



Maxim Violations as Narrative Suspense Strategies in *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017)

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Article Info	Abstract
Received: 2026-06-01 Revised: 2026-06-18 Accepted: 2026-06-30 Keywords: Detective Fiction; Gricean Maxim Violations; Information Manipulation; Narrative Suspense; Pragmatic Analysis DOI: 10.24256/ideasv14i1.11164 Corresponding Author: Hudayashfa Qurrotun Na'ma hudayashfa@students.un nes.ac.id English Literature, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah	<i>This study investigates how Gricean maxim violations function as a strategy for constructing narrative suspense in <i>Murder on the Orient Express</i> (2017). While previous studies on maxim violations in film discourse have primarily focused on classification and communicative functions, this study examines their role in narrative structure. Drawing on Grice's Cooperative Principle and narrative suspense theories proposed by Sternberg and subsequent narratological studies, the study aims to identify the types of maxim violations and analyze their contribution to suspense construction. Employing a qualitative descriptive design with a pragmatic-narrative approach, the study analyzes 89 utterances from investigation scenes in the movie script, focusing on suspects' interrogative interactions. The findings indicate that maxim violations function systematically as mechanisms for regulating information and maintaining uncertainty in detective narratives, with Quality violations occurring most frequently. The study demonstrates that conversational deviations operate not only as pragmatic phenomena but also as narrative resources in cinematic storytelling. These findings contribute to pragmatics, narrative discourse, and film studies by providing an integrative perspective on the relationship between language, information management, and suspense construction.</i>

1. Introduction

Film dialogue functions not merely as a medium of communication but also as a narrative device that structures causality, guides audience expectations, and regulates the progression of information within a story (Spahiu, 2025). In detective fiction, dialogue occupies an even more crucial role because the narrative is

organized around investigation, clue distribution, and the gradual reconstruction of hidden events (Chandler, 1977; Link, 2023). Rather than revealing the truth immediately, detective narratives strategically control the disclosure of information, allowing facts to emerge progressively through conversations and interrogations (Sternberg, 1992). Consequently, suspense arises from the discrepancy between what characters and audiences know and what remains concealed, creating uncertainty and motivating continued inquiry (Köppe & Onea, 2023). Narrative suspense is therefore closely related to the management of information, including delayed revelation, controlled disclosure, and unresolved expectations (Doust & Piwek, 2017). Recent studies further suggest that suspense is maintained by inquiry-driven processes, in which unanswered questions encourage audiences to anticipate future revelations (Onea et al., 2026).

Within detective storytelling, these mechanisms are particularly evident during investigation scenes where information is exchanged, negotiated, and frequently manipulated (Jenner, 2016). Suspense may emerge through concealment, distortion, or delay of information. Concealment restricts access to relevant facts, distortion reshapes interpretation through misleading representations, and delay postpones the disclosure of important information (Hirsch et al., 2025; Sternberg, 1992). Because investigation relies heavily on verbal interaction, dialogue becomes a primary site where information is strategically managed to sustain uncertainty and maintain audience engagement.

One linguistic mechanism that may contribute to such information management is the violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975). The maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner require speakers to provide sufficient, truthful, relevant, and clear information (Yule, 1996). However, speakers do not always adhere to these principles. However, speakers do not always adhere to these principles. Violations may produce incomplete, misleading, irrelevant, or ambiguous utterances (Cutting, 2002). In deceptive or strategic interactions, such deviations can restrict access to information, manipulate interpretation, or postpone clarification. Consequently, maxim violations may function not only as pragmatic phenomena at the level of communication but also as linguistic resources that shape narrative effects through the regulation of information flow.

