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Flouting and Violating Gricean Maxims in Cinematic Discourse: A Qualitative Analysis of Red, White & Royal Blue

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Abstract. Grounded in English discourse analysis, this qualitative study aims to describe conversational maxim non-observance in the speech of the characters of the movie Red, White & Royal Blue (2023). The study used the Cooperative Principle and pragmatic concepts to unveil pragmatic functions of maxim flouting and maxim violation. A descriptive research design was selected for the study, and a purposive sampling technique was used to collect data from multiple movie scripts. To achieve the objective of the study, several excerpts of the movie's script were subjected to examination using conversational maxims. The qualitative study employed an expert validation method to verify results' authenticity and reliability by engaging an English expert to evaluate if the responses align with the principles of the Cooperative Principle. The results revealed that both overt (mostly Manner, Relation, and Quality) and covert (primarily Quality) maxim non-observance are used in the movie to offer grounds for interpersonal communication in private and institutional arenas. The study also found that overt maxim violations and flouting of Manner, Quality, and Relation maxims are rampant in the conversations of characters engaging in banter or negotiating romantic feelings (e.g., exchanges between the Royal Family and the CIA agents). At the same time, covert maxim violations were attributed to characters involved in institutional interactions. The functions of maxim non-observance ranged from damage control, reputation management, and image restoration using cover stories. Overall, the findings demonstrate that fictional conversations depicted in the movie can be used to understand how people navigate their identities and institutional membership while engaging in interpersonal communication. Thus, the study concluded that the Cooperative Principle still applies to modern cinematography.

Keywords: Pragmatics; Gricean Maxims; Flouting; Discourse Analysis

Introduction

Human communication is not a simple exchange of literal meanings, it is a complex social activity in which people exchange information carrying different intentions and contextual meanings to interlocutors Yule (1996). In day-to-day conversation, participants often need to comprehend meanings that are not literally expressed to them. Hence, contextual and inferential understanding plays a vital role in interpreting the speaker's intended message Levinson (1991). It makes conversations not a sequence of utterances but rather an exchange of messages with the contextual and situational variables that require participants to interpret expressions and go beyond the literal meaning of what they say. The process of interpreting implied meaning is crucial in dialogues since what speakers intend to communicate may not always coincide with what they explicitly say. As such, the analysis of how participants derive meaning beyond the utterance's literal content provides the basis for exploring conversational interaction using Grice's Cooperative Principle and conversational maxims.

Grice (1991) proposed the Cooperative Principle, which describes how interlocutors generally contribute to conversations. The principle assumes that participants make contributions that follow the conversational maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. However, speakers may deliberately depart from these maxims to convey meanings beyond what is explicitly stated. Thomas (1995) distinguishes between

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flouting a maxim and violating a maxim as two different ways speakers may depart from the Cooperative Principle. Flouting occurs when a speaker openly disregards a maxim in a way that prompts the listener to infer an implied meaning from the context of the conversation Cutting (2020). In contrast, violating a maxim occurs when a speaker intentionally provides deceptive or misleading information in order to conceal facts or intentions Thomas (1995). This distinction is important for the present study because flouting and violating represent different communicative purposes and therefore require separate identification and coding in the analysis.

The context of the conversation is a significant aspect for considering the cases of maxim non-observance and their implications. Movie dialogues are especially pertinent for pragmatic analysis since, despite being written, acted, and edited for the viewers, they imitate real-life communication and can demonstrate how people explain their meanings through conversations Cutting (2020). The romantic comedy Red, White & Royal Blue focuses on the romance between Alex Claremont-Diaz and Prince Henry, and his interactions with him are full of implications and figurative language, making the conversation worth analyzing. The speech of the characters can help assess how they comment on each other and the situation with potential maxim breaches. In this paper, I will attempt to perform a pragmatic analysis of the excerpts from the movie Red, White & Royal Blue looking at the possible ways in which Grice's (1991) maxims might be flouted or violated. The researchers will also discuss the possible implied meanings in the conversation to identify the figurative meanings intended by the authors.

The film's dialogue creates an excellent context to explore the ways one's utterances may convey implications. While the conversations are well crafted to portray what happens on screen, they present examples of how people do not always follow the conversational maxims and the possible consequences of ignoring them. However, each instance of a maxim being flaunted cannot be understood from what the person saying it has stated. An additional step of analyzing what they might have meant by what they said is required to determine the possible implications. The cooperative principle allows for identifying what a person may have intended to convey by exploring the possible violations of maxims, which can help recognize the implications. The implications must be related to the context and what a character might be suggested to have intended to say, which is why looking at the characters' conversations in Red, White & Royal Blue, can allow identifying the ways the maxim of manner may be flaunted or violated.

