

# Violations of Conversational Maxims in Investigative Interviews: Revisiting the Indonesian Cyanide Coffee Murder Case

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## ABSTRACT

This study advocates the role of forensic linguistics in detecting lies during investigative interviews with suspects and witnesses, with a focus on the case of Jessica Kumala Wongso, who was convicted and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for the cyanide poisoning of Wayan Mirna Salihin. Drawing on the cooperative principle and conversational maxims theories, this study examines the deceptive language used by suspects. The dataset was manually collected through purposive sampling from court transcripts and in-depth news interviews to ensure both relevance and analytical rigor. The analysis indicates that deceptive communication involves deliberate strategic violations of Grice's conversational maxims, specifically those relating to the maxims of quality and quantity. These findings are consistent with McCornack et al.'s Information Manipulation Theory 2, which posits that lies arise through the covert manipulation of informational components within conversational exchanges. This study underscores the importance of these maxims as a systematic analytical framework for detecting deception and also demonstrates their potential to enhance the accuracy of evidence evaluation in criminal investigations.

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## INTRODUCTION

The cyanide coffee murder case that resulted in the death of Wayan Mirna Salihin at Olivier Café in Jakarta, Indonesia, in 2016 attracted much attention from the public and media. On January 30, 2016, the police arrested Jessica Wongso, an Australian citizen born in Indonesia, on charges of alleged premeditated murder, making her the only suspect in the case (Belarminus, 2016; Paskalis, 2016; Sasongko, 2016; Syafril, 2016). In advance of her arrest, she frequently appeared in several exclusive media interviews, including *Seputar Indonesia*, *CNN Indonesia*, *Metro TV*, and *Liputan 6*. During these interviews, she provided a detailed account of the chronology of events and consistently maintained her alibi. Furthermore, she defended herself during the trial, which was broadcast nationwide.

Following a series of 26 trial sessions held between June 15 and September 28, 2016, the panel of judges decided that Jessica was proven guilty of premeditated murder under Article 340 of the Criminal Code and finally sentenced her to 20 years' imprisonment (Pratiwi & Samosir, 2016; Riana, 2016; Rizal, 2016). However, public skepticism persisted as the CCTV footage failed to provide clear evidence, particularly of the moment the suspect was reported to have put or poured cyanide into the victim's cold Vietnamese coffee

ordered by the defendant. Seven years following the court's verdict, Netflix released a documentary titled *Ice Cold: Murder, Coffee, and Jessica Wongso* (Sixsmith, 2023). It once again garnered public attention and further fuelled the ongoing debate surrounding the case, revealing unanswered questions and highlighting the controversial aspects of the investigation. The documentary has contributed to the increasing polarization of public opinion and intensified demands for a judicial review by re-examining the evidence and witnesses' testimonies. As of August 2024, more than 26,030 people have signed a petition with the hashtag #JusticeForJessica, urging a review of the court's decision (Partai Keadilan Netizen, 2024).

The documentary has renewed attention to the case and exposed weaknesses in the existing evidence. It revisits disputed parts of the investigation, such as doubts about the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) footage and the lack of clear forensic proof, and echoes public concerns about fair legal procedures and the presumption of innocence. The case has shifted from a high-profile trial into a broader public debate about justice, transparency, and the media's influence on legal cases.

JW's murder case is one of the most widely discussed in modern Indonesia, yet the investigation shows a clear lack of linguistic input. The prosecution consulted many experts from other fields, but no forensic linguist was involved, even though the case produced extensive verbal data from police interrogations and media interviews. A forensic linguistic analysis should have formed a core part of the investigation.

In criminal cases, the line between truth and lies is often thin. Suspects, witnesses, and victims may distort facts, whether intentionally or not. In such a context, language serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a strategic apparatus that can conceal as much as it reveals. Therefore, analyzing how individuals use language, including what they choose to say, omit, or emphasize, can provide critical insights into their intentions and credibility.

Lies and deceit are common in criminal investigations (Meibauer, 2018). Early work on deception came mainly from psychology and focused on physiological and nonverbal cues. Polygraph tests, for example, measure changes in heart rate and other bodily responses linked to nervousness, but their accuracy is disputed because nervousness does not always mean lying (Vrij & Fisher, 2020). As a result, tools such as polygraphs and similar tools can produce false positives (Kotsoglou, 2021).

Linguistic cues were long neglected, based on the belief that liars can fully control their speech and avoid revealing themselves (Choudhury, 2014). However, legal systems rely on language, since most legal actions are carried out through spoken or written texts (Meibauer, 2018; Othman et al., 2019). In practice, deception is conveyed through language, and features such as intonation, sentence structure, and word choice often differ between truthful and deceptive accounts (Bajaj et al., 2023; Dando et al., 2023; Loconte et al., 2023; Meibauer, 2018; Sarzynska-Wawer et al., 2023; Shuy, 1998).

