

Maxim Violations in The Rising Action of An Animated Movie

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ABSTRACT

This research examines violations of conversational maxims in the film *Frozen* (2013), focusing on the rising action stage, where emotional tension begins to form and communication becomes more complex. Based on Grice's cooperative principle, this research aims to identify types of maxim violations and examine their pragmatic functions in character interactions. The method used is descriptive qualitative using dialogue excerpts as primary data. Existing data are then collected by observing and selecting utterances that contain maxim violations in scenes that are driven by the character's emotions, and analyzed based on the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner. The findings revealed that the four types of maxims were violated in the film by the main characters such as Anna, Kristoff, Olaf and Oaken. Quantity and quality violations are the most frequently occurring. This shows the character's tendency to express subjective beliefs and provide inadequate or excessive information. Then, this analysis also shows that these violations have various pragmatic functions, including expressing emotional states, hiding ignorance, and creating humor. Not only communicative failure, maxim violations also contribute significantly to narrative development and character construction. They reflect how characters manage interactions between individuals under emotional stress and show that language in systematic discourse functions as a strategic tool.

Keywords: *Cooperative Principle, Conversational Implicature, Maxim Violation, Pragmatics, Animated Film, Frozen (2013)*

INTRODUCTION

Language is the main tool humans use to construct a social reality. As social creatures, each individual relies heavily on cooperative communication behavior to produce information effectively, negotiate relationships, and build the desired meaning. Grice (1975) introduced the cooperative principle to guide speakers to contribute to a conversation so that it can produce appropriate conversations. According to Grice, speakers in every conversation are expected to understand the four maxims of conversation, namely quantity (providing sufficient information), quality (providing honest information), relevance (providing relevant information), and manner (providing clear and orderly information). However, in real life, communication often does not comply with these maxims perfectly. Speakers often violate or ignore existing maxims on purpose to produce implicatures or other meanings that listeners infer based on their contextual reasoning (Yule, 1996). In previous research it was stated that this does not always indicate a communication failure, but can also serve pragmatic purposes such as politeness, irony, emotional defense, or humor (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Thomas, 1995).

Although maxim violations have been widely researched in everyday discourse, literary works, political speeches, song lyrics, audiovisual media, especially animated films, have provided a very broad field for pragmatic analysis. Film dialogue is often considered to simulate natural conversation that is carefully structured so that it can fulfill narrative, aesthetic and emotional functions (Turner, 2006). In animated films, dialogue has many roles to play in

advancing the plot, defining character identities, and engaging audiences of various age groups so its use is considered important and must have appropriate meaning.

This study focuses on maxim violations found in the rising action stage of the film *Frozen* (2013). Rising action represents an important narrative phase where conflict increases, misunderstandings deepen, and character motivations become more strategic, so it is highly suitable as research material, especially in pragmatic investigations. In addition, understanding maxim violations is very important because it reflects how speakers can manage the use of meaning beyond literal expressions. As Thomas (1995) explains, violating maxims in conversation can result in misunderstandings, but on the other hand can also function as a meaningful pragmatic strategy depending on the context. In emotionally charged situations, speakers often prioritize expression over maintaining proper norms of cooperation.

In the context of dialogue in the film, these violations are intentionally done to build narrative tension and clarify character relationships. In the rising action stage, a film typically presents moments of increasing conflict that require careful pragmatic interpretation. Therefore, examining maxim violations in films can help researchers to reveal how language can be used as a tool to support plot development and emotional depth. Animated films are often considered simple entertainment, however in fact, animated films also function as a powerful communication medium that can reflect social values and interpersonal dynamics. Through carefully structured dialogue, animated films succeed in presenting complex pragmatic phenomena in an easily accessible form. *Frozen*, as a globally recognized animated film, offers rich conversations and can reflect communication in real life, especially in moments of emotional tension.

The interactions between characters in the film *Frozen* show that language is used not only as an instrument to convey information, but also as a tool to express psychological states, negotiate relationships, and manage conflict. This makes the film *Frozen* suitable for use as research data for pragmatic analysis, because the characters' speech often expresses implied meanings that can only be understood through contextual interpretation.

