Maxim Observance and Non-Observance on Meilin's Utterances in *Turning Red* Movie

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Abstract. This study explores the observance and non-observance of Grice's Cooperative Principle in the speech of Meilin Lee, the main character in Pixar's animated film Turning Red. Focusing on her dialogues with both family members and friends, this research aims to identify how Meilin observes, flouts, or violates the conversational maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study analyzes 97 utterances selected from the film's transcript. The results show that the maxim of relevance is most frequently used in family interactions, often flouted to avoid confrontation or express resistance. Meanwhile, the maxim of quantity dominates Meilin's interactions with her friends, frequently flouted for humor or expressive emphasis. Violations are more common in family settings, reflecting emotional concealment or tension, whereas flouting is more prevalent in casual, peer-based conversations. These findings highlight how characters' maxim use shifts depending on relational context and suggest that non-observance strategies serve functions such as avoidance, emphasis, emotional control, or indirect expression. The study contributes to pragmatic analysis in fictional discourse and offers insight into how animated characters reflect real-world communication dynamics

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, Gricean Maxim, Pragmatic, Turning Red.

INTRODUCTION

Communication is the act of conveying information, ideas, or emotions between individuals, with the primary goal of achieving mutual understanding. Berlo (1960) conceptualizes communication as a dynamic process involving four key components: sender, message, channel, and receiver. He emphasizes that successful communication depends on the sender's encoding skills and the receiver's decoding abilities, as well as the relationship between participants and the medium through which the message is transmitted. Pearce (1989) expands on this by framing communication as a social act that constructs meaning through interaction, shaped by cultural and social contexts. Meaning, therefore, is not only embedded in spoken words but also constructed through the dynamics of human interaction.

Messages can be delivered either explicitly or implicitly. Explicit communication involves direct and unambiguous expression of meaning, whereas implicit

communication relies on context, shared knowledge, and inference. As Yule (1996) explains, understanding implicit meaning is central to the field of pragmatics, which studies how context influences the interpretation of language. Pragmatics highlights that meaning depends on situational factors such as speaker identity, listener relationship, and the social context of the interaction. A key concept in pragmatics is implicature, where meaning is implied rather than directly stated. Yule (1996) categorizes implicature into two types: conventional implicature, associated with specific expressions (e.g., "but" implying contrast), and conversational implicature, which arises from contextual and shared assumptions in a conversation. Conversational implicature enables speakers to communicate efficiently by relying on listeners to infer unstated meanings.

This phenomenon is further explained through Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, which suggests that effective communication depends on participants adhering to four conversational maxims: Quantity (provide sufficient information), Quality (provide truthful information), Relevance (stay on topic), and Manner (be clear and orderly). However, speakers may not always strictly follow these maxims. Instead, they may observe, flout, or violate them—depending on their communicative intent. Flouting, often used for humor or subtle emphasis, involves intentionally breaking a maxim to convey an implied meaning without misleading the listener. In contrast, violation involves providing misleading or irrelevant information, typically with the intention to deceive or obscure.

This theoretical framework is particularly useful in analyzing communication in visual narratives, such as animated films. Turning Red (2022), directed by Domee Shi, presents a rich case for pragmatic analysis. The film follows Meilin Lee, a Chinese-Canadian teenager navigating life between traditional family expectations and the freedoms of adolescent friendship. The contrast in Meilin's communication with her family and friends reflects different pragmatic strategies, shaped by cultural values and social norms. Her interactions with family are often formal and laden with unspoken expectations, while conversations with peers are more relaxed, open, and emotionally expressive. This dynamic showcases how Gricean maxims are used differently depending on social context.

Previous studies on conversational implicature and maxim violation in films often focus on identifying types and frequencies of maxims in general or on analyzing dialogues across various characters. However, few have examined how the use of maxims shifts depending on relational context, such as between family and friends, especially in the experience of a diasporic adolescent. This study addresses that gap by analyzing how Meilin observes, flouts, or violates the maxims in two specific social contexts: with her family and with her friends. By focusing on one character across contrasting relational dynamics, this study aims to identify which types of Gricean maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relevance, or Manner) are most frequently used by Meilin in different social contexts. It also aims to analyze how her use of observance and non-observance strategies—such as flouting and violating maxims—differs between interactions with her family and with her friends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of previous studies have addressed conversational implicature and maxim violations in various movie scripts. Simaremare and Herman (2020) found that the maxim of relevance was frequently violated in Mulan, reflecting cultural implications rooted in Chinese values. Nurhidayah et al. (2021) identified Particularized Conversational

Implicature (PCI) as dominant in Gifted, suggesting that contextual understanding is essential for interpretation. Kurniawan and Utami (2021) discovered that Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) was more frequent in the Japanese drama Oshin, revealing psychological nuances in women's speech. Efizahane and Afriana (2022) highlighted the use of relevance violations in Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness to build tension and obscure meaning.