Questioning of suspects and witnesses, therefore, requires clear, well-planned interview practices. Poor interviewing can distort the record and lead to unjust outcomes (Muniroh & Heydon, 2022). This study draws on interactional sociolinguistics to propose a linguistics-based interview model for suspects and witnesses, with a focus on detecting and interpreting deceptive information.

In forensic linguistics, understanding how language is used strategically to conceal or reveal the truth is critical. This study investigates the patterns of conversational maxim violations displayed by suspects and witnesses in real murder cases. Rather than statistically quantifying or comparing the frequency of these violations, this study focuses on analysing how such deviations emerge within their statements. This study reveals (1) how the suspect conceals the truth in a murder case through linguistic expressions that are either articulated or

withheld; and if applicable, (2) what linguistic features distinguish the maxim violations produced by deceptive speakers from those produced by truthful speakers within this forensic context.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### Deception and Its Cognitive Processes

Research on deception has long posed challenges for scholars due to its complex nature and its tendency to blur the line between honesty and deceit. Although the meaning of a sentence can indicate the conditions under which its proposition is true (Kroeger, 2023), it is still hard to analyze deceptive behavior in different fields of study because the differences between truth and falsehood are often subtle and ambiguous. McCornack et al. (2014) observe that many deception studies draw a strict distinction between truth and lie, referring to bald-faced lies (BFL) as fully intentional falsehoods and bald-faced truths (BFT) as entirely honest statements. This binary framework then served as the conceptual foundation for McCornack et al.'s (2014) development of the original Information Manipulation Theory (IMT).

However, as a communicative act, deception is often far more complex than a simple distinction between truth and lies. Although the latest model of deception production, IMT2, suggests that deceptive statements may include elements of truth, as a statement can simultaneously consist of honest and deceptive components (McCornack et al., 2014), some researchers continue to adopt a rigid binary framework in their analysis of deception. Vrij (2008) offers a detailed account of the cognitive processes involved in deliberately constructing deceptive discourse, highlighting the substantial effort required to create, maintain, and convey false information convincingly and coherently. Vrij (2008) further explains that:

Liars may need to fabricate and monitor their stories to ensure they are plausible and consistent with everything the observer knows or could discover. Furthermore, liars must remember their previous statements to appear consistent when retelling their story and know to whom they told it. Liars should also avoid slips of the tongue and refrain from providing new leads. (pp. 39-41)

This complex cognitive load shows that deception involves more than merely choosing lies over truth. It requires careful management of memory, attention, and social perception. Thus, studying deception requires an interdisciplinary approach that combines psychological, linguistic, and contextual perspectives to understand the ways deceptive communication operates in real-world settings.

### Linguistic and Conversational Deception Markers

Linguistic research often treats truth and lies as pragmatic matters, asking how language use and context reveal a speaker's intentions. Sentence meaning is tied to the conditions under which what it says would be true in the real world (Kroeger, 2023). A simple sentence expresses a proposition, and only propositions (not sentence forms) can be judged true or false. A speaker is truthful when the proposition expressed matches the actual situation.

From a pragmatic perspective, the meaning of a sentence determines its truth conditions (Kroeger, 2023), which in turn define when the proposition it conveys can be regarded as true or false. Some propositions, known as analytical sentences or tautologies, are universally true in all contexts. Conversely, contradictions are propositions that are false in every conceivable situation (Kroeger, 2023). When a speaker produces such sentences, they are not making truth claims about the world, as there is no situation in which these sentences

could be true. Between these two extremes are synthetic propositions or contingency, which can be true in some contexts and false in others. Therefore, assessing their truth value necessitates not only an interpretation of their meaning but also knowledge of the specific circumstances in which they were produced (Kroeger, 2023).

Deception research has begun to identify regular linguistic patterns across languages. Adha (2020) found that Indonesian and English lies share features such as more words and longer sentences, fewer spatial, temporal, and perceptual details, and frequent use of modals, vague expressions, and third-person pronouns. These choices make utterances more repetitive, less varied, and less direct. Adha (2020) also notes that Indonesian speakers tend to be more expressive but less explicit and less direct when lying. Sarzynska-Wawer et al. (2023) observe that false statements often have simpler vocabulary, are shorter and more concrete, and use more positive than negative words. These findings support a pragmatic view of deception, where truth and lies are judged not only by propositional content but also by contextual and interactional cues in language use.

Deception in communication is often examined through pragmatic frameworks that show how speakers follow or manipulate conversational norms. The main analytical model for this study comes from Grice's theory of conversational maxims (Grice, 1975). He argues that conversation is generally cooperative and guided by shared expectations about how people should talk. Grice (1975) classified conversational maxims into four primary types:

- Quantity: give enough information, but not more than needed.
- Quality: do not say what you believe is false or lacks evidence.
- Relation: keep your contribution relevant.
- Manner: be clear, orderly, and avoid ambiguity and vagueness.