Although previous studies have examined Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxim non-observance in different communicative and cinematic contexts, further investigation is needed into how maxim flouting and maxim violation operate together in the selected dialogues of Red, White & Royal Blue (2023). The studies reviewed for the present research provide a foundation for understanding the functions of conversational maxims, but limited attention has been given to how these two forms of maxim non-observance contribute to the communicative purposes and interpersonal interactions represented in this particular film. Specifically, the ways in which maxim flouting and maxim violation function in indirect expression, humor, topic avoidance, concealment, and the management of interpersonal relationships warrant closer examination. Addressing this gap, the present study analyzes selected dialogues from the film using Grice's Cooperative Principle to identify instances of maxim flouting and maxim violation, examine their communicative functions, and determine what they reveal about the characters' interpersonal relationships and communicative strategies.

The analysis of selected dialogues from Red, White & Royal Blue can therefore clarify how characters use maxim flouting and maxim violation to communicate implied meanings and achieve different communicative purposes. Moreover, the paper will investigate how such performative actions are related to the characters' interpersonal relationships and communicative approaches. By distinguishing the two types of maxim non-observation and interpreting their intention in the context of the conversation, it will be possible to make a relevant contribution to the pragmatic analysis of the scripts used in the film.

Research Questions

Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What conversational maxims are flouted and violated by the characters in Red, White & Royal Blue?
2. What communicative functions do the identified instances of maxim flouting and maxim violation serve in the selected dialogues, particularly in terms of humor, indirect expression, avoidance, concealment, or relationship negotiation?
3. What do the identified instances of maxim flouting and maxim violation reveal about the interpersonal relationships and communicative strategies of the characters in the selected dialogues?

Scope and Delimitation

Grounded in Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle, this study focuses on identifying and analyzing instances of maxim flouting and violating across Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner within selected dialogue excerpts from the 2023 screenplay Red, White & Royal Blue by Matthew López and Ted Malawer.

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Original Article

Methodologically, textual analysis of the official script was tethered with two (2) independent viewings of the film by the researchers to assess vocal delivery and situational context, specifically evaluating the pragmatic functions of non-observance such as humor, indirectness, tension management, and information concealment across interpersonal and institutional settings. Conversely, the investigation is delimited in three key respects. First, it focuses strictly on maxim flouting and covert violation, intentionally excluding other forms of non-observance such as maxim opting-out, infringement, and suspension. Second, its scope applies exclusively to the scripted cinematic dialogue of Red, White & Royal Blue (2023) and cannot be generalized to spontaneous, real-life speech or other film genres. Third, the analytical focus remains on spoken and written pragmatic dialogue within narrative context, excluding a comprehensive multimodal examination of kinesics, acoustic prosody, or visual cinematic techniques.

Literature Review

English discourse analysis is generally considered to be a field devoted to studying the properties of language as used in particular environments, be it spoken or written texts (Yule, 1996). However, discourse analysis is more than an exercise in examining the language properties as in itself. Studies of discourse explore how participants in conversations manage to create coherent and unified action through talk, take turns, and understand what others are saying (Enfield and Levinson, 2006; Birner, 2025). Simply put, conversations are not used as a vehicle to simply exchange bare ideas; instead, a discourse is a dynamic medium where conversation partners negotiate meanings and interpret what the other says with reference to what has been said (Levinson 2013).

The ways in which conversation partners seek to negotiate interactions are encapsulated in what Grice (1989) called the cooperative principle. This principle is guided by several sub-maxims that conversation participants are generally assumed to follow, which makes conversations comprehensible to all who use the language. These maxims describe how people can "make their contributions to conversation as informative as is required" (Grice, 1989). The maxims of Conversational Analysis are: (a) Quantity, (b) Quality, (c) Relevance, and (d) Manner. The aforementioned maxims illustrate how effective communication operates in human interaction. The overarching principle dictates that participants should tailor their contributions to match the accepted purpose and stage of the talk exchange. To achieve this, speakers adhere to four distinct maxims: the Maxim of Quantity requires providing as much information as necessary without exceeding what is required; the Maxim of Quality mandates truthfulness, directing speakers to avoid false statements or claims lacking adequate evidence; the Maxim of Relation ensures that contributions remain directly relevant to the topic at hand; and the Maxim of Manner governs clarity, urging speakers to be perspicuous by avoiding ambiguity and obscurity, remaining concise, and presenting ideas in an orderly sequence. Together, these maxims form the pragmatic foundation through which rational, cooperative dialogue and implicit meanings are interpreted.While Grice (1989) intended these maxims to be normative, many subsequent discourse analysts highlighted that conversation partners rarely follow them strictly. Instead, such rules are generally considered to be descriptive, meaning that they encapsulate regular patterns of behavior but are not followed rigidly. Discourse analysts generally agree that the maxims are descriptive rules that can be used to highlight how speakers use language to negotiate meaning, make implicatures, and explicate what they mean indirectly (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014). In particular, Grice's Cooperative Principle is the theoretical framework that allows linguists to analyze how the characters in the Red, White & Royal Blue explore each other's meanings in both public (political) and private arenas of discourse.

