



Manipulation Through Maxim Violations: A Pragmatic Analysis of the Korean Drama *Doubt*

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ABSTRACT

Research on maxim violations and linguistic manipulation remains limited, particularly regarding how such violations function as tools of influence. This study examines the role of maxim violations as manipulation strategies in the Korean drama *Doubt*. Data were collected from character dialogues and analyzed qualitatively through non-participatory observation and descriptive analysis. The study identified 41 utterances containing 86 maxim violations. Violations of the maxim of quality were the most frequent, followed by those of relevance, manner, and quantity. Quality violations influenced hearers to accept the speaker's intentions through misleading statements, while relevance violations created uncertainty and redirected focus. Manner

violations employed ambiguity to evoke empathy or guilt, and quantity violations, though less frequent, reinforced or undermined beliefs through excessive or limited information. Overall, the findings suggest that maxim violations function as effective linguistic strategies for manipulation, enabling speakers to subtly influence or control hearers within specific social and emotional contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Conceptually communication serves as a mechanism for transmitting information, bridging differences in perspective, and fostering social relations through the honest and open

exchange of meaning. In practice, however, language is often used for more strategic and even manipulative purposes. It functions not only as a medium for expressing thought but also as a means to obscure, redirect, or reshape the hearer's perception to serve the speaker's interests. This illustrates a tension between the ideal role of language as a cooperative instrument and its actual use as a means of control. As Korneeva et al. (2019) argue, language as a powerful tool of thought has the capacity to shape how individuals perceive and interpret reality. Therefore, linguistic manipulation should be understood not merely as a deviation from cooperative communication but as a deliberate strategy aimed at influencing beliefs, emotions, and actions.

The term *manipulation* derives from the Latin *manipulus*, meaning “a handful,” which originates from *manus* (hand) and *pleo* (to fill) (Seda & Rafayel, 2021). Within the realm of communication, manipulation refers to the deliberate act of influencing, directing, or controlling another person to fulfill particular objectives. Van Dijk (2006) characterizes manipulation as an asymmetrical communicative act in which the speaker exercises greater power than the hearer, often to the latter's disadvantage or without their full awareness. Such manipulation is typically subtle, presented through utterances that appear cooperative but are inherently deceptive.

In pragmatic studies, linguistic manipulation is often discussed in relation to violations of Cooperative Principle by Grice (1991). This principle is grounded in the idea that effective conversation depends on contributions that are truthful, sufficient, relevant, and clear between participants. Grice identified four maxims to guide cooperative interaction: quality (be truthful), quantity (provide adequate information), relevance (stay focused on the topic), and manner (be clear and avoid ambiguity). When a speaker intentionally violates one of these maxims to conceal intentions or create implied meanings, the phenomenon is known as violating a maxim. This differs from flouting a maxim, which aims to generate implicatures without misleading the interlocutor. However, in manipulative contexts maxim violations are consciously employed to influence the interlocutor's perception (Howe, 2017; Thomas, 2014; Van Dijk, 2006).

Violations of conversational maxims are not merely a universal linguistic phenomenon but are deeply shaped by context. Okolo (1996) argues that inconsistencies between verbal and nonverbal messages constitute a breach of the maxim of manner, which may confuse or even mislead the interlocutor. Song (2015) study of Korean conversational data similarly shows that violations of the maxim of manner frequently manifest as deliberate ambiguity. Such ambiguity initially guides interlocutors toward an incorrect interpretation before revealing the intended meaning, thereby producing pragmatic effects such as humor, irony, or, in certain contexts,

manipulation. Consequently, understanding the surrounding context is essential for determining whether a maxim violation functions as a legitimate pragmatic strategy or as a manipulative act.

Linguistic manipulation, moreover, can be seen as an inherent dimension of communication rather than an exception to it. Rigotti (2008) contends that all communication is inherently manipulative, as it aims to influence another person's behavior or thought. A completely "neutral" exchange, therefore, would be communicatively ineffective. Maillat (2013) further explains that manipulative communication occurs when a speaker strategically limits the contextual assumptions available to the hearer, guiding their interpretation toward the speaker's intended conclusions. From this perspective, manipulation should not be viewed merely as a moral deviation but as a complex pragmatic process that draws upon linguistic structure, contextual framing, and communicative psychology to achieve persuasive influence.

