



## An Analysis of Flouting of Maxims of Quality in the “Uptown Girls” Movie Used by the Main Character

Marianus Indra Wayon<sup>1</sup>, Ni Wayan Suastini<sup>2</sup>

Department of English Literature, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Mahasaraswati Denpasar University, Jl.Kamboja No.11A, Dangin Puri Kangin, North Denpasar District, Denpasar City, Bali 80233, Indonesia<sup>1</sup>

Email: [marianusindrawayon@gmail.com](mailto:marianusindrawayon@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The study, entitled "Flouting Maxim of Quality in the Film Uptown Girls (2003)," aims to identify and analyze the types of flouting of the maxim of quality and the reasons why the main character, Molly Gunn, flouts this maxim throughout the film. The data for this research were collected from the film Uptown Girls (2003), focusing on utterances by Molly Gunn that contain instances of sarcasm, hyperbole, deliberate lies, and unsupported statements. This study applied observation and transcription methods, analyzed using a descriptive qualitative approach. The analysis was supported by Grice's (1975) theory of the Cooperative Principle, specifically the maxim of quality, to categorize the types of flouting. Furthermore, the reasons behind Molly's flouting were interpreted based on pragmatic functions such as emotional expression, self-defense, and social interaction. This study collected 50 instances of flouting the maxim of quality, including 14 cases of deliberate lies, 13 hyperboles, 12 sarcasms, and 11 unsupported statements. The analysis reveals that Molly Gunn's floutings are not accidental but serve as deliberate communicative strategies to reflect her emotional vulnerability, identity assertion, and relational dynamics. Based on the results, it can be concluded that deliberate lie is the most frequently used flouting type, and the pragmatic motivation behind these utterances is primarily to preserve self-image and engage the audience through implied meaning.

**Keywords:** *flouting maxim, maxim of quality, Uptown Girls*

### Abstrak

Penelitian yang berjudul Pelanggaran Maksim Kualitas dalam Film Uptown Girls (2003) ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis jenis-jenis pelanggaran maksim kualitas serta alasan mengapa tokoh utama, Molly Gunn, melanggar maksim tersebut sepanjang film. Data dalam penelitian ini dikumpulkan dari film Uptown Girls (2003), dengan fokus pada ujaran-ujaran Molly Gunn yang mengandung unsur sarkasme, hiperbola, kebohongan sengaja (deliberate lie), dan pernyataan tanpa dukungan (unsupported statement). Penelitian ini menggunakan metode observasi dan transkripsi, yang dianalisis melalui pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Analisis didukung oleh teori Prinsip Kerja Sama (Cooperative Principle) Grice (1975), khususnya maksim kualitas, untuk mengkategorikan jenis pelanggaran. Selain itu, alasan di balik pelanggaran maksim oleh Molly diinterpretasikan berdasarkan fungsi pragmatik seperti ekspresi emosional, pertahanan diri, dan interaksi sosial. Penelitian ini mengumpulkan 50 data pelanggaran maksim kualitas, yang terdiri dari 14 kasus kebohongan sengaja, 13 hiperbola, 12 sarkasme, dan 11 pernyataan tanpa dukungan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa pelanggaran-pelanggaran ini bukanlah tindakan acak, melainkan strategi komunikasi yang disengaja untuk mencerminkan kerentanan emosional, penegasan identitas,

dan dinamika hubungan interpersonal. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian, dapat disimpulkan bahwa kebohongan sengaja merupakan jenis pelanggaran yang paling sering digunakan, dengan motivasi pragmatik utama berupa perlindungan citra diri dan keterlibatan penonton melalui makna implisit (implicature).

**Kata kunci:** *pelanggaran maksim, maksim kualitas, Uptown Girls*

## Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in human communication, serving not only as a means of conveying information but also as a medium for building social relationships, expressing emotions, and shaping both individual and collective identities. As Kridalaksana (2001) states, language is a system of arbitrary sound symbols used by members of a community to interact, cooperate, and identify themselves. In everyday interaction, language is rarely employed in a purely literal or explicit manner. Instead, speakers often rely on context, intonation, and pragmatic strategies to convey implicit meanings, particularly when navigating social norms, emotional conditions, or interpersonal tensions.