Previous studies have consistently shown that maxim violations are widespread in films and audiovisual discourse. Earlier studies emphasize their association with deception and multiple maxim violations (Tupan & Natalia, 2008). Subsequent studies generally report that maxim violations serve communicative functions such as deception, indirectness, ambiguity, and implicature, with violations of Quality and Quantity frequently emerging as dominant patterns (Arbain et al., 2023; Dewi et al., 2023; Dewi & Ariyaningsih, 2023; Ningsih & Ambalegin, 2022; Putri et al., 2024; Toda & Ghozali, 2017; Wahyuningsih & Gustania, 2021; Wulandari et al., 2022; Yulianti & Ambalegin, 2021). Similar tendencies are evident in studies of films and literary texts, which largely focus on

identifying types of violations and explaining their communicative functions without extending the discussion to broader narrative structures (Cahyana et al., 2025; Efendi, 2023; Fadli, 2016; Nugraha & Tawami, 2025; Putra et al., 2023; G. R. Putri, 2023; Safitri, 2024; Sari et al., 2019; Soleman et al., 2023; Widiasih et al., 2022). Although these studies provide valuable insights into pragmatic behavior, maxim violations are generally treated as isolated utterance-level phenomena rather than as components of narrative organization.

Research related to *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) also primarily focuses on linguistic aspects of the film. Amanda (2019) examines maxim violations and interprets them as deceptive strategies used during interaction. Setiawan & Sari (2021) investigate illocutionary acts performed by Hercule Poirot, whereas Anisa et al. (2021) discuss semantic relations in the dialogue. In addition, Fauzana et al. (2022) demonstrate how code mixing and code switching contribute to meaning construction. Collectively, these studies confirm the importance of language in shaping interaction and characterization. Nevertheless, they mainly emphasize communicative functions and linguistic features, leaving the role of language in constructing suspense largely unexplored.

Despite the increasing interest in maxim violations and narrative studies, research explicitly connecting Gricean maxim violations with narrative suspense remains limited. Existing studies rarely explain how violations systematically manipulate information within investigative dialogue or how such manipulation contributes to suspense in detective storytelling. Moreover, previous research tends to focus on communicative intentions rather than interpretive consequences. Meaning construction in discourse is shaped not only by what speakers say but also by how utterances influence interpretation and understanding within interaction (Putnam et al., 2017). Therefore, a conceptual connection can be proposed in which maxim violations operate as mechanisms of information manipulation, producing interpretive effects that ultimately generate narrative suspense.

Guided by Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975) and theories of narrative suspense proposed by Sternberg (1992), Köppe & Onea (2023), and Hirsch et al. (2025) this study conceptualizes maxim violations as linguistic mechanisms that regulate information through concealment, distortion, and delay. These mechanisms subsequently generate interpretive effects, including suspicion, curiosity, and uncertainty, which contribute to the construction of narrative suspense. This conceptual framework provides the analytical basis for examining the relationship between pragmatics and narratology in detective discourse.

Based on these considerations, this study addresses two research questions: (1) What types of Gricean maxim violations occur in *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017)? and (2) How do these violations function as strategies for creating narrative suspense? Accordingly, this study aims to identify and classify the types of maxim violations and to analyze how they manipulate information through concealment, distortion, and delay, particularly in investigation scenes involving

suspects. Unlike previous studies that primarily describe pragmatic deviations and communicative functions, this study integrates pragmatics and narratology to demonstrate that maxim violations function as structural devices regulating information flow, interpretive effects, and suspense in detective storytelling. This integrative perspective constitutes the novelty of the present study and contributes to broader discussions in pragmatics, discourse analysis, and narrative studies.

2. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a pragmatic-narrative approach to investigate how Gricean maxim violations function as a strategy for constructing narrative suspense. The analysis integrates Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) with theories of narrative suspense proposed by Hirsch et al. (2025), Köppe & Onea (2023), and Sternberg (1992). This framework was used to examine how maxim violations contribute to information manipulation and influence the development of suspense in detective storytelling.

Data Collection

The data were obtained from the movie script of *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017), while the film itself was used as a supporting source to observe gestures, intonation, and contextual cues. The study focused on investigation scenes in which Hercule Poirot interrogates suspects during the process of reconstructing the murder. These scenes represent the investigative phase of detective narratives, where information is gradually disclosed through dialogue (Jenner, 2016). Since suspects occupy a central role in controlling and manipulating information, their utterances became the primary focus of analysis. A total of 89 utterances containing maxim violations were selected as the primary data.