Studies on maxim violations and language manipulation have been conducted in various contexts. Puspita and Young (2023) examined forms of maxim violation in daily interactions and found that violations of the maxims of quality, relevance, and manner often lead to communication breakdowns. Yulianti and Ambalegin (2021) analyzed maxim violations in the series *Pretty Little Liars* and discovered that such violations are used to mislead interlocutors. In the context of the Korean language, Song (2015) investigated maxim violations to understand the formation of conversational implicatures, but did not focus on their manipulative functions. Therefore, the use of maxim violations as a tool of linguistic manipulation in Korean remains underexplored.

Previous studies have shown that research on maxim violations is extensive in English and Indonesian discourse but remains limited in Korean, especially in relation to manipulation. In Korean communicative culture, where social hierarchy and politeness are highly valued, such violations may serve distinct pragmatic functions, not only implying hidden meanings but also shaping the interlocutor's behavior and perception. Although linguistic manipulation has been widely examined in political and media discourse (Darmojuwono, 2000; Van Dijk, 2006), its role in interpersonal communication has received little attention. This gap exists partly because authentic interpersonal data involving manipulation are difficult to obtain, as such interactions occur in private and sensitive contexts. Therefore, this study analyzes manipulative language in the drama *Doubt*, which provides a valuable representation of interpersonal interactions that are otherwise hard to capture in real-life situations.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to address two main questions: (1) what types of maxim violations are used as linguistic manipulation strategies in the Korean drama *Doubt*, and (2) how each type of maxim violation functions to influence or control the interlocutor within the characters' interactions. The study is expected to contribute to the development of Korean pragmatic research by clarifying how maxim violations serve manipulative purposes. Through the framework of Grice's Cooperative Principle, this research also seeks to deepen the understanding of the relationship between pragmatic strategies, power, and cognitive influence in discourse.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive analysis method and a non-participant observation technique. According to Fiantika et al. (2022), qualitative research aims to understand specific phenomena and describe them in words based on observed conditions, while Sugiyono (2013) explains that this approach seeks to obtain in-depth and meaningful data. The non-participant observation technique allows the researcher to observe language use without directly engaging in the interaction (Mahsun, 2005). The descriptive analysis method is applied to systematically and accurately describe and interpret the linguistic phenomena observed.

The corpus data for this study were taken from the Korean drama *Doubt* (*이토록 친밀한 배신자*), a mystery–thriller series released in October 2024. The drama revolves around a police investigator whose daughter becomes a prime suspect in a murder case. Literally translated as “A Betrayer So Close,” the title reflects the drama's central themes of deception and manipulation among close relationships, particularly within families. These thematic elements provide a strong basis for examining manipulative utterances in the drama's dialogues. Data were collected from ten episodes by identifying utterances containing manipulative language. The analysis proceeded inductively through three stages: (1) identifying manipulative utterances in the drama dialogues, (2) determining the types of maxim violations within those utterances and interpreting their influence on manipulative strategies, and (3) drawing conclusions based on the findings.

RESULTS

Types of Maxim Violation in Korean Drama *Doubt*

The first stage of this study involves identifying manipulative utterances. This process applies the parameters proposed by Al-Hindawi (2017), which include four key aspects: target (hearer), intention, concealment, and speaker's interest. The *target* refers to the hearer, whose limited access to information places them in a disadvantaged position. The *intention* is deliberate yet covert, making the manipulator's true purpose difficult to detect. *Concealment* plays a crucial role in ensuring the manipulation's success by obscuring meaning or selectively revealing information. Lastly, the *speaker's interest* highlights the manipulator's aim to serve their own benefit, often at the expense of the hearer. Based on Grice's Cooperative Principle and these parameters, this study identified 41 instances of manipulative utterances and 86 cases of maxim violations across all episodes of *Doubt*. This indicates that a single utterance can contain multiple maxim violations, reflecting the complex and layered strategies speakers employ to manipulate their interlocutors. The data were collected from various characters who employed manipulative language strategies, not limited to the main character. The following table presents the overall distribution of maxim violations found in the drama.

Table 1. Maxim Violation in Korean Drama *Doubt*

| No | Maxim Violation | Frequency |
|--------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Maxim of Quality | 28 (32,56%) |
| 2 | Maxim of Relevance | 21 (24,92%) |
| 3 | Maxim of Manner | 19 (22,09%) |
| 4 | Maxim of Quantity | 18 (20,93%) |
| Total | | 86 (100%) |

Based on the findings, the most frequently violated maxim is the maxim of quality, with 28 instances (32.56%), while the least violated is the maxim of quantity, with 18 instances (20.93%). This indicates that the most common manipulation strategy in Korean involves speakers creating conversational implicatures by expressing personal assumptions or lying, leading the target to believe those assumptions. A detailed analysis of each maxim violation will be discussed further.