Although the Cooperative Principle explains how people usually communicate normally, speakers do not always adhere to the conversational maxims in practice. Thomas (1995) reports various ways in which one may fail to follow the maxims of conversation, such as flouting, violation, opting out, infringing, and suspending a maxim. The current study focuses on two ways of maxim non-observance known as flouting and violation because both help to explain how speakers communicate implied meanings or conceal information.

According to Cutting and Fordyce (2020), maxim flouting involves openly departing from the maxim to enable the listener to deduce the speaker's intention. For instance, a person may employ hyperbole, sarcasm, or an unexpected shift of topic in the middle of a conversation to pass a humorous or ironic remark (Ulfah & Afrilia, 2018) or to disguise an unkind or unpleasant observation (Irawan et al., 2021). In each case, the listener is expected to infer what the speaker means from the context in which maxim flouting takes place.

On the other hand, Thomas (1995) argues that maxim violation occurs when a speaker intentionally violates a maxim to mislead or cover up some information. It involves deliberately withholding information from the listener or giving ambiguous messages to prevent him or her from understanding something that the speaker wishes to conceal or hide. Unlike maxim flouting that is aimed at making the listener infer what the speaker actually means, maxim violation is intended to mislead or deceive the listener. Ramadanti et al. (2024) illustrate how the maxims of conversation are violated in the film dialogues as a way of understanding how the characters use language in the real world.

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The main difference between maxim flouting and maxim violation is that the former is meant to invite an inference while the latter is intended to mislead or withhold information. Thus, it is critical to conduct a contextual analysis of the speech acts to determine whether flouting or violation of a maxim takes place before deciding what the speaker intends. In the dialogues of Red, White & Royal Blue , for instance, the characters may use maxim flouting to communicate a humorous intention or to avoid talking about something unpleasant. On the other hand, maxim violation may take place when a character is evading an issue or trying to conceal some private information or intention.

Film dialogue is designed and delivered to convey conversations while telling the narrative and story as well as shaping the characters involved (Bednarek, 2018). Contrary to regular conversations, film dialogues are prepared and written in a script as an element of a larger design. As such, it can be utilized to express certain ideas as well as to communicate sentiments, develop relationships, advance the plot, and expose information about the characters. Safitri and Martisa (2021) explored the use of maxim flouting and violation in Deadpool 2 to illustrate how Grice's framework can be integrated into examining film dialogues.

Concurrently, prior research has sought to demonstrate the ways in which maxim non-observance is used in conversations to impart additional meaning beyond the literal intentions of the speakers. Padila et al. (2026) investigated maxim flouting in The Wild Robot while Giriyani and Efransyah (2020) are mentioned in the original manuscript to demonstrate the use of conversational maxims in film dialogue. Similarly, Hidayati (2018) looked at maxim flouting in Radio Galau FM. Each piece illustrates how speakers tend to use implicature to convey messages and meanings that are not explicitly stated in the utterances themselves, but which can be inferred based on the contextual information provided. Nevertheless, the application of particular maxims depends on the specific circumstances of the conversation and the relationship between the speakers.

Moreover, the use of maxim non-observance can be intended to misinform or mislead the audience. Both Safitri and Martisa (2021) and Ramadanti et al. (2023) tackled the issue of maxim non-observance in the film dialogue for the purposes of demonstrating how the characters can be deceptive or untruthful in the interactions between the characters in order to cover something up, evade the responsibility, or act humorously. Altogether, the prior research literature on conversational maxims and film dialogue is a valuable springboard for the current investigation. Yet, it is vitally important to remember that not all films employ similar tools in the same way. Therefore, the current study should focus on identifying the ways in which the characters of Red, White & Royal Blue use maxim flouting and violation to further the narrative and shape the relationships between the characters.

Previous studies explored Grice's Cooperative Principle and non-observance of conversational maxims in various ways in different movies and contexts (Giriyani & Efransyah, 2020; Safitri & Martisa, 2021; Ramadanti et al., 2023). They provided insight on how speakers utilized the language to express certain meanings, feelings, and intentions through conversations. Furthermore, these studies demonstrated the significance of taking into account the context of the utterance when it comes to maxim flouting and maxim violation.

