

A Content Analysis on Translation Shift: How Flouting Maxim, Violating Maxim, and Multimodality influence the Characterization of the Main Character in the Webtoon Garden of the Dead Flower

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ABSTRACT

This paper highlights the significance of the interplay between pragmatic and multimodal approaches in constructing characterizations in Webtoon. Other studies often analyze the linguistic and visual elements separately, making this research that combines pragmatic theory and multimodal analysis in understanding character personality construction remain limited. This paper fills this gap by conducting an integrated analysis of the main character, Camellia, in the Indonesian Webtoon Garden of the Dead Flower. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, 41 dialogue panels were found where Camellia uses the non-observance maxim of Grice's Cooperative Principle. It focuses on analyzing how the data of flouting and violating maxims synergize with multimodal cues. The results show that Camellia's characterization is explicitly constructed by flouting maxim of relevance and violating maxim of quality. This pragmatic strategy depicts her character as cunning and strategic yet vulnerable. The analysis also reveals that the multimodal cues amplify these pragmatic choices, such as expressive close-ups, camera framing, and typography. This study concludes that Camellia's characterization is constructed together by linguistic and visual designs, offering a robust model for analyzing characterization in digital narrative media.

1. INTRODUCTION

Dialog is the primary way for the author to convey their story to the reader. Hence, dialogue becomes one of the central parts of understanding the story and characters. Visual cues, bubbles, and even typography greatly also affect how readers perceive the characters and stories. It is essential to transfer the message from the original comic so that characters are not misinterpreted. Muftachor (2019) stated that dialogue between the characters should follow the Cooperative principle. Grice (1975) stated that the general speaker and listener will have a successful conversation if they obey the cooperative principle defined in the four maxims. Maxim is a "rule of communication" that discusses how people can stay on the discussion topic without any misunderstanding or ambiguity.

However, the Grice Cooperative principle is not always adhered to in many conversations, mostly in films, series, talk shows, and Webtoon. This phenomenon, according to Grice, is called the non-observant maxim. It is crucial to pay more attention to translating Webtoons that go beyond literal linguistic conversion, primarily when the original utterances address the non-observant maxim. This complexity is further amplified by the multimodal nature of Webtoon, where verbal and visual elements interact to create meaning. For instance, the use of specific fonts, colors, and layouts can influence how readers perceive a character's emotions, personality, and actions (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). This interplay of textual and visual elements enhances the narrative and provides deeper insights into character traits. Translator is demanded to capture the nuance of a character who flouts or violates in their dialogue. The failure of preserving the pragmatic and multimodality aspect creates a risk in flattening complex character and alter the narrative.

Based on previous studies, characters who flout maxim of quantity tend to have implied meaning in their dialogue. At the same time, characters who flout maxim of relevance tend to use it as a distraction or persuade the listeners to find the hidden meaning of what the speakers say (Ibrahim, Arifin & Setyowati, 2018; Wahyuni, Arifin, Lubis, 2019).

Meanwhile, the characters who violate maxim quality tend to conceal the truth, dishonest, incorrect, or irrelevant despite the character's intention. Characters who often violate the maxim of quantity tend to avoid disliked dialogue or situations, but on some occasions, they tend to be more talkative and give additional information that is not concise and clear. Characters who tend to violate maxim of relevance use it to make irrelevant conversation. Lastly, violating the maxim of manner tends to be used when speaking unclearly and inappropriately (Wulandari, Arifin, & Setyowati, 2022). Multimodality also has a role in conveying information as (Linh, 2021) studies that multimodality in movie posters can communicate the movie genre. Many researchers analyze those aspects separately, and studies that focus on comic analysis in pragmatic and multimodality are still limited.

The issue of the non-observant maxim, mainly in the form of flouting and violating, can also occur in Webtoon. Hamidah, Sabat, and Aisyah (2023) investigated four types of maxim violation in the Just Friend comic in the original language. They assert that these maxim violations are to cause misunderstanding and confusion in the reader. This further implies the importance of equivalently translating non-observant maxims into the target language. It is therefore crucial to pay more attention to translating Webtoons that go beyond literal linguistic conversion, primarily when the original utterances address non-observant maxim. Characters who flout and violate the Gricean maxim rely on pragmatic effect to convey their intention, for example, using sarcasm or utter implied meanings. It is expected for the translator to maintain the original dialogue's communicative purpose or the dialogue's underlying meaning or its atmosphere, such as humor and irony in other languages.