Tasyarasita and Wibowo (2022) analyzed All The Bright Places and observed that the maxim of quality was commonly flouted, driven by competitive, collaborative, or conflictive motives. Astini et al. (2023) identified quantity as the most frequently flouted maxim in Raya and The Last Dragon, contributing to narrative tension. Darmayani et al. (2023) found GCI more dominant than PCI in Turning Red, with relevance being the most frequent maxim applied. Similarly, Hidayah et al. (2024) reported that relevance and quality violations were used to develop interpersonal dynamics in the same film, though without distinguishing communication strategies across relational contexts. Other studies, such as Anjani (2024) in Barbie and Safitri (2024) in Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3, emphasized maxim violations primarily for character development and dramatic or humorous effect, with quantity and relevance emerging as the most common.

While these studies offer valuable insight into the use of implicature and maxim violation, most focus on general patterns across multiple characters. Few have specifically examined how Gricean maxims are used differently depending on social relationships. Therefore, this study focuses on Meilin's utterances in Turning Red, analyzing how she observes, flouts, or violates maxims in two contexts—family and friends—while exploring the pragmatic functions behind these strategies, such as sarcasm, humor, affection, frustration, and emotional resistance. To address this gap, this study applies H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle as the theoretical framework to analyze how Meilin observes or fails to observe conversational maxims in two distinct contexts: with her family and with her friends.

Grice (1975) proposed that participants in a conversation are expected to contribute appropriately and effectively, in a manner aligned with the purpose and direction of the discourse. The Cooperative Principle provides a foundation for interpreting both explicit and implicit meanings in communication. Grice formulated four conversational maxims to support this principle:

1. Maxim of Quantity
   Speakers are expected to provide the right amount of information—neither excessively nor insufficiently. The two key sub-rules include: (1) do not provide more information than is required, and (2) do not provide less information than is necessary.
2. Maxim of Quality
   This maxim requires speakers to contribute only what they believe to be true, supported by adequate evidence. Misleading or false statements are to be avoided.
3. Maxim of Relevance
   Contributions should be relevant to the ongoing topic. Irrelevant utterances can disrupt coherence and hinder mutual understanding.
4. Maxim of Manner

This maxim concerns the clarity of expression. Speakers should avoid obscurity and ambiguity, and present their ideas in an orderly and concise manner.

Grice acknowledged that in real-life interactions, these maxims are not always strictly followed. He categorized their use into two primary conditions: observance and non-observance.

A. Observance of Maxims

Observance refers to full compliance with the conversational maxims. When maxims are observed, communication is efficient, informative, relevant, and clear.

Example from Grice (1975):

A: "Where does C live?"

B: "He lives in London."

This reply is appropriately informative and adheres to the principles of truth and relevance.

B. Non-Observance of Maxim

Non-observance occurs when speakers deliberately or implicitly fail to adhere to one or more maxims. This can be employed for various pragmatic purposes, such as irony, humor, emotional expression, or strategic communication. Non-observance is further divided into two categories:

1. Flouting the Maxim

Flouting refers to an intentional and overt violation of a maxim, where the speaker assumes the listener will recognize the implied meaning. It is often used in informal settings such as personal conversations.

Examples:

a. Irony: "X is a fine friend." (Suggesting X is actually not a good friend)
b. Metaphor: "You are the cream in my coffee." (Indicating emotional importance)
c. Hyperbole: "Every hair of his head loves a salad." (An exaggerated metaphor)
d. Relevance:
   A: "How was your date?"
   B: "Well, my cat is very happy I'm home early." (Implying it went badly)
e. Manner: "Miss X produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely with the score of 'Home Sweet Home.'" (An indirect way of saying her singing was poor)

2. Violating the Maxim

Violation involves a covert failure to observe a maxim, typically with the intent to mislead, omit, or conceal information. This strategy is commonly seen in more formal or strategic interactions.

