

**MAXIM VIOLATION IN A SHORT MOVIE A CUP OF COFFEE BY
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ABSTRACT

This study examines maxim violation in the short movie A Cup of Coffee. This study aimed to find the types of violation maxims, and also aimed to find the reasons behind the characters violated the maxim by using Grice's framework of the cooperative principle. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative approach, following Creswell's framework (2014) which explores and understands the meaning that individuals or groups of people attribute to social or human problems. By following his framework, the data was obtained through the official script of the short movie A Cup of Coffee as the primary source, maintaining accuracy while preserving the nuances of language and context.

1. INTRODUCTION

In daily conversations, people often engage in indirect and nuanced exchanges instead of plainly stating their thoughts or intentions. For instance, when an individual comments, "Wow, it's really quiet in here," during a group meeting, they may not merely be reflecting on the atmosphere but are subtly encouraging others to engage. Such utterances demonstrate how individuals strategically use language not just to convey information but also to navigate interpersonal relationships, show politeness, or achieve specific social objectives. This phenomenon is crucial to the study of maxim violations, which frequently occur in everyday interactions to accomplish intended effects without directly expressing them.

One of the essential frameworks in the field of pragmatics that elucidates how individuals communicate effectively is Grice's Cooperative Principle. Grice (1975) posits that conversational participants typically follow four conversational maxims to promote cooperation and comprehension: the Maxim of Quantity (offering an appropriate amount of information), the Maxim of Quality (delivering truthful information), the Maxim of Relevance (supplying pertinent information), and the Maxim of Manner (maintaining clarity and order). These maxims serve as guidelines for how speakers and listeners interpret meaning during conversations. Nevertheless, in practical situations, individuals often contravene these maxims, not to create confusion, but to produce implied meanings, that enhance the dialogue.

A maxim violation occurs when a speaker either intentionally or unintentionally contravenes one of these maxims, thus failing to fully cooperate in accordance with the principle. In contrast to maxim flouting, which involves a deliberate breach intended to

convey an implicature or a concealed meaning, a violation can mislead, confuse, or deceive the listener without indicating that there is an intention to communicate something beyond the literal interpretation. Grice (1975) posits that such violations can undermine the cooperative essence of conversation and influence how listeners comprehend the speaker's statements. Therefore, comprehending maxim violations is essential for elucidating communication failures and the subtleties of meaning that extend beyond what is explicitly articulated.

Violation of the Maxim of Quantity occurs when a speaker offers either insufficient or excessive information, disrupting the anticipated equilibrium in communication. When the information is lacking, the listener is forced to infer or seek out crucial details needed to grasp the message.

Example:

A: "Does your dog bite?"

B: "No"

A: [Bends down to stroke it and gets bitten] "Ow! You said your dog doesn't bite!"

B: "That isn't my dog." (Cutting, 2002: 40)

In the conversation above, it illustrates that the speaker B violated the maxim of quantity by failing to provide clear information. When speaker A asked, "Does your dog bite?" and the speaker B replied "no," it led to confusion when A was bitten by the dog nearby. When A protested, the speaker B defensively stated, "Isn't my dog" This exchange shows her indifference in providing relevant information, as she misunderstood that A was inquiring about the dog present, not her pet at home. Thus, she clearly violated the maxim of quantity.

Violation of the Maxim of Quality involves providing false, misleading, or unsubstantiated information, thus undermining the principle of truthfulness in communication. When a speaker deliberately lies, exaggerates, or fabricates information, they violate this maxim.

Example:

Husband: "How much did that new dress cost, darling?"

Wife: "thirty five pounds" (Cutting, 2002: 40)

Here, the wife violated the maxim of quality by not giving a sincere response, and giving him the wrong information. This type of violation damages trust and can cause confusion or conflict. However, sometimes speakers violate this maxim in subtle ways, such as exaggerating for dramatic effect or withholding evidence to support a claim, making it harder for the listener to assess the truth. In some cases, violations of Quality can be motivated by a desire to protect someone's feelings or to avoid harm, illustrating how pragmatic factors influence adherence to this maxim

Violation of the Maxim of Relation (Relevance) occurs when a speaker responds with information that is irrelevant or unrelated to the topic under discussion. This can happen accidentally when the speaker misunderstands the conversational context, or intentionally as a way to avoid answering a question or to shift the topic.