Although previous research has analyzed maxim violations in novels, songs, and various film genres, attention to the rising action stage of animated films is still limited, so this research addresses the following questions:

- 1) What types of maxim violations occur in the rising action of *Frozen*?
- 2) What pragmatic motivations underlie these violations?
- 3) How do these violations contribute to narrative development and characterization?

By integrating pragmatic theory with film narrative analysis, this study offers a deeper understanding of how cooperative principles function within constructed cinematic discourse.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grice's Principle of Cooperation, proposed by Grice (1975), explain that effective communication is guided by the general principle of cooperation which requires speakers to contribute to the conversation in accordance with the context and purpose of the interaction. This principle is further explained into four different parts namely, quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. The maxim of quantity requires speakers to provide sufficient information without exaggerations or deficiencies, while the maxim of quality requires speakers to provide information that is in accordance with facts and avoid false or unsupported statement. The maxim of relevance requires the speaker to convey something related to the topic of discussion, and the maxim of manner emphasizes the importance of clarity, conciseness and avoiding ambiguity.

However, in practice, these principles do not always work as expected. Grice distinguished several ways in which maxims are not obeyed, including violation, flouting, and suspension. Disobedience like this often leads to the emergence of conversational implicatures which are conveyed implicitly rather than explicitly. Conversational implicature, as defined by Yule (1996), refers to implied meaning that appears when the speakers does not directly state what they mean. In these cases, listeners rely on contextual clues and shared knowledge to interpret the speaker's intended meaning. Thomas (1995) further emphasizes that implicatures play an important role in interaction, especially when speakers avoid directness in communication.

According to Cutting (2002), implicature can be formed when speakers deliberately do not comply with one or more of Grice's maxims and require the listener to infer the meaning based on their understanding of the context.

Cutting emphasizes that ignoring maxims is one of the common pragmatic strategies used to create implied meaning and is not considered as a sign of communication failure. In this view, speakers rely on shared contextual knowledge with listeners and rely on situational awareness to ensure that their intended meaning is properly understood. Therefore, maxim violation functions as a natural and strategic aspect of interaction, especially in contexts where speakers aim to express attitude, emotions or intentions indirectly.

Additionally, maxim violations do not necessarily indicate ineffective communication. Brown and Levinson state that indirectness can function as a politeness strategy in social interactions. Moreover, pragmatic phenomena such as irony, sarcasm, humor, and emotional defensiveness often depend on deliberate noncompliance with maxims. In the context of the film's dialogue, these violations become more salient as the characters interact in heightened emotional and dramatic circumstances. Consequently, maxim violations can be understood not only as a breakdown in communication, but also as a strategic tool that contributes to character development and narrative construction.

Several previous studies have shown that maxim violations are strongly influenced by the situational context and the relationships that dialogue speakers have. Nahak and Bram (2021) argue that violations of relevance and quantity are often used to avoid direct confrontation or to maintain social harmony. Likewise, Hossain (2021) highlights that quality violations can serve as an expressive device rather than an act of deception. In film discourse, these violations are not committed without reason but rather to serve narrative and stylistic purposes. Dialogue in films represents simulated social interactions under dramatic pressure, in which characters may deliberately commit transgressions in order to express conflict, humor, or emotional resistance. However, studies that specifically focus on maxim violations in the rising action of an animated film are still limited, which further justifies the need to conduct this research.

Apart from identifying maxim violations, it is also important to understand the concept of pragmatic functions in communication. Pragmatic functions refer to the communication purpose behind each utterance, such as expressing emotion, providing information, or creating humor. According to Cutting (2002), speakers may deliberately violate conversational maxims with the aim of achieving certain communicative effects rather than simply causing misunderstandings. Therefore, analyzing the functions behind each utterance is also considered important because it can help reveal the basic meaning behind maxim violations in discourse. Furthermore, analyzing maxim violations in an animated film contributes to the broader field of pragmatic studies by showing how cooperative principles operate in fictional discourse but are also socially meaningful. Unlike spontaneous everyday conversation, film dialogue is deliberately designed, allowing researchers to examine pragmatic strategies in a controlled narrative context.