Data collection was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher read the movie script and cross-checked it with the film to ensure contextual accuracy. Second, investigation scenes involving interrogative interactions between Poirot and the suspects were identified. Third, utterances containing potential violations of the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner were selected and organized systematically for analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out deductively. Each utterance was first classified according to the type of maxim violation based on Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975). The researcher then examined the linguistic devices employed in the utterances, such as hedging, vague expressions, topic shifts, repetition, over-elaboration, and explicit refusal. Subsequently, the utterances were analyzed in terms of their role in information manipulation. Concealment referred to withholding or restricting access to crucial information, distortion referred to misleading or false representations, and delay referred to the postponement of

relevant information through indirect, vague, or incomplete responses (Hirsch et al., 2025; Köppe & Onea, 2023; Sternberg, 1992). Finally, interpretive effects were examined to explain how the utterances shape character interaction and audience understanding through contextual interpretation (Putnam et al., 2017). To enhance trustworthiness, coding categories and interpretations were discussed with the research supervisors, and repeated cross-checking between the script and the film was conducted to maintain consistency and minimize interpretive bias.

3. Result

A total of 89 maxim violations were identified in the investigation scenes of *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017). Violations of all four Gricean maxims were found, with Quality violations occurring most frequently. Quality violations account for 39 occurrences (43.82%), followed by Quantity with 25 occurrences (28.09%), Relation with 14 occurrences (15.73%), and Manner with 11 occurrences (12.36%).

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Maxim Violations

Maxim Violated	Frequency	Percentage
Quality	39	43.82%
Quantity	25	28.09%
Relation	14	15.73%
Manner	11	12.36%
TOTAL	89	100%

The findings indicate that violations of the maxim of Quality are the most dominant. Characters frequently employ misleading, false, or exaggerated statements, suggesting that information manipulation in investigative dialogue relies heavily on the construction of alternative interpretations rather than on straightforward disclosure.

Information manipulation is realized through three principal mechanisms, namely concealment, distortion, and delay. Among these mechanisms, concealment appears most frequently with 42 occurrences (45.16%), followed by distortion with 35 occurrences (37.63%), and delay with 16 occurrences (17.20%). Because several utterances perform overlapping functions, the total number of occurrences (93) exceeds the total number of utterances analyzed.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Information Manipulation

Information Manipulation	Frequency	Percentage
Concealment	42	45.16%
Distortion	35	37.63%
Delay	16	17.20%

TOTAL	93	100%
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**Some utterances perform overlapping functions; therefore, the number of occurrences exceeds the total amount of data.*

The predominance of concealment indicates that characters tend to withhold crucial information, restrict explanations, or avoid direct answers during interrogations. Distortion is realized through misleading and false statements, whereas delay appears through indirect, vague, or incomplete responses that postpone the disclosure of relevant information.

Concealment in Investigative Dialogue

Concealment refers to the restriction of access to crucial information during interrogation. This mechanism is mainly realized through violations of the maxims of Quantity and Quality. Quantity violations reduce the amount of information provided, whereas Quality violations conceal truth through denial, evasion, or partial disclosure.

Table 3. Concealment through Maxim Violations

No	Dialogue	Page	Maxim Violated	Linguistic Device
1.	POIROT: ... You say you were in our sleeper coach all night. You never left it? MICHEL: <i>Only once. When we reached the station in Vincovci.</i>	45	Quantity (Under-informative)	Minimizing expression ("only once"), lack of elaboration
2.	POIROT: No one else passed? MICHEL: <i>One of the ladies went to the toilet at the end, a red kimono. Dragons. Oh, and you stuck your head out again, Monsieur.</i>	47	Quantity (Partial information)	Vague reference ("one of the ladies"), descriptive insertion
3.	POIROT: Do you know of any specific enemies Mr. Ratchett may have had. MACQUEEN: <i>Gosh, take a number.</i>	52	Quantity (Vague generalization)	Idiomatic expression ("take a number")
4.	POIROT: Did you happen to know the Armstrongs? MRS. HUBBARD: <i>Knew of, can't say I had the pleasure. There's money and there's money. But you do believe me, about the man in my room?</i>	61	Quality (Evasive response)	Topic shift through redirecting question