Nonetheless, there is a need for further investigations on how maxim flouting and maxim violation take place together in the selected dialogues of Red, White & Royal Blue (2023). In the previous studies included in the background of this research, there is a lack of attention on the role of these two types of maxim non-observance in conveying specific purposes and different relationships between the conversation participants. Particularly, their roles in creating humor, expressing and concealing something indirectly, avoiding specific topics or subjects, and managing relationships need to be taken into more detail.

In order to address the gap in the previous research, the current study will be focused on analyzing the selected dialogues of Red, White & Royal Blue with the use of Grice's Cooperative Principle. It will identify which conversational maxims were flouted or violated by the characters in the dialogues and examine these violations and flouting from the perspective of their purpose in communication. In addition, the study aims to examine how the maxim flouting and maxim violation demonstrate the relationship between the characters and how the strategies help the characters to deal with sensitive topics.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative research design to analyze the flouting and violation of conversational maxims in selected dialogues from Red, White & Royal Blue (2023). The study used Grice's Cooperative Principle to identify the conversational maxims that were flouted or violated, examine their communicative functions, and determine what they revealed about the characters' interpersonal relationships and communication strategies.

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Research Locale

The study was limited to selected excerpts from the 2023 film Red, White & Royal Blue. Since the film's dialogues were written and designed for a specific effect, the patterns identified in the film may not hold true for spontaneous conversations. However, the selected excerpts provided a useful context for exploring how maxim flouting and maxim violation shaped cinematic discourse, as well as the interactions between the characters.

Research Participants

Not applicable, as the study focused on selected excerpts of the movie Red, White & Royal Blue (2023), rather than human participants.

Research Instrument

The script of the movie Red, White & Royal Blue (2023), written by Matthew López and Ted Malawer, served as the source of data for the study. The script was obtained from a public website where the screenplay was made publicly available. The researchers used Grice's Cooperative Principle as the basis for manually coding the selected conversations. Each utterance was analyzed to determine whether it demonstrated the flouting or violation of a conversational maxim. The identified cases were classified according to the four conversational maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner.

Data Gathering Procedure

First, the researchers watched the film to identify which parts of the movie's script would be useful for the analysis. The script was examined for utterances illustrating the flouting of Grice's maxims of conversation. After that, the relevant parts of the script were sorted according to characters, scene numbers, and page numbers. In addition, the researchers watched the movie two (2) times with the script to ensure that they fully captured the contextual meaning. The purpose of this activity was not to compare the script and the final version of the film, but rather to observe the expressions, hear the tone of voice, and understand the context in which the characters communicated. This process helped the researchers identify the pragmatic functions of the utterances. As a result, the final corpus of data consisted only of utterances relevant to the research question. The researchers manually coded the selected conversations using Grice's Cooperative Principle. Each utterance was analyzed within the context of the conversation in which it appeared to determine whether it demonstrated the flouting or violation of a conversational maxim. Each identified case was then grouped according to Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. The researchers classified maxim flouting and maxim violation based on the speaker's purpose in communicating and the overt or covert nature of the maxim's misapplication. Maxim flouting is an overt "conversational non-observance" that does not aim to mislead the listener and "invites an inference about some further meaning that is not expressed outright" (Grice, 1989; Thomas, 1995). Thus, a speaker flouts a maxim by openly and overtly violating it without deceptive intentions but provoking the listener to infer additional meaning beyond the utterance's literal meaning. In contrast, maxim violation is a covert "non-observance" intended to mislead or provide the listener with incomplete or inaccurate information (Grice, 1989; Thomas, 1995). After coding the conversations, the researchers examined the functions of each identified maxim flouting and maxim violation. Each conversation was assessed in terms of the roles it played in the conversation and the implications for the participants' power dynamic, discourse strategy, and interpersonal relationship. Each case was also evaluated in terms of pragmatic functions, such as the use of humor, indirect expression, avoidance, and information concealment. The results were summarized in relevant tables that included the utterances, their speakers, page and scene numbers, types of maxim non-observance, and applicable maxims. The researchers then interpreted the results within the context of the research questions. The researchers acknowledged that the interpretation of conversational meaning was subjective. Given that the study explored implied meanings, communicative intentions, and functions of maxim non-observance, the researchers' understanding of the dialogue and context could affect the analysis. To address these considerations, several scholarly interventions were implemented. First, the analysis ensured that all coding decisions and interpretations were strictly grounded in the conversational context, the actual dialogue, and Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle, particularly in distinguishing between maxim flouting and maxim violation based on established academic definitions. Additionally, the analysis was consulted with two individuals who specialized in language studies. The analysis did not claim to reflect cinematic discourse or real-life conversations beyond the selected excerpts from the film.

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: What conversational maxims are flouted and violated by the characters in Red, White & Royal Blue?