This complexity is further amplified by the multimodal nature of Webtoon, where verbal and visual elements interact to create meaning. Multimodality, which covers half of the Webtoon, also needs to be maintained by the translator. Multimodality, which encompasses these various modes of communication, plays a crucial role in characters' portrayal. For instance, the use of specific fonts, colors, and layouts can influence how readers perceive a character's emotions, personality, and actions (Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). This interplay of textual and visual elements enhances the narrative and provides deeper insights into character traits. However, challenges arise when these elements are not consistently adapted across different languages or platforms. In some cases, the absence of a particular comic version in a specific language forces readers to rely on unofficial translations, which may lack the nuanced multimodal elements of the original. This inconsistency can lead to varied interpretations of characters, as the multimodal cues essential for accurate portrayal might be lost or altered in translation.

It is crucial to maintain the message of the original source. Mistranslating pragmatic aspects can cause lost meaning or alter the characterization completely. Furthermore, multimodality becomes a big concern to the translator, because not only is it necessary to be correctly translated, but it is also necessary to keep details in terms of speech bubbles, visual cues, even the typography. Even the smallest changes in topography can alter the reader's understanding of the main character's trait. Prior studies also indicate the research gap. Many researchers analyze those aspects separately, and studies that focus on comic analysis in Pragmatics and multimodality is still limited. Research that explores both pragmatic aspects and multimodality is expected to fill the research gap. This study analyzes Webtoon's *Garden of the Dead Flower* with the specific aim of filling the gap by analyzing how pragmatic and multimodal elements in the Indonesian source text are translated into English and how these shifts affect the representation of the main character.

2. METHOD

This research applies a descriptive qualitative approach, using flouting and violating maxim, as well as multimodal content to analyse the construction of main character, Camellia, in Indonesian webtoon *Garden of the Dead Flower*. This research focus on analysing the interplay of pragmatic communication and visual design shaped protagonist personality.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

This study examined 41 Camellia's dialogue panels that contain flouting and violating maxim. The result reveals that Camellia characterization is delivered through an interplay of pragmatic strategies that is reinforced by multimodal cues. The distribution of dialogue that contains flouting and violating maxims is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Flouting and Violating Maxims

Types of Maxim	Flouting	Violating	Total
Quantity	2	8	10
Quality	3	13	16
Relevance	10	2	12
Manner	2	1	3
Total	17	24	41

The data in Table 1 indicate the pragmatic strategies Camellia usually employs. The most common strategies used are flouting maxi of relevance by 10 data and violating maxim of quality by 13 data. She tends to use the flouting maxim of relevance to evade or change the topic of conversation to protect herself and her secret. She also mostly uses violating maxim of quality (lying) as her main strategy for survival.

The specific multimodal elements in each panel further enhance these pragmatic choices. The key multimodal cues identified in this research include:

- Expressive Close-Ups, are used in moments of deduction or Dramatic tension to allow the reader to focus solely on Camellia’s psychological state.
- Atmospheric Backgrounds, are frequently used to mirror Camellia’s tone and feeling in conversation. One of them is a dramatic shift in multiple panels from bright to dark and shadowy. This background heightens the atmosphere of tension, fear, or suspicion.
- Topography, is frequently used in speech bubbles and text styles, which include repetition, shaky bubbles, ellipses, etc. The choices in topography directly reflect Camellia’s emotional state.
- Camera Framing, is positioned with angles and panel layout to show Camellia’s situation as either powerful or vulnerable. The framing usually represented by Zoom in is when she looks down at others or zoom out when she is in trouble.

Example 1

Context of the situation: Camellia is prying about Vincent’s background by asking multiple servants at the house. One of the servants is the oldest one, and Camellia tries to bring up the topic of Madam’s scandal to bait the oldest servant.

Pembantu: “Aku sudah bekerja menjadi pembantu di rumah tuan Jan bahkan sebelum beliau bersama Nyonya Gendhis, jadi aku tahu tabiat wanita tak tahu diuntung itu!”