5.	POIROT: ... You knew Doctor Arbuthnot before the boat to Stamboul? MARY DEBENHAM: <i>No.</i>	75	Quality (False denial)	Direct negation ("No")
6.	POIROT: ... Do you recognize anyone from the Armstrong household on this train? Family, staff... Governess... PRINCESS DRAGOMIROFF: <i>No. Though this man's face does remind me somewhat of Mrs. Armstrong's cook.</i>	81	Quality (Misleading denial)	Partial admission using contrast marker "Though"

Concealment in investigative dialogue is predominantly realized through violations of Quantity and Quality. Characters frequently provide under-informative answers, deny relevant facts, or shift attention away from sensitive issues. These strategies restrict access to important information and maintain uncertainty regarding the relationships, motives, and identities of the suspects.

Distortion in Investigative Dialogue

Distortion involves the manipulation or misrepresentation of information that alters how events are interpreted. This mechanism is predominantly associated with violations of the maxim of Quality. Rather than withholding information completely, speakers construct misleading explanations, false alibis, and deceptive assertions that encourage alternative interpretations.

Table 4. Distortion through Maxim Violations

No	Dialogue	Page	Maxim Violated	Linguistic Device
1.	POIROT: Left hand or the right? DR. ARBUTHNOT: That's the thing. <i>The wounds are haphazard.</i> They don't seem to follow any pattern. <i>As if the killer wasn't sure. Or closed his eyes and struck blind.</i>	41	Quality (Speculative explanation)	Hedging ("as if"), speculative language
2.	POIROT: Perhaps it moved you to the toilet? We are investigating a murder, no time to be shy abt nature's calls. MICHEL: <i>No, I tell you no</i>	46	Quality (Overconfident assertion)	Overgeneralization ("no assassin could"), certainty marker

	assassin could have moved through the car without me seeing him. And I have the only pass key.			
3.	POIROT: You assume he was killed? MACQUEEN: <i>No -- not at all, I just meant he was in fine health -- he had enemies.</i>	49	Quality (Evasive statement)	Self-repair, contradiction ("No--not at all")
4.	MRS. HUBBARD: <i>The murderer was in my compartment last night!</i>	60	Quality (False claim)	Emphatic assertion with exclamation
5.	POIROT: Are you sure you didn't see him? SCHMIDT: <i>I'm certain. The other conductor was a small man, with a short beard.</i>	83	Quality (Misleading certainty)	Emphasis ("I'm certain")
6.	POIROT: You know I must to speak with her. COUNT ANDRENYI: <i>Impossible. Elena... is not well. We only now travel to London for the doctor. She never left the cabin once last night.</i>	101	Quality (False alibi)	Over-elaboration, emphatic assertion ("never")

Distortion is primarily realized through Quality violations. Characters employ speculative explanations, emphatic denials, and fabricated statements that reshape the audience's perception of events. These strategies create false leads and strengthen uncertainty by directing suspicion toward misleading interpretations.

Delay in Investigative Dialogue

Delay refers to the postponement of relevant information within the progression of the investigation. This mechanism is realized through violations of Quantity, Relation, and Manner. Indirect responses, vague expressions, and incomplete utterances temporarily suspend clarification and prolong the process of revelation.