Example:

Husband: "How much did that new dress cost, darling?"

Wife: "I know, let's go out tonight. Now, where would you like to go?" (Cutting, 2002: 40)

In the given example, the wife violates the maxim of relation by offering a response that has no relevance to her husband's question. By shifting the topic and evading the conversation regarding the dress she recently purchased, the wife evidently neglects the importance of the dialogue. This behavior suggests her intention to conceal the price of the

dress from her husband, prompting her to steer the conversation away from the initial question.

Violation of the Maxim of Manner entails being deliberately ambiguous, obscure, or excessively verbose, thereby hindering the clarity and comprehensibility of the message. This can include using complicated jargon, unclear references, or convoluted sentence structures that confuse the listener.

Example:

Husband: "How much did that new dress cost, darling?"

Wife: "A tiny fraction of my salary, though probably a bigger fraction of the salary of the woman that sold it to me." (Cutting, 2002: 40)

In the earlier example, the wife (B) broke the rule by intentionally shifting the topic of discussion. Her vague reply, "a tiny fraction of my salary, though probably a bigger fraction of the salary of the woman that sold it to me," implies that the dress wasn't too pricey. By presenting her answer like this, she wanted to comfort her husband, showing him that she could pay for it without making him worry about the cost. This shows that the wife (B) went against the maxim of manner, since her reply was not clear enough for the situation. Such violations can be used strategically to conceal information, delay giving a direct answer, or create an impression of knowledge without being specific. Conversely, some people may violate this maxim unintentionally due to poor communication skills, nervousness, or cultural differences in communication style. Violating the maxim of Manner makes it difficult for the listener to grasp the intended meaning, disrupting effective communication.

Researchers from various theoretical perspectives have extensively examined the motivations behind why individuals may choose to violate maxims, revealing the complexity of real-life communication. Leech (1983) classified the reasons for violating maxims into four types: competitive, conflictive, collaborative, and convivial. These categories illustrate the various ways in which speakers can modify their speech based on their goals.

The convivial and collaborative categories are frequently associated with the preservation of politeness and social harmony. In convivial communication, speakers utilize language to convey friendliness, as seen in actions such as extending offers, issuing invitations, or demonstrating goodwill. The speaker aims to ensure that the listener feels at ease and valued. Conversely, in collaborative communication, speakers work together to foster mutual understanding and facilitate seamless interaction.

In contrast, the competitive and conflictive categories emphasize the speaker's individual goals, rather than the maintenance of politeness. In competitive communication, the speaker's goal is to attain something for themselves, which may involve persuading another person, soliciting a favor, or issuing a demand. This often entails flouting maxims in a manner that prioritizes the speaker's interests over those of the listener. For instance, a speaker might provide minimal information (violating the maxim of quantity) to sway the listener's reaction. In conflictive communication, the speaker employs language that directly contradicts or questions the listener. The goal might be to critique, dispute, or express dissent. In this scenario, maxims can be violated more boldly, showing less regard for politeness, to assert control or convey displeasure.

Goffman (2008) elaborates that individuals can achieve, maintain, or safeguard their face by continuously exhibiting a socially acceptable persona during interactions. This phenomenon, referred to as face-work, is especially significant in comprehending the reasons behind the flouting of conversational maxims. When speakers encounter sensitive situations, they may select their words with caution to safeguard either their own face or

that of the listener. Consequently, they frequently violate conversational maxims not with the intent to mislead, but rather to maintain social harmony and prevent embarrassment.

Then Dörnyei (2005), as cited in Purnomo (2017), highlights that speakers might deliberately choose not to comply with conversational maxims to fulfill their own objectives. Instead of strictly following the Cooperative Principle, they opt to emphasize their personal aims. This may involve seeking benefits, safeguarding their position, or subtly influencing the interaction. In these instances, the breach of maxims serves as a tactical approach to express self-interest rather than indicating a breakdown in communication.

Moreover, Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011) stated various reasons that may lead speakers to violate conversational maxims during communication. These reasons encompass protracting the answer to postpone or evade providing a straightforward answer, as well as misleading counterparts to shape the interpretation of information. Furthermore, speakers might seek to satisfy the interlocutor by exhibiting excessive politeness or ambiguity, even at the cost of being less informative. In addition, completely avoiding the discussion is a prevalent tactic employed to avoid uncomfortable or sensitive subjects.

