

Violations of Grice's Conversational Maxims in Japanese Fictional Discourse: A Case Study of the Anime *Bofuri*

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Abstract

This study investigates violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle and the particularized conversational implicatures they generate in the anime *Bofuri: I Don't Want to Get Hurt, so I'll Max Out My Defense* (season one). Focusing on dialogues between Maple and Sally, twelve episodes were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive approach and a listen-and-record technique. The findings indicate that violations of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner are employed strategically, producing implicatures such as sarcasm, refusal, concern, and evasion. These implicatures contribute to character development and relational dynamics, reflecting the indirectness and affective stance characteristic of Japanese discourse. By mapping specific maxim violations to their corresponding implicatures, the study offers a nuanced understanding of pragmatic mechanisms in fictional interaction and narrative communication.

Keywords: pragmatic; cooperative principle; particularized conversational implicature; Japanese discourse

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1. Introduction

Language functions as a fundamental medium of communication, enabling interaction and the mutual exchange of information. For communication to be successful and efficient, the communicative process must operate effectively. Pragmatics, as a branch of linguistics, examines how such effectiveness is achieved by analyzing meaning as it is constructed and interpreted within specific contextual conditions. Grice (1989) in his Cooperative Principle argues that effective communication depends on interlocutors' adherence to four conversational maxims: quality, quantity, relation, and manner. The maxim of quantity is to provide as much information as is needed, no more and no less. The maxim of quality obliges speakers to provide information that is truthful and supported by adequate evidence. The maxim of relation requires

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contributions to be relevant to the ongoing discourse, while the maxim of manner prescribes that information be conveyed clearly, concisely, and unambiguously. As Rofi'ah & Poerbowati (2019) note, adherence to these maxims sustains conversational coherence, while not-complying or violating the maxims may result in ambiguous, obstructive, or pragmatically unsuccessful communication. Zani (2022) asserts that violating the Cooperative Principle makes a conversation become incoherent and pragmatically unrefined. Such violations, whether deliberate or inadvertent, may hinder comprehension and diminish the overall quality of interaction between interlocutors (Rachmatia et al., 2024). Furthermore, violations of these maxims often generate conversational implicatures, whose interpretation relies heavily on context (Kurniawan & Saptomo, 2024).

Implicature as a concept in pragmatics, refers to the idea that speakers can convey something indirectly; beyond, different from, or even contrary to the literal meaning of an utterance (Nemesi, 2025). Implicature refers to a meaning that is conveyed indirectly, extending beyond or diverging from the literal interpretation of an utterance. According to Sumiati et al. (2022), Conversational implicature concerns information that speakers convey beyond their explicit utterances; therefore, interlocutors must assume the Cooperative Principle to interpret implicatures successfully.

Implicatures are pervasive in everyday interaction and audiovisual media, including anime, where they serve to generate humor, enhance narrative dynamics, and deepen character development (Yuniarti, 2014; Fauziyyah, 2024). A particularized conversational implicature arises from specific contexts where locally recognized inferences are required to work out the conveyed meaning, as opposed to generalized implicature (Yule, 1996). In Japanese discourse, indirectness and reliance on implied meaning are particularly prominent (Kurniawan et al., 2024). In the anime *Bofuri*, there are particularized conversational implicatures such as sarcasm, refusal, concern, and evasion. These particularized conversational implicatures arise from violations of maxims.

Previous research has examined either violations of the Cooperative Principle and the occurrence of conversational implicatures. Research by Saparina et al. (2022), and Hasanah et al. (2024) examines general and specific conversational implicatures; however, these studies do not systematically relate implicatures to particular maxim violations. Triana & Rianingsih (2024) as well as Kuku (2022) focus on violations of the Cooperative Principle but do not explicitly trace the implicatures generated by such violations. Berly et al. (2025) explore the relationship between the Cooperative Principle and implicatures arising from its violation, yet their analysis remains broad and does not specify the types of conversational implicatures associated with violations of individual maxim; while Zahira (2023) focuses on pragmatic implications that arise in humor on Twitter. These research reveals a gap in the relationship between specific maxim violations and the specific conversational implicatures they produce within Japanese fictional discourse.