**Table 1.** Thematic propositions of IMT2

| Theme                    | Code | Propositions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------------|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Intentional State        | IS1  | Deceptive intent and its conscious awareness arise only after initial-state/end-state gaps are perceived as irreconcilable through truth.                                                                                                                                                                              |
|                          | IS2  | Deceptive intent may arise, exist, and decay at any temporal point during the production of deceptive discourse.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Cognitive Load           | CL1  | The comparative cognitive load associated with the production of truthful versus deceptive discourse is based on the gap between activated information units in memory, the functional demands of the initial state, and the desired end state, that is, the difficulty of reasoning through perceived problem spaces. |
|                          | CL2  | Communicators disclose information units in their discourse that comprise the most efficient communicative paths through perceived problem spaces.                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                          | CL3  | Deceptive discourse that successfully reconciles problematic initial-state/end-state discrepancies recurs when similar states arise.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Information Manipulation | IM1  | Communicators produce BFL Quality and Quantity violations when the most salient, activated information units within memory are perceived as untenable to disclose.                                                                                                                                                     |
|                          | IM2  | Quantity violations are the most frequent form of deceptive discourse                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                          | IM3  | Relation violations are the least frequent form of deceptive discourse                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|                          | IM4  | Manner violations occur less frequently than Quantity and/or Quality violations, but more frequently than Relation violations.                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|                          | IM5  | Within deceptive discourse, disclosed information units that violate Quality are derived from truthful information units previously stored in long-term memory and activated by initial-state conditions in working memory.                                                                                            |
|                          | IM6  | When the activated units of truthful information in memory are judged as untenable to disclose, but have no alternative, associated information units are activated from which speakers can construct Quality violations, and discourse production falters.                                                            |

Source: McCornack et al., 2014

Based on Grice's Conversation Maxims (Grice, 1975), McCornack (1992) proposed the original concept of IMT, which posits that deception entails the intentional manipulation of information within conversational contexts. According to McCornack (1992), deceptive communication arises from violations of conversational norms, such as concealing relevant information, providing false information, or creating ambiguity, thereby undermining the expectations of cooperation between conversation participants. Recognizing the complexity of deceitful behaviour, McCornack et al. (2014) further developed the framework into IMT2. This revised model is based on key theoretical premises and consists of 11 propositions organized into three related domains: Intentional State (IS), Cognitive Load (CL), and Information Manipulation (IM). McCornack et al. (2014) note that:

Deceptive and truthful discourse both are output from a speech production system involving parallel-distributed-processing guided by efficiency, memory, and means-ends reasoning; and this production process involves a rapid-fire series of cognitive cycles (involving distinct modules united by a conscious workspace) and modification of incrementally constructed discourse during the turn-at-talk in response to dynamic current-state/end-state discrepancies. (p. 15)

The 11 propositions describe specific ways in which deception can arise in communication, as listed in Table 1.

## METHOD

The data for this study were collected from two distinct conversational settings related to the same case: an exclusive interview broadcast on *CNN Indonesia* (CNN Indonesia, 2016b, 2016a) and a series of court trial interviews documented by *KompasTV* (KompasTV, 2023b, 2023a). These sources were selected for their complementary qualities and diverse perspectives. *The CNN Indonesia* interview offers clear audiovisual content that aids the transcription process, while *KompasTV*'s courtroom interviews reflect actual legal proceedings. By combining media and courtroom communication contexts, these sources enable a comprehensive analysis of the case.

Data were collected through purposive sampling, focusing on ambiguous or vague utterances to identify linguistic cues of truthful and deceptive statements. A descriptive-qualitative approach was employed to systematically analyze the linguistic features associated with deception and truthfulness while minimizing the imposition of overly interpretative frameworks. All utterances during the trials were carefully analyzed to identify patterns of violations in accordance with Grice's theory of conversational maxims (Grice, 1975).

Statements were classified as truthful or deceptive based on which maxim of quantity, quality, relation, and/or manner was violated. The analysis investigated linguistic features in authentic interviews together with relevant contextual factors. This was done to capture how suspects and witnesses use pragmatic strategies when lying or telling the truth. To reduce subjectivity and bias, all classifications were checked twice by the researchers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents examples of conversational maxim violations in comparison to truthful communication. These were drawn from an exclusive press interview with the suspect and from interviews conducted during the court hearings. In this session, NA refers to the News Anchor, JW stands for Jessica Wongso, the defendant, P denotes the Prosecutor, J refers to the presiding judge, W1 represents Witness 1 (the victim's friend, Hani

Juwita Boon), and J1 stands for Panel Judge 1, while W2 indicates Witness 2 (the café manager). The findings are systematically presented from the forensic linguistics perspective.