Camellia: “Jadi Paman bekerja di rumah itu sejak sebelum Tuan Jan bertemu Nyonya Gendhis? Pantas saja Paman tahu sebanyak itu. Tapi kalau benar begitu, kasihan sekali ya tuan Jan. Sudah menikahi wanita pribumi yang hanya kelas rendahan di mata orang eropa, ternyata malah dicampakan begitu saja. Kira-kira siapa yang membocorkan aib keluarga De Jaeger, ya? Kalau melihat tuan jan yang sangat keras pada anak-anaknya dan sangat menjaga martabat keluarganya, Tuan Jan tak akan tinggal diam pada pembantu yang membocorkan aib keluarga itu. Tapi pembantu itu malah masih bisa bekerja di rumah itu dengan tenang sampai sekarang. Bukankah ini aneh, ya kan paman?”

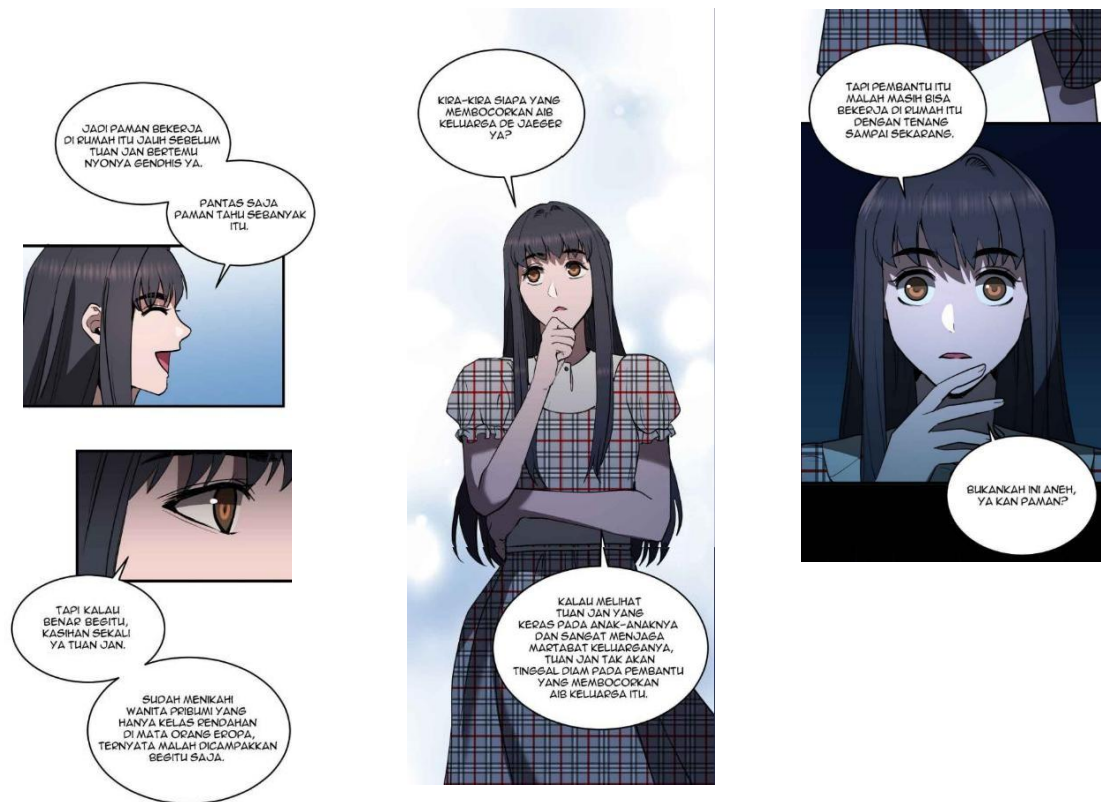


Figure 1. Indonesian version

The main character, Camellia, employs this type of flouting, which involves providing an excessive amount of information followed by a question that seems rhetorical to the listener. While giving this excessive type of answer and question, she intends to confuse and accuse the listener or servant of snitching on the victim's story or spreading false news. Instead of performing simple things, such as asking who the perpetrator is or saying that his logic is flawed, she constructed a multi-step logical argument that indirectly accused the servant.

Multimodality, namely visual cues such as background color, framing and close-up, visual metaphor, and body language, in this panel, strengthens Camellia's flouting maxim of quantity and Camellia's characterization. The visual cues show Camellia being sarcastic and questioning the listener to judge his flawed logic, making her opinion or analysis more convincing to the reader. The angle of the drawing, from the side and close up to her eye, also strengthens her character of being more analytical, curious, and brave, as evident in her sarcastic question or opinion. While she explains her answer to the servant, the subtle changes in her background make her accusation to the servant more convincing. The dramatic close-up. Her eyes are wide with realization, and the background is dark, heightening the tension. As if looking down on him, that allows her to stand up to her accusation and ignore the consequences on her behalf. This particular dialogue reveals her to be fearless and bold yet bright enough to conclude the servant's mistakes. This builds her character of logical yet cunning and brave yet empathetic individual.