Example:

In a recommendation letter: "He is very punctual and dresses well."

The omission of relevant academic or professional attributes implies a violation of the Maxim of Quantity by intentionally withholding critical information.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze how Meilin Lee, the main character in Turning Red, observes and violates the conversational maxims proposed by H.P. Grice. The qualitative method is chosen to allow a deeper interpretation of the character's utterances within their social and pragmatic context. By focusing on the natural use of language in the film, this study seeks to uncover the implicit meanings and communicative intentions conveyed through Meilin's interactions.

The data source for this study is the 2022 animated film Turning Red, produced by Pixar Animation Studios. The analysis centers specifically on the character Meilin and her verbal interactions throughout the movie. Her utterances are treated as the data and are drawn directly from the film's English subtitle script. These utterances are then classified based on the relationship context in which they occur—whether addressed to family members or to friends—thus allowing comparative analysis of her pragmatic strategies across different social settings.

The data collection process began with repeated viewings of the film to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dialogue. Meilin's utterances were extracted and cross-checked with the official subtitle transcript to ensure accuracy. Only utterances that indicated a clear application or violation of the Cooperative Principle were selected for analysis. These selected utterances were then grouped according to two categories: family-related interactions and friend-related interactions.

The analysis was conducted using Grice's theory of the Cooperative Principle, which includes four conversational maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner. Each utterance was examined to determine whether it demonstrated observance or non-observance of a particular maxim. Furthermore, to systematize the data, a coding system was applied to reflect both the type of maxim and the nature of the social interaction. The codes used were FQN and FRQN for Quantity (family vs. friends), FQL and FRQL for Quality, FRV and FRRV for Relevance, and FMN and FRMN for Manner. These codes facilitated the identification of patterns in Meilin's communication behavior, making it possible to trace how she adjusted her pragmatic strategies depending on the relational context. The analysis also considered the implied functions of maxim use—such as humor, sarcasm, affection, avoidance, or emotional resistance.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis identified a total of 97 utterances by Meilin, of which 63 occurred in family interactions and 34 in friend interactions.

No.	Maxim Used	Total	
		Family	*Friends*
1.	Quantity	13	12
2.	Quality	18	8
3.	Relevance	27	5
4.	Manner	5	9
Total		63	34

These utterances were categorized by maxim and by whether Meilin observed, flouted, or violated the maxim. In the family context (63 utterances), Meilin's use of the maxims was distributed as follows: the maxim of Quantity occurred in 13 utterances (6 observed, 7 flouted); Quality occurred in 18 utterances (2 observed, 9 flouted, 7 violated); Relevance in 27 utterances (8 observed, 19 flouted); and Manner in 5 utterances (1 observed, 4 flouted). In the friend context (34 utterances), the totals were: Quantity in 12 utterances (5 observed, 7 flouted); Quality in 8 utterances (7 flouted, 1 violated); Relevance in 5 utterances (2 observed, 3 flouted); and Manner in 9 utterances (1 observed, 7 flouted, 1 violated). These results demonstrate that the emphasis on specific maxims varies according to relational context, indicating that Meilin adjusts her way of speaking with family and friends to fulfill different social intentions. While all maxim-related utterances by Meilin are included in the appendix, only a number of them are examined in detail in the following discussion. These examples were chosen for their clarity,

functional diversity, and representativeness, in order to maintain focus and prevent repetition.

A. Discussion of Meilin's Maxim Usage
1. Maxim of Quantity

The Maxim of Quantity concerns the appropriate amount of information shared in a conversation. A speaker is expected to provide neither too little nor too much detail. In Turning Red, Meilin frequently flouts this maxim, either by withholding information in moments of emotional tension—especially with family—or by over-explaining when interacting with friends, often driven by excitement or frustration.

a. Family

Data 1: FQN4
MOTHER: You're ten minutes late. What happened? Are you hurt? Are you hungry?
MEILIN: Um…

This utterance represents a flouting of the Maxim of Quantity, as Meilin fails to give sufficient detail in a context that clearly calls for explanation. Instead of answering her mother's urgent and multi-layered questions, she responds with "Um…", a vague hesitation that contains no informative content. Her silence signals unease and a desire to delay the conversation. Pragmatically, this functions as an act of avoidance, where the minimal response attempts to postpone confrontation without directly rejecting it.