### Deception Indicated by Violating the Maxim of Quality

The maxim of quality plays a pivotal role for judges and prosecutors in courtroom proceedings, as it serves as the essential foundation for obtaining accurate and reliable information throughout the trial (Smith, 1895). According to Grice (1975), the maxim of quality requires the speaker to be truthful. The information provided by the speaker must be genuine, justified, and relevant, as lies or false statements can disrupt communication and lead to misunderstandings. The maxim of quality can be violated if the speaker is suspected of being dishonest and providing incorrect information to the hearer, as shown in Excerpt 1.

#### Excerpt 1.

NA : “*Bagaimana anda mengenal Mirna, Jessica? Euh, Mirna tu orangnya seperti apa yang -euh- [US] anda adalah teman Mirna sendiri.*”

[” How did you know Mirna, Jessica? Uh, what kind of person was Mirna since -euh- [US] you were Mirna’s friend.”]

JW : “*Mirna itu baik sekali. Dia orangnya juga lucu, ya. Maksudnya kalo ngomong sama dia tu gak...gak selesai-selesai. Kita selalu ketawa. Ehm.... orangnya juga sangat kreatif, pekerja keras, ehm... Yah, dia teman yang baik, lah. Dia orangnya gak...gak aneh-aneh, gitu.*”

[” Mirna was very kind. Yes, she was also funny. I mean, when I talked to her, our conversations never seemed to end. We often laughed together. Ehm...She was also very creative and hardworking, ehm. Well, she was a good friend. She was a... she was a normal person.”]

NA : “*Berarti dapat dikatakan anda adalah sahabat dekat, begitu?*”

[“So, can we say that you were her close friend, right?”]

JW : “*Tidak dekat. Kita temen main waktu dulu ehm //interrupted---*”

[”Not that close. We just used to hang out in the past, mmm...//interrupted---

NA : “ //Interruption//*Tapi tidak dekat?*”

[“//Interruption// **But not that close?**”]

JW : “*Tapi tidak sampai mendalam. Kita suka curhat atau ngomong setiap hari. Tidak sampe seperti itu. Tapi kita waktu Kuliah, ehm. Kita, ya, ketemuan di kampus, gitu, kan, ya. Bahas-bahas soal ehm assignment, terus udah gitu ya, ehm, ya sekedar begitu aja. Pergi makan, pergi minum kopi, jalan-jalan ke mal. Ya, yang kayak anak kuliah lakukan, lah. Normalnya kayak begitu.*”

[“We weren’t that close. We used to vent or talk every day, but it wasn’t that deep. However, during our college days, uhm. We, uhm, we used to meet on campus, yes. We would usually discuss our, uhm... assignments, and that was about it, uhm..., that was about it. We hung out for lunch, had coffee, and went to the mall. Well, these were typical activities for college students.”]

NA : “*Berapa tahun berarti, euh, sudah, euh, berteman dengan Mirna?*”

[” So, uh, how many years had you been friends with Mirna?”]

JW : “*Euh, sekitar 8 tahun. Iyah, ehm. Lalu kita wisuda di hari yang sama juga bersama-sama, sama Hani juga, sama temen kita yang lain-lainnya. Ehm... Lalu sesudah itu saya, euh, meneruskan tinggal di sana, yah. Mencari kerja dan kerja di sana. Ehm...tidak pulang ke Indonesia untuk bekerja. Paling cuman liburan saja sedikit-sedikit.*”

[“**Uh, about 8 years.** Yeah, uhm... Then we graduated on the same day, together with Hani and our other friends. Ehm. After that, I, uh..., continued living there, looking for work and working there. Ehm...I didn't go back to Indonesia to work. I only went back occasionally for short vacations.”]

(CNN Indonesia, 2016a, 12:06-13:18)

Excerpt 1 presents a dialogue from an exclusive interview between the news anchor (NA) and Jessica Wongso (JW), who was still a witness in the case at the time of the interview. NA began the interview by asking JW about Mirna's character. In her initial statement, JW indicated that she knew Mirna very well. However, when NA tried to get confirmation from JW by asking: “*Berarti dapat dikatakan anda adalah sahabat dekat, begitu?*” [“So, can we say that you were her close friend, right?”], JW seemed to correct her statement and then emphasized that: “*Tidak dekat*” [“Not that close”]. Interestingly, in her subsequent statement, she recounted activities she and Mirna engaged in while at the same university, activities typically associated with close friendships. In addition, JW mentioned that their friendship had lasted for eight years.

Based on the questions and the answers provided, the discrepancy between the lexical item description close friend and JW's rejection of this information was identified as a distortion of information. As a result, JW's statement can be considered not entirely untrue due to the existence of statements that are considered inconsistent at one point in time. It can also be observed that she altered the strength or scope of the proposition made in the misinterpreted statement, a point also suggested by Galasiński (2000) regarding what a liar might do to conceal the truth. In this case, the distortion manifested as a violation of the maxim of quality, as evidenced by her refusal to be described as a close friend of the victim, which was inconsistent with her description of her previous activities, her perception of the victim's character, and information about the length of her friendship with the victim.