This chapter presents the results of the pragmatic analysis of selected dialogues from Red, White & Royal Blue (2023). The analysis identifies instances of conversational maxim flouting and maxim violation based on Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle. The selected dialogues are examined according to the four conversational maxims Quantity, Quality, Relation or Relevance, and Manner. Flouting and violation are treated as separate categories of maxim non-observance, and each identified instance is interpreted within its conversational and narrative context.

Table 1. Instances of Maxim Flouting in the Oval Office Coming-Out Scene

	Utterance/Dialogue	Character(s)	Page/ Scene	Maxim	Type of Non-Observance
1.	Alex: " Yea. I've been, um, I've been figuring some things out about myself lately. And it's, um, relevant to the campaign, in a way." Ellen: "Okay" Alex: "I've met someone." Ellen: " Is that all? Honey, that's great. But why would that be relevant to the campaign? She's not a Republican, is she?"	Alex & Ellen	p. 72, Scene 89	Manner and Relation	Flouting
2.	Alex: "No. She's also a "he." And "he" happens to be Henry." Ellen: "As in the Prince of England?" Alex: "Yeah." (Ellen picks up her phone) Alex: "Oh, I'm –"Ellen: "We're going to need some pizza."	Alex & Ellen	p. 72, Scene 89	Quantity and Relevance	Flouting
3.	Ellen: " So are you gay? Bi? Fluid? Pan? Queer?" Alex: "Cool it, mom. I'm bi." Ellen: " All right. You know, the "B" in LGBTQ is not a silent letter.."	Ellen & Alex	p. 73, Scene 90A	Manner with Quality	Flouting
4.	Ellen: "I mean if I'd had more warning, I could have made you a PowerPoint presentation but..can I give you some advice"	Ellen	p. 73, Scene 90A	Quality	Flouting
5.	Ellen: "I just want to make sure you know you need to wear a condom if you're having anal intercourse. We can talk about getting you on Truvada. And if you're bottoming, you need the HPV vaccine. I can have HHS send over some brochures..." Alex: "You are ridiculous. I cannot believe they give you the nuclear codes."	Ellen & Alex	pp. 73–74, Scene 90A	Quality and Relevance	Flouting

Table 1 contains 5 excerpts of dialogues from the Oval Office coming out scene that illustrate the ways in which the characters flout maxims of Manner, Relation (Relevance), Quantity and Quality. First, in Excerpt 1, Alex and Ellen both flout the Maxims of Manner and Relation. Alex flouts Manner when he says he has been "figuring some things out about myself lately" and it is "relevant to the campaign, in a way". He is using ambiguous and indirect language to soften the blow of a potentially shocking coming out confession. Ellen then flouts the Maxim of Relation when asking "She's not a Republican, is she?" instead of commenting on Alex's coming out confession. Second, Ellen flouts the Maxims of Quantity and Relevance in Excerpt 2. After Alex finally tells his mother that he has been dating Prince Henry, Ellen responds with "We're going to need some pizza". She flouts Relevance by changing the subject from her son's coming out to ordering food. Ellen also flouts Quantity by giving an insufficient response to Alex's just revelation about the British royal family; instead of trying to process the information right away, she gives a short comment about needing pizza to have some time to herself. Third, in Excerpt 3, Ellen responds to Alex's "I'm bi" with "The 'B' in LGBTQ is not a silent letter". Ellen flouts Manner when she does not state her position on her son's sexuality more directly. She also flouts Quality by saying that the "B" is not a silent letter in a sarcastic and exaggerated manner, as if it actually was a silent letter in the acronym LGBTQ. Ellen basically teases Alex for taking so long to admit his sexuality. Fourth, Ellen flouts the Maxim of Quality in Excerpt 4, when she says "If I'd had more warning, I could have made you a PowerPoint presentation". Ellen knows it would be inappropriate to make a PowerPoint presentation for her son's coming out, but she exaggerates her feelings just to make the situation more lighthearted. Her flouting of Quality allows her to joke about the situation and diminish its seriousness.

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 287-297, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Finally, in Excerpt 5, Alex says "You are ridiculous. I cannot believe they give you the nuclear codes" in response to Ellen's medical advice. Alex flouts both the Maxims of Relevance and Quality. He responds to his mother's intrusive questions about his sex life and medical needs with a comment on her presidential powers. Alex also states that he "cannot believe they give you the nuclear codes", which is an exaggeration (flout of Quality), meant to ridicule Ellen for being so nosy. Based on the analysis of dialogues from the Oval Office scene in the movie, it can be concluded that the characters often flout maxims of Manner, Relation, Quantity and Quality to make light of serious topics and keep their interactions lighthearted.

Research Question 2: What communicative functions do the identified instances of maxim flouting and maxim violation serve in the selected dialogues, particularly in terms of humor, indirect expression, avoidance, concealment, or relationship negotiation?