This study investigates two primary elements based on the points discussed: first, the different types of maxim violations, namely Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner, that appear in the dialogues of the characters; and second, the reasons behind the characters violating the maxim. Utilizing Grice's Cooperative Principle as a key theoretical framework and applying Creswell's qualitative research methodology for analysis, this research intends to shed light on the richness and intricacy of the meanings present in cinematic dialogue.

2. METHOD

This study applies a qualitative approach to examine the dialogue in the short film *A Cup of Coffee* by Michael Robert Myers. A qualitative approach represents a broad perspective on how to undertake qualitative research. According to Creswell (2013) qualitative research aims to explore and understand the meaning of human experiences in their social and cultural context. This study will discuss the appropriate meaning in the context of the conversation between the characters in the short movie *A Cup of Coffee*. The process of data collection entailed meticulous observation and attentive listening to the short movie, alongside the gathering of dialogues that illustrated instances of breaches of the proverb's principles in communication. In this study, a qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because the analysis was about finding and analyzing the dialogue of the characters in the short movie, which was obtained from the official transcript.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study uses Grice's theory to analyze the types of maxims and the reasons behind the characters who violate the maxims used in the dialogues of the short movie *A Cup of Coffee* by Michael Robert Myers. This study found five utterances containing maxim violations which consist of, two maxim of quantity, one maxim of quality, one maxim of relevance, and one maxim of manner.

Tabel 1. Maxim Violations found in *A Cup of Coffee* short movie

No.	Types of Maxim Violations	Total
1	Maxim of Quantity	2
2	Maxim of Quality	1
3	Maxim of Relevance	1
4	Maxim of Manner	1
Total of Utterances		5

Discussions

a. Violation of Maxim Quantity

Violation of maxim quantity is when the speaker conveys information that is either insufficient or excessive. In this short movie, there are two utterances that violate maxim of quantity. The followings are the analysis of the violations of maxim quantity.

Data 1

Aaron : “So, how’s Susan?”

Mark : “Good. She finally opened her haberdasher. So, she’s enthralled.”

Context:

In the conversation above, it describes two people having a dialog, Mark and Aaron. Aaron who was sitting in a cafe with coffee at his table and his frustrating face then Mark who came over to him, then later Aaron asked how Susan, his ex-wife, was doing. In this conversation, Mark did not answer what was asked.

Discussion:

According to Gricean Framework, Mark should provide information that is as informative as required, not too little, and not too much. However, Mark goes beyond the scope of Aaron’s question by not only saying Susan is “good” but also adding details about her opening a haberdasher and being “enthralled.” These additional pieces of information were not specifically asked for, and thus they exceed the expected amount of detail.

The reason behind Mark violated the maxim of quantity can be understood through Leech’s (1983) concept of convivial communication. Mark’s response serves a politeness function rather than an attempt to mislead or dominate the conversation. His additional comment about Susan’s business reflects goodwill, indicating that he wants to keep the conversation friendly before revealing the more serious reason for their meeting.

Data 2

Aaron : “Yes, I did drink way too much at that party but I am back to my AA meetings and my therapist says I am making real progress. I am on the way to recover and...and kicking me out of my kids lives will just kill me. I wouldn’t be able to take it. Please just convince her to reconsider.

Mark : “I did, Aaron. I did eighteen months ago when you showed up drunk to Derek’s cello recital. I talked her out of it when you wrecked her van because you were sauced at 3 in the afternoon. I made her reconsider you many times and you blew each one. She’s done with you. I’m done with you. Our decision is final.

Context:

In the conversation above, they are still at the same cafe with their coffee. Mark had time to ask something else and after Aaron asked how Susan was and finally Mark said his purpose to meet Aaron. Mark explained that Susan wanted Aaron not to contact their children anymore, but Aaron disagreed.

Discussion:

According to Gricean Framework, Mark should give Aaron the answers he needs in moderation. In the conversation above, Mark provides additional information which makes it violate maxim quantity. Mark can simply answer that he has convinced Sarah, without the need to provide how he convinced Sarah.