This section highlights inconsistencies in JW's statements; however, it is essential to explain why they reflect deliberate deception rather than mere misunderstanding. The key lies in the deliberate modification of the strength or scope of the information, which indicates deliberate distortion rather than unintentional communication. JW's denial that she was a close friend contradicts her detailed recollections of activities typical of close friends during college and the stated duration of their friendship. This inconsistency is not a matter of vague or unclear communication, but may reflect a strategic attempt to manipulate perceptions of her relationship with the victim and ways to avoid getting involved in more serious problems.

This behaviour is consistent with IM5, which involves deliberately withholding or modifying truthful information to deceive. Consequently, JW's statement “*Tidak dekat*” [Not that close] can be seen as a deliberate violation of the maxim of quality by manipulating the information. On the other hand, the subsequent account of their relationship during college is likely an accurate memory stored in his long-term memory. The presence of this conflicting information indicates a deliberate attempt to conceal the truth, reinforcing the interpretation of deception rather than mere misunderstanding.

The concept of semantic prototypes from cognitive linguistics can be introduced to strengthen the argument and explain its relevance in lie detection. According to Coleman and Kay (1981), as cited in Shuy (1998), semantic prototypes connect words and/or phrases with pre-linguistic cognitive schemas or mental images, which allow speakers to assess the extent to which an object conforms to those schemas. In the context of lie detection, when a speaker rejects or distances themselves from the prototype, for instance, by denying their closeness, the speaker may attempt to manipulate the truth. This denial appears to reflect a deliberate attempt to mislead or conceal a relationship, which is a key indicator of deceitful behavior. This interpretation is also

consistent with interpersonal deception theory, which suggests that deception can arise from conflicting pressures to withdraw from the interaction and to manage the emotional and cognitive demands of lying, as well as to appear normal in conversation (Buller et al., 1996).

### Deception Indicated by Violating the Maxim of Quantity

As explained in proposition IM2, violations of the maxim of quantity are the most common form of misleading discourse (McCornack et al., 2014). In communication, it refers to the amount of information provided during a conversation (Grice, 1975). This requires the speaker to provide the listener with as much information as necessary for the current exchange (Tupan & Natalia, 2008). This maxim can be violated when the speaker uses complex (indirect) sentences, provides insufficient (uninformative) information, speaks too briefly, gives excessive detail, or conveys information in an excessive manner (Grice, 1975).

#### Excerpt 2.

- P : “*Selanjutnya anda sampai ke meja 54. Di sana, apa pertama kali yang dilakukan?*”  
 [“And then, you arrived at table 54. What was the first thing you did there?”]
- JW : “*Euh...saya duduk* [unfilled pause] *Saya duduk.*”  
 [“Euh... **I sat down** [unfilled pause] **I sat down.**”]
- P : [overlapped response] “*Iya.*”  
 [overlapped response] “*Yes.*”
- JW : “*Ehm...saya melihat menu, saya mungkin main handphone, sekitar itu aja.*”  
 [“Ehm...**I looked at the menu, I, perhaps checked my phone, that was about it.**”]  
 (CNN Indonesia, 2016b, 15:00-15:15)

Excerpt 2 depicts the interaction between the prosecutor (P) and the defendant Jessica Wongso (JW). This excerpt captures a crucial moment in the murder trial, when P questioned JW about her specific actions upon arriving at the crime scene (Table 54). Given that JW had been found guilty of premeditated murder, P suspected that when JW arrived at Table 54, she was preparing cyanide to poison the victim. Another reason to question her activities at Table 54 came from CCTV footage, which showed JW’s suspicious behaviour while waiting for her friends. She opened her bag with both hands, constantly turning her head left and right. She was also suspected of trying to block the CCTV’s view by strategically placing those paper bags on the table.

Based on the conversation in excerpt 2, it can be concluded that P asked a concise and straight-forward question, “*Di sana, apa pertama kali yang dilakukan?*” [“What was the first thing you did there?”]. Although this question is brief, what P expects from JW is likely to be more than just a simple answer about the general activities of a café customer when she arrived at her table (sitting down, looking at the menu, or playing with her mobile phone). If the person being spoken to in this interaction understands that the ultimate goal of the communication is to identify the real perpetrator of the crime, then they are likely to provide a more detailed answer. Evidence that truth tellers tend to provide more detailed information is explained in Excerpt 5. Instead of providing more specific and detailed information about her activities at Table 54 before her friend’s arrival, JW withheld details by only providing general and typical information.