Violation of Maxim of Quality in *Doubt*

Violations of the maxim of quality occur when a speaker says something they believe to be false or lack sufficient evidence to support. In manipulative strategies, such violations are employed to conceal facts or influence the hearer's decisions by presenting personal assumptions

or deliberate falsehoods as truth. The following example illustrates how this strategy effectively operates through the violation of the maxim of quality.

- (1) Taesoo : *Jinjaro jukgo sipeo?*
 ‘Do you really want to die?’
 Jisoo : *Deoneun mot beotigesseo*
 ‘I can’t take it anymore.’
 Taesoo : *Geureohge jukgo sipeumyeoneun geunyang neo honja jugeo. Wae? Mot hagesseo? Deo isang habinihante neo piryo eobseo. Naega itjanha. Jeongmal geurae? Neo jugeumyeon habini gwaencanheul geo gata? Neo eobseumyeoneun i sesange habini honjaya, goaya! Geuraedo gwaencanhgetnyago? Habiniga nahante euijihal geot gatae? Gyaehante nan namiya!*
 ‘Then just die alone if that’s what you want. Why? Can’t do it? Habin doesn’t need you anymore because she has me. Really? Do you think Habin will be fine if you die? Without you, she’ll be alone in this world, an orphan! Are you okay with that? Do you think Habin will rely on me? To her, I’m just a stranger.’
 Jisoo : *Naega micheotna bwa. Jinjja eotteohke dwaesseotna bwa. Oneul il habinihante..*
 ‘I must have lost my mind. I don’t know what’s wrong with me. Don’t tell Habin about today.’

In example (1), Taesoo and Jisoo are a divorced couple. When Taesoo finds their daughter, Habin, unconscious, Jisoo who overwhelmed by guilt and depression intends to end her life. To prevent this, Taesoo employs a manipulative strategy through a violation of the quality maxim. His utterances, “Habin doesn’t need you anymore because she has me” and “Without you, she’ll be alone in this world, an orphan,” are both false and contradictory. In reality, Habin would not become an orphan, and there is no evidence that she no longer needs her mother. These exaggerated claims are intentional, aiming to provoke guilt and emotionally influence Jisoo. Taesoo’s manipulation conceals his true intention, to stop Jisoo’s suicide, behind deceptive yet persuasive language. Jisoo fails to detect this manipulation and instead responds according to his intended outcome by regretting her decision. This supports Maillat’s (2013) argument that manipulation restricts the target’s interpretation to align with the speaker’s intention and Rigotti’s (2008) view that a perlocutionary effect, such as a change in belief or behavior, marks successful manipulation. Thus, Taesoo’s violation of the quality maxim effectively functions as a linguistic strategy to alter the hearer’s belief and action. Another example can be presented as follows.

- (2) Doyoon : *Seonsaengnimirang gatci jeonyeok meokgo bange deureogatneunde gapjagi baega...*
 ‘I was having dinner with the teacher, and when I went into the room, suddenly my stomach...’
 Mother : *Baega apeun ge anira yeori naneun georago haetjanha.*
 ‘I told you it wasn’t a stomachache, but a fever.’
 Doyoon : *Ah...*
 ‘Oh, right...’
 Mother : *Doyoona, eomma neohante hwanaen geo aniya. Geunde silsuhamyeon an dwae, dasi hae bwa.*

‘Doyoon, I’m not angry with you. But you shouldn’t make a mistake. Try again.’
 Doyoon : *Eo, seonsaengnimirang gatci jeonyeok meokgo bange deureogatneunde...*
 ‘I was having dinner with the teacher, and when I went into the room...’

In example (2), the mother instructs her son, Doyoon, to memorize a false statement to mislead the police, exemplifying a manipulative act through violation of the maxim of quality. The utterance “*Doyoon, I’m not angry at you*” contradicts her actual emotional tone. Although expressed as reassurance, it carries implicit pressure, prompting Doyoon to comply. The conversational implicature suggests that the mother seeks to reduce resistance and ensure Doyoon’s cooperation in lying. While Doyoon likely understands his mother’s intent, he remains compliant due to emotional dependence and the asymmetrical power relation between them. As Maillat (2013) notes, manipulation can occur by restricting interpretive alternatives, in this case, through authority and emotional coercion. Following Rigotti (2008), the perlocutionary effect is a shift in behavior rather than belief, as Doyoon repeats his mother’s fabricated line. Thus, the violation of the maxim of quality here functions as a coercive manipulation strategy rooted in emotional control.