This study addresses the gap by analyzing: (1) violations of the Cooperative Principle's maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner; and (2) the specific meanings of conversational implicatures that emerge from these violations in dialogues between the characters Maple and Sally. By employing distinct data sources and a clearly defined object of study, the research provides a nuanced understanding of the pragmatic mechanisms underlying maxim violations and implicature in Japanese anime discourse.

2. Methods

This study examines conversational implicature generated through violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle, using dialogue from the first season (12 episodes) of the anime *Bofuri: I don't want to Get Hurt, so I'll Max Out My Defense*. Data were selected based on their relevance to character introduction, narrative progression, and interactive dynamics within the game-world setting. Dialogue was extracted, transcribed, and systematically documented with contextual detail such as speaker, addressee, and situation. A qualitative descriptive approach was applied, focusing on identifying and analyzing violations of the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Using the interactive model of Miles et al. (2013), data were reduced by classifying violations and excluding irrelevant material, displayed in tables with narrative explanations, and interpreted to conclude the resulting implicatures and their role in character construction.

3. Result and Discussion

The analysis of utterances in the anime *Bofuri: I Don't Want to Get Hurt, so I'll Max Out My Defense* reveals multiple violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle, in the maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These violations produce conversational implicatures that are strongly shaped by contextual factors. The results are organized according to each type of maxim violation and the associated implicatures. Among the implicatures identified are sarcasm, refusal, concern, and evasion. Examples of representative utterances are provided to demonstrate these patterns and to illustrate how maxim violations contribute to the generation of conversational implicatures in the interactions between Maple and Sally. Maple and Sally were selected because their interactions provide the most consistent and contextually rich data for analyzing violations of Grice's cooperative principle. Their close relationship also creates a strong shared context, which is essential for analyzing particularized conversational implicatures. Compared to other characters, their conversations are more frequent, representative, and pragmatically relevant to the objectives of this study.

3.1 Types of Violations

3.1.1 Violation of the Maxim of Quantity

Conversation (1)

サリー	:	メイプル、どうやってこんなに早くか?
メイプル	:	はなしはあとでわたしにがんばって。
Sally	:	<i>Meipuru, douyatte konnani hayakuka?</i>
Maple	:	<i>Hanashi wa atode watashi ni ganbatte</i>
Sally	:	Maple, how did you get here so fast?
Maple	:	I'll tell you later.

In conversation (1), there is a conversation between Sally and Maple. At that time, it is said that Sally was in a tight spot when fighting Federica and her group. Just as she was about to be defeated, Maple came to her aid. Conversation (1) indicates a violation of the quantity maxim committed by Maple against Sally's utterance.

Sally's utterance "*Meipuru, douyatte konnani hayakuka?*" means that Sally asked for an explanation of why Maple was able to come quickly to help her, since Maple is slow to move. So, the response Sally expected was for Maple to provide a further explanation as to why she was able to come more quickly. However, in conversation (1), it can be seen that Maple responds with the sentence '*Hanashi wa atode watashi ni ganbatte*' (I'll tell you later). Maple's utterance does not provide an answer (does not provide sufficient information) to what Sally asked. Therefore, Maple's utterance can be said to violate the maxim of quantity. Grice (1989) explains that communication must provide sufficient information, neither too little nor too much. In conversation (1), it can be seen that Maple responds by delaying the requested explanation rather than supplying the information needed to satisfy Sally's question, so it can be said that Maple violates the maxim of quantity.

From the conversation (1) above, a violation of the maxim quantity occurs because Maple deliberately delays giving Sally an explanation to focus on the battle, instead saying, "I'll tell you later."