Table 5. Delay through Maxim Violations

No	Dialogue	Page	Maxim Violated	Linguistic Device
1.	POIROT: On the contrary. If you were overly emotional I	51	Quantity (Approximate/non-specific answer)	Hedging ("about")

	might suspect a farce. When did you last see him? MACQUEEN: <i>Must've been about ten. He called me in to look over our sales in Italy.</i>			
2.	POIROT: When did you last see your master? MASTERMAN: <i>About him. I must first say I had no notion whatsoever he was this -- Casetti. To imagine him responsible for that horror... Had I known I would never have consented to his service.</i>	63	Relation (Indirect response)	Topic expansion before answering
3.	POIROT: If I am it is entirely by accident. Miss Greta Ohlsson. You were a trained nurse? And now -- a missionary. Such a calling. If I may, why did you change professions? GRETA: <i>I owed it to God. There were -- indulgent times in my youth...</i>	68	Manner (Vague expression)	Ellipsis and vague expression ("indulgent times")
4.	MARY DEBENHAM: As we established. <i>There are no laws against my silence.</i>	76	Quantity (Refusal to answer)	Explicit withholding ("no laws against my silence")
5.	POIROT: Did you ever know a Colonel Armstrong? DOCTOR ARBUTHNOT: <i>Well -- I might've known two or three Armstrongs. Tommy in the 60th -- and Selby Armstrong, killed at the Somme.</i>	92	Relation (Indirect response)	Hedging ("might've")
6.	COUNTESS ANDRENYI (V.O.): <i>So we took it off my passport and my bag. I was only scared --</i>	103	Quantity (Incomplete disclosure)	Ellipsis (unfinished utterance)

Delay in investigative dialogue is realized through Quantity, Relation, and Manner violations. Speakers frequently postpone relevant information by

providing indirect, ambiguous, or incomplete responses. Instead of preventing disclosure altogether, these violations regulate the timing of information delivery and maintain suspense throughout the investigation.

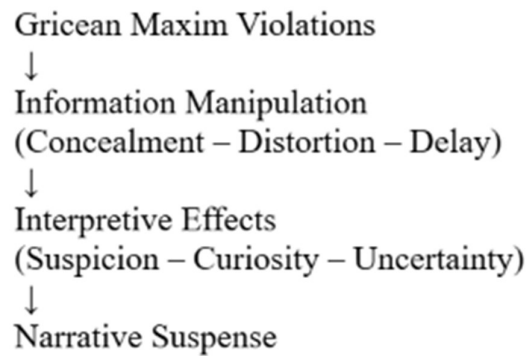


Figure 1. Conceptual Relationship between Maxim Violations and Narrative Suspense

Figure 1 summarizes the relationship between maxim violations, information manipulation, interpretive effects, and narrative suspense. The model illustrates how conversational deviations function as mechanisms that regulate information flow and shape audience interpretation throughout the investigation. The findings demonstrate that maxim violations do not function merely as conversational deviations.

They operate systematically through three mechanisms of information manipulation. Concealment limits access to crucial information, distortion reshapes interpretation through misleading statements, and delay postpones the revelation of relevant information. Although analytically distinguished, these mechanisms occasionally overlap within the same utterance, indicating that information manipulation in detective narratives is multidimensional. Collectively, these mechanisms regulate information flow and maintain uncertainty throughout the investigation, supporting the development of narrative suspense.

4. Discussion

Maxim Violations as a Strategy for Narrative Suspense

The findings demonstrate that maxim violations in *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) function not merely as conversational deviations but as systematic narrative strategies. Across the 89 utterances analyzed, violations of the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner contribute to three major mechanisms of information manipulation, namely concealment, distortion, and delay. These mechanisms regulate what information is accessible, how it is interpreted, and when it is revealed, thereby producing narrative suspense. This finding supports Sternberg's (1992) argument that suspense is closely related to the strategic distribution of information and is further consistent with Köppe & Onea (2023)

view that suspense emerges from gaps between what is known and what remains unknown.

Previous studies on maxim violations have generally focused on conversational implicatures, politeness, deception, and communicative functions in everyday discourse and film interactions. In contrast, the present study demonstrates that maxim violations also function narratively. Rather than merely violating conversational expectations, speakers manipulate information to sustain uncertainty throughout the investigation. Unlike earlier studies that mainly classify maxim violations or explain their interpersonal functions, the present study emphasizes their role in regulating information flow and constructing suspense. This finding extends previous pragmatic studies by showing that conversational deviations may serve broader narrative purposes within detective storytelling.