Among these pragmatic strategies, politeness plays a vital role in shaping how meaning is expressed. It reflects the speaker’s awareness of social appropriateness and interpersonal sensitivity, functioning as a mechanism to maintain social harmony and avoid conflict (Holmes, 2013). Politeness often requires speakers to express themselves indirectly, especially in situations involving power imbalances, emotional vulnerability, or potential disagreement. This indirectness is not arbitrary—it is governed by underlying principles that guide conversational behavior.

One of the most influential frameworks in linguistic pragmatics is Grice’s Cooperative Principle (1975), which explains how communication operates through a shared understanding of four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. The maxim of quality, which is the focus of this study, stipulates that speakers should not say what they believe to be false or what lacks sufficient evidence. However, in real-life discourse, this maxim is frequently and deliberately flouted—not to deceive, but to enrich communication through implied meanings such as sarcasm, exaggeration, humor, or emotional nuance. These floutings are often closely tied to politeness strategies, allowing speakers to express complex intentions while preserving social balance.

Flouting the maxim of quality, therefore, should not be viewed as a communicative failure. On the contrary, it serves specific pragmatic functions, such as protecting one’s self-image, managing interpersonal relationships, or expressing emotion in a socially acceptable way. For instance, sarcastic utterances like “You’re a real genius” directed at someone who has just made a mistake are understood by listeners as mockery rather than genuine praise. This illustrates how flouting the quality maxim can generate conversational implicature (Grice, 1975), enabling speakers to convey layered meanings that go beyond the literal.

Such pragmatic strategies are especially prominent in media discourse, particularly in film dialogues, where characters frequently use non-literal language to

reflect complex emotions and social dynamics. As audiovisual media aim to simulate real-life interaction, films provide a rich source for pragmatic analysis. They reveal how conversational maxims are creatively manipulated to deepen narrative, build character relationships, and evoke audience empathy (Ginting, 2020). Through these dramatized exchanges, viewers gain insight into the nuanced workings of language, reaffirming its role not only as a communicative tool but also as a mirror of human thought and social behavior.

Several previous studies have explored maxim violations in both real and fictional contexts. Anggraeni and Ariatmi (2020) analyzed critical utterances on social media, demonstrating how users flout the maxim of quality to express indirect criticism while maintaining politeness. Ginting (2022) investigated politeness strategies in film, revealing that characters frequently use maxim violations to convey emotional depth and interpersonal tension. Similarly, Putri (2022) and Siwi (2020) examined how characters in films and talk shows employ pragmatic strategies such as sarcasm, understatement, and irony to manage social interaction. These studies confirm that flouting conversational maxims, particularly the maxim of quality, is a prevalent and intentional strategy in both real-life and scripted communication.

Despite these contributions, limited research has focused specifically on how the flouting of the maxim of quality is used systematically by a single character to develop narrative and reveal psychological complexity in film. The film *Uptown Girls* presents a compelling case, particularly through the character Molly Gunn, a young woman from a privileged background who faces abrupt life changes. As Molly transitions from a carefree existence to one marked by personal loss and responsibility, she frequently uses sarcasm, exaggeration, lies, and unsupported statements. These utterances serve as coping mechanisms and communicative tools to navigate emotional challenges, social interactions, and identity shifts.

This study aims to analyze how Molly Gunn's violations of the maxim of quality reflect her psychological state and serve pragmatic functions within the film's narrative. By classifying her utterances based on type of violation, implied meaning, and communicative function, this research seeks to uncover how language in film can mirror real-life communicative phenomena and contribute to character portrayal.

Moreover, this study has broader relevance in the fields of applied linguistics, English language education, and media discourse analysis. Understanding how conversational maxims are flouted in film dialogues can enhance viewers' ability to interpret indirect language and improve pragmatic competence, especially in foreign language learning contexts. By highlighting the role of flouting as an artistic and rhetorical device, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of language use in audiovisual media and its impact on audience perception.

This study seeks to answer the following research question like How and why does Molly Gunn, in the film *Uptown Girls*, flout the maxim of quality? The objective is to identify and analyse the forms, meanings, and functions of these violations within the context of the character's development and the narrative structure, thereby providing insight into the interplay between language, identity, and social context in film.

## Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the flouting of the maxim of quality in the *Uptown Girls* (2003) movie. The data consisted of **50 utterances** spoken by the main character, Molly Gunn, collected through repeated viewing of the film to ensure accurate identification of relevant dialogues. Each utterance that potentially contradicted reality, lacked sufficient evidence, or was deliberately non-literal was transcribed verbatim along with contextual details such as tone, body language, and situational setting. The data were then reduced to exclude neutral statements and systematically categorized into four types of flouting based on Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle: sarcasm, hyperbole, deliberate lie, and unsupported statement. The analytical process involved examining each utterance in its narrative context, identifying the conversational implicature it generated, and interpreting its pragmatic function using Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory. This dual analysis—structural classification and functional interpretation—was conducted to reveal both *how* the maxim was flouted (through linguistic forms) and *why* it was done (through interpersonal and emotional motivations). Finally, the frequency of each flouting type was calculated to identify dominant patterns, which were interpreted concerning Molly Gunn’s character development and the film’s narrative structure.

## Result and Discussion

### Result

This study focuses on analyzing the flouting of the maxim of quality in the film *Uptown Girls* (2003), applying Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle as the theoretical framework. The analysis centres on the main character, Molly Gunn, and how she frequently uses non-literal language in her interactions with others. A total of 50 utterances were identified and analyzed, each illustrating how Molly flouts the maxim of quality in various forms, including sarcasm, hyperbole, deliberate lie, and unsupported statements. These instances reflect Molly’s strategic use of language to manage emotional expression, protect her self-image, and navigate complex social dynamics. The utterances were categorized according to the type of flouting and frequency, revealing insightful patterns in her communication style and character development throughout the film.

**Table 1. Types of Flouting the Maxim of Quality by Molly Gunn in the *Uptown Girls* movie**

Types of Flouting Maxims of Quality	Occurrence	Percentage
Sarcasm	12	24%
Hyperbole	13	26%
Deliberate Lie	14	28%
Unsupported Statement	11	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

As shown in Table 1, all four types of flouting the maxim of quality were found in 50 utterances delivered by Molly Gunn. The most frequently flouted type was Deliberate Lie, which occurred 14 times (28%), followed by Hyperbole with 13 instances (26%), Sarcasm with 12 occurrences (24%), and Unsupported Statement with 11 instances (22%). These floutings were not random or accidental; rather, they reflect intentional communicative strategies used by Molly to express emotional vulnerability, assert independence, create humour, and manage social relationships. Her frequent use of non-literal language created conversational implicatures, requiring both the characters within the narrative and the audience to interpret her intended meaning through contextual cues. The strategic flouting of the maxim of quality by Molly Gunn demonstrates how fictional dialogue can mirror real-life communication tactics, offering insight into how people use language to cope with personal challenges, defend their self-image, and maintain social interaction under stress or emotional turmoil.

## **Discussion**

In the Discussion section, this study provides a detailed analysis of two representative utterances for each type of flouting, selected from the overall 50 data collected. These examples serve to illustrate the pragmatic functions and contextual significance of the flouting maxim of quality as performed by the character Molly Gunn.

### **1.Sarcasm**

Sarcasm is a form of expressive speech act in which a speaker states something contrary to reality, typically with the intent to mock, criticize, or convey emotional distress in a non-direct way. According to Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, sarcasm flouts the maxim of quality, which stipulates that speakers should not say what they believe to be false or lack adequate evidence. In sarcasm, the speaker intentionally violates this maxim, expecting the hearer to infer the opposite of the literal meaning through conversational implicature. This makes sarcasm a strategic and context-dependent form of indirect communication.

#### **Data 1**

"I'm fine, really. Never been better."

(Context: Molly says this during a moment of emotional hardship, after experiencing significant personal and financial loss.)

This utterance is a clear instance of flouting the maxim of quality because the speaker, Molly Gunn, expresses a statement she knows to be untrue. The phrase "I'm fine, really. Never been better" contradicts the actual context, where she is visibly distressed and struggling with her circumstances. The intent behind the utterance is not to deceive the listener but to mask her vulnerability and maintain a sense of emotional control. The tone of voice, facial expression, and situational cues indicate that this is not a genuine statement but rather a sarcastic remark intended to convey her inner turmoil. In pragmatic terms, this utterance serves as a self-protective strategy, allowing Molly to avoid eliciting pity from others while subtly signalling her distress. The implied meaning, or implicature, is that she is not fine and requires support or

understanding. According to Grice (1975), such flouting is expected to be recognized by the hearer through context, which enables the interpretation of the intended meaning beyond the literal. Furthermore, from a sociolinguistic perspective, sarcasm is often used to preserve face, especially in difficult emotional situations. This aligns with Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, where face-threatening acts (FTA) such as showing vulnerability are often mitigated through indirect strategies, like sarcasm, to maintain positive face (the desire to be respected and not pitied). Thus, this utterance flouts the maxim of quality intentionally and functions not as deception, but as a rhetorical tool for emotional regulation, social interaction, and character expression. It reflects how non-literal language is used effectively in film dialogue to convey psychological complexity and to engage the audience in interpreting deeper meanings through contextual cues.