By focusing on the rising action stage, this study highlights how pragmatic violations emerge as a response to escalating conflict and emotional stress in a conversation. This focus not only differentiates this research from previous research, but also emphasizes the role of language as a narrative device that shapes audience interpretation and character development.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method as outlined by Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña (2014). The qualitative approach provides descriptive data in the form of spoken language which is used to observe linguistic phenomena in real contexts, such as communication patterns between characters in a film. This method was chosen because it allows an in-depth linguistic analysis to be carried out on violations of the principle of cooperation that appear in the dialogue of the film *Frozen*, so that the implicit meaning behind the violation of the maxim can be revealed clearly. The data collection process starts from selecting specific dialogues at the rising action stage that contain potential maxim violations. Relevant utterances are then collected, selected, and classified based on the type of maxim violation that occurs, making it easier to group data. Next, the analysis applies Grice's maxim theory to interpret by looking at the context of the conversation, the relationship between characters, the purpose of communication, and the emotional conditions that influence the utterance. The analysis was carried out on indicators of maxim violations, namely quantity, quality, relevance and manner, to then specifically analyze the forms of violations of the principle of cooperation that occurred in the film *Frozen*. The final stage includes interpretation and discussion of examples of maxim violations to show how these violations affect the communication process between characters in the scene.

DISCUSSION

This research reveals that violations of conversational maxims often occur in the rising action of the film Frozen. Each character tends to violate different maxims, and these violations functions to support the development of the storyline and achieve certain communicative goals. This is in line with previous research which states that maxim violations are not only considered a defect in communication, especially in highly emotionally driven interaction, but also functions as a pragmatic strategy to express emotions and contribute to narrative development (Rauf & Prihandini, 2025)

The data presented in table 1 below were obtained through analysis of selected dialogues from the rising action in the film Frozen, focusing on utterances that contain maxim violations based on the type. This makes it easier for researchers to group the data.

Table 1. The overview of maxim violations found in the rising action of Frozen

Maxim Violations	Item	Total	Percent	Pragmatic Functions
Maxim Quality	1	5	50%	Emotional expression, defense
Maxim Quantity	1	3	30%	Conceal ignorance
Maxim Relevance	1	1	10%	Avoidance
Maxim Manner	1	1	10%	Creating humor
Total		10	100%	

Based on the table above, the maxim of quality is the most frequently violated with a percentage reaching 50% of the total data. Followed by the maxim of quantity at 30%, while the maxims of relevance and manner are each 10%. This finding is in line with previous research which shows that maxim violations in film dialogue are influenced by communicative goals and contextual factors, including the intention and emotional state of the speaker (Arbain et al., 2023). This pattern shows that emotional factors greatly influence the way characters communicate in the actions that appear in the film.

The following data below present selected dialogues from the rising action stage in the film Frozen that contain maxim violations. This data was analyzed using the Grice cooperative principle by focusing on the types of maxim violations and the pragmatic functions. Each dialogue is then examined to identify how the maxim is violated and what meaning is contained behind the utterance.

Maxim of Quantity

Data 1

Kristoff: "What's his last name?"

Anna: "...of the Southern Isles."

In this conversation, Anna can be seen violating the quantity principle by providing less information than required. He provided information that was far less than what Kristoff expected so that there was a violation in the dialogue. This violation occurred not because Anna wanted to hide the true facts, but because of factual ignorance. Anna is forced to violate the maxim of quantity because she does not know the complete identity of her partner. From a pragmatic perspective, this reflects Anna's attempt to hide her lack of knowledge, which is manifested through her

careless and hasty decisions in choosing a partner. Narratively, this violation functions as an initial clue for the audience to understand the plot and understand the context of the shallow relationship between Anna and Hans, which is the main source of conflict.

Data 2

Kristoff: "So, did Elsa seem like she wanted to be found?"

Anna: "Well, I mean, she didn't say NO, but she did freeze the entire kingdom."