Data 2: FQN7
MOTHER: Mei-Mei, what's going on, honey? Are you sick? Is it a fever? A stomach ache? Chills? Constipation?
MEILIN: No!

In this case, Meilin also flouts the Maxim of Quantity by responding with a single, overly brief word that lacks clarity. Her answer, "No!", doesn't address the specific concerns her mother expressed and thus provides insufficient information. Although not dishonest, the reply avoids emotional engagement. The function is pragmatic minimalism—Meilin uses the shortest possible answer to shut down the conversation and distance herself emotionally from the situation.

b. Friends

Data 1: FRQN13
MIRIAM: Mei, chill. Let's go, let's go. Calm down, Mei.
PRIYA: Dude, keep it together.
MEILIN: I can't. We need to see this concert. Why doesn't my mom get that? I never ask for anything. My whole life I've been her perfect little Mei-Mei. Temple duties, grades…

Meilin's response here clearly flouts the Maxim of Quantity by including more detail than the situation requires. Rather than addressing the immediate request to calm down, she launches into an emotionally loaded narrative about her perceived sacrifices. This type of elaboration reflects her frustration and emotional intensity. The purpose is expressive, as the excessive information functions as a form of emotional release and highlights her need for understanding from her friends.

2. **Maxim of Quality**

The Maxim of Quality emphasizes truthfulness and the avoidance of false or misleading statements. In the film, Meilin flouts or violates this maxim through intentional understatement, exaggeration, or outright deception, depending on the context. With family, she often hides the truth or uses emotionally charged expressions to navigate parental authority. In contrast, with friends, her exaggerations tend to serve humorous or expressive purposes, indicating a more relaxed and supportive communication environment.

a. **Family**

Data 1: FQL4
MOTHER: Mei-Mei, what is this?
MEILIN: It's nothing. Just a boy. He's no one.

Meilin flouts the Maxim of Quality by purposely downplaying the importance of her drawings. Although the illustrations clearly depict intense romantic feelings toward Devon, she dismisses them by calling them "nothing" and labeling him as "just a boy." This contrast between her words and the visual content suggests that she knows her statement is unconvincing. The utterance serves a pragmatic purpose of avoidance, as she tries to minimize embarrassment and divert attention. Her understatement is a strategic use of meiosis, aiming to lessen the emotional weight of the situation.

Data 2: FQL8
MOTHER: It's going to be okay.
MEILIN: No, it's not! Will you just get out?
MOTHER: Excuse me?
MEILIN: I didn't mean that. I'm a gross red monster!

The phrase "I'm a gross red monster" flouts the Maxim of Quality through a dramatic and emotionally driven exaggeration. Although Meilin refers to her transformation, the terms "gross" and "monster" are not accurate in a literal sense. The statement reflects deep emotional turmoil and self-disgust. Pragmatically, the utterance is an emotional outburst, used to express her guilt and loss of self-worth. The metaphorical use of "monster" underscores how she views herself negatively during this moment of crisis.

Data 3: FQL3
MOTHER: Who are these hip-hoppers? And why are they called "4-Town" if there are five of them?
MEILIN: Uh… I don't know. Some of the kids at school like them.

Meilin violates the Maxim of Quality by intentionally hiding the truth. She claims not to know much about 4-Town, despite being a passionate fan. This deceptive response is designed to avoid confrontation with her mother. The violation is subtle and calculated, as her mother does not realize she is being misled. The pragmatic intent is to preserve her independence while maintaining peace, using a calm and believable tone to make the lie seem credible.

b. Friends

Data 1: FRQL2

MIRIAM: And here is your reward. Ninety-nine Australian tour, with the Girl I Love Your Jeans remix.

MEILIN: O-M-G, Mir! I'll guard it with my life!

In this instance, Meilin flouts the Maxim of Quality by making a playful exaggeration. Her statement, "I'll guard it with my life!" is not meant to be taken literally. Instead, it is a form of hyperbole that conveys excitement and gratitude. The pragmatic function is to inject humor and express emotional appreciation within a close peer context, where such non-literal language is readily understood and accepted.

