing the game Harlan's way,”

Benoit : “but yours. ”

Benoit : “You're a good person.”

Marta : “This family. I should help them. Right?”

Benoit : “Well, I have my opinion, but I have a feeling you'll follow your heart.”

Minute	Conversation	Description
13.33-13.45	Benoit : "As a self-made man myself" Benoit : "I have to express my admiration, for how you followed in your father's footsteps." Linda : "Thank you."	Benoit put some respect to Linda because Linda followed her father's footsteps to be a successful woman.
51.47-51.57	Benoit : "I want you to be by my side for it." Marta : "What??" Benoit : "My confidante, My eyes and ears." Marta : "Hey. Wait, wait, Detective. Why me?" Benoit : "I trust your kind heart."	Benoit highly respects Martha because of her kind heart, and Martha becomes Benoit's accomplice.

## 2. Emphaty

- a. The scene is the scene where the empathy of Benoit Blanc's character occurs. The situation in this scene is when Benoit tries to reveal whether it is true that Richard Drysdale had an affair with a woman. Benoit talks about this with Martha because Martha is the closest person to Harlan, but uniquely Martha has a condition when ever she talks about lies then she will immediately throw up. Sure enough when asked by Benoit about Richard's affair she immediately vomited. Here Benoit shows his empathy for Martha by apologizing, because he thinks Martha is speaking a figurative word that if she lies she will throw up immediately. The next reaction shown is Benoit trying to take a handkerchief from his jacket to give to Martha. This reaction is often encountered in real life because it is our instinct as humans who still have empathy.

Image minute 25.45 – 25.47



Benoit : Dear girl, I'm sorry.

Benoit : I assumed you were speaking figuratively.

- b. This scene shows Benoit being very angry with the Harlan family, to the point where Benoit says "You have all treated her like shit, to steal back a fortune that you lost, and she deserves." Benoit thinks this case is getting clearer who is guilty, because Benoit says the Harlan family only wants the inheritance because they have personal interests that can harm the family. With that, Martha, who had confessed to Benoit about what happened on the night of Harlan's death, found a common ground. Therefore, Benoit stopped Martha who wanted to confess to Harlan's family that she was Harlan's killer by giving an excessive dose of drugs so that Harlan committed



suicide. We can see the empathy given by Benoit earlier, he was very angry by using a very high tone and cursing all of Harlan's family. His face also looks angry, we can see that he raises his eyebrows, indicating that he is angry and sympathizes with what this family did to Martha.

Image minute 01.42.50-01.43.03



Benoit : “You have not been good to her.”

Benoit : “You have all treated her like shit, to steal back a fortune that you lost, and she deserves.”

Benoit : “You're a pack of vultures at the feast!”

- c. In the following scene Benoit finally almost reached the top, where he already knew who Harlan Thombrey's killer was. Harlan Thombrey's killer is Ransom Drysdale, he is Harlan's grandson who wants his grandfather's will to fall into his own hands. In this scene, Ransom changes the medicine bottle that will be injected into Harlan by changing the liquid in the two bottles of Harlan's medicine. But because Marta was used to the medicine that was often injected into Harlan, she did not think long, Marta immediately injected the medicine into Harlan. Marta finally realized that she was giving the right medicine to Harlan. This is where Benoit finally put respect to Marta by saying "You gave him the correct medication, because you are a good nurse.", with Benoit's expression that raised his eyebrows up and softened his voice proof that he appreciated Marta for being a good nurse for Harlan. So according to Benoit, Marta was just one of the scapegoat victims in this case so that she would be jailed and Ransom would get his inheritance as a grandson.

Image minute 01.50.47- 01.51.12



Benoit : “You gave him the correct medication, because you are a good nurse.”

Marta : “Then Harlan was...”

Benoit : “I'm sorry, Marta. But yes.”

Benoit : “Harlan was perfectly fine.”

Benoit : “His blood was normal.”

Benoit : “The cause of death was truly, solely suicide, and you are guilty of nothing but some damage to the trellis and a few amateur theatrics.”