In the conversation above, Mark’s reply exemplifies the conflictive communication, as he shows no interest in upholding politeness or safeguarding Aaron’s emotions. Rather, he purposefully emphasizes Aaron’s continuous shortcomings to rationalize his and his family’s choices. In contrast to cooperative or collaborative communication methods, conflictive communication entails the intentional use of rude or confrontational language to convey feelings of anger, disappointment, or to terminate a relationship. Consequently, the

violation of the maxim in this context can be most effectively interpreted through the framework of conflictive communication, wherein the speaker disregards conversational conventions to assert emotional and moral boundaries.

b. Violation of Maxim Quality

The maxim of quality is a principle that requires participants to provide accurate information. By adhering to the maxim of quality within the cooperative principle, participants are expected to deliver entirely truthful information. A violation of this maxim occurs when a speaker attempts to convey information that is likely false or deceptive to their conversational partner. A discourse that lacks a foundation in reality, is not substantiated by clear and concrete evidence, and cannot be justified, constitutes a breach of the maxim of quality. There are one utterance that violate maxim of quality.

Data 1

Mark : “Look, I’ll cut right to the chase. Susan doesn’t want you involved in Beth and Derek’s life anymore.

Aaron : “She can’t cut me out like that. Court says I have visitations.”

Context :

In data 1, the conversation between Mark and Aaron is discussing Mark who has explained why Susan no longer wants Aaron to interfere with Susan's life and their children. But Aaron opposed it and said he had visitation rights from the government to see his children. But this violates the quality maxim because the short movie does not show that the visitation rights are valid. Aaron did not provide evidence of the visitation rights.

Discussion:

According to Grice's Framework, the above conversation violates the quality maxim. Grice explains that maxim quality is to say something factually and provably true. In the conversation above, Aaron said that he had a visit letter from the government but in the short movie video it appears that Aaron did not bring the letter. It can be concluded that the conversation above violates maxim quality.

This is consistent with Dorneus’ (2005) perspective that individuals may violate the Maxim of Quality to fulfill their own interests. Aaron seems to assert this not primarily to mislead, but rather as a strategy to uphold his stance and avoid being marginalized in his children’s lives. His underlying motivation is to safeguard his identity and involvement as a father. Within this framework, the breach serves to protect his self-perception and steer the conversation in a direction that benefits him. Therefore, Aaron’s assertion represents a violation of the Maxim of Quality, motivated by a need to exert control and sustain personal significance, despite the questionable truthfulness of the claim.

c. Violation of Maxim Relevance

In order to establish effective cooperation between the speaker and the hearer, it is essential for both parties to provide relevant contributions to the subject matter being discussed, in accordance with the maxim of relevance. A speech is considered to adhere to the maxim of relevance when the speech and the responses are interconnected. A violation of the maxim of relevance takes place when a speaker offers a response that is unrelated to the topic of conversation or attempts to shift the focus of the ongoing discussion. There is one utterance that violate maxim of relevance.

Data 1

Mark : “She’s gonna put up a case for the judge. Now, it’s better to just cut your loses and focus on picking up you’re life. When the kids become legal adults and if they decide they want to see you, you can. I’m sorry we have to do this but it’s best.”

Aaron : “Can I ask a question?”

Context :

In data 1, they are still talking about the same topic. Mark said that it was better for Aaron to give in and obey Susan's wishes so that the case would not be more complicated, but there was a maxim violation in the conversation. In the conversation, when Mark explained to Aaron, Aaron did not answer Mark's statement but instead Aaron asked if he could ask. This illustrates the irrelevance of a conversation due to inappropriate responses.

Discussion:

According to Grice's Framework, Aaron violates maxim relevance because what Aaron responds to Mark is not appropriate or relevant. When Mark gave Aaron advice to focus on himself, instead of saying thank you to Mark, Aaron asked a question which was irrelevant.

This type of shift is well-explained by the concept proposed by Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011), which suggests that individuals occasionally violate conversational maxims to avoid the discussion. Instead of directly addressing Mark's explanation, Aaron diverts the conversation with a vague and seemingly unrelated question. It appears as though he is attempting to evade the uncomfortable truth of the situation. His question interrupts the natural progression of the dialogue, indicating either his reluctance to confront the subject matter or a desire to divert the conversation from such an emotionally charged issue. Consequently, Aaron's inquiry is not intended to elicit information, rather, it serves as a mechanism for emotional self-protection. This clearly constitutes a violation of the Maxim of Relevance.

d. Violation of Manner

The maxim of manner in Grice's cooperative principle mandates that all participants communicate with one another directly and clearly. The conveyed message must be free from ambiguity or obscurity. A violation of this principle takes place when the speaker presents information in a disorganized or unclear manner to their conversational partner. There is one utterance that violate maxim of manner

Data 1

Aaron : "It's just been hard. "

Mark : "Don't do this sympathy shit. I KNOW it's been hard since your son died. And if anyone else knows it its Susan and Derek and Beth. They had to deal with it too. But your answer to the problem was Alcohol and it eat away until you had nothing. Goodbye Aaron. You will receive a call from our lawyer giving the finite details."