Data 2: FRQL11

MIRIAM: Uh, what's with the tuque?

MEILIN: Uh… Bad hair day.

Meilin flouts the Maxim of Quality by giving a false but harmless explanation. She says she's having a "bad hair day" to hide the truth about her transformation. The answer is deliberately unconvincing, and her hesitation suggests she expects her friends to sense the untruth. The utterance functions as a method of avoidance, helping her maintain privacy while deflecting attention away from her unusual appearance.

3. Maxim of Relevance

The Maxim of Relevance requires speakers to contribute information that is directly related to the ongoing conversation. In Meilin's interactions, this maxim is frequently flouted—particularly with family—through topic shifts and evasive responses, often as a means of avoiding uncomfortable situations. With friends, however, her relevance is more consistent, reflecting stronger alignment and emotional openness.

a. Family

Data 1: FRV5

MOTHER: Is this your homework?

MEILIN: Mom… Don't!

Meilin flouts the Maxim of Relevance by not responding directly to her mother's question. Instead of confirming or denying whether the item is her homework, she says "Mom… Don't!", shifting the topic to an emotional appeal. This reply deliberately avoids engaging with the content of the question. Pragmatically, the utterance functions as a strategy to delay confrontation and suppress the emerging tension.

Data 2: FRV13

MOTHER: Everything okay? I thought I heard…

MEILIN: Mom, I think I've made a breakthrough.

In this exchange, Meilin flouts the Maxim of Relevance by replying with a completely unrelated statement: "I think I've made a breakthrough." Her mother's question expresses concern over a possible disturbance, but Meilin ignores it and redirects the topic. The pragmatic purpose here is deflection—she attempts to hide the actual cause of the noise while maintaining a conversational tone that sounds informative yet evasive.

b. Friends

Data 1: FRRV31
MIRIAM: Ready to get your karaoke on?
MEILIN: Totally.

Meilin observes the Maxim of Relevance by responding directly and appropriately to Miriam's question. Her affirmative "Totally" aligns perfectly with the invitation to participate in karaoke. Though concise, the reply maintains topic continuity and expresses shared enthusiasm. Pragmatically, this utterance functions as confirmation and reinforces social bonding through mutual interest.

Data 2: FRRV23
MIRIAM: Your mom must have gone nuclear.
MEILIN: Who cares? What's she gonna do? Ground me?

Meilin flouts the Maxim of Relevance by dismissing the concern raised by her friend. Instead of validating or engaging with the statement about her mother's possible anger, she counters with rhetorical questions that express indifference and defiance. The utterance deliberately shifts focus, serving as an emotionally charged rejection of the topic. The pragmatic function is indirect resistance, conveyed through sarcasm and rhetorical framing.

4. Maxim of Manner

The Maxim of Manner focuses on clarity, order, and the avoidance of ambiguity in speech. In emotionally stressful moments, Meilin flouts this maxim by speaking in vague, disorganized, or overly dramatic ways. Her utterances often lack clarity and coherence, especially when she feels overwhelmed by parental demands or social pressure. These instances reveal how emotional disruption influences her pragmatic choices, and how ambiguity becomes a tool to express or hide internal conflict.

a. Family

Data 1: FMN1
MOTHER: Wait. Is it… that? Did the… Did the red peony bloom?
MEILIN: No! Maybe?

Meilin flouts the Maxim of Manner by responding with ambiguous and conflicting phrases: "No! Maybe?" Her reply lacks clarity and decisiveness, which results in confusion. This unclear response reflects her discomfort in addressing her mother's metaphorical reference to menstruation. Pragmatically, the utterance functions as a form of avoidance, where Meilin expresses unease through indirectness and hesitancy, avoiding a clear answer due to the sensitivity of the topic.

Data 2: FMN8
MOTHER: What if I come with you?
MEILIN: uh-Wha…

The utterance "uh-Wha…" exemplifies a flouting of the Maxim of Manner, as Meilin's response is fragmented, unclear, and lacking structure. Her speech becomes incoherent in reaction to her mother's unexpected suggestion. This disruption in her expression signals

emotional overwhelm. Pragmatically, the utterance reflects a moment of panic and discomfort, where the lack of order mirrors Meilin's internal state of shock.

b. Friends

> **Data 1: FRMN5**
> MIRIAM: Priya, Abby, quit it. Mei, what the heck happened?
> **MEILIN: It's just some, you know, inconvenient, uh, genetic thingy I got from my mom. I mean… It'll go away. Eventually. Maybe.**

Meilin's reply is filled with vague expressions and filler phrases, such as "you know," "uh," and "thingy," which make her explanation unclear and difficult to follow. These characteristics indicate a flouting of the Maxim of Manner, as the utterance lacks brevity, clarity, and precision. Pragmatically, this reflects a deliberate attempt to obscure the truth through indirect language. Her vagueness serves as a strategy to avoid directly revealing her panda transformation.