3.1.2 Violation of the Maxim of Quality

Conversation (2)

- メイプル : サリー、大丈夫？
サリー : ここはゲーム。。。ここはゲーム ここはゲーム。。。
よし！大丈夫
メイプル : それ全然大丈夫じゃないよね
Maple : *Sally, daijoubu?*
Sally : *'koko wa gemu...koko wa gemu...koko wa gemu...yoshi! daijoubu*
Maple : *Sore zenzen daijoubu janai yo ne.*
Maple : Sally, are you okay?
Sally : This is just a game...this is just a game... this is just a game... Yoshi! It's okay!
Maple : That's not okay at all.

In conversation (2), Sally and Maple are in conversation. At that time, it is said that Sally looked scared when entering the forest where there were many ghosts. Maple realized Sally's fear and asked to make sure that Sally was okay. Conversation (2) indicates a violation of the maxim of quality by Sally against Maple's utterance.

Maple's line, "*Sally, daijoubu?*" means she's checking whether Sally is okay when she sees many ghosts in the forest where they are on a mission. Therefore, the answer/response that Maple expects from Sally is whether she is okay. However, from conversation (2), it can be seen that Sally responds with the sentence '*Koko wa gemu...koko wa gemu...koko wa gemu...yoshi! daijoubu*' (This is just a game...this is just a game... this is just a game... Yoshi! It's okay!). Sally's utterance does not match her current situation, thereby violating the maxim of quality. Grice (1989) explains that information must be truthful and have sufficient evidence. Sally's utterance "*Koko wa gemu...koko wa gemu...koko wa gemu...yoshi! daijoubu*' (This is just a game...this is just a game... this is just a game... Yoshi! It's okay!) still complies with the maxim of manner, as can be seen from the sentence "*Yoshi, daijoubu!*" and still complies with

the maxim of relation because Sally's utterance in the sentence '*daijoubu*' is still continuous with Maple's previous utterance in the sentence "*Sally, daijoubu?* (Sally, are you okay?)

From conversation (2) above, a violation of the maxim quality arises because Sally deliberately lies that she is fine, even though she is afraid when entering the forest where there are many ghosts. Sally's violation of the quality maxim is not just "lying," but a strategy to calm herself, and it illustrates her fragile character, which tries to be rational.

3.1.3 Violation of the Maxim of Relations

Conversation (3)

- サリー : 次のイベントっていつになるんだろう?
メイプル : 2人でやれるような形式だといいいんだけどね。
Sally : *Tsugi no ibentotte itsu ni naru ndarou?*
Maple : *Futari de yareruyouna keishiki da to ii ndakedo ne.*
Sally : When's the next event?
Maple : I hope the event can be done with two people.

In conversation (3), Sally and Maple are in conversation. At that time, Sally was impatient to attend an upcoming event. Sally asked Maple when the event would take place. Conversation (3) indicates a violation of the maxim of relation by Maple in response to Sally's utterance.

Sally's statement "*Tsugini ibentotte itsu ni naru n darou?*" (When's the next event?) means that Sally wants to participate in an event in the game and asks Maple when it will take place. However, from conversation (3), it can be seen that Maple responds with the sentence "*Futari de yareruyouna keishiki dato ii ndakedo ne*" (I hope the event can be done with two people). Maple's utterance is not relevant to Sally's utterance, so Maple's utterance violates the relation maxim. Grice (1989) explains that providing information pertinent to the topic being discussed fulfils the relation maxim. In conversation (3), Maple's utterance does not apply to the topic being discussed by Sally, so Maple violates the relation maxim.

From the conversation (3) above, there is a violation of the maxim of relation because Maple deliberately did not respond to Sally's question about "when" the event would take place. Maple intentionally expressed her desire to hang out with Sally and did not care when the event would be held.