Table 2. Instances of Maxim Violation in Selected Film Dialogues

	Utterance/Dialogue	Character(s)	Page/ Scene	Maxim	Type of Non-Oservance
1.	Zahra: "To undo all the damage you've done. The White House and the Palace are going to release a joint statement explaining that what happened at the wedding was a complete misunderstanding--" Alex: "Which it was." Zahra: "--and despite rarely having time to see one another, you and Prince Henry are in fact close personal friends and have been for the last several years"	Zahra & Alex	Pages 10–11 (Scene 8)	Quality	Violation
2.	Henry: "It's all true, Grandpa." The King: "Nevertheless, I have directed palace communications to issue a firm denial of these accusations." Henry: "They are not accusations--they are the truth."	Henry & King	Page 98 (Scene 124)	Quality	Violation
3.	The King: "It's a truth from which I am determined to protect you." Henry: "I don't want your protection, I want your support."	King & Henry	Page 98 (Scene 124)	Manner	Violation
4.	Henry: "I don't want your protection, I want your support." The King: "It is not yours to decide which of the two you will get."	King & Henry	Page 98 (Scene 124)	Relation	Flouting

Table 2 above contains extracts from the play's dialogues, which illustrate the flouting and strategic nonobservance of maxims of quality, manner, and relation by the characters involved in institutional or high-power interactions. Unlike the examples provided in Table 1, the following instances of maxim violations are meant to conceal potentially damaging truths or to impose the superior power's will on the subordinates through the use of linguistic strategies.cIn the first extract (Excerpt 1), Zahra commits a violation of the maxim of quality while discussing the White House and Palace joint statement, claiming that Alex and Prince Henry "are in fact close personal friends and have been for the last several years." In fact, at the scene of the conversation (Scene 8), the two men are known to have an apparent enmity. Zahra's maxim violation is committed on purpose by announcing a fabricated truth, she performs a damage control activity for the royal family's reputation as the official response to the recent royal wedding scandal. The second extract (Excerpt 2) illustrates a quality maxim violation committed by the King of England while responding to Henry's inquiry in Scene 124. After Henry confirmed the contents of the emails, stating that "It's all true, Grandpa," the King replies with the announcement of "palace communications have been instructed to issue a firm denial of these accusations," despite having prior knowledge of their truthfulness. Once again, a quality maxim violation has been committed to maintain the established image of the royal family by preventing the unpleasant truth from becoming public. Excerpt 3 contains an example of a manner maxim violation committed by the King while he is attempting to reassure Henry that the issued statement about his engagement is not an issue: "It's a truth from which I am determined to protect you." From a logical standpoint, this response should not be considered a violation; however, on a figurative level, the King is manipulating the facts and imposing a false perception of the situation. He is misleading Henry by presenting the unacceptable truth with the image of a protective figure who defends his son's interests, thus committing a maxim of manner violation.

Finally, Excerpt 4 is taken from the conversation in which Henry objects to his father's insistence on him remaining closeted: "I don't want your protection, I want your support." In response to his son's plea, the King states: "It is not yours to decide which of the two you will get." While attempting to convince Henry of his position, the King violates the maxim of relevance by refusing to acknowledge his son's appeal outright and

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

avoiding the subject of his relationship with his daughter. By doing that, the King of England negates Henry's request for support and imposes his own terms on the conversation, thus, violating the maxim of relevance. As illustrated by the examples in Table 2, the characters in power often resort to conversational maxim violations to either protect their image or enforce their superior status over the subordinates. The most common violations committed are those of the maxim of quality, followed by the violations of manner and relevance. On the whole, the characters in positions of power tend to abuse the use of figurative language and metaphorical statements (violations of manner) when committing maxim violations to conceal the truth and impose their will on the lower parties.

Research Question 3: What do the identified instances of maxim flouting and maxim violation reveal about the interpersonal relationships and communicative strategies of the characters in the selected dialogues?

Table 3. Communicative Functions of Identified Maxim Flouting and Maxim Violation in Selected Film Dialogues

Type of Non-Observance	Maxim	Communicative Function	Evidence/Interpretation
1. Flouting	Manner	Indirect expression	Alex uses ambiguous and roundabout language while talking about his own personal disclosure, thus avoiding mentioning the subject directly.
2. Flouting	Relation/ Relevance	Tension deflection	By doing so, Ellen changes the subject of the conversation right away. She talks about something completely different, namely, doing an ordinary activity.
3. Flouting	Manner	Humor and interpersonal support	Ellen has phrased something in a funny, non-literal way, as a means of not responding directly to what Alex had said.
4. Flouting	Quality	Humor and exaggeration	Ellen says something intentionally exaggerated so as to make light of what has been said and turn the conversation away from it.
5. Flouting	Relation/ Relevance	Humor and topic avoidance	Alex talks about something else, making a joke about his mother, thus changing the topic of conversation.
6. Violation	Quality	Concealment and public image management	A public description would present the relationship between Alex and Henry in a different light than it is in private; this could help conceal their relationship.
7. Violation	Quality	Concealment and institutional image protection	The public denial would contradict what is known to the members of the conversation, thus controlling the representation of the relationship.