#### Data 2

“I’m always on time—in my own time zone.”

(Context: Molly utters this when she arrives late, responding to someone’s complaint or sarcastic remark about her tardiness.)

The utterance “*I’m always on time—in my own time zone*” is a clear instance of sarcasm and represents a deliberate flouting of the maxim of quality, as proposed by Grice (1975), which requires speakers to avoid saying what they believe to be false or lack sufficient evidence for. In this context, Molly is responding to criticism about her lateness by making an untrue statement, thereby inviting the hearer to infer the opposite of the literal meaning. Her remark humorously acknowledges her tardiness while attempting to deflect criticism and maintain her positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), i.e., her desire to be liked and avoid disapproval. By adding “in my own time zone,” Molly uses irony to minimize the seriousness of the situation and to mask her irresponsibility in a socially acceptable and humorous way. This sarcasm is not intended to deceive but rather to manage social interaction, lessen confrontation, and portray her character’s carefree and defensive nature. As such, the utterance functions as a rhetorical device that leverages non-literal language to express emotional nuance and invite the listener to engage in pragmatic interpretation, thereby enhancing character depth and audience engagement.

#### 2. Deliberate Lie

A deliberate lie is a type of speech act where the speaker intentionally states something false, knowing that it contradicts the actual situation. According to Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle, this act constitutes a flouting of the maxim of quality, which directs speakers to only say what they believe to be true and to avoid statements that lack evidence. When a speaker deliberately lies, but expects the listener to infer the truth from context, the lie becomes a pragmatic strategy rather than an act of deception. Such flouting often serves to protect the speaker’s emotional state, reassure others, or temporarily maintain social harmony.

#### Data 3

“I have everything under control.”

(Context: Molly says this while her life is evidently chaotic which as she has lost financial security, is struggling with responsibility, and faces emotional instability.)

This utterance is a clear example of flouting the maxim of quality. Molly Gunn, as the speaker, knows her life is not under control; yet, she asserts the opposite. The literal content of her utterance is false, and she is aware of its falsehood. However, the purpose of this utterance is not to deceive maliciously, but to manage her own anxiety and to reassure others, possibly to avoid drawing attention to her struggles or to prevent others from worrying about her. The implied meaning of this utterance is that Molly feels overwhelmed, and by saying she has control, she attempts to project a sense of stability. This creates a conversational implicature, where the listener is expected to understand from the context that her life is, in fact, disordered. Her statement serves as a psychological defense mechanism, allowing her to maintain composure in a difficult situation. This is a protective linguistic strategy that masks emotional vulnerability, aligning with Grice's view that flouting can function to preserve social and emotional equilibrium. Moreover, in light of Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, this utterance can also be interpreted as an attempt to maintain positive face. By asserting control, Molly aims to avoid appearing weak or incapable in front of others, thus minimizing face-threatening acts such as revealing incompetence or distress. In this sense, the deliberate lie serves both interpersonal and intrapersonal functions: it shields Molly from external judgment and helps her cope with internal turmoil. In conclusion, this utterance is a strategic flouting of the maxim of quality, where the falsehood is intended to be recognized by others as such, thus prompting interpretation beyond the literal level. It highlights how film dialogue can mirror real-life communication tactics, especially when individuals use non-literal language to manage difficult emotional or social realities. Molly's use of a deliberate lie reflects her struggle for control and her attempt to preserve dignity amid chaos.

#### Data 4

"I just fixed his jacket."

(Context: Molly says this in response to public attention about her role in shaping Neal's public image, where others give her credit for significantly influencing his style and success.)