Context :

In data 1, Mark and Aaron's conversation continues and in this situation Mark says something ambiguous and unclear to Aaron. He wants to leave Aaron but before that he says something else, and is also structurally unclear. After Mark says goodbye, he again gives information to Aaron. This illustrates the maxim violation on maxim manner.

Discussion:

According to Grice's Framework, Mark violates maxim manner because what Mark says in the conversation above is unclear or ambiguous. Mark seemed to want to leave Aaron and had said "goodbye", but after that Mark did not leave but gave other information which made it seem ambiguous.

The reason why Mark violate the maxim of manner can be most effectively understood through Leech's (1983) concept of conflictive communication. In accordance with Grice's cooperative principle, the maxim of manner necessitates that speakers convey their messages clearly, systematically, and without ambiguity. Nevertheless, Mark's reply to Aaron, "Don't do this sympathy shit. I KNOW it's been hard since your son died..." is laden with emotion, lacks organization, and is purposefully confrontational. Instead of

providing a composed or structured response, Mark permits his frustration and disappointment to overshadow his communication, resulting in a disordered expression filled with conflicting emotions, accusations, and a sense of finality. His statement is devoid of poise and instead heightens the emotional charge of the dialogue. This intentional disruption of communicative clarity is not incidental but rather deliberate, as Mark seeks to terminate the relationship and convey profound resentment. This is consistent with Leech's concept of conflictive communication, where the speaker consciously flouts politeness conventions to establish emotional boundaries, reject the listener, or exhibit hostility.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that violations of maxims, as seen in the short film *A Cup of Coffee* by Michael Robert Myers, are both frequent and intentional in naturalistic dialogue. Among the four maxims outlined in Grice's Cooperative Principle Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner each was breached at least once throughout the film, illustrating how characters adeptly manipulate language to achieve emotional, social, or personal objectives. The Maxim of Quantity was the most frequently violated, indicating that speakers often provide either insufficient or excessive information based on their communicative purpose whether to uphold politeness (convivial) or to convey frustration (conflictive). The Maxim of Quality was breached when characters made unverifiable or misleading statements, usually to protect themselves or steer the conversation. A breach of the Maxim of Relevance occurred when a character sidestepped direct answers, often to evade emotionally challenging subjects. Finally, the Maxim of Manner was contravened when a character displayed anger or disappointment in a chaotic or unclear manner, underscoring the emotional intricacies behind communication failures.

The results of this research indicate that the characters in *A Cup of Coffee* breached conversational maxims for contextually motivated reasons that correspond with various established pragmatic theories. Citing Leech's (1983) classification of communicative objectives: competitive, conflictive, collaborative, and convivial, this research pinpointed examples of convivial communication, where individuals, like Mark, included superfluous yet courteous details to uphold social cohesion, and conflictive communication, where individuals intentionally employed aggressive language to convey frustration or assert emotional limits. Moreover, consistent with Dörnyei (2005), communicating self-interest emerged as a driving force behind specific violations, particularly when Aaron made assertions without substantiation to maintain his position as a father. This illustrates an effort to steer the interaction in a manner that benefits the speaker's personal aims. Additionally, the findings also corroborate Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi's (2011) assertion that violations of maxims may serve as a tactic to avoid discussion, particularly in emotionally charged contexts. For instance, Aaron redirected the conversation to avoid facing uncomfortable realities. While other reasons, including protracting answer, misleading counterparts, pleasing interlocutors (Khosravizadeh & Sadehvandi, 2011), saving face (Goffman, 2008), and participating in competitive or collaborative communication (Leech, 1983) are theoretically significant, they were not apparent in the analyzed data. Consequently, it can be concluded that the breaches of maxims in this short film are neither random nor incidental; instead, they are actions driven by pragmatic considerations intended to address emotional tension, protect personal identity, and regulate social interactions.

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