Table 3 represents the primary communicative functions related to each instance of maxim flouting and maxim violation identified in the preceding sections. The results reveal a specific division in conversational non-observance depending on whether the dialogue is created within private and interpersonal or public and institutional contexts. To begin with, in private and interpersonal contexts (Items 1-5), maxim flouting is utilized to negotiate emotional vulnerability, establish and enforce limits, and build solidarity through humor. Alex's initial flouts of Manner enable him to indirectly introduce an intimate revelation without immediately subjecting himself to judgment, while Ellen's flouts of Relation, Quantity, and Quality ("We're going to need some pizza", "PowerPoint presentation") help destigmatize the coming-out process with humor. Besides, Ellen's combined Manner and Quality flout ("The 'B' in LGBTQ is not a silent letter") allows her to confirm Alex's bisexual identity in a lighthearted manner. Thus, it can be observed that the flouting of maxims in private and interpersonal contexts creates a supportive space for disclosing intimate topics.

On the other hand, the non-observance of maxims in public and institutional contexts (Items 6-9) is generally found in covert maxim violations and authority flouts to maintain concealment, cover up, frame-dumping, and enforce power differentials. Indeed, Zahra's ("close personal friends") and the King's ("firm denial") Quality violations are deployed to protect their private and sensitive information from public scrutiny. Besides, the turn-by-turn analysis of King and Henry's confrontation illustrates how institutional figures use a combination of Manner violations and Relation flouts to uphold the state of affairs. Namely, the King utilizes the notion of the protection to conceal his suppressed identity (Manner Violation) however, Henry's refusal to accept this as a form of support compels the King to shift the topic to the theme of monarchical control ("not yours to decide", Relation Flout). Such a move highlights the inability of institutional figures to openly discuss their intimate topics and the need to use non-observance as a tool of power differential reinforcement. Thus, it can be concluded that the simulated cinematic dialogue produces a variety of pragmatic tools to navigate the tension between personal and institutional contexts.

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The pragmatic analysis of conversational maxims in the selected dialogues in Red, White & Royal Blue (2023) demonstrates that the non-observance of the principles is a premeditated and functional discourse strategy. Based on Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle and the non-observance taxonomies by Thomas (1995) and Cutting (2008), this paper argues that the findings of maxim flout and violation serve a different functional division.

Maxim Flouting as an Interpersonal Strategy for Rapport and Emotional Management

The findings presented in Table 1 demonstrate that flouting (primarily Manner, Relevance, and Quality) in the selected excerpts is an overt strategy to achieve conversational goals. Concerning the non-adherence to Manner, Alex's "I've been figuring some things out…" can be interpreted as a flout to Manner to mitigate the direct approach to a potentially delicate matter. Similarly, Ellen's "We're going to need some pizza" and "The 'B' in LGBTQ is not a silent letter" can be interpreted as a flout to Relation and Quality, respectively. Her intention is not to lie but to alleviate the tension in the conversation by employing banter. Certainly, such a strategy has been reported by Hidayati (2018) and Irawan et al. (2021) who found that in romantic movies, speakers tend to flout maxims of Manner and Relation to test a partner's reaction and manage emotional vulnerability without jeopardizing the conversation.

Maxim Violation as an Institutional Shield for Secrecy and Image Control

Unlike flouting, the findings in Table 2 suggest that the violation of Quality (by both White House and Royal Palace officials) is a covert strategy to conceal information. For instance, when the White House and Royal Palace officials demand Alex and Henry to be "close personal friends" or when the King issues a "firm denial" of their relationship, Quality is violated to maintain secrecy. Definitely, Thomas (1995) and Culpeper and Haugh (2014) note that the reason for violating Quality is to hide facts, particularly in institutional settings. Such a strategy has been reported by Safitri and Martisa (2021) and Ramadanti et al. (2023) who argue that in cinematic discourse, Quality is violated to protect the institution's image during a crisis. Thus, the analysis demonstrates that the flouting of Quantity and Quality in Red, White & Royal Blue can provide valuable insights into the characters' psychological processes and power dynamics.