3.1.4 Violation of the Maxim of Manner

Conversation (4)

- サリー : おはようかえで。どう？ 慣れてきた？
メイプル : うーん。困ったら食べれば何とかなるって分かった。
Sally : *Ohayou, Kaede. Dou? Naretekita?*
Maple : *Un, komattara tabereba nantoka narutte wakatta*
Sally : Good morning, Kaede. How are you? Are you getting used to it?
Maple : Yes, I understand. If I'm in trouble, I can eat.

In conversation (4), there is a conversation between Maple and Sally. At that time, it is said that Sally asked Maple whether she was already familiar with playing games. Previously, Maple had already completed the mission when there were difficulties, Maple fought by eating monsters that were difficult to defeat.

Sally's statement, "*Ohayou, Kaede. Dou? Naretekita?*" means that Sally wants to confirm whether Maple is used to playing games or not. Therefore, the answer Sally expects from Maple is yes or no. However, in conversation (4), Maple says, "*Un, komattara tabereba nantoka narutte, wakatta*" (Yes, I understand. If I'm in trouble, I can eat). Maple's statement about the word "*tabereba*" is ambiguous, as it is unclear what to eat, which confuses Sally. Maple's statement does not match Sally's expectations, so it can be understood that Maple violates the maxim of manners. Grice (1989) explains that communication must be clear, concise, straightforward, and not ambiguous. In data (3), it can be seen that Maple provides ambiguous information to Sally, so Maple's utterance is considered to violate the maxim of manner.

From the conversation (4) above, a violation of the maxim of manner arises because Maple provides clear information to Sally.

3.2 Particularized Conversational Implicatures

3.2.1 Sarcasm

Conversation (5)

- メイプル : もう、ステータスポイントまってるでしょ。振り分けないの？
 サリー : それはもうちょっとスキルを取ってからスキルで戦闘スタイルが決まってくるところあれし。
 メイプル : やるな上級者め
 サリー : まあ、メイプルよりはいろんなゲームやってきたしね。
 Maple : *Mou, suteetasu pointo matteru desho. Furiwakenaino?*
 Sally : *Sore wa mō chotto sukiru o totte kara sukiru de sentou sutairu ga kimatte kuru tokoro areshi.*
 Maple : *Yaruna, joukyuushame.*
 Sally : *Maa, Meipuru yori wa ironna gemu yattekita shine.*
 Maple : Come on, you have statistics points waiting, right? Why not allocate them?
 Sally : I'll do it after I gain some more skills. Once I've decided on my fighting style with those skills, then I'll do it.
 Maple : You're experienced already.
 Sally : Yes, I've played more games than Maple.

In conversation (5), there is a conversation between Maple and Sally. At that time, it is said that Sally explained to Maple that she wanted to acquire various skills to improve her fighting abilities, so she could try them out and determine her fighting style. Maple praised Sally for being quite experienced.

Maple's previous statement, "*Yaruna joukyuushame,*" meant that Maple was praising Sally for her gaming experience. Therefore, Maple expected Sally to respond with a thank-you. However, in conversation (5), Sally responded with, "*Maa, Meipuru yori wa ironna gemu*

yattekitashine." (Yes, I've played more games than Maple). Sally's utterance is excessive because she does not express her gratitude, as Maple expected. Therefore, Sally's utterance can be said to violate the maxim of quantity, which Grice (1975) describes as communication must provide sufficient information, neither too little nor too much.

The violation of the maximum quantity in the conversation (5) above gives rise to a specific conversational implicature, namely, sarcasm. This implicature arises because Sally deliberately fails to comply with the principle of cooperation to achieve pragmatic goals, such as sarcasm, in the context of fictional discourse. This violation serves as a strategy to subtly assert Sally's position and show off her nature in the context of an intimate conversation. This is expressed indirectly through the sentence '*Maa, Meipuru yori wa ironna gemu yattekitashine.*' (Yes, I've played more games than Maple).