McCornack et al. (2014) propose that individuals involved in deceptive discourse often exhibit repetitive speech patterns in similar contexts in IMT2, particularly in the CL3, as these patterns provide a highly efficient and skilful means of communication. This efficiency reduces the cognitive effort required to falsify information during high-pressure interactions. Excerpts 1 and 2 present at least two conversational contexts:

the description of a state of affairs and the narration of a sequence of events. In Excerpt 1, NA asks JW about her relationship with the victim during their time in college. Conversely, Excerpt 2 describes P questioning JW about a series of actions she took during the alleged murder to obtain a clear and detailed picture of the events.

Across both contexts, JW consistently resorts to two notable discourse patterns. The first pattern is the use of lexical units such as “*sekedar begitu aja*” [“that was about it”], “*kayak begitu*” [“just like that”], and “*sekitar itu aja*” [“that was all”]. These expressions effectively limit the scope of the information she provides, signaling that the preceding statements represent the entirety of her account, whether about her relationship with the victim (Excerpt 1) or her activities at Table 54 (Excerpt 2). The second pattern involves the use of simple, minimal clauses with few cohesive markers, resulting in terse, somewhat fragmented narratives.

Although IMT2 identifies these patterns as violations of the maxim of quantity, it is essential to explain why deceitful individuals tend to prefer such simplicity. Vrij (2008) demonstrated that liars deliberately use brief and vague responses as a strategic move to minimize the chance of contradictions and reduce the cognitive load required to construct and maintain narratives. This explanation complements McCornack et al.'s statement (2014) in CL3, which proposes that deceitful speakers tend to use carefully structured and cognitively manageable speech patterns to prevent excessive mental strain during deception. This occurs because deceptive messages are often generated efficiently by dynamically adjusting information already stored in memory, thereby minimizing cognitive effort.

JW's consistent use of brief, limited responses across various conversational contexts indicate a deliberate strategy to reduce cognitive load while violating the maxim of quantity. According to Vrij (2008), deceitful individuals often use vague and minimal statements to reduce the risk of contradiction and decrease the cognitive effort required to maintain the lie. On the other hand, truth tellers tend to provide specific details and explain with contextual information, as they rely on actual memories rather than fabricated content. This difference reinforces the idea that JW's repeated use of brief and vague language indicates a deliberate deception strategy rather than his usual way of speaking.

### **Deception Indicated by Violating the Maxim of Manner (and Quantity)**

Maxim of manner requires speakers to speak as clearly, concisely, and sequentially as possible, avoiding vagueness, ambiguity, and confusion (Grice, 1975). Excerpt 3 below is an example of an excerpt that was thought to comply with the maxims of manner and quality.

#### **Excerpt 3.**

P : “*Apakah dalam keadaan Sazerac dan Old-Fashioned sudah di atas meja, anda sempat menyentuh dari sedotan?*”

[When the Sazerac and Old-Fashioned were on the table, did you ever touch them with a straw?]

JW : “*Sedotan dan kopi Mirna saya tidak pernah sentuh.*”

[“I never touched Mirna's straw and coffee.”]

P : “*Tidak pernah sentuh sama sekali?*”

[“Never touched (them) at all?”]

JW : “*Tidak.*”

[“Never.”]

P : “*Posisinya tetap pada keadaan semula?*”

[“Did they remain in their original positions?”]

- JW : *“Betul”*  
 [“Yes.”]
- P : *“Iya. Setelah itu versi dari saudara Marlon adalah pada saat dia datang itu sedotan sudah ada di atas, di dalam gelas. Bagaimana tanggapan anda?”*  
 [“Yes. After that, according to Marlon, by the time he arrived, the straw was already on top, in the glass. How do you respond to (that)?”]
- JW : *“Saya tidak bisa menanggapi...hal tersebut.”*  
 [“I can’t comment...on that.”]
- P : *“Tidak bisa menanggapi?”*  
 [“You can’t respond?”]
- JW : //Nodding//
- P : *“Versi anda adalah sedotan masih di dalam //correcting// masih di bawah?”*  
 [“In your version, the straw was still inside //correcting// still underneath (next to the glass), right?”]
- JW : *“Iya itu versi saya.”*  
 [“Yes, that’s my version.”]
- P : *“Paper bag-nya di mana saat itu? Saat kopi disajikan?”*  
 [“Where was (the position of) the paper bag when the coffee was served?”]
- JW : *“Euh, itu saya tidak ingat kapan saya mindahin paper bag. Jadi...”//interrupted-*  
 [“Euh, I don’t remember when I moved the paper bag. So..”//interrupted--]
- P : //interruption// *“Tidak ingat kapan?”*  
 [//interruption// “You don’t remember when?”]
- JW : *“Entah masih di meja atau sudah di belakang, saya tidak tahu.”*  
 [“(I don’t know) whether it was still on the table or had already moved to the back, I don’t know.”]
- P : *“Dalam berita acara anda, di sini dikatakan juga bahwa anda memindahkan paper bag sebelum kopi datang. Ini gimana?”*  
 [“In your official report, you also said that you moved the paper bag before the coffee arrived. How about it?”]
- JW : *“Ya mungkin saat itu saya ingetnya begitu.”*  
 [“Well, maybe at that time, that’s what I remembered at the time.”]
- (CNN Indonesia, 2016b, 41:06-42:10)