Concealment through Maxim Violations

Concealment occurs when crucial information is withheld or restricted, primarily through violations of Quantity and Quality.

Data 5 (Table 3)

POIROT: "... You knew Doctor Arbuthnot before the boat to Stamboul?"

MARY DEBENHAM: "No."

(Green & Christie, 2015:75)

Mary's response represents a violation of the maxim of Quality. The direct negation "No" functions as a categorical denial that suppresses an existing relationship. Linguistically, the utterance presents false certainty and prevents access to relevant information. The interpretive effect is the maintenance of uncertainty regarding the relationship between the two characters and their possible motives.

The findings indicate that concealment mainly operates through under-informative responses, denials, and evasive statements. This result supports Chandler's (1977) observation that detective fiction commonly relies on restricted information to maintain mystery. However, unlike previous studies that mainly classify maxim violations according to Gricean categories, the present study demonstrates how Quantity and Quality violations function as mechanisms for controlling informational access. Thus, concealment contributes to suspense by preserving informational gaps and preventing immediate understanding.

Distortion through Maxim Violations

Distortion occurs when information is manipulated or misrepresented, causing events to be interpreted incorrectly. This mechanism is predominantly associated with violations of Quality.

Data 4 (Table 4)

MRS. HUBBARD: "*The murderer was in my compartment last night!*"

(Green & Christie, 2015:60)

Mrs. Hubbard's utterance employs emphatic assertion to present a fabricated claim as undeniable truth. Linguistically, the utterance exaggerates certainty and creates a misleading interpretive framework. As a result, both Poirot and the audience are encouraged to assume the existence of an external intruder.

These findings support Sternberg's (1992) claim that suspense can be generated through manipulated interpretations rather than through the absence of information alone. Similarly, Spahiu (2025) argues that deceptive discourse constructs alternative interpretive possibilities that require subsequent revision. The present findings extend this perspective by showing that distortion in investigative dialogue frequently relies on Quality violations, particularly through emphatic assertions, false alibis, and speculative explanations. Consequently, suspense is sustained through interpretive instability, where audiences repeatedly reassess previous assumptions.

Delay through Maxim Violations

Delay occurs when relevant information is postponed, primarily through violations of Quantity, Relation, and Manner.

Data 2 (Table 5)

POIROT: "When did you last see your master?"

MASTERMAN: "*About him. I must first say I had no notion whatsoever he was this—
Cassetti...*"

(Green & Christie, 2015:63)

Masterman's response illustrates a violation of Relation through indirectness. Rather than answering immediately, he introduces additional commentary that postpones the requested information. Linguistically, the expression "I must first say" signals topic expansion and delays the reconstruction of the timeline.

These findings are consistent with Hirsch et al. (2025), who argue that suspense depends not only on information itself but also on the timing of its disclosure. The findings further demonstrate that indirectness, vagueness, and incomplete utterances function as temporal strategies that prolong anticipation. Unlike concealment, which limits access to information, delay regulates when information becomes available. Therefore, suspense is maintained through postponed clarification rather than complete informational absence.

Interplay between Maxim Violations and Narrative Suspense

The findings show that concealment, distortion, and delay operate in an interconnected manner. Violations of Quantity frequently contribute to

concealment and delay through under-informativeness, incomplete disclosure, and refusal to elaborate. Violations of Quality predominantly produce distortion by creating false or misleading interpretations. Meanwhile, Relation and Manner violations function as supporting strategies by introducing topic shifts, ambiguity, and vagueness.

Although these categories are analytically distinguished, several utterances perform overlapping functions. For instance, Michel's response, "Only once. When we reached the station in Vincovci" (Green & Christie, 2015:45), simultaneously performs concealment and delay. Through the minimizing expression "only once," the utterance restricts access to information regarding Michel's movements while also postponing the reconstruction of the timeline. Similarly, MacQueen's response, "No—not at all, I just meant he was in fine health—he had enemies" (Green & Christie, 2015:49), combines concealment and distortion. While attempting to suppress his knowledge and emotional involvement, he simultaneously directs interpretation toward an alternative explanation. These examples indicate that information manipulation in detective narratives is multidimensional rather than mutually exclusive.

