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## Pragmatic Violations of the Cooperative Principle in the Narrative of Prophet Ibrahim: Implications for Islamic Da'wah

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### Abstract

**Keywords:** This study aims to examine violations of Grice's Cooperative Da'wah, Maxim Principle in the story of Prophet Ibrahim based on QS. Al-Anbiya: Violation, Nabi 51-70, and to explore its relevance to contemporary da'wah Ibrahim, strategies. The focus of the research is directed at prophetic Pragmatics, dialogues involving Ibrahim that contain maxim violations— Qur'anic quantity, quality, relevance, and manner—not merely as linguistic Rhetoric, deviations but as rhetorical strategies to convey the message of Cooperative monotheism persuasively and contextually. This study employs a Principle qualitative-descriptive method with a pragmatic content analysis approach. Data were collected through documentation of Qur'anic verses containing dialogical narratives, particularly from Surah Al-Anbiya, and were analyzed based on the Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature theory developed by H. P. Grice. The findings reveal four key verses that strategically demonstrate maxim violations: QS 21:53 (relevance), QS 21:56 (quantity), QS 21:63 (quality), and QS 21:66 (manner). These violations do not hinder communication; rather, they serve as rhetorical devices to provoke the audience's awareness of the irrationality of idol worship and the importance of monotheism. In conclusion, maxim

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violations in the story of Prophet Ibrahim reflect communicative wisdom in prophetic da'wah. This approach is relevant to modern da'wah contexts, as it shows that non-literal yet reflective and rhetorical communication strategies can enhance the effectiveness of Islamic preaching. This study offers a novel integration of pragmatic analysis and Qur'anic narrative interpretation, revealing how violations of the Cooperative Principle inform effective strategies for contemporary Islamic da'wah communication.

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**Abstrak**

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**Kata Kunci:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pelanggaran prinsip kerja sama Grice dalam kisah Nabi Ibrahim berdasarkan QS. Al-Anbiya: 51-70, serta mengeksplorasi relevansinya terhadap strategi dakwah kontemporer. Fokus penelitian diarahkan pada dialog-dialog profetik Nabi Ibrahim yang mengandung maksim pelanggaran, seperti kuantitas, kualitas, relevansi, dan cara, yang tidak sekadar sebagai penyimpangan linguistik tetapi sebagai strategi retorik untuk menyampaikan pesan tauhid secara persuasif dan kontekstual. Metode yang digunakan adalah kualitatif-deskriptif dengan pendekatan analisis isi pragmatik. Data diperoleh melalui dokumentasi ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an yang mengandung narasi dialogis, khususnya dari surah Al-Anbiya, dan dianalisis berdasarkan teori prinsip kerja sama (Cooperative Principle) dan implikatur percakapan (Conversational Implicature) yang dikembangkan oleh H. P. Grice. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat empat ayat utama yang memuat pelanggaran maksim secara strategis: QS. 21:53 (relevansi), QS. 21:56 (kuantitas), QS. 21:63 (kualitas), dan QS. 21:66 (cara). Pelanggaran ini tidak bersifat merusak komunikasi, melainkan mengandung muatan retorik yang menggugah kesadaran kaumnya terhadap kekeliruan menyembah berhala dan pentingnya tauhid. Kesimpulannya, pelanggaran maksim dalam kisah Nabi Ibrahim mencerminkan kebijaksanaan komunikatif dalam dakwah profetik. Pendekatan ini relevan untuk konteks dakwah modern, karena menunjukkan bahwa strategi komunikasi yang tidak literal, namun reflektif dan retorik, justru dapat memperkuat efektivitas pesan dakwah. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi dengan mengintegrasikan analisis pragmatik dan penafsiran narasi Al-Qur'an, mengungkap bagaimana pelanggaran Prinsip Kerja Sama dapat menjadi strategi efektif dalam komunikasi dakwah Islam kontemporer

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## Introduction

In spoken communication, the success of conveying a message heavily depends on the Cooperative Principle as proposed by Grice, which includes the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Violations of these maxims do not necessarily indicate communication failure; rather, they often carry deeper implicatures, especially in the context of religious discourse such as Islamic preaching (da'wah). Research on maxim violations has been extensively conducted across various domains, including Friday sermons (Alkhalaf, 2022), interfaith debate (Yahya & Al, 2022), and popular da'wah discourse on social media.