In Excerpt 3, P interrogates JW about the placement of straws and paper bags, which are allegedly related to the murder. Despite JW repeatedly insisting that she did not touch the cup or straw used by the victim, her testimony contradicted that of the coffee waiter, who stated that the straw was already in the Vietnamese coffee cup when he served the drink at Table 54. When confronted with this contradictory statement, JW briefly responded, *“Saya tidak bisa menanggapi itu”* [“I can’t comment on that.”].

This type of response violates the maxim of quantity and manner for two reasons. First, the response is not informative, thus violating the maxim of quantity. Second, the response does not clearly state her position on the conflicting testimony, which violates the maxim of manner. Her statement is ambiguous, and she cannot definitively state whether she agrees or disagrees with the other witness’s statement. She also repeatedly states that she cannot recall the exact location of the paper bag and does not remember critical details of the murder.

When asked about the discrepancy between her previous statement in the Official Report and her testimony at the trial, JW replied, *“Ya mungkin saat itu saya ingetnya begitu”* [“Well, maybe that’s what I remembered at

the time”]. The use of the softening word  *mungkin*  [maybe] and the vague pronoun  *begitu*  [that] reflects semantic uncertainty and deliberate ambiguity. This lexical choice indicates an attempt to distance herself from the content of the statement and to avoid responsibility by giving vague answers.

To provide a more comprehensive analysis, a wider theoretical framework is used. McCornack et al.'s IMT2 (McCornack et al., 2014), particularly its Cognitive Load proposition, proposes that liars tend to rely on vague and pre-prepared speech patterns to reduce the cognitive effort required to maintain the lie. Similarly, Buller et al.'s Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT) (Buller et al., 1996) argues that liars often try to appear cooperative while avoiding full disclosure. Here, the defendant's use of hedging and vague references is consistent with this theoretical framework, indicating an effort to manage cognitive load and minimize the risk of self-disclosure.

When compared with findings from previous studies on deceptive discourse in legal contexts, the defendant's statements exhibit patterns often associated with evasive responses, characterized by ambiguity, memory gaps, and reduced detail. In contrast, truth tellers usually provide more consistent, detailed, and context-grounded accounts. Thus, JW's repeated use of vague answers and cognitive loads may indicate a deliberate communication strategy to conceal guilt while avoiding overt lies.

### Deception Indicated by Violating the Maxim of Relation

According to IMT2, violations of the maxim of manner occur less frequently than violations of the maxims of quantity and quality, but more commonly than violations of the maxim of relation (McCornack et al., 2014). Compared to the other categories, violations of the maxim of relation are the least common among the four categories. It is even more difficult to find in the context of a trial. This is likely due to the predetermined purpose of communication during a trial: to prove that the defendant is either guilty or innocent and to validate the verdict in a criminal case. Therefore, relevant information is important in communication in the context of a trial. Despite its uniqueness, Excerpt 4 shows how a murder suspect violated this.

#### Excerpt 4.

- P : “*Coba dilihatkan dulu (rekaman) CCTVnya waktu penyajian kopi. //long pause// Dari kamera 9. //longpause// Ini, paper bag masih ingat?*”  
 [“Take a look at the CCTV recording of the coffee being served //long pause// From camera 9. //long pause--- Here, do you still remember the paper bag?”]
- JW : “*Itu terlihatnya seperti paper bag, iya.*”  
 [“Yes. It looks like a paper bag.”]
- P : “*Seperti paper bag, ya?*”  
 [“Like a paper bag, huh?”]
- P : “*Iya, pada saat disajikan oleh Agustriono. Coba diputar (rekamannya).*” //long pause---  
 [“Yes, when Agustriono delivered the coffee. Let's play (the recording).” //long pause---]
- P : [After watching the CCTV recording] “*Ya, masih ada paper bag di atas meja.*”  
 [[After watching the CCTV recording] “Yes, there was still a paper bag on the table.”]
- P : “*Nah, keterangan anda di BAP ini pada saat (kopi) disajikan, paper bag sudah anda taruh di belakang, ini yang bener yang mana sekarang?*”  
 [“Well, in your official report, you stated that when [the Vietnamese coffee] was served, you had already put the paper bag in the back. Which statement is correct now?”]