Synthesis and Contribution to Cinematic Discourse Analysis

By synthesizing the findings of the previous sections, this paper demonstrates that the non-adherence to Grice's maxims of Conversation can be both an overt and a covert strategy. The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature on cinematic discourse in several ways. First, they expand the understanding of pragmatic inferences made by movie characters. Bednarek (2018), for instance, argues that the language of movie screens is a simulation of "natural haphazard talk" that constructs complex character psychology and power dynamics. While the prior research on cinematic discourse focuses on the implications of non-adherence to maxims in a monologic context (Padila et al., 2026), this study demonstrates that characters employ various strategies of maxim non-observance to achieve their goals. In particular, the analysis demonstrates that flouting and violation of Quantity and Quality can be employed as interpersonal and institutional strategies, respectively.

Overall, this paper has demonstrated that Grice's maxims of Conversation can serve as a useful tool for pragmatic analysis of cinematic discourse. Unquestionably, the analysis of the selected excerpts from Red, White & Royal Blue (2023) has demonstrated that both flouting and violation of Quality can be employed as strategies to convey subtextual meaning. Specifically, while flouting is used in interpersonal communication to mitigate the tension, the violation of Quality is a tool for institutional secrecy. This study's findings add to the existing body of research on pragmatic inferences made by movie characters and highlight the importance of context-dependency in the interpretation of implicatures.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to note that this study did not involve human subjects or participants, interviews, questionnaires, or surveys. The data for this paper were extracted from the publicly released film Red, White & Royal Blue (2023), featuring a screenplay written by Matthew López and Ted Malawer, based on the novel by Casey McQuiston. As such, participants' consent was not obtained since the source material is available in the public domain. However, the researchers strictly adhered to ethical principles and standards in academic practice. Full credit was given where it was due by explicitly acknowledging the film's creators, specifically author Casey McQuiston, screenwriters Matthew López and Ted Malawer, as well as all academic literature and resources referenced throughout the study. Furthermore, while presenting the findings, the researchers acknowledged that the analysis relied solely on dialogue extracted from the selected screenplay, ensuring that all concepts, utterances, and subtexts were accurately represented without distortion or misrepresentation.

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Original Article

Conclusion

This study examined selected dialogues from Red, White & Royal Blue (2023) using Grice's (1989) Cooperative Principle, with particular attention to maxim flouting, maxim violation, and their communicative functions. The analysis distinguished the two forms of maxim non-observance and examined how they operate within the conversational contexts presented in the film. The findings show that the selected instances involve the Maxims of Manner, Relation or Relevance, and Quality. Maxim flouting is associated with indirect expression, humor, topic avoidance, and the management of conversational tension. Maxim violation, on the other hand, is associated primarily with concealment and the management of public representation. These differences demonstrate that maxim non-observance can serve different communicative purposes depending on the context in which an utterance occurs. The analysis further indicates that the identified forms of maxim non-observance contribute to the representation of the characters' interpersonal relationships and communicative strategies. Through indirect expressions, humorous responses, topic shifts, and controlled information, the dialogue represents the characters' negotiation of personal and public concerns. The findings therefore support the use of Gricean pragmatics in examining how meaning is communicated beyond what is explicitly stated in scripted film dialogue. However, the study is limited to selected dialogues from a single film. The findings therefore cannot be generalized to all cinematic discourse or to natural conversation. Instead, they provide a focused analysis of how maxim flouting and violation function within Red, White & Royal Blue. Future studies may examine a larger collection of films or compare different genres to determine whether similar patterns of maxim non-observance and communicative functions occur across cinematic discourse.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, scope, and limitations of this study, several key recommendations are proposed for future researchers, discourse analysts, and language educators. First, future researchers are encouraged to expand the empirical dataset beyond single-film screenplays to comparative cross-genre analyses or long-form serial television dramas (Bednarek, 2018). Examining whether distinct genre conventions, such as political thrillers versus romantic comedies, influence the functional proportion of maxim flouting versus violation would provide a broader empirical baseline for cinematic discourse studies (Ramadanti et al., 2023; Padila et al., 2026). Second, while this study focused primarily on textual script dialogue, future pragmatic research should adopt multimodal discourse frameworks by integrating acoustic prosody, facial expressions, and kinesic cues alongside text (Culpeper & Haugh, 2014). Combining Gricean textual analysis with visual and auditory modalities provides a far more comprehensive approach to decoding character intent, subtextual nuance, and covert non-observance in screen media (Safitri & Martisa, 2021). Finally, language educators and curriculum developers are advised to incorporate selected cinematic dialogues as authentic learning materials for teaching conversational implicature and indirect speech acts in English language instruction (Cutting, 2008). Pedagogical tasks that prompt students to identify and analyze maxim flouts in popular media can significantly enhance L2 learners' pragmatic competence and contextual awareness of spoken English discourse (Ulfah & Afrilia, 2018; Irawan et al., 2021).

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Original Article

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