Violation of Maxim of Relevance in *Doubt*

A relevance maxim violation occurs when the speaker’s utterance is entirely unrelated to the conversational topic. In manipulation, this violation serves to divert the hearer’s focus and induce self-doubt. The following example illustrates a successful manipulation strategy through the violation of the maxim of relevance.

- (3) Taesoo : *Song Mina.. niga jukyeosseo? Daedabhae.*
 ‘Song Mina, did you kill him? Answer me.’
 Habin : *Hajuni mariya... jeongmal sagoyeosseulkka?*
 ‘About Hajun... do you really think it was an accident?’
 Taesoo : *Mwo?*
 ‘What?’
 Habin : *Eommaneun? Eommaga jeongmal jasalhaetdago saengakhae?*
 ‘And Mom? Do you really believe she committed suicide?’

In example (3), Taesoo, Habin’s father, lives alone with her after her mother, Jisoo, committed suicide. In this scene, he accuses Habin of murdering Song Mina. Although the police have suspicions, there is no conclusive evidence identifying the real culprit. Meanwhile Hajun, Habin’s younger brother, had died in an accident when they were children. To avoid answering

the accusation directly, Habin shifts the topic with an unrelated remark, demonstrating a manipulative strategy through the violation of the maxim of relevance. This violation is marked by Habin's utterance, "About Hajun... do you really think it was an accident?" which is unrelated to Taesoo's question and emotionally charged, diverting his focus and undermining his conviction. The conversational implicature is that Habin seeks to make her father doubt his belief.

The interaction meets the parameters of successful linguistic manipulation. Taesoo fails to detect Habin's intent, meaning her goal remains concealed while he responds according to her interests. Following Maillat (2013), Habin restricts interpretive context through emotionally charged, irrelevant speech. In Rigotti's (2008) terms, the perlocutionary effect is seen in Taesoo questioning her statement. This demonstrates how violating the maxim of relevance can manipulate the hearer's focus and induce doubt. Another example of using relevance violations to manipulate the interlocutor into doubting their own beliefs is also done from Habin to her mother, Jisoo, as presented in (4).

- (4) Habin : *Sirheo chajanael geoya?*
 'No, I will find her.'
- Jisoo : *Mannamyeon mwo? Eojjeoryeogo.?*
 'And when you find her? What will you do?'
- Habin : *Wae geureohke tteoro? Naega gyae eotteohke halkka bwa geurae? Janghajuncheoreom?*
 'Why are you trembling so much? Are you worried I might hurt her? Like what happened to Jang Hajun?'
- Jisoo : *Neo jigeum museun...*
 'What do you mean...'
- Habin : *Naega jukyeotdago saenggakhaneun geojanha appacheoreom*
 'You think I killed Hajun, right? Just like Dad.'
- Jisoo : *Mwo?*
 'What?'
- Habin : *Soljikhi geureohke saengakhae bon jeok seobseo? Hanbeondo?*
 'Honestly, have you really never thought that way? Not even once?'

In this interaction, Habin, the daughter, is confronting her mother, Jisoo, shortly before Jisoo's eventual suicide. Jisoo tries to stop Habin from searching for her missing friend, speaking with a trembling voice that signals fear and emotional vulnerability. Habin responds with statements that are irrelevant to Jisoo's questions, such as, "Why are you trembling so much? Are you afraid I'll hurt her? Like with Hajun?" and "You think I killed Hajun, like Dad did." These responses refer to past traumatic events rather than addressing the immediate question of her intentions, which constitutes a violation of the maxim of relevance. By introducing emotionally charged and tangential content, Habin shifts Jisoo's attention away from the current

situation, causing her mother to doubt her own assumptions and focus on Habin's framing of the past.