In this dialogue, Anna violated the quantity principle because she did not provide sufficient information as expected, gave convoluted answers, and provided contradictory information, thus failing to answer the question asked by Kristoff directly. By stating that Elsa "didn't say no" while admitting to Elsa's extreme actions, Anna fails to provide a clear answer regarding her sister's true intentions. This violation is driven by Anna's doubts because there are two contradictory intersections within her, about her really loving her sister, and about her not being able to deny that Elsa's power has destroyed everything. Pragmatically, this dialogue functions as a form of emotional denial, where Anna avoids saying "no" to maintain her hope of reconciliation. Narratively, it highlights the growing tension between Anna's optimism and the increasingly dangerous stakes of the plot.

Data 3

Kristoff: "So, uh, tell me. What made the Queen go all ice-crazy?"

Anna: "Oh. Well, it was all my fault. I got engaged, and then she freaked out because I'd only just met him, you know, that day. And she said she wouldn't bless the marriage, and..."

Anna's answer in this dialogue violates the maxim of quantity because she provides more information than Kristoff expected as a questioner. Instead of giving a sufficient answer, Anna explained the incident at length, accompanied by excessive emotion and details of the incident. This violation reflects Anna's emotional state, as she still feels guilty for the impact that occurred and needs space to vent her feelings. From a pragmatic point of view, this dialogue functions as a form of recognition and seeking understanding from other parties. Narratively, this dialogue serves to deepen Anna's inner conflict and helps the audience understand the background of the tension between Anna and Elsa.

Maxim of Quality

Data 4

Kristoff: "What if you hate the way he eats? What if you hate the way he picks his nose?"

Anna: "The Prince does not pick!"

Anna's statement here violates the maxim of quality, especially the sub-maxim which states that one should not say something without sufficient evidence. Anna emphasized the fact that Hans did not pick his nose with absolute certainty, even though what she said could not be proven with certainty because she had only known Hans for less than 24 hours, therefore, this was considered to have no empirical evidence. The reason behind this violation was that Anna felt cornered by Kristoff's logic, so Anna chose to use his words as a self-defense mechanism. In terms of character, this is useful for strengthening Anna's idealistic nature in contrast to Kristoff's realistic nature. Narratively, it marks an ideological clash between the romantic fairy tale concept of love and the realistic pragmatics.

Data 5

Olaf: "Oh, look at that. I've been impaled."

In this dialogue, Olaf is considered to have violated a principle of the maxim of quality because his words seem to belittle or minimize a fact. In normal situations, getting pierced by a large piece of ice was not something that could be considered small and would be a fatal event that could cause pain or panic, but Olaf took it as a light and casual observation. The reason behind his words is because of his innocence and the non-biological nature of Olaf's character itself. Olaf doesn't feel pain like humans do, so he can respond more lightly to the situation. Narratively, this violation functions as a comedic entertainment by Olaf to lighten the tense atmosphere, and also emphasizes that Olaf as a magical character always sees the world from a pure perspective.

Data 6

Olaf: "And who's that funky-looking donkey over there?"

Anna: "That's Sven."

Olaf: "Uh-huh. And who's the reindeer?"

In this dialogue, Olaf is seen asking a question that violates the maxim of quality because he calls Sven a donkey, even though Sven is actually a reindeer. This violation is caused by Olaf's limited knowledge of the outside world. When Anna gave a short, factual answer, Olaf asked another question that made it clear that there was a misunderstanding in the situation. Pragmatically, this violation is not intended to mislead, but rather to emphasize Olaf's character who has strong innocence. From a narrative perspective, this dialogue serves to build humor and strengthen Olaf as a naive and innocent character, as well as creating light-hearted interaction dynamics throughout the journey.

Data 7

Olaf: "I'm Olaf and I like warm hugs!"

Kristoff: "A snowman... who likes warm hugs? That's... Normal."