Maxim violations in communication represent a complex and inherent phenomenon in human interaction, including within the context of da'wah. From a pragmatic perspective, these violations can be analyzed by examining how individuals within specific societies adapt to or disregard communicative norms to achieve specific purposes, particularly in delivering da'wah messages. In this context, the story of Prophet Ibrahim, as one of the central figures in the Abrahamic religions, offers a valuable lens for such analysis, given his role in shaping moral and religious narratives that are rich in potential maxim violations.

Nevertheless, pragmatic studies of the Qur'anic texts that recount the stories of the prophets – particularly that of Prophet Ibrahim – remain relatively rare, especially those employing the framework of maxim violations. Yet, these stories contain rhetorical dimensions and communication strategies that are highly relevant for strengthening contemporary da'wah. For example, Hidayah's study identified maxim violations in the stories of Prophet Ibrahim and Musa as translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, but did not explicitly connect these findings to current da'wah practices (Hidayah, 2019)

Previous studies have shown that violations of politeness principles in language have been examined in various contexts, such as in social media groups (Widyasari et al., 2022). However, research specifically investigating maxim

violations in the story of Prophet Ibrahim and their relevance to da'wah practices remains limited. A study by Fatmawati and Ningsih highlighted cultural reasons behind maxim violations but did not specifically explore how these might relate to religious messages conveyed by prophetic figures (Fatmawati & Rika Ningsih, 2022). Similarly, research by Lestari and Assidik examined politeness violations in public discourse, yet did not address the religious and moral dimensions of such violations (Lestari & Assidik, 2024). This reveals a gap in the literature that needs to be addressed – particularly in relation to da'wah practices that can be associated with historical and moral narratives, such as those found in the story of Prophet Ibrahim. This gap opens an opportunity to explore how maxim violations in the story of Prophet Ibrahim not only reflect the wisdom of prophetic communication, but also offer a pragmatic framework applicable to crafting da'wah strategies that are communicative, respectful, and effective.

This study offers a novel contribution by integrating Grice's theory of maxim violations with a pragmatic exegesis of the story of Prophet Ibrahim, along with its relevance to modern da'wah strategies. The main contribution of this article lies in presenting a pragmatic linguistic approach as a textual analysis tool to understand the communication strategies of the prophets – strategies that can be adapted by contemporary preachers. Thus, this research enriches the field of pragmatic studies in religious discourse and provides practical recommendations for da'wah practitioners.

This research is grounded in the urgency of understanding effective communication strategies in da'wah, particularly through a pragmatic lens in the study of prophetic narratives. The primary focus is directed toward the dialogues of Prophet Ibrahim in the Qur'an, which contain rich implicit meanings and rhetorical strategies that are relevant for linguistic analysis. By applying Grice's Cooperative Principle, this study explores various communication dynamics that are not always literal but are laden with maxim violations that convey powerful and implicit da'wah messages.

Such an approach enables the revelation of the pragmatic dimensions within Prophet Ibrahim's da'wah interactions – both in terms of utterance forms and underlying meanings. Through this analysis, the study aims to uncover new insights into how prophetic communication shapes message delivery strategies that are not only contextual but also adaptive to the dynamics of contemporary da'wah communication. This research further contributes to the body of pragmatic studies in the Qur'an and opens reflective space on its relevance in current da'wah practices.

## **Method**

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach, as its main objective is to deeply understand the meaning and function of maxim violations in religious texts – specifically the story of Prophet Ibrahim – within a pragmatic context. This approach aligns with Creswell's view that qualitative methods are used to explore social or humanistic phenomena in a contextual and interpretative manner (Creswell, 2009).

The method used is pragmatic content analysis, based on Grice's theory of the Cooperative Principle and conversational maxim violations. This method is applied to examine Qur'anic texts that recount the story of Prophet Ibrahim, particularly the dialogues or conversations, in order to uncover the maxim violations and the implicatures embedded within them (Grice, 1975).

The sample for this study consists of Qur'anic verses narrating the episode of the destruction of idols by Prophet Ibrahim, which includes communicative elements or dialogues between Prophet Ibrahim and his people. This story represents a central part of the prophetic narrative, rich in symbolic da'wah messages and unique communication strategies. The sampling technique used is purposive sampling, where data is deliberately selected based on its relevance to the topic of maxim violations in the context of da'wah. The primary focus is on verses from Surah Al-Anbiya' (21): 51–70.

These verses present the dialogue between Prophet Ibrahim and his people, as well as the confrontational moment when he destroyed the idols, followed by his strategic use of maxim violations to implicitly convey the message of monotheism (tawhid). Data collection was carried out through documentary analysis, which involved examining Qur'anic texts along with their translations and interpretations (tafsir). Additional data were gathered from both classical and contemporary tafsir sources to enrich the understanding of the communicative context.