This manipulation satisfies the parameters of successful linguistic influence: Jisoo, the target, does not recognize Habin's intent to continue her search, meaning Habin's goal remains concealed while Jisoo's reactions align with her daughter's objectives (Maillat, 2013). The perlocutionary effect is observable in Jisoo's repeated questioning, "What do you mean?" which indicates confusion and engagement with Habin's reframing (Rigotti, 2008). Through this scene, it becomes evident that violating the maxim of relevance allows Habin to manipulate the conversation by diverting the interlocutor's focus, generating doubt, and controlling the direction of the interaction, all while hiding her true intentions.

Violation of Maxim of Manner in *Doubt*

A manner maxim violation occurs when the speaker produces ambiguous, unclear, or long-winded utterances. In manipulative strategies, this type of violation is used to elicit empathy and induce guilt in the interlocutor. The following example illustrates a successful manipulation through a manner maxim violation.

- (5) Soohyun : *Ajummaneun aljanhayo.*
 'Aunt, you know, right?'
 Jisoo : *Mwol?*
 'What?'
 Soohyun : *Da almyeonseo jeohante mal an hasin geojyo? Habine daehae.*
 'You knew but didn't tell me, right? About Habin.'
 Jisoo : *Geuge museun?*
 'What do you mean?'
 Soohyun : *Habini dareun saramdeulirang dallayo. Mwonga jeodo seolmyeonghal sun seobneunde*
 museun malinji asijanhayo, mwonji aljanhayo. Jeo ije gyaе museowoyo. Dowajuseyo. Geu
 jeongdoneun hae jul su itjanhayo.
 'Habin is different from others. I can't really explain, but you know what I mean, you know it.
 I'm scared of them now. Help me. You can at least do that, right?'
 Jisoo : *Naega eotteohke dowajumyeon doelkka?*
 'How can I help?'
 Soohyun : *Ajummaneun aljanhayo.*
 'Aunt, you know, right?'

In this interaction, Soohyun manipulates Jisoo's perception of Habin's behavior and the urgency of the situation. She employs ambiguity and emotional pressure, violating the maxim of manner. Utterances such as '*Habin is different from others. I can't really explain, but you know what I mean*' are intentionally vague, prompting Jisoo to interpret the situation and assume that

Habin is dangerous or unpredictable. This creates cognitive and emotional pressure, compelling Jisoo to act despite limited information. Soohyun further manipulates Jisoo's emotions by appealing to her empathy and sense of responsibility. Statements like *'I'm scared of them now. Help me. You can at least do that, right?'* induce guilt and concern, guiding Jisoo to intervene and act in accordance with Soohyun's wishes. The perlocutionary effect is seen when Jisoo responds by asking how she can help, demonstrating that Soohyun's intent has successfully influenced Jisoo's behavior.

Following Maillat (2013), Soohyun restricts the interpretive context by framing her statements ambiguously and emotionally, ensuring that Jisoo interprets the situation in line with her intention. According to Rigotti (2008), the shift in perspective is marked by Jisoo's perlocutionary reaction: she considers taking action to assist Soohyun. Through this interaction, it is evident that Soohyun violates the maxim of manner as a strategy of linguistic manipulation, steering the interlocutor's perception, emotions, and actions without revealing her true objective.

- (6) Habin : *Maja. Geuraedo, eotteohgedeun chajanaeseo jugilgeoya.*
 'You're right. Still, I will find and kill the perpetrator.'
- Taesoo : *Jeongmallo eommaga beomin ttaemune jugeotdago saenggakhae? Neo ttaemunigetji. Eommaneun neo bol ttaemada himdeureosseul geoya. Siche mudeun ge tteoollaseo goerowosseul geogo. Pihaji malgo ttokbaro bwa. Geugeo mot gyeondigesseoseo nugurado jukigo sipeun geojanha, neo. Janghabin, eomma geureohge mandeun geon, saram ttaemun anigo euisimiya.*
 'Do you really think your mother died because of the perpetrator? It's because of you. Your mother must have suffered every time she saw you. The memory of burying that corpse must have tormented her. Don't run away, face it. Because you couldn't bear it, you wanted to kill someone, didn't you? Jang Habin, your mother was driven to suicide by her own doubt, not by other people.'
- Habin : Ha...
 'Ha...' (sigh)

In this interaction, Taesoo, Habin's father, manipulates her through emotional reframing, guilt induction, and interpretive control. The scene takes place after Habin's mother's suicide, which Habin believes was caused by a blackmailer. When Habin insists on finding and punishing the culprit, Taesoo reframes the event, claiming that the real cause of her mother's death was Habin herself. By saying, 'You think your mother died because of the perpetrator? It was because of you,' he shifts responsibility and imposes moral blame on her.