Servant: "I've worked here since before Menner Jan married that woman! I know everything about that ungrateful woman!"

Camellia: "Ahh... so you've worked here since before meneer Jan met Her. No wonder you know so much! If what he's saying is true, I really pity Menner Jan... He married an inlander, a low class human being in the eyes of the colonizers... but then she left him. **Who started spreading this news about the de Jager family? Based on how strict Menner Jan is to his sons and how he always perseveres in**

maintaining his family reputation, he wouldn't sit still and let his servant spread rumors about his family. But... that servant is still working for him to this day. It just doesn't add up, don't you think?"

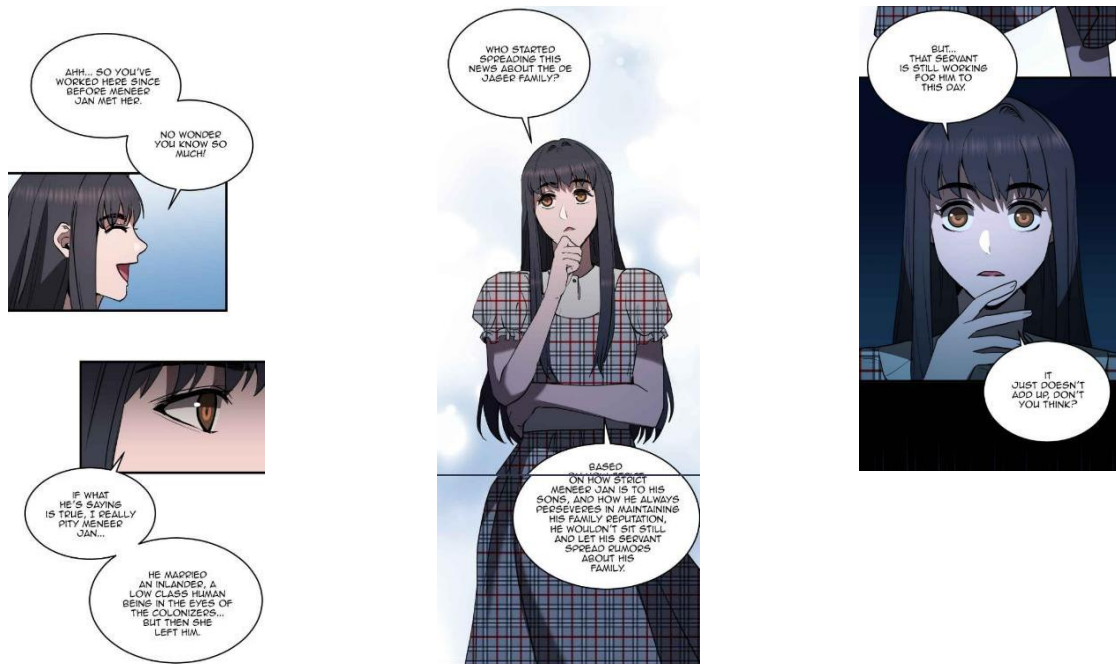


Figure .2 English version

The changes are the same, ellipsis and pause moment. The topic shift is still there, but it feels less like a clever pivot and more like a necessary transition. Camellia has to change the topic to get to the part where she can deliver her dramatic, insincere line about pitying Menner Jan. The shift in relevance becomes a bridge to the main event. This addition subtly weakens another type of flouting maxim besides maxim of quality.

3.2. Discussion

The analysis of the Indonesian version confirms that Camellia's character is built through the refined use of indirect communication. The flouting maxim, whose implied meaning is intended to be understood, constructs a different side of her personality. The maxim of quality is consistently flouted to perform sarcasm, as seen in the interrogation of the servant. This portrays her as cunning and brave, capable of turning the opponent's logic against them while also acknowledging the danger of the consequences. The flouting maxim of relevance, which she employs most often, serves as a primary tool for self-preservation. She uses it by abruptly evading questions, which reveals her traits to be vulnerable and strategic as she works to conceal her identity while simultaneously signaling her underlying fear.