### 3. Audible

- a. This scene shows how communication can get through anything and also can pass through any intermediary, for example a handphone. Because audible is one of the indications of the effectiveness in the communication, and audible means a message that can be understood through anything. This scene shows one of the indications that is audible, the scene is when Marta and Benoit were waiting for Fran who was hospitalized due to a high-dose drug injection. The communication is done between Lieutenant Elliot and Benoit, they discuss about Ransom's confession about who is the killer of Harlan that has been done by Marta. This communication through phone proves that message Lieutenant Elliot well received to Benoit who was in the hospital.

Image minute 01:39:00 - 01:39:11



- b. This scene is a little bit unusual, because this is a whispering scene. Communication happened to Officer Wagner when the intensity of the case almost came to fulfillment and everyone is confused about why Benoit stops Marta's confession that she killed Harlan. Benoit asked Officer Wagner to clear the house area and told him to call someone from family member that is the murderer of Harlan. This scene describes there is some secret with what Benoit wanted to convey, and Officer Wagner received the message and immediately left the room and did what Benoit asked him to do.

Image minute 01:43:51 - 01:44:03



### 4. Clarity

- a. In this scene, the writer finds a scene that refers to clarity, namely or the clarity of a message conveyed by the character in this Knives Out movie. In that scene, we can see that Benoit wants to know something that refers to a statement that Martha has some special reaction to mistrust. Because there's someone who told Benoit about



Martha's condition after spilling a lie. As a detective, Benoit wanted to find out if the message was true. In the law of clarity, it there must indeed be openness between the communicator and the communicant about the message to be conveyed. Because of that question Martha answer with yes that happens to her since she was a child, ""It's something I've had since I was a kid.". and she continue to answer "It's a physical thing that I... Just the thought of lying... Yeah, it makes me puke.". we see that martha opened up to Benoit about his condition, so Benoit got some clear information.

Image minute 00:24:38 - 00:25:01



Kau punya reaksi regurgitif terhadap dusta.

Benoit : "You have a regurgitative reaction to mistruthin'."

Marta : "Who told you that?"

Benoit : "Is it true?"

Marta : "Uh... yes."

Marta : "It's something I've had since I was a kid."

Marta : "It's a physical thing that I... Just the thought of lying... Yeah, it makes me puke."

- b. Writer find something interesting In this next scene Benoit use term words to discribe the message that he wants to expain. The scene happens when Benoit realise something not right with this case, he felt he had been lied to with all the statements that Harlan's Family spilled to him while do some interview section. Therefore, Benoit began to have a similar method with a novel entitled "Gravity's Rainbow". He said, "I anticipate the terminus of Gravity's Rainbow.", He continue to say "It's a novel.", because of he's mentioning some term word he afraid that she can't understand it, so he continue with word "its a novel". But surprisingly Martha understand about what Benoit trying to say. she knew about the book. Here we can see how the message given by Benoit can be well received by Martha.

Image minute 00:50:59 - 00:51:08



Aku mengantisipasi akhir seperti "Gravity's Rainbow"

Benoit : "I anticipate the terminus of Gravity's Rainbow."

Marta : "Gravity's Rainbow?"

Benoit : "It's a novel."

Marta : “Yeah, I know.”

- c. In this scene clarity happens towards the end of the film when Benoit tries to reveal who is guilty in this case. Marta is still confused about the situation, because earlier she wanted to confess the fact that she killed Harlan because of her carelessness. Instead of letting Marta confess he grabs her to another room and let Marta listen to Benoit’s statement. Benoit always mention about “donat hole”, this is the word that he uses to paraphrase this murder case. Benoit describes this case as a donat hole but because there’s a lot of odd, he describes it as donat inside the donat hole with its own hole. This illustrates that the murderer leaves a trail that is likened to a hole and the murderer mines his crime again by leaving a hole that becomes a mystery. This made Marta begin to understand little by little what was happening.

Image minute 01:44:17 - 01:44:45



Benoit : “But... But, I spoke in the car about the hole at the center of this donut.”

Benoit : “And what you and Harlan did that fateful night seems at first glance to fill that hole perfectly.”

Benoit : “A donut hole in a donut's hole.”