The response Kristoff gives here violates the principle of the maxim of quality through the use of verbal irony. By Kristoff calling a talking snowman's desire for a warm hug "normal," he is saying something he clearly believes is wrong and unnatural, as the tone and context suggest that he finds the situation ridiculous. The reason for the cause is Kristoff's sarcastic personality and his difficulty in processing the magical elements of the world he has suddenly entered. In terms of characteristics, this strengthens the contrast between Kristoff's cynical and realistic nature and the innocent magical world represented by Olaf. Narratively, this violation functions as comedic entertainment by using pragmatic sarcasm to lighten the mood and build the social dynamics of the group in the story.

Data 8

Anna: "It's just a little bit of snow. I'm sure it'll blow over in... an hour? Maybe two?"

In this scene, Anna clearly violates the principle of the maxim of quality by mentioning something that is uncertain and difficult to prove, what she says is not sufficiently supported by strong evidence and underestimates the seriousness of the situation that is happening, this is known as an understatement. Even though the kingdom had fallen into a seemingly eternal winter and it was difficult to predict when it would end, Anna still said that it was "just a little bit of snow" and would be over soon, she had no factual basis for people to believe her words. The reason for this violation is Anna's urgent need to calm herself and Kristoff from the situation that occurred and keep the journey to find Elsa continuing. This reflects Anna's blindly optimistic character trait, which she often uses as a pragmatic strategy to cover up the fear of failure that is surrounding her. Viewed from a narrative perspective, this underscores the gap that exists between Anna's perspective and Elsa's uncontrollable powers and can create dramatic irony for the audience.

Maxim of relevance

Data 9

Oaken: "Hoo-hoo! Big summer blowout. Half off swimming suits, clogs, and a sun balm of my own invention, yeah?"

Anna: "Oh, great. For now, how about boots?"

In this dialogue, Oaken delivers a long, unnecessary pitch to Anna about summer goods, which is irrelevant in her snowy surroundings. So Oaken's statement here is considered to violate the maxim of relevance because it conveys information that has nothing to do with what Anna needs. In response, Anna did not respond to Oaken's promotion directly, but instead shifted her focus to her immediate needs. Anna's response was also considered to violate the maxim of relevance because Anna did not explicitly respond to the content of Oaken's words directly. Narratively, this dialogue serves to create humor while emphasizing the contrast between the eccentric Oaken and the pragmatic Anna.

Maxim of Manner

Data 10

Kristoff: "You're not actually going to marry a guy you just met, are you?"

Anna: "Yes, I am! And it's true love, so you wouldn't understand!"

In the dialogue above, there are two maxims that are violated at one time, namely the maxim of relevance and the maxim of manner, seen from the way Anna adds emotional attacks that deviate from the logical debate about her marriage when answering Kristoff's question. Although the first part of his answer was informative and sufficient to answer Kristoff's question, the addition of the phrase "you won't understand!" irrelevant and makes his statement something he shouldn't have said. The reason for this violation was because Anna felt her principles were being judged, prompting her to switch from factual responses to emotional defense mechanisms. This strengthens the "ideological clash" between Anna's fairy tale beliefs and Kristoff's pragmatism. Narratively, this violation deepens the conflict between the two main characters and suggests that their inability to follow cooperative principles stems from their respective, fundamentally different life experiences.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study aims to identify the types of violations of Grice's maxims that exist in the rising action stage of the film Frozen and reveal the reasons behind the use of these violations. The results of the analysis show that there are violations of Grice's maxims in the rising action stage of the Frozen film, namely quality, quantity, relevance and manner, each of which is found with different frequencies and functions. This violation not only shows the development of conflict, but also illustrates the psychological condition of the characters and drives the progress of the story. The dynamics of the interaction between Anna, Kristoff, and Olaf dominate these findings, where violations of quality and quantity are something that often reflects a self-defense mechanism carried out by Anna as an effort to maintain her idealism, while violations of the maxim of relevance committed by supporting characters such as Olaf and Oaken functions as elements of comedy that are triggered by the innocence and economic motivations that both of them have. Overall, it can be concluded that maxim violations in films do not always have a negative connotation, but more than that they also function as an effective tool to build contrasting characterization and deepen narrative conflict. Understanding this phenomenon also provides comprehensive insight into how communication between characters in a literary work can be built to convey emotional and social messages in the form of audiovisual media.

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