This utterance exemplifies a deliberate flouting of the maxim of quality, as described by Grice (1975). Molly makes a statement that minimizes her actual contribution to Neal's image by claiming she merely "fixed his jacket," despite the context indicating that her influence was substantial and widely recognized. She is fully aware that the literal content of her statement is incomplete and misleading, and the hearer is expected to infer that she played a larger role than she admits. This intentional understatement is not made to deceive but to deflect attention, downplay involvement, or possibly cope with feelings of rejection or emotional conflict following her separation from Neal. By minimizing her impact, Molly employs a protective strategy that allows her to distance herself emotionally from a situation that might evoke hurt or vulnerability. Pragmatically, the conversational implicature here is that she contributed significantly, but does not want to admit it openly. This aligns with Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, where such utterances function

as a face-saving act, helping Molly avoid appearing boastful or emotionally affected, thus maintaining positive face, the desire to be seen as modest and unaffected. The deliberate flouting of the maxim of quality in this context is not meant to deceive maliciously, but rather to signal emotional restraint and self-control in a socially delicate situation. It reveals Molly’s internal conflict, as she attempts to manage her public image and private emotions simultaneously. In film dialogue, such understated language adds depth to character portrayal, showing how non-literal communication is used to reflect complex psychological states and to engage viewers in interpreting the true meaning beneath surface words. Therefore, this utterance is a strategic lie designed to mask personal pain, while also inviting the listener to read between the lines and understand her unspoken truth.

#### Data 5

“I was busy all day.”

(Context: Molly says this as an excuse after failing to fulfil a responsibility or missing an appointment. The surrounding context reveals that she was not engaged in any meaningful activity, and the claim is false.)

This utterance is a deliberate flouting of the maxim of quality, as conceptualized by Grice (1975), which holds that speakers should only say what they believe to be true and for which they have adequate evidence. Molly’s statement “I was busy all day” is knowingly false, used as a convenient excuse to avoid admitting fault or neglect. Pragmatically, this utterance serves a self-protective and face-saving function. According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, admitting carelessness or idleness would constitute a face-threatening act (FTA), potentially damaging Molly’s positive face, her desire to be seen as responsible or competent. By claiming busyness, she avoids a confrontation with her shortcomings and attempts to preserve her dignity in the eyes of others. The statement functions as a socially acceptable lie, often used in daily life to mitigate conflict or deflect criticism. Moreover, the conversational implicature is that Molly did not value the task or appointment enough to prioritize it, yet she masks this with a false explanation. The listener is expected to understand, especially through contextual cues (e.g., Molly’s idle behaviour earlier), that her busyness is fabricated, thus recognizing the flouting of quality. This usage of non-literal language is common in social interactions and reflects how individuals use strategic dishonesty to manage social perceptions and avoid emotional discomfort. In film dialogue, such lines serve to portray realistic human behaviour, how people often rely on small, plausible lies to maintain appearances and navigate relational expectations. Molly’s utterance here demonstrates her avoidant tendencies and her struggle with accountability, offering insight into her emotional and social coping mechanisms. Therefore, this utterance flouts the maxim of quality by knowingly stating a falsehood, functioning not as malicious deception but as a tactic for social and psychological preservation.



### 3. Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a rhetorical device in which the speaker deliberately exaggerates reality for emphasis, humour, or emotional effect. In pragmatics, hyperbole is a recognized form of flouting the maxim of quality because the speaker makes a statement that is clearly untrue or factually impossible, but not intended to deceive. Instead, the exaggerated claim prompts the listener to infer the intended non-literal meaning through conversational implicature (Grice, 1975). The use of hyperbole often reflects playfulness, emotional expression, or personal style, rather than an attempt to mislead.

#### Data 6

“I talk to animals. They talk back.”

(Context: Molly says this in a lighthearted conversation, expressing her eccentric personality.)

This utterance is an example of intentional exaggeration that violates the literal truth, thereby flouting the maxim of quality. Molly knows that animals cannot talk, and so does the audience or interlocutor. However, her statement is not meant to be interpreted literally. Rather, it is an example of hyperbole, used to highlight her whimsical, imaginative, and carefree nature. From a pragmatic perspective, the implied meaning is that Molly feels a special, personal connection to animals, possibly seeing them as companions or sources of comfort. The pragmatic function is to create humour, entertain the listener, and showcase her quirky identity. The audience is expected to understand the exaggeration and appreciate the underlying character trait being expressed, her eccentricity, and desire to engage others playfully. According to Grice’s (1975) theory, this utterance flouts the maxim of quality because it deliberately states something factually false with the assumption that the listener will recognize the non-literal intention. The conversational implicature generated is that Molly is not making a serious claim but is instead using figurative language to illustrate her worldview or emotional state. Additionally, hyperbole in film dialogue functions as a narrative device that enhances characterization. As noted by Dynel (2009), hyperbole is often used in fiction to signal emotional intensity or personality traits, helping the audience to connect with or understand a character more deeply. In Molly’s case, this utterance reinforces her identity as someone who lives unconventionally and is perhaps childlike in her imagination. In conclusion, this hyperbolic utterance exemplifies how flouting the maxim of quality can be used artistically and functionally in character dialogue. It is not a deceptive act but a playful exaggeration that serves to express personality, engage the listener, and enhance the narrative by highlighting Molly’s individuality and charm.