> **Data 2: FRMN11**
> MIRIAM: Oh, no. 4-Town's the same night as the ritual?
> **MEILIN: NOOOO! The same night? The same night? WHAT?!**

In this exchange, Meilin flouts the Maxim of Manner through exaggerated repetition and disorganized delivery. Her repeated exclamations—"The same night? WHAT?!"—create a sense of emotional chaos that overwhelms the message. The lack of clear structure makes the utterance difficult to interpret logically. Pragmatically, this is a dramatized response used to express shock and panic, prioritizing emotional intensity over informative content.

B. Discussion of Comparative Use on Meilin's Non-Observance Utterances

1. Maxim of Quantity

In family interactions Meilin often flouts Quantity by under-informing. For example, in response to urgent questions from her mother Meilin replies only "Um…", providing minimal information, or simply "No!", thereby withholding expected detail and avoiding explanation. These clipped replies indicate reluctance or discomfort under family pressure and function as avoidance strategies. In contrast, with friends Meilin tends to flout Quantity by over-sharing in emotional moments. In an outburst to her friends she elaborates at length ("I can't… My whole life I've been her perfect little Mei-Mei… Temple duties, grades…"), far exceeding what is expected. This over-informativeness is an expressive release of frustration rather than deception. In general, then, Meilin's Quantity flouting is relationship-dependent: minimalism under familial authority versus dramatic elaboration with peers.

2. Maxim of Quality

Meilin's truthfulness also varies by context. With family, flouting and violation of Quality serve to deflect and protect. She frequently uses understatement or emotional exaggeration to mask the truth (for instance dismissing her romantic drawings as "just a boy" or calling herself a "gross red monster"). These instances of flouting Quality (often via irony or metaphor) aim to avoid confrontation or embarrassment under parental authority. Family context also yields outright violations of Quality: Meilin lies when convenient (for example denying her fandom of the boy band to her parents)

to preserve autonomy. By contrast, among friends Quality violations are rare and flouts are mostly playful exaggerations or obvious falsehoods used for humor or avoidance. For example, she hyperbolically says she'll "guard it with [her] life" to a band tour announcement, or jokingly claims a "bad hair day" to hide her red hair. Such flouts are understood and tolerated by her friends as non-literal joking. In summary, Meilin's Quality flouting in family settings is self-protective and indirect, whereas in friend settings it tends to be humorous or insincere but harmless. This contrast shows, as noted in the thesis, that Quality violations occur primarily under family pressure while friend-context flouts rely on shared understanding.

3. Maxim of Relevance

The maxim of relevance was the most frequently invoked with family (27 cases), indicating Meilin often shifts topics or responds tangentially under familial pressure. Indeed, many family exchanges show deliberate topic changes: for example, when asked about her homework Meilin cries out "Mom… Don't!" instead of answering, and when her mother probes a noise, she suddenly declares she's made a "breakthrough". These floutings of Relevance serve as avoidance or redirection. In the family context, then, Relevance flouting is a strategy to deflect parental questions and buffer emotion. Among friends, relevance is observed much more directly in casual dialogue (e.g. simply answering "Totally" when invited). Friend-context flouting of Relevance, when it occurs, often signals rebellion or sarcasm rather than mere avoidance: for instance, Meilin responds to her friends' concern about her mother with dismissive rhetorical questions ("Who cares? What's she gonna do? Ground me?"), flouting relevance to assert independence. Thus, like Quantity and Quality, Relevance flouting in family context functions to evade and postpone issues, while in friend context it tends to express frustration or defiance.