This manipulation involves multiple violations of Grice's maxims. First, it violates the maxim of quality, since Taesoo's statement is not based on verifiable facts but on an emotionally charged interpretation designed to control Habin's perception. Second, it violates the maxim of

manner because his speech is indirect, ambiguous, and emotionally loaded, forcing Habin to infer his meaning and internalize guilt. These violations operate as psychological coercion: Taesoo evokes vivid, painful imagery that ‘She must have suffered every time she saw you, remembering the buried body’ to generate guilt and emotional vulnerability. By framing Habin’s grief as selfish anger by saying ‘You want to kill someone because you can’t stand it’, he invalidates her emotions and enforces internalized blame.

The perlocutionary effect is seen in Habin’s resigned sigh, signaling emotional defeat and compliance. Taesoo’s speech exemplifies Maillat’s (2013) notion of successful manipulation: the target accepts the speaker’s framing without realizing it is being influenced. Through emotional domination, guilt induction, and interpretive control, Taesoo reshapes Habin’s perception of reality, showing how linguistic manipulation can exploit emotional vulnerability rather than relying on explicit persuasion.

Violation of Maxim of Quantity in *Doubt*

A violation of the maxim of quantity occurs when a speaker provides too little or too much information. In manipulative strategies, this is used to implant or undermine a belief. The following example illustrates successful manipulation through a quantity maxim violation.

- (7) Doyoon : *Eomma geunde wae nan nappeun jit hal ttaemada gieoki eobseo?*
‘Mom, but why do I have no memory every time I do something bad?.’
Mother : *Doyooniga seseuroreul bohohaeya dwaenikka geuraeseo kkameokneun geoya. Geurigo eomman nappeun jisirago saenggak an hae. Eommarang doymooniga haengbokhal suman isseumyeon da joheun irin geoji. Eommaneun doymooni wihaeseomyeon mwodeun hae. Alji?*
‘You have to protect yourself, Doyoon, so you forget. And I don’t think it’s really bad. As long as you and I can be happy, that’s all that matters. I would do anything for you, Doyoon. You know that, right?.’

Example (7) occurs after Doyoon experiences memory loss. The mother repeatedly says things like, ‘Anything that makes us happy is good. I would do anything for you, Doyoon,’ and emphasizes that his happiness is the most important. This is a violation of the maxim of quantity because his mother provides more information than is necessary, over-explaining, repeating reassurance, and elaborating beyond what Doyoon asked or needed. Instead of giving a simple answer, she layers additional statements designed to reinforce a specific interpretation.

This constitutes manipulation because the excessive information guides Doyoon’s thinking without him realizing it. By repeatedly emphasizing that his memory loss is harmless

and that all actions are for his benefit, the mother directs Doyoon to adopt her framing of the situation. He fails to detect her intent and internalizes her perspective, which aligns with her goal of comforting and controlling him emotionally. The combination of over-information, repetition, and gentle delivery makes the utterance manipulative. It subtly reshapes Doyoon's beliefs and emotional state while concealing the speaker's influence. Meanwhile, providing too little information can also create manipulative utterances, as illustrated in the following example.

- (8) Habin : *Geojitmalhaji ma. Eomma geureol saram aniya. Sasildaero malhae*
 'Don't lie. Mom isn't that kind of person. Tell me the truth..'
 Taesoo : *Sasiliya*
 'It's true..'
 Habin : *Jeongmal eommaga jukyeotdago?*
 'Are you saying Mom really did it?'

In example (8), Habin urges her father, Taesoo, to tell her the full truth. He responds briefly: "It's true." This minimal reply violates the maxim of quantity by providing too little information, creating ambiguity and prompting Habin to seek clarification. The brevity and seriousness of Taesoo's response manipulates Habin by generating doubt and making her rely on him for guidance. According to Maillat (2013), Taesoo shapes the interpretive context by withholding information, while Rigotti (2008) notes the perlocutionary effect in Habin's repeated questioning, showing how short and vague responses can subtly influence the interlocutor's beliefs.

DISCUSSIONS

The analysis reveals that linguistic manipulation in conversation is closely related to the violation of Grice's maxims, although this relationship is both strategic and context-dependent. Violating a maxim enables speakers to convey implicit intentions through implicatures, guiding the hearer's interpretation without making explicit statements. Such violations should therefore not merely be viewed as deviations from the Cooperative Principle but as pragmatic strategies that allow speakers to influence understanding, emotions, and actions in subtle yet effective ways.

