



## **ANALYSIS VIOLATION OF THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE IN CORALINE CHILDREN'S STORYBOOK**

**Khadeja Gina Alifia**  
[ginakhadeja@gmail.com](mailto:ginakhadeja@gmail.com)

Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon, West Java

**Eva Utami Durahman**  
[ami.invada@gmail.com](mailto:ami.invada@gmail.com)

Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon, West Java

**Cecep Agus**  
[cecep.prodi.inggris@gmail.com](mailto:cecep.prodi.inggris@gmail.com)

Institut Prima Bangsa Cirebon, West Java

### **Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mencari dan membagi tipe-tipe pelanggaran maxim teori grice pada buku anak-anak Coraline yang di tulis oleh Neil Geiman 2008. Metode deskriptif kualitatif digunakan untuk menganalisis data, dengan menggunakan teori dasar Paul Grice (1989), White (1990), dan teori George Yule (1996). Data terdiri dari 17 dialog novel Coraline, Paul Grice mengidentifikasi bahwa cooperative principle memiliki empat maxim, yakni quantity, quality, relation, dan manner. Dalam penelitian ini focus pada pelanggaran dalam kategori non-observance. Peneliti menemukan bahwa pelanggaran maxim quantity lebih mendominasi diikuti oleh maxim manner, relation, dan quality. Ini bisa menekankan bahwa novel coraline memiliki dialog yang bertele-tele sangat kontrast dengan kurangnya informasi penting di saat ketegangan meningkat.

**Kata kunci:** cooperative principle, pelanggaran, maxim, dialogue, novel

### **Abstract**

This study aims to identify and categorize types of violations of Grice's maxims in the children's book Coraline, written by Neil Gaiman in 2008. A qualitative descriptive method was used to analyze the data, using the basic theories of Paul Grice (1989), White (1990), and George Yule (1996). The data consisted of 17 dialogues from the novel Coraline. Paul Grice identified that the cooperative principle has four maxims, namely quantity, quality, relation, and manner. This study focused on violations in the non-observance category. The researcher found that violations of the maxim of quantity were more dominant, followed by the maxims of manner, relation, and quality. This emphasizes that the novel Coraline has long-winded dialogues that contrast sharply with the lack of important information at times of increasing tension.

**Keywords:** cooperative principle, violation, maxim, dialogue, novel

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is a complex social system that serves as the primary means of communication for humans to convey thoughts, emotions, and information in social interactions, both through verbal forms such as speech and nonverbal forms such as gestures, enabling mutual understanding between individuals in various cultural and situational contexts. Communication itself is fundamental to social interaction, as it can be used to find solutions to problems (Sari, 2024). In communication, there are several rules that must be obeyed by



speakers and listeners. One of them is the principle of cooperation (Labobar, 2018), governed by the Cooperative Principle, as outlined by (White, 1990), which consists of four maxims. In practice, violations of these maxims often occur to create implicature or verbal manipulation, both in everyday conversation and in literary works.

Effective communication requires optimal synergy between the sender (speaker with clear intentions), message (structured content), channel (verbal/written/digital), receiver (with a similar background), environment (noise-free), and feedback (mutual understanding) (Collins et al., 2015). but often fails due to obstacles such as semantic ambiguity, disproportionate information (too little or too much), dishonesty, topic mismatch, and psychological or cultural factors that cause misunderstanding, conflict, or verbal manipulation. This phenomenon is clearly seen in the manipulative dialogue in Neil Gaiman's novel *Coraline*. The violation of the cooperative principle not only happens in verbal communication, but it can also happen in written dialogue.

To overcome this failure, (White, 1990) proposed a principle of cooperation, embodied in four main maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner, within his Cooperative Principle theory. Thus, violations of the maxims, although seemingly destructive to cooperation, often produce strategic implicatures that enrich meaning, such as the dominance of quantity excess and manner ambiguity in the *Coraline*-Other Mother interaction to build dark fantasy tension.

The Cooperative Principle was created to produce effective communication. *“Make your conversational contribution such as is required.”* (Grice, 1989), at that moment. Adjust your way of speaking to the purpose of the conversation, there are four types of maxims for this.

Maxim of quantity from Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle requires speakers to provide the right amount of information: enough to meet the conversational needs, but no more than necessary (Grice, 1989). Example for this, B asks, *“Where does A live?”* D says, *“He lives in Indonesia, in the city of Bandung.”* This is the correct answer, by provide a sufficient information. Maxim of quality requires the speaker to ensure truthfulness in their contributions and provide evidence (Grice, 1989). Example for this, A says, *“He probably didn't pass the exam.”* The speaker has no evidence to support their claim, and just saying *'probably'* shows that they are less certain.

Maxim of relation requires the speaker to be relevant to the topic of the ongoing conversation (Grice, 1989). Example for this, A says, *“The weather is warm today,”* B says, *“I'm hungry.”* Completely ignoring the topic of weather creates an obvious mismatch that requires explanation. Maxim of manner requires the speaker to be brief, be orderly, be clear, and avoid ambiguity (Grice, 1989). Example for this, A asks, *“Want coffee or tea?”* B says, *“Fine.”* Manner is **how** we say it, not **what** we say.