Benoit : “But we must look a little closer.”

Benoit : ” And when we do, we see the donut hole has a hole in its center.”

Benoit : ” It is not a donut hole, but a smaller donut with its own hole”

## 5. Humble

- a. In this conversation Benoit is asking one of Harlan’s family members, Joni Thrombey Harlan’s daughter in law. Benoit asks what is Joni doing when he meet Harlan’s. In that scene Benoit directly asks, “What were you seeing Harlan about?”. Benoit curious what Joni's interest was in meeting Harlan, Joni said that there something happen with her daughter collage payment, so he need to meet with Harlan’s to discuss about that, but Joni felt pressured by the question and start to panic. Since Benoit had put a bit of pressure on Joni to answer this question he understood and apologized to him for pressuring her. Benoit's reaction was not immediate, but he also saw the look on Joni's face as she began to panic at the question. This is a humble attitude that Benoit done to her, he give her a time to discribe it.

Image minute 00:19:57 - 00:20:11



Benoit : “What were you seeing Harlan about?”

Joni : “It was just a mix-up with the, uh, the payment for Meg's tuition.”

Benoit : “I'm... I'm... I'm sorry to press, but what kind of mix-up?”

- b. Once again Benoit is humble to Martha Cabrera, Benoit is calm and lets his suspect take a moment first and then starts talking about the information that he needs so he can hear it clearly. In this cut scene, Benoit wants to know something how was the testimony of Martha, Harlan's sister, because she's the one who is very close to Harlan Thrombey, and her position is at its very center in this case. So Benoit wants to know a lot of things from her confession, but at this time Benoit won't press her too much, The reason why Benoit does this is because when the first time he asks something to her, the statement that comes out from Martha's mouth is a lie, she will puke immediately. So Benoit humbly invited Martha to take her time to speak.

Image minute 00:31:52 - 00:32:09



Benoit : “We kept you waiting all afternoon, because I wanted to hear from you last.”

Benoit : “I needed an entire picture of the evening in my head, and your piece of it is at its very center.”

Benoit : “So, please take your time.”

- c. In this cut scene Benoit looks surprised because he sees Harlan's Mom sitting in her chair while looking out the window. Benoit immediately greeted her by saying, “Good morning, Mrs. Thrombey.” This is a basic reaction when someone meets another person they will greet each other. We can see here Benoit is humble by greeting her while nodding his head showing the humble attitude of a Benoit Blanc.

Image minute 00:59:11 - 00:59:13



## CONCLUSION

Based on the communication in *Knives Out*, the author concludes that the interpersonal communication that occurred in the film was successful, communication runs dynamically especially when the truth in this case finally revealed. The communication dynamic in this film starts at the first time Benoit begins to speak up. in the first minute of the movie Benoit so quiet and does not talk much, the communication begins when Linda, Harlan's daughter confronts Benoit and asks about his appearance in this case. As the movie goes on the communication in the film is increased, because Benoit is taking control of the murder case. Interpersonal communication begins to happen to every character associated with Harlan's death. Benoit conducts back-to-back communications at the beginning of the movie interviewing almost all family members in the house and anyone related to Harlan's death. In the middle to the last minute of the movie, Benoit communicates more with Marta, the communication dynamic between them is always increasing.

Refers to The five laws of effectiveness in interpersonal communication, REACH (Respect, Emphaty, Audible, Clarity, Humble) communication that occurs according to the dynamics that occur, this is the explanation :

Respect, Benoit always respect his interlocutor when communicating. Benoit gives more verbal respect and sometimes uses non-verbal in order to be well understood by his interlocutors.

Emphaty, Benoit always shows his emphaty to Marta, because they always communicate with eachother, and Benoit showed his empathy for Marta throught expression and intonation.

Audible, Benoit doesn't do this too much, but he manages to convey all his messages well so that each character can understand what he means.

Clarity, in this point in order to deliever the message Benoit often uses metaphors, so that the message he will convey can be heard clearly and well.

Humble, Benoit also has a humble attitude, because in this film he always gives tricky question that made his interlocutor panic and stuned. Because of that he always give time for his interlocutor to speak.

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