While manipulation is often associated with deception, the findings indicate that it is not always negative. In some contexts, manipulation may serve positive functions such as persuasion, comfort, or guidance. Sorlin (2017) conceptualizes manipulation as a spectrum ranging from persuasion to coercion. On the persuasive end, manipulation aims to shape the hearer's beliefs, whereas on the coercive end, it seeks to control behavior through emotional or psychological

pressure. Within this continuum, violations of maxims operate as tools that balance self-oriented goals with the social need to maintain harmonious interaction. Persuasive manipulation can thus be socially legitimate, while coercive manipulation becomes problematic due to its implicit exercise of control and dominance.

Each type of maxim violation also contributes differently to the success of manipulation. Violations of quality allow speakers to influence beliefs and emotions by presenting information that is only partially true or emotionally charged. Violations of relevance redirect the focus of conversation, causing the hearer to lose argumentative direction and depend on the speaker for interpretive clarity. Violations of manner, through ambiguity or obscurity, compel the hearer to infer meaning independently, creating opportunities for emotional influence. Meanwhile, violations of quantity generate ambiguity and cognitive dependence, positioning the speaker as the primary source of clarification and authority. The most effective manipulative utterances often combine several types of violations. For example, a speaker may merge obscurity (manner), topic diversion (relevance), and emotional appeal (quality) to produce a more powerful persuasive effect. Other contextual factors such as the speaker's credibility, social capital, and power relations further determine the extent to which manipulation succeeds or fails.

These findings also highlight that manipulative strategies are deeply embedded in the socio-cultural context in which they occur. In the Korean context, linguistic manipulation often operates within the framework of politeness and hierarchical relations. Cultural norms emphasizing harmony, respect, and conflict avoidance encourage forms of manipulation that are indirect, emotional, and subtle. Speakers may use politeness as a veneer to conceal self-serving motives, while hearers interpret such utterances as expressions of empathy or care. This dynamic demonstrates that maxim violations extend beyond linguistic mechanisms to encompass social and psychological dimensions that reinforce manipulation's effectiveness within hierarchy-oriented communication. In such a cultural setting, manipulation is not always perceived as unethical because it aligns with the broader goal of maintaining relational harmony.

However, as Van Dijk (2006) argues, the illegitimacy of manipulation lies not merely in its departure from conversational norms but in its violation of the hearer's communicative and social rights. From this perspective, manipulation becomes problematic when the speaker covertly influences interpretation or decision-making in ways that undermine the hearer's autonomy. Linguistic manipulation, as revealed through maxim violations, is therefore not only a pragmatic strategy but also an act that can subtly infringe upon interlocutors' communicative

rights which reflecting deeper structures of power and inequality. In this regard, the present findings explain how manipulation operates linguistically, while Van Dijk's framework clarifies why it matters socially and ethically. Manipulation, then, should be understood not only as a pragmatic phenomenon but as a discursive strategy that both reflects and reproduces asymmetrical power relations in communication.

Overall, these findings broaden the understanding of linguistic manipulation as a communicative practice that exploits cooperative linguistic structures for self-oriented purposes. Violations of maxims function as pragmatic instruments for managing perception, emotion, and behaviour without overt coercion. In some contexts, manipulation serves prosocial aims such as reassurance or persuasion, while in others, it becomes a tool of control that reinforces social hierarchies. Thus, a pragmatic analysis of linguistic manipulation not only reveals the linguistic strategies used to influence others but also illuminates how language functions as a social mechanism for negotiating power and authority in everyday interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

The study identified 41 utterances containing 86 maxim violations, with violations of the maxim of quality being the most frequent (32.56%). These typically involved false or misleading statements intended to influence the hearer's thoughts or actions. Different types of maxim violations served distinct manipulative functions, such as shifting focus, creating ambiguity, and controlling information, and often appeared in combination to enhance their effect. Manipulation was found to be more effective in emotionally close relationships, where trust and empathy increased the hearer's susceptibility. This indicates that manipulation functions not only as a linguistic strategy but also as a social process shaped by emotional and hierarchical dynamics. However, as the data were drawn from a fictional drama, the findings may not fully reflect real-life communication. Future research should therefore examine authentic interactions to better capture the cognitive and social mechanisms underlying linguistic manipulation in Korean.

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