Situations in which the maxim is violated can result in implicatures (implied meanings). Thus, this study aims to analyze patterns of violations of the Cooperative Principle, specifically Grice's four maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner), in the dialogue of Neil Gaiman's novel *Coraline*, to reveal the implicatures produced in *Coraline*'s interactions with the Other Mother and supporting characters.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach by classifying parts of the dialogue that are included in the types of maxim violations. By using this method, it can explore how people



think, feel, and interpret their world (Rossman et al., 1985). Data was taken from a children's storybook titled *Coraline*. The researcher found some dialogues that contained violations of the cooperative principle. This study uses one digital children's storybook, *Coraline* with Illustrations by Dave McKean, written by Neil Gaiman in 2008. This book was chosen because it contains dialogues with conversational implicatures. The data was collected through reviews and repeated readings, and then the dialogues were recorded. There are no additional instruments, such as observation sheets or interviews, because the analysis is based entirely on direct dialogue quotations from the book, ignoring the narrator's text.

The researcher found written dialogues containing violations of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, manner, and mixed data. The analysis was conducted in six steps: (1) reread all 17 marked dialogues, (2) mark quotations that violate one or mixed of Grice's maxims (quantity, quality, relation, manner), (3) group quotations by type of violation into a Word table, (4) calculate the frequency of each violated maxim, (5) find patterns in the context of dialogues between Caroline and humans/non-humans, (6) quantity violations are more dominant in creating long-term lies.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Findings

The data used in this study is found in the novel *Coraline*, a children's horror fantasy novel by author Neil Gaiman, published in 2002. The novel was published in 2002 by Bloomsbury and HarperCollins. An analysis of this novel identified 17 cases of violations of Grice's maxims, with a predominance of violations of Quantity (9) and Quality (5), followed by Relation (6) and Manner (7).

### Violation of The Cooperative Principle in *Coraline*

#### 1. Violation of Maxim Quantity

Maxim quantity seeks a balance of information, neither too much nor too little. The following conversation example illustrates a violation of the principle of quantity:

<b>Coraline</b>	: "How do I know you'll keep your word?"
<b>Other Mother</b>	: "I swear it," ... "I swear it on my own mother's grave."
<b>Coraline</b>	: "Does she have a grave?"
<b>Other Mother</b>	: "Oh yes," ... "I put her in there myself. And when I found her trying to crawl out, I put her back."
<b>Coraline</b>	: "Swear on something else. So I can trust you to keep your word."
<b>Other Mother</b>	: "My right hand."

The context of this conversation is when Coraline challenges the Other Mother and invites her to play a game to find the souls of the ghost children and her parents. Other Mother violates quantity with excessive detail "*I put her in there myself. And when I found her trying to crawl out, I put her back,*" which exceeds the simple context and instead arouses Coraline's suspicion because it is too vivid and implicitly reveals a sadistic nature.

#### 2. Violation of Maxim Quality



Maxim quality seeks truthful, accurate, and evidence-based information to avoid false statements. The following conversation example illustrates a violation of the principle of quality:

**Coraline** : “Cats don’t talk at home.”  
**The cat** : “Well, you’re the expert on these things,” ... “After all, what would I know? I’m only a cat.”

The context of this conversation is when Coraline expressed her disbelief in the cat's abilities “*Cats don’t talk at home.*” And the cat fails to fulfill the cooperation that leads to violations of quality due to literal inconsistencies between statements and demonstrated abilities. The cat reflects its ability to speak, which contradicts the statement “*I am just a cat.*” False statements claiming inability when evidence shows otherwise. “*What do I know?*” feigns epistemic humility without evidence, violating quality (honesty).

### 3. Violation of Maxim Relation

Requires for information that is relevant and still related to the topic at that time. The following conversation example illustrates a violation of the principle of relation:

**Other Mother** : “We only want what’s best for you.”  
**Coraline** : “I’m going now,”

The context of this conversation is that Coraline became suspicious of the Other Mother after seeing strange signs (disgusting food, button eyes, live animals). The Other Mother became increasingly aggressive in her desire to trap Coraline in the Other World forever. She said that “*We only want what’s best for you*” with a little bit of violating quality element, but Coraline refuses to answer directly and chooses to ‘run away’ instead. This answer give a vague information because it doesn’t give simple information, so it creates a violation relation. Seeing Coraline choose to run away implies that the good intentions of the other mother are twisted into something terrible.

### 4. Violation of Maxim Manner

Requires information to be concise, clear, and organized without causing ambiguity. The following conversation example illustrates a violation of the principle of manner:

**Coraline** : “Who are you?.”  
**The Ghost** : “Names, names, names,” ... “The names are the first things to go, after the breath has gone, and the beating of the heart. We keep our memories longer than our names. I still keep pictures in my mind of my governess on some May morning, carrying my hoop and stick, and the morning sun behind her, and all the tulips bobbing in the breeze. But I have forgotten the name of my governess, and of the tulips too.”