4. Maxim of Manner

The maxim of manner was least frequent overall, but its use also differs by context. In family scenes Meilin's Manner flouts often involve ambiguity or disorganization under stress. For example, when confronted with an indirect reference to her first period ("Did the red peony bloom?") Meilin stammers "No! Maybe?", producing a contradictory and unclear response. Similarly, her reply "uh–wha…" is incoherent when her mother offers to accompany her. These speech disturbances (filled pauses, stutters) represent flouting of Manner that reflects panic or shame. In friend scenes, manner flouts appear as vagueness under pressure or emotional overflow: she uses filler words and vague phrasing ("inconvenient… thingy") to obscure details about her panda transformation, and later reacts with chaotic repetition ("NOOOO!… WHAT?!") when stressed about conflicting commitments. Notably, one Manner violation (intentional obscuring of facts with euphemism) occurs among friends, suggesting Meilin sometimes chooses to be unclear to manage impressions in peer company. Otherwise, Meilin is capable of observing Manner in both settings when composed – her apologies or explanations (especially with friends) are often clear and logically structured. In sum, family interactions provoke disfluent or evasive speech (flouting Manner for avoidance), whereas friend interactions elicit either clear communication or emotionally charged outbursts that violate brevity and clarity.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Meilin Lee's application of Grice's Cooperative Principle—particularly the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner—differs significantly depending on her interlocutor, whether engaging with family members or friends. Among the 97 utterances analyzed, 63 occurred in conversations with her family and 34 in exchanges with friends. Each utterance was categorized as an instance of maxim observance, flouting, or violation. The overall findings demonstrate that Meilin more frequently engages in non-observance than observance, with flouting being the most dominant strategy employed. The distribution and communicative function of each maxim also varies based on the social relationship present in each interaction.

In family settings, Meilin most commonly flouts the Maxim of Relevance, often shifting topics or offering indirect responses as a form of avoidance and emotional self-protection. These strategies help her navigate emotionally sensitive conversations or conceal vulnerabilities. The Maxim of Quality is also frequently involved, with Meilin using exaggerations, minimizations, or even falsehoods to downplay emotional distress or to obscure the reality behind her loss of control over her red panda transformation. In contrast, when speaking with her friends, Meilin's language becomes more emotionally expressive and direct. The Maxim of Quantity emerges as most prominent, with frequent flouting through over-informative or exaggerated statements, often tied to emotional release or a desire for affirmation. Similarly, the Maxim of Manner is regularly flouted in contexts of social stress, producing vague or repetitive speech that reflects her internal emotional state.

These patterns suggest that Meilin adjusts her pragmatic strategies to suit the relational dynamics at play. Flouting occurs across both settings but serves different purposes: with family, it facilitates emotional restraint and indirect communication; with friends, it allows for humor, emotional bonding, and expressive freedom. Violations of maxims, while less frequent, are more common in family interactions and are typically used to withhold information or avoid conflict. In friend interactions, violations are rare and tend to arise when Meilin seeks to maintain control or reduce concern from others.

The results of this study carry several implications for future research and pedagogical practice. Future studies may expand upon this work by examining other characters or including broader variables such as gender, cultural identity, or generational differences. Additional theoretical perspectives—such as politeness theory, speech act theory, or discourse analysis—could offer more nuanced insight into the interplay between language and relational dynamics. Moreover, applying this framework to different media platforms, such as TV series, online content, or spontaneous discourse in interviews, may provide a broader view of how Gricean principles function in more complex or unscripted settings.

For educators and readers engaged in pragmatics or communication studies, this research also highlights the pedagogical value of animated film dialogues in teaching implicit meaning and communicative intent. Observing how characters such as Meilin flout or violate conversational maxims can sharpen learners' sensitivity to indirectness, sarcasm, understatement, and emotional cues in real-life communication. The accessible and emotionally rich language of films like Turning Red makes them powerful tools for exploring how social context and emotion shape discourse. Finally, the study contributes to cultural and communication research by illustrating how relational roles, identity negotiation, and power dynamics influence pragmatic decision-making. Meilin's contrast in communicative behavior between family and peer settings demonstrates how culture,

emotional proximity, and generational expectations inform the strategic use of language. Future inquiry may explore similar dynamics across cultural or bilingual contexts to better understand how individuals navigate complex social relationships through conversational choices. Overall, this study underscores the significance of relational context in pragmatic analysis and invites further exploration into the ways language reflects both interpersonal meaning and broader cultural norms.

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