#### Data 7

“I could eat a horse.”

(Context: Molly says this in a moment of extreme hunger or frustration, likely after missing a meal or engaging in an exhausting activity. There is no actual horse involved, and the statement is not meant to be taken literally.)

The utterance “I could eat a horse” is a classic example of hyperbole, representing a deliberate flouting of the maxim of quality as proposed by Grice (1975),

which requires speakers to avoid saying things they know to be false or lack sufficient evidence for. Molly’s statement is not meant to be taken literally, as consuming an entire horse is physically impossible and untrue; instead, it serves to dramatically emphasize the intensity of her hunger. This intentional exaggeration invites the listener to interpret her true meaning through conversational implicature—that she is extremely hungry, not prepared to eat a horse. The utterance functions as a rhetorical device to express discomfort vividly and humorously, reflecting Molly’s expressive and informal character. From a pragmatic perspective, such hyperbole also works to create social rapport and lighten the interaction, serving as comic relief and enhancing the emotional impact of her words. According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, hyperbole can foster solidarity by engaging listeners in shared understanding and emotional resonance, especially in casual contexts. Thus, this utterance flouts the maxim of quality not to deceive, but to convey emotional intensity and amplify expression in a socially engaging way. It exemplifies how non-literal language is employed to enrich communication, portray character depth, and prompt the audience to interpret meaning beyond the literal level, making dialogue more impactful and psychologically nuanced.

#### 4. Unsupported Statement

An unsupported statement is a form of utterance that lacks factual support or is highly unrealistic, yet it is delivered as if it were true. In the framework of Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle, such statements flout the maxim of quality, which requires speakers to avoid making claims that are unverified or insincere. The speaker intentionally utters something implausible, not to deceive, but to express emotional states or foster relational closeness through conversational implicature.

##### Data 8

“You’re the only adult I can trust.”

(Context: Molly says this to a young child during a moment of emotional vulnerability.)

This utterance flouts the maxim of quality because Molly, an adult, asserts something unrealistic: that a child is the only trustworthy adult in her life. The literal content is factually incorrect, and both Molly and the audience recognize the impossibility of a child fulfilling the adult role of trust and responsibility. However, this statement serves a deeper emotional purpose. The implied meaning is that Molly feels abandoned, isolated, and is desperately seeking emotional support. The pragmatic function of this utterance is to establish emotional intimacy and to communicate her sense of loneliness. By elevating the child’s role, Molly both expresses affection and exposes her emotional dependency, which she may not be comfortable expressing directly. From a Gricean perspective, this is a deliberate flouting, where the unrealistic claim is designed to generate an implicature: that Molly trusts the child more than the adults in her life, highlighting her broken relationships and emotional instability. The statement is not about factual trustworthiness, but about emotional safety and connection. Additionally, in Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, this utterance functions as a negative politeness strategy, an indirect way of requesting

support or reassurance without making explicit demands. The flouting thus becomes a social and emotional tool, reinforcing the narrative tension between Molly's outward persona and inner turmoil.

Data 9

"That's how rock stars live – no rules, no regrets."

(Context: Molly says this while engaging in reckless or irresponsible behaviour, amidst personal crisis.)

This utterance flouts the maxim of quality because it romanticizes a chaotic lifestyle, presenting it as ideal and consequence-free, despite the reality of Molly's deteriorating circumstances. The literal statement lacks factual basis and is unsupported, as Molly's life is marked by regret, conflict, and disorder. The implied meaning is that Molly wishes to escape responsibility and maintain a rebellious, free-spirited identity. The pragmatic function is identity preservation. By aligning herself with the myth of the rule-breaking rock star, she distances herself from social expectations and personal accountability. According to Grice (1975), this flouting produces conversational implicature, signalling that Molly's statement is not to be taken at face value but as an attempt to cope with crisis through image maintenance. The flouting allows her to deflect criticism, both internal and external, by framing her behaviour as authentic and bold, rather than unstable. This kind of rhetorical stance is common in narratives where characters resist societal norms and justify self-destructive behaviour through idealized identities. It also illustrates how flouting the maxim of quality can function as a psychological defense, enabling characters to rationalize their actions and preserve self-worth in difficult situations.