The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model of qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2014), which consists of three stages:

1. Data Reduction: Identifying relevant verses and isolating dialogues or narratives that demonstrate maxim violations.
2. Data Display: Organizing the data in tables that indicate the type of violated maxim (quantity, quality, relevance, or manner), along with explanations of the implicatures and their contexts.
3. Conclusion Drawing: Interpreting the meanings of the maxim violations within the framework of prophetic communication and their relevance to da'wah principles.

The analysis is based on Grice's theory of the Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975), and is contextualized within the broader framework of Islamic preaching (da'wah).

## **Result and Discussion**

This study analyzes Surah Al-Anbiya (21): 50–71, with a particular focus on Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle. The findings reveal that there are four verses containing deliberate violations of Grice's cooperative maxims by Prophet Ibrahim. These violations occur within utterances that nonetheless convey clear, relevant, and logical information in the context of his da'wah promoting monotheism (tawhid). The table below presents the verses identified as containing violations of Grice's maxims.

No.	Arabic Verse	English Translation
1	قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا ءَابَاءَنَا لَهَا عُبْدِينَ	<i>They said, "We found our forefathers worshipping them."</i>
2	قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ وَأَنَا عَلَى ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ	<i>He said, "Rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth who created them, and I am among those who testify to that."</i>
3	قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَسَأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ	<i>He said, "Rather, this chief of theirs did it. So ask them, if they can speak!"</i>
4	قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ	<i>He said, "Do you worship besides Allah that which does not benefit you at all, nor harm you?"</i>

Table: Findings of Verses Violating Grice's Cooperative Principles

The Cooperative Principle is a branch of pragmatics. Paul Grice developed the Cooperative Principle, which posits that in everyday conversation, speakers and listeners mutually observe a set of cooperative norms. Speakers shape their utterances in such a way that listeners are able to comprehend them (Abdulghani, 2021). This principle is explained through four fundamental rules or maxims: the maxim of quantity, the maxim of quality, the maxim of relevance, and the maxim of manner/implementation.

According to Rahardi, the maxim of quantity requires that speakers and their interlocutors provide contributions that are appropriate to the needs of the conversation. Providing either too little or too much information than is required violates the maxim of quantity within the framework of communicative cooperation (Rahardi, 2018). Rahardi further explains that under the maxim of quality, any statement should be supported by sufficient evidence. In addition to being based on accurate data and factual evidence, both speakers and listeners

must convey information truthfully and honestly in conversation. A statement such as “The capital city of Indonesia is Jakarta” serves as an example of an utterance that fulfills the maxim of quality (Rahardi, 2018).

Rahardi states that to maximize relevance, both the speaker and the interlocutor in a conversation must contribute information that is pertinent to the topic being discussed. Any utterance that is unrelated to the topic – whether from the speaker, interlocutor, or another participant – violates the maxim of relevance (Rahardi, 2018). For example, if the speaker and their interlocutor are discussing the rising cost of airline tickets, and someone suddenly interrupts with a topic that has no connection to the issue, that person has violated the maxim of relevance. In everyday conversation, it is often important to stay on topic. However, in certain situations, violating the maxim of relevance might be necessary to serve specific communicative purposes.

The maxim of manner emphasizes the importance of clarity, precision, brevity, and orderliness in delivering an utterance. Grice notes that unlike the other maxims, which focus on content (what is said), this maxim highlights the form of delivery (how something is said). It prohibits vagueness, ambiguity, and excessive verbosity, while demanding systematic and coherent organization in speech. In practice, the maxim of manner reflects orderliness in verbal interaction, where each participant speaks in turn and with structure (Omwancha et al., 2024).

The following is an analysis of verses from Surah Al-Anbiya that relate to the violation of Grice’s maxims in the story of Prophet Ibrahim, viewed through a pragmatic lens and in relation to Islamic preaching (da'wah). This study highlights how Prophet Ibrahim strategically employed indirect speech acts that intentionally violated Gricean maxims to deliver his message of monotheism more persuasively, critically, and effectively.

Verse 53 as a Response to Verse 52

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا ءَابَاءَنَا لَهَا عِبْدِينَ

"They said, 'We found our forefathers worshipping them.'" (QS. Al-Anbiya: 53)

This verse recounts how the people of Prophet Ibrahim responded to his question not with a logical argument but by referring to ancestral tradition. When asked why they worshipped idols, they failed to provide a theological or rational justification. Instead, they cited the practices of their forefathers, relying on inherited customs rather than on truth or evidence.