3.2.2 Refusal

Conversation (6)

- メイプル : えー?今すぐ?
 サリー : そうだよだてもう届いたでしょ。
 メイプル : 届いたけどさでもリサーはまだできないんだよね?
 サリー : うーんお母さんが。。。"次のテスト集中しなさい!"って。
 Maple : *Ee? Imasugu?*
 Sally : *Sodayo date mou todoita desho.*
 Sally : *Todoita kedo sa demo, Sari wa mada dekinain da yo ne?*
 Maple : *Un. Okaasan ga..."Tsugi no tesuto ni shuuchuu shinasai!" tte.*
 Maple : Huh? Right now?
 Sally : It did arrive, but I still can't do the research yet, right?
 Maple : Hmm...Mom said... "Focus on your next test!"

In conversation (6), Maple and Sally are in conversation. At that time, it is said that Maple hesitated to try the game Sally suggested. Sally tells Maple to try the game right away, but Maple seems reluctant because she knows Sally will not try it at that moment, and she wants to confirm whether Sally really cannot try it.

Maple's previous statement, in the sentence "*Todoita kedo sa demo, Sari wa mada dekinain da yo ne?*" means that Maple wanted to reconfirm whether Sally really couldn't try the game/log in at that moment. Therefore, the answer/response that is relevant to Maple's statement is Sally's answer about whether she can or cannot log in to the game. However, from conversation (6), it can be seen that Sally responded with the sentence, "*Un. Okaasan ga..."Tsugi no tesuto ni shuuchuu shinasai!" tte*, which means, "Mom said to focus on the upcoming test." Sally's statement is irrelevant/unrelated to the topic of Maple's previous statement, which was about Sally's ability/willingness to try the game at that time. Therefore, it can be said that Sally violated the relation maxim. Grice (1975) explains that providing information relevant to the topic being discussed fulfils the relation maxim. From the dialogue, it can be inferred that Sally either did not comply with the relation maxim or violated it. From conversation (6) above, a specific conversational implicature arises as a result of violating the relation maxim. The implicature is that Sally refuses Maple's invitation to log in to the game. This is implied by the statement that her mother asked Sally to focus on her exams first.

This implication of refusal is used to achieve pragmatic goals, such as the formation of social constraints in the context of fictional discourse. This violation of the relation maxim serves as a strategy to establish Sally's character as obedient and polite by not refusing directly.

3.2.3 Concern

Conversation (7)

- メイプル : あと3日間で9個のメダルか?
サリー : 厳しそうは?
Sally : *Ato, mikkakan de kyuuko no medaruka?*
Maple : *Kibishisou wa?*
Sally : Nine more medals in three days, right?
Maple : Is it difficult?

In conversation (7), Maple and Sally are in conversation. At that time, it is said that Sally told Maple they needed nine more medals in the remaining three days, and that Sally suggested going alone to hunt for medals from players who already had them.

Sally's previous statement, through the sentence '*Ato, mikkakan de kyuuko no medaruka?*' (Nine more medals in three days, right?) means that Sally asked Maple whether they needed nine more medals in the remaining days. However, from conversation (7), it can be seen that Maple responded with the sentence '*Kibishisou wa?*' (It's difficult, isn't it?). Maple's utterance is not relevant to Sally's utterance, so it can be said that Maple violates the relation maxim. Grice (1975) explains that providing information relevant to the topic being discussed fulfils the relation maxim. Maple's utterance is not related to the topic previously mentioned by Sally about whether they need nine more medals, and Maple instead implores Sally about the difficulty of obtaining medals. In conversation (7), it is evident that Maple does not comply with the relation maxim or violates the relation maxim.

From the conversation (7) above, a specific conversational implicature arises from violating the maxim of relation. The implicature is that Maple feels concern/worry about not being able to collect the medals within three days. This is expressed indirectly through the sentence '*Kibishisouwa?*' (It's difficult, isn't it?). This implication of concern is used to achieve pragmatic goals, such as managing emotions in the context of fictional discourse. This violation of the maxim of relation serves as a strategy to establish Maple's character as someone who cares deeply about her friend's safety.