The context of this conversation is when Coraline didn’t manage to run away from the other mother/Beldam, and she put her inside a mirror. There she met 3 ghost children. This dialogue severely violates Manner's maxim through excessive responses—simple questions about identity are answered with poetic monologues about the process of death and childhood memories. Both of Manner's criteria are violated: obscurity (unclear) and excessive length.



## B. Discussion

Effectiveness in communication depends on participants working together to achieve mutual understanding in conversation (Gong, 2023). Without cooperation between speakers, there will be a gap in understanding that leads to misunderstanding. Speakers and listeners must be aware of these rules, and they must also comply with them in order to keep the conversation flowing smoothly (Fitriani, 2021). Based on the results of the study, the researcher found 17 pieces of data in the form of dialogues between Coraline and humans & non-humans, and the results obtained were that there are 9 violations of the maxim of quantity, 5 of the maxim of quality, 6 of the maxim of relation, and 7 of the maxim of manner.

The Maxim of Quantity is frequently violated to build suspense, manipulate the Other Mother, and create Coraline's adventure full of lies. This is for dramatic effect: excessive information builds tension (e.g., the description of the secret door), while minimal information (from the Old Man's mice) triggers Coraline's curiosity, aligning with the themes of exploration and hidden danger. As in the dialogues in this novel, they are brief, ambiguous, and manipulative, especially from the Other Mother, who provides either too much (overly informative) or too little information to draw Coraline into another world, violating the quantity maxim in order to create deceptive implicature.

The maxim of quantity remains dominant in Coraline's dialogue, but the maxim of manner (avoid vagueness, ambiguity, or convolutedness) comes second because the Other Mother deliberately uses vague and metaphorical language to hide her evil intentions. In Gaiman's dark fantasy narrative, manner violations come second to quantity because Coraline's short dialogue requires clarity for children, in contrast to the ambiguous Other Mother, who creates tension and implies danger (for example, "grave" implies death).

Violation of the maxims of quality and relation is only one data point apart because Gaiman combines direct falsehood (quality) with topic diversion (relation) for a gradual manipulative effect.

## CLOSING

The violation of the Cooperative Principle in Coraline proves effective in producing implicatures that reinforce the themes of courage and tension, with the maxim of quantity being the most dominant.

It is recommended that students use the novel Coraline for discourse analysis courses to examine the author's purpose in writing this book, the impact of manipulative characters, and the effect on readers.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of 17 key dialogues in Neil Gaiman's novel Coraline identifies systematic violations of Grice's maxims that shape the narrative structure of gothic fantasy, with Quantity dominating, followed by Manner, Relation, and Quality. These findings address the research objective by showing that maxim violations are not flawed communication, but rather deliberate narrative strategies to create implicatures that build tension and teach stranger danger to child readers. The dominant patterns detected are: the antagonist (Other Mother) uses Quality violations to deceive "*We only want what's best for you*", magical creatures (Cat) employ unproven false answers "*I'm only a cat*", the protagonist (Coraline) demonstrates moral agency through strategic Relation violations "*I'm going now*", and the ghost children



express trauma through extreme Manner failure “Names, names, names”. Overall, the violations consistently mislead the listener.

## RECOMENDATION

This research is useful for literary enthusiasts, especially those who enjoy dark fantasy for children, to identify violations of maxims in conversations that build narrative tension, thereby increasing appreciation of literary pragmatics and critical analysis skills. By understanding the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner, readers are expected to become more aware of the importance of Grice's cooperative principle to make speech more effective and efficient.

## REFERENCE

Collins, K., Coulson, A., Zhu, J., Rohm, C. E. T., & Stewart, W. (2015). Web Design: Elements of Effective Communication. *Communications of the IIMA*, 6(2), 44–47. <https://doi.org/10.58729/1941-6687.1313>

Fitriani, F. (2021). Seminar on research results: the violation of the maxim of quantity produced by the undergraduate students at the english department STKIP YPUP Makassar. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Studies*, 3(4), 256. <https://doi.org/10.29103/ijevs.v3i4.3449>

Gong, Y. (2023). An Analysis of Conversational Implicature in Pride and Prejudice. *OALib*, 10(09), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1109893>

Grice, P. (1989). *The way of words*. 394 pages.

Labobar, M. (2018). English Education Journal The Violation of Cooperative Principles in The Dialogue Among The Characters of David Baldacci's The Escape (2014). *Eej*, 8(3), 370–377. <http://journal.unnes.ac.id/sju/index.php/eej>

Rossman, Gretchen B, Wilson, & Bruce L. (1985). *EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. DESCRIPTORS \*Data Analysis; Data Collection; Educational Improvement.*

Sari, Z. (2024). *KHIRANI+-+VOLUME+2+NOMOR+4,+TAHUN+2024+hal+242-253. 2.*

White, A. R. (1990). Studies in the Way of Words By Paul Grice Harvard University Press, 1989, 385 pp., £25.95. In *Philosophy* (Vol. 65, Issue 251, pp. 111–113). <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0031819100064330>