In parallel, her frequent violating maxim of quality (lying) and violating maxim of quantity are not malicious but tools for her survival and investigation. She violates the maxim of quantity when she refuses to tell the bitter truth about Wiliem to Juna, which is a calculated act of defense, positioning her as protective to her allies. She also violates the maxim of quality by testing Vincent in unexpected ways, portraying her character as anachronistic and quick-witted. The violation of maxim of relevance, when she abruptly changes the topic, indicates her fear and desperation, particularly when feeling trapped by the killer. This aligns with research showing that maxim violation in the narrative is often a deliberate device to reveal a character's hidden motives or psychological state (Putri, Dewi, Aryawibawa, 2024).

Crucially, as the framework by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) suggests, these pragmatic choices are powerfully amplified by the Webtoon's multimodality. The visual design is not merely illustrative but is synergistic with the dialogue in shaping Camellia's persona. This interplay is perfectly captured during her interrogation of the servant. Here, the interplay of a transitioning background from white to black, combined with shifting camera angles, creates a sense of rising tension and boosts her cunning traits. This visual narrative is paired with her pragmatic strategy, such as the continuous statements that lead to accusations flout the maxims of quantity and manner, culminating in a sudden, sharp accusation. Together, the overwhelming dialogue and the disorienting visuals construct a definitive portrait of her cunning and manipulative capabilities, demonstrating how text and image co-create her complex character.

The translation can maintain the core pragmatic and the primary intent, but the intensity is subtly altered. The specific, pragmatic translation strategies identified by Chesterman (2016) provide a clear framework for understanding how these shifts occur. These shifts are mainly the result of the use of illocutionary and interpersonal change strategies. In the interrogation shift of the servant, Camellia's use of flouting the maxim of quantity paints her as instinctively smart. The English translation shifts her rapid deduction by adding pauses (e.g., "But..."). This illocutionary change shifts her tone into a controlled, theatrical-like performance. This shifts the original focus of flouting maxim of quantity into flouting maxim of quality, enhancing her sarcasm. This addition makes her appear more performative rather than spontaneous deduction. The interpersonal change is the most vivid in shifting Camellia's characterization. This is evident in her refusal of Vincent's offer. The addition of a stutter and an exclamation point (e.g., "N-no need!!!") transforms her personality completely. It shifts her original character from being composed into someone whose panic is visibly leaking. While the core pragmatic is maintained, the English version conveys her character to be more panicked.

4. CONCLUSION

The original Indonesian version portrays Camellia's character as built on the strategic non-observance of Grice's maxims, specifically flouting maxim of relevance and violating maxim of quality. She uses it as her primary tool for survival and investigation, portraying herself as cunning, strategic, protective, and vulnerable. Multimodal cues play a part by amplifying or weakening the pragmatic choices. The shifting background, camera angles, and typography work together with the dialogue to show Camellia's psychological state and her traits. The interplay between linguistic and visual cues perfectly illustrates the co-creative power of text and image, as described by Kress and Leeuwen.

This study focuses specifically on the main character. Future research may consider expanding the scope to include dialogues from other characters, particularly the antagonists. It could broaden the use of the Gricean maxim and its multimodality as such analysis contrasts to that of the protagonist, potentially revealing deeper ideological conflict in the narrative. It could determine whether the impact of pragmatic choices and multimodal strategies for characterization in the thriller Webtoon is specific or common. The English version primarily preserves Camellia's core personality, subtly adjusting it rather than replicating it directly. The translator mainly maintain the core intent but alter the tone and intensity. This is supported by the total data, which indicates that the number of cases that go through a "partial shift" is more than half. The primary translation strategies used are illocutionary and interpersonal change, which shift her composed fear into visible panic. This results in shift in Camellia's personality to be more sarcastic and emotionally transparent compared to the Indonesian version.

The challenge in translating multimodality text requires the translator to comprehend not only linguistic differences but also pragmatic and cultural nuances. The translator needs to recreate the intended character effect rather than merely translating words literally. The use of translation strategies, such as cultural filtering (e.g., "ain't" and "menner jan"), serves as an example of recreating intended character effects. This study also reveals that any changes in punctuation or word choice can significantly alter Camellia's portrayal and reader perception of her. This further underscores the important role of co-creating the meaning in multimodal narratives for the translator.

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