3.2.4 Evasion

Conversation (8)

- メイプル : うん?サリー、どうしたの?
サリー : うん?いや、なんでもない。これからも過ごす楽しみだな思ったとこ
メイプル : だね。楽しみに
Sally : *Un? Sari, doushita no?*
Maple : *Un? Iya, nandemonai. Korekara mo sugosu tanoshimi da na omotteta toko.*

Sally : *Dane. Tanoshimi ni.*
Maple : Hmm? Sally, what's wrong?
Sally : Yes? Yes? No, nothing. I hope I can spend more time with you
Maple : That's right. It must be fun.

In conversation (8), there is a conversation between Maple and Sally. At that time, it was said that Sally was daydreaming about how two players (Yui and May) were very similar to Maple in personality. Maple realized that Sally was daydreaming and decided to find out why.

Maple's previous statement, "*Un? Sally, doushita no?*" means that Maple is making sure that Sally is okay because she seems to be daydreaming. Therefore, the answer/response that Maple expects from Sally is an honest account of what she is thinking. However, from conversation (8), it can be seen that Sally responds with the sentence '*un? Yes, nothing. I wish I could spend more time with you.*' Sally's statement does not match her current situation, so it violates the maxim of quality. Grice (1975) explains that information must be truthful and have sufficient evidence. In conversation (4), it can be seen that Sally neither told the truth nor lied to Maple, instead she avoids telling the truth; so it can be said that Sally violated the maxim of quality.

From the conversation (8) above, a specific conversational implicature arises in the context of evasion (avoidance), resulting from violating the maxim of quality. The implication that arises is that Sally avoids telling the truth by creating an evasion statement. She did that to Maple because she did not want to say that Maple resembled the actors Yui and May. This is expressed through the sentence '*Un? Iya, nandemonai. Korekara mo sugosu tanoshimida na omottetatoko*' (Yes? No, nothing. I hope I can spend more time with you). This implication of evasion is used to achieve pragmatic goals, such as maintaining a harmonious relationship (phatic function) and saving face (face-saving act) in the context of fictional discourse. This violation of the maxim of quality serves as a strategy to establish Sally's character, who prioritizes politeness.

4. Conclusions

Based on the results and discussion above, violations of the four maxims of conversation (quantity, quality, relation, and manner) in the anime *Bofuri* are functional and strategic. These violations are not communication failures, but rather pragmatic strategies to create implied meaning (implicature), namely sarcasm, refusal, concern, and evasion. The violation strategy reflects the main character, Maple, who often violates the maxims of quantity and relation by providing insufficient or irrelevant information, which confirms her practical nature in critical moments and her unique playing strategy. Meanwhile, Sally tends to violate the maxim of quality by providing information that is not entirely true, reflecting her rational nature, her efforts to protect her feelings, and her occasional desire to appear strong in front of Maple.

The findings reveal that violation of the maxim of quantity tend to produce implicatures such as sarcasm or deliberate postponement, while violation of the maxim of relation frequently give rise to implicatures of refusal or concern. Violation of the maxim of quality are associated with implicatures of evasion, functioning such as maintaining a harmonious relationship and strategy to establish character, whereas violations of the maxim of manner result in ambiguity

that reflects character-specific communicative styles. These implicatures: sarcasm, refusal, concern, and evasion serve important narrative and interpersonal functions, contributing to character construction and relationship management within the fictional discourse.

This study has described violations of conversational maxims and conversational implicatures arise from violations of maxims in the anime *Bofuri: I Don't Want to Get Hurt, so I'll Max Out My Defense* season one, using Grice's principle of cooperation. The study confirms that conversational implicatures in Japanese *anime* discourse are closely tied to culturally informed preferences for indirectness. However, this study still has limitations, including not examining general conversational implicature, aspects of politeness in language, or comparisons of maxim violations between seasons or with other anime genres. Future research may extend this analysis to other genres or media to further explore the role of maxim violation and implicature in character development and narrative communication.

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