Those findings portray clearly the relationships from Figure 1 that suspense emerges not simply from hidden information but from the interaction between linguistic choices and interpretive processes.

Interpretive Effect and Narrative Function

The interpretive effects generated by maxim violations shape how meaning is constructed within the narrative. Concealment creates information gaps that encourage curiosity, distortion produces misleading interpretations that require revision, and delay generates anticipation by postponing clarification. These interpretive effects influence both the progression of the investigation and the audience's understanding of events.

This finding supports Putnam et al. (2017), who argue that meaning emerges through interpretation rather than through linguistic forms alone. In the present study, suspicion, curiosity, and uncertainty are not treated as emotional responses directly measured from viewers, but as theoretical interpretive outcomes inferred from textual analysis. Therefore, the analysis focuses on narrative potential rather than empirical audience reception.

The present study contributes to pragmatics, discourse studies, and film analysis by demonstrating that maxim violations function not only as conversational phenomena but also as narrative devices. Previous studies commonly examine maxim violations from the perspectives of implicature, politeness, deception, and communicative functions, whereas the present study emphasizes their role in regulating information flow and constructing suspense. Thus, the study extends maxim-violation research beyond utterance-level pragmatics toward narrative discourse analysis.

From the perspective of narrative discourse, the findings suggest that

information manipulation constitutes an important mechanism through which meaning and uncertainty are organized in detective narratives. From the perspective of film studies, the findings indicate that suspense is created not solely through plot structure but also through linguistic interaction. Consequently, screenplay writers may employ under-informative responses, false assertions, indirectness, and ambiguity strategically to maintain mystery and guide audience interpretation. These findings therefore highlight the importance of dialogue as an active component of cinematic storytelling rather than merely a vehicle for delivering information.

The present study interprets suspense effects from a pragmatic and narrative perspective based on textual analysis. The interpretive effects identified in this study are theoretical constructs rather than empirical evidence derived from audience-response data. Therefore, the discussion of suspicion, curiosity, and uncertainty should be understood as inferred interpretive outcomes rather than directly observed viewer experiences. Future studies may combine pragmatic analysis with audience reception studies to examine how viewers actually respond to information manipulation in detective narratives.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Gricean maxim violations in *Murder on the Orient Express* (2017) function not merely as pragmatic deviations but as systematic narrative strategies in constructing suspense. The findings reveal that violations of the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner contribute to three principal forms of information manipulation: concealment, distortion, and delay. These forms regulate what information is available, how it is interpreted, and when it is disclosed within investigative dialogue, particularly in utterances produced by suspects.

Concealment operates by restricting access to crucial information, distortion reshapes interpretation through misleading or false statements, and delay postpones the delivery of relevant information. As a result, these mechanisms generate information gaps, interpretive instability, and temporal uncertainty, which are essential in sustaining narrative suspense.

Furthermore, the analysis shows that maxim violations produce specific interpretive effects, influencing how meaning is constructed within character interaction and how the audience understands the unfolding investigation (Putnam et al., 2017). Therefore, this study extends previous pragmatic research by demonstrating that maxim violations function not only at the level of communication but also as structural devices that organize narrative suspense through systematic information manipulation.

However, this study is limited to the analysis of a single film and focuses specifically on investigation scenes involving suspects' utterances. As a result, the

findings cannot be generalized to all film genres or narrative contexts. In addition, this study analyzes suspense structurally through information manipulation rather than examining audience emotional responses. Future research is recommended to explore a wider range of texts, including different genres or multiple films, to compare patterns of maxim violations and their narrative functions.

Further studies may also incorporate audience reception or cognitive approaches to examine how viewers perceive and respond to suspense. Additionally, integrating other linguistic or narrative theories may provide a more comprehensive understanding of how language contributes to the construction of narrative effects in film discourse.

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