The primary violation in Surah Al-Anbiya: 53 is of the maxim of relevance. When Prophet Ibrahim asked, "*Why do you worship idols?*", the expected response would involve a logical or theological explanation. However, their reply failed to address the actual question and instead shifted the focus to ancestral authority. This is an example of a non sequitur, a conclusion that does not logically follow from the initial inquiry.

Within Grice's framework, this constitutes a conversational implicature, where deviation from a maxim (in this case, relevance) may signal weak argumentation or an implicit refusal to engage in critical reflection (Grice, 1975). Such a response suggests a deeper issue in the communicative dynamic: an unwillingness to confront the foundational logic behind their belief system.

In the verse, it is clearly illustrated that when the people of Prophet Ibrahim were confronted with questions about their idol worship, they merely relied on the traditions of their ancestors without providing any clear or rational justification. This aligns with Al-Baghawi's interpretation, which states that the people of Ibrahim lacked a strong argument and therefore resorted to ancestral heritage as an excuse (Al-Baghawi, 1411).

The relevance of da'wah in relation to the violation of Grice's cooperative principles can be observed in the response of Prophet Ibrahim's people in Surah Al-Anbiya:53. They responded to a call for rational thinking by referring to ancestral tradition. This violation of the maxim of relevance offers an important lesson for preachers in establishing communication that is logical, relevant, and empathetic. In today's context, many people still use tradition as a justification

for their beliefs or religious practices without considering valid or rational evidence (Anisa & Farisi, 2023).

Therefore, an effective da'wah strategy must be able to address such patterns of thinking through a logically sharp and argumentative approach, while remaining courteous in delivery so that the message of Islam can be well received by society.

Verse 56 is a response to verse 55:

قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَلِكُمْ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ

Ibrahim said: "*Rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, the One who created them, and I am among those who bear witness to that.*"

This verse serves as a response to the accusation posed by his people in the previous verse: "*Is it you who has done this to our gods, O Ibrahim?*" In this reply, there is a violation of the maxim of quantity, as Ibrahim does not directly answer whether he was the one who destroyed the idols. Instead, he shifts the conversation toward the concept of tawhid (the oneness of God) and the creation of the heavens and the earth. However, this is a deliberate flouting of the maxim to redirect their attention to the true essence of divinity.

According to Grice, in effective communication, a speaker must provide the right amount of information – not too little and not too much – referred to as the maxim of quantity (Grice, 1975). Yet in this verse, Ibrahim does not give a straightforward answer to the accusation. Rather, he diverts the discussion toward tawhid, emphasizing the One who created the heavens and the earth. Therefore, it is evident that this verse contains a violation of the maxim of quantity.

This is a case of flouting the maxim of quantity. In pragmatics, flouting occurs when a speaker intentionally violates a maxim to convey an implicit message or to steer the conversation toward a deeper meaning (Grice, 1975). The purpose of this flouting is not to evade the question, but rather to shift the focus of the debate from a technical issue (the destruction of idols) to the core problem:

the misguidance of idol worship and the importance of properly understanding the concept of divinity.

In *Tafsir al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*, Ibn 'Ashur provides an in-depth explanation of Surah Al-Anbiya:56. He emphasizes that Prophet Ibrahim's statement is a rejection of his people's faulty premise, using the word "bal" ("rather"), which, according to Ibn 'Ashur, indicates a deliberate shift in topic to draw their attention to a higher argument—the concept of tawhid. He also stresses that this is a form of educational communication, not a defensive one, as the goal is to awaken both intellect and heart (Ashur, n.d.).

The relevance of this verse to Prophet Ibrahim's da'wah strategy lies in how he redirects the debate away from the accusation and toward its core issue — tawhid. His strategy, as reflected in Surah Al-Anbiya:56, prominently features implicit rhetoric. He adopts an indirect approach—not responding to the accusation directly, but instead shifting focus to the concept of divine oneness. This method encourages his people to think independently, rather than simply reacting to questions or accusations. This approach exemplifies a contextual and persuasive form of da'wah, where violations of communication maxims are not obstacles, but part of a discursive strategy aimed at engaging the audience's logic and emotions in a deeper, more reflective manner (Zaenal, 2015).

Verse 63 is a response to verse 62:

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَسَأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ

Ibrahim replied: "Rather, the largest of them did it, so ask them if they can speak."

In Surah Al-Anbiya:63, Prophet Ibrahim responds to his people's accusation by saying, "Rather, the largest of them did it, so ask them if they can speak." Literally, this statement violates the maxim of quality in Grice's cooperative principle because the large idol clearly could not have destroyed the others. However, this violation is an intentional rhetorical irony aimed at awakening his people's awareness about the impotence of these idols.