Data 10

"I'm fine on my own"

(Context: Molly says this after being offered help or emotional support from a friend or loved one. At this point in the story, she is facing significant emotional distress, financial instability, and personal isolation, yet refuses assistance as a way to assert independence.)

The utterance "I'm fine on my own" constitutes a flouting of the maxim of quality as conceptualized by Grice (1975), since Molly knowingly makes a statement that is contradicted by reality. At the time of this utterance, Molly is emotionally and financially unstable, facing isolation and struggling with personal challenges. Her claim of self-sufficiency is thus unsupported by evidence, and it is clear to both herself and the listener that she is not truly fine nor capable of independently managing her situation. The pragmatic function of this utterance is self-protection; Molly uses this statement to assert independence, not to deceive, but to mask vulnerability and avoid appearing weak. The conversational implicature signals that Molly's declaration is not sincere but rather a defensive response to her circumstances, meant to preserve her dignity. According to Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, this utterance serves to maintain positive face, as Molly attempts to avoid being pitied or judged. Her flouting of the maxim of quality reflects a psychological strategy to cope with emotional discomfort and to resist reliance on others, even when support is needed. In fictional dialogue, such utterances enhance character complexity, revealing inner

conflict through non-literal language that invites audience interpretation. Ultimately, this flouting functions as a means of emotional regulation and identity preservation, demonstrating how language can be used not only to communicate but to shield the self from emotional exposure in moments of personal crisis.

## Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the utterances spoken by Molly Gunn in the film *Uptown Girls*, this study concludes that the maxim of quality is deliberately and systematically flouted by the main character to convey implicit meanings, manage emotional experiences, and express her identity. The types of flouting identified, sarcasm, deliberate lies, hyperbole, and unsupported statements, function pragmatically as tools for emotional self-protection, relationship management, humorous engagement, and identity preservation. Among these, deliberate lies were the most frequent, indicating Molly’s tendency to use intentional falsehoods as a strategy for coping with personal challenges and maintaining her self-image. These violations are not communicative failures but represent strategic linguistic choices that align with Grice’s (1975) theory of conversational implicature, where meaning is derived from context and shared understanding rather than literal expression. Molly’s use of non-literal language reflects psychological complexity and mirrors real-life communication strategies, where individuals navigate social pressures and emotional vulnerabilities through indirect speech. The findings affirm that flouting the maxim of quality serves as an artistic and rhetorical device in film discourse, enriching character development and enhancing audience engagement. Furthermore, this research highlights the pedagogical and analytical relevance of pragmatic theory in audiovisual media, contributing to a deeper understanding of language use, identity construction, and social interaction. Future studies may expand this analysis to other maxim violations or explore variations across genres and cultural contexts to further uncover the pragmatic dynamics of language in media narratives.

## Reference

- Anggraeni, D., & Ariatmi, S. (2020). Violation of the politeness principle in criticizing utterances on social media. *ELLITE: Journal of English Language, Literature, and Teaching*, 5(1), 1–10.
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics: Vol. 3. Speech acts* (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Ginting, H. (2020). Politeness strategies used by the main characters in the “Uptown Girls” movie. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 20(1), 25–36.
- Ginting, H. (2022). The use of politeness strategies in cinematic dialogues: A pragmatic analysis. *Lingua: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 13(2), 101–115.
- Holmes, J. (2013). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Kridalaksana, H. (2001). *Kamus Linguistik* (3rd ed.). PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

- Putri, N. A. (2022). Pragmatic analysis of politeness in Boy William's YouTube talk show. *Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra*, 8(1), 50–60.
- Siwi, P. N. (2020). The analysis of politeness strategies in the dialogue of *The Intern* movie. *Linguistics and Literature Journal*, 11(1), 10–20.
- Dynel, M. (2009). Humorous garden-paths: A pragmatic-cognitive study. *Cambridge Scholars Publishing*.