According to Grice's cooperative principle, a violation of the maxim of quality occurs when a speaker conveys information that is not true or supported by evidence (Grice, 1975). Yet in this context, Prophet Ibrahim employs irony as a rhetorical device to deliver a deeper message. By suggesting that his people ask the largest idol, he highlights the absurdity of worshiping lifeless objects that cannot speak or act.

Tafsir Al-Jalalain explains that Prophet Ibrahim's statement is a form of satire intended to show that the idols are unworthy of worship due to their inability to speak or act. This aligns with a da'wah strategy that employs a rhetorical and confrontational approach to challenge established beliefs without explicitly conveying falsehoods (As-Suyuti, 2015).

This violation of the maxim is highly effective within the context of confrontational da'wah, which challenges entrenched beliefs rhetorically without explicitly stating falsehoods.

Verse 66 is a response to verse 65:

قَالَ أَفَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ

Ibrahim said: "*Then why do you worship besides Allah that which neither benefits you at all nor harms you?*"

Prophet Ibrahim utters a rhetorical question, which constitutes a violation of the maxim of manner (modesty/clarity) because it takes the form of a question yet functions as a critical statement. The purpose is not to seek an answer but to provoke awareness and critical thinking among his people. This strategy demonstrates that in da'wah, rhetorical questions can be used as a reflective tool rather than merely normative arguments.

In Surah Al-Anbiya:66, Prophet Ibrahim says, "*Then why do you worship besides Allah that which neither benefits you at all nor harms you?*" This statement is a rhetorical question which pragmatically violates the maxim of manner in Grice's cooperative principle. The maxim of manner requires speakers to be clear and straightforward (Grice, 1975). However, Prophet Ibrahim intentionally uses

a question form not to obtain an answer but to criticize and awaken his people's awareness regarding the illogicality of worshipping idols that cannot provide benefit or harm.

Prof. Dr. Wahbah az-Zuhaili explains in his tafsir *Al-Wajiz* that Prophet Ibrahim refuted his people by highlighting the inability of the idols to provide any benefit or harm. He employed a rhetorical approach to emphasize the unworthiness of idols as objects of worship (Az-Zuhaili, 2015).

This da'wah strategy of Prophet Ibrahim demonstrates that violations of conversational maxims can be used effectively to convey profound messages. By using rhetorical questions, he was able to awaken his people's awareness about the illogicality of idol worship. This approach remains relevant in the context of modern da'wah, where challenging entrenched beliefs can be carried out through intelligent and rhetorical communication strategies.

The analysis of several Qur'anic verses containing dialogues between Prophet Ibrahim and his people reveals a pattern of delivering the message of tawhid through a distinctive rational and rhetorical approach. Overall, these findings indicate that Prophet Ibrahim's da'wah was not solely based on revelation but was also delivered through a logical and communicative approach that adapted to the conditions and mindset of his people. This reinforces the view that the Qur'an presents prophetic narratives with a rhetorical structure aimed at building awareness and fostering changes in societal thinking.

## Conclusion

Conclusions This study shows that the deliberate violations of Grice's cooperative principle by Prophet Ibrahim in his dialogue with his people are not failures of communication but rather a rhetorical, reflective, and communicative da'wah strategy. Through an analysis of Surah Al-Anbiya verses 53, 56, 63, and 66, it was found that violations of the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner were effectively employed to convey the message of tawhid implicitly yet powerfully. This strategy successfully awakened his people's awareness of

the illogicality of idol worship and redirected their attention to the oneness of God.

Each maxim violation in these verses contains conversational implicatures intentionally used to build a reflective dialogue that challenges established beliefs. In Surah Al-Anbiya:53, the violation of the maxim of relevance reflects the weakness of traditionalist arguments; verse 56 shows a violation of the maxim of quantity aimed at shifting discourse toward tawhid; verse 63 involves irony as a violation of the maxim of quality; and verse 66 uses rhetorical questions as a violation of the maxim of manner. All of these support Prophet Ibrahim's role as a prophetic communicator who not only delivers revelation but also strategically and contextually composes his message.

Thus, the maxim violations in the story of Prophet Ibrahim have high pragmatic value for developing contemporary da'wah strategies. Da'wah does not always have to be literal and normative; sometimes, rhetorical approaches and strategic violations of communication norms are more effective in raising audience awareness of deeper truths. This approach not only enriches the pragmatics study of the Qur'an but also provides a relevant and applicable communication model for modern da'wah.

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