- JW : “*Saya tetep pada pendirian saya kalau saya sebenarnya tidak ingat.*”  
[“I stick to my point that I really don’t remember.”]
- P : “*Lho, sekarang pada [unfinished]. Anda juga mengatakan setuju dengan berita acara anda yang anda sampaikan di penyidikan. Berita acara penyidikan anda bilang paper bag itu sudah tidak ada di atau meja pada saat kopi datang. Jadi yang bener yang mana?*”  
[“Wait, now [unfinished]. You also said that you agreed with your investigation report. Your report states the paper bag was no longer on the table when the coffee arrived. So, which one is correct?”]
- JW : “*Saya mengerti tapi sebenarnya pada saat itu saya juga tidak begitu ingat.*”  
[“I understand, but actually I didn’t really remember at the time.”]
- P : “*Tidak begitu ingat. Kenapa anda mengatakan bahwa itu (paper bag) sudah dipindahkan. Kenapa tidak anda katakan, “Saya tidak ingat, pak”.*”  
[“You didn’t remember. So why did you say that it (the paper bag) had been moved? Why didn’t you just say, “I don’t remember, Sir”.”]
- JW : “*Euh, pada saat itu mungkin kondisinya lain atau bapak yang menanyakan atau penyidiknya itu lain terhadap saya. Kan, bapak juga tidak bisa tahu kondisi saya seperti apa pada saat itu.*”  
[“Euh, at that time, perhaps the circumstances were different, or the person asking, or the investigator’s perception was different from mine. You couldn’t even know what my condition was like at that time.”]
- P : “*Lho, tapi ini dengan sadar anda katakan bahwa memang itu dipindahkan di atas meja sebelum kopi itu datang. Anda sadar pada saat itu?*”  
[“But you were consciously saying that it was moved on the table before the coffee arrived. Were you aware at the time?”]
- JW : “***Pada saat itu, itu yang saya katakan. Keterangan saya.***”  
[“**That was what I said at the time; that was my statement.**”]
- P : “***Saya tanyakan, anda sadar tidak saat anda mengatakan ini*** (suspect’s information in the crime scene reconstruction)?”  
[**I asked you one more time: were you conscious when you said this...?** (suspect’s information in the crime scene reconstruction)?”]
- JW : “***Sadar.***”  
[“**I was.**”]

(CNN Indonesia, 2016b, 42:11-43:44)

As seen in Excerpt 4, JW’s response shows a subtle relational violation. When P questioned JW’s inconsistency, she used a strategy of ambiguity by giving answers that avoided the question and included irrelevant details. P asked whether JW was conscious when she made her statement in the official report. In turn, JW’s stated that, “*Pada saat itu, itu yang saya katakan. Keterangan saya*” [“That was what I said at the time; that was my statement.”]. This type of response does not provide a direct answer to the question. Instead, it shows that she refuses to admit she was fully conscious when she gave her statement in the official report. Despite the vagueness and lack of information suggested by the evasive response, the main problem is that the answer is irrelevant to the question asked. By making statements unrelated to P’s questions about her consciousness, JW undermined the conversation’s expected relevance.

When P repeated the question to obtain a clear answer, JW finally replied briefly and directly, “*sadar*” (“I was (conscious)”). This shift indicates that the initial violation of the maxim of relation was employed as a

deceptive strategy through equivocation. Buller et al. (1996) characterized this as the use of ambiguity, indirectness, irrelevance, and depersonalization. In JW's case, her ambiguous and irrelevant answers were consistent with these characteristics, as she avoided the P's direct questions. Such avoidance was aimed at postponing or avoiding full responsibility. Even though she ultimately admitted she was fully conscious, she did so only after being persistently questioned. This shows that she was trying to control the flow of information and avoid self-incriminating admissions.

### Unveiling Truthful Communication from Murder Case Witnesses

In criminal proceedings, truthful confessions serve as an important source of evidence, typically conveyed through witness testimony that can be exculpatory or incriminating, at the investigation, prosecution, and trial stages. Such testimony relates to direct observation, personal experience, or case-related knowledge. The role of this evidence is formally recognized and regulated in Article 1, Clause 184 of the Indonesian Criminal Code, which underscores the importance of authentic testimony in law enforcement by outlining five legally recognized types of evidence: witness testimony, expert testimony, documents, physical indications, and the defendant's statement.

In this case, adherence to the maxims of conversation regarding quantity, quality, manner, and relationship in witness testimony is vital to support the investigation and trial process. Therefore, Excerpts 5 and 6 present transcripts from a single interview segment conducted by the court judge (J) with two witnesses, whose testimonies are also analyzed in this study. Witness 1 (W1) is a friend of the victim who was present at the scene and became a key witness in the case. Witness 2 (W2) is the café manager who was on duty at the time of the incident and played a crucial role in evacuating the victim and securing the material evidence.

#### Excerpt 5.

J : *"Bertemu Mirna jam berapa?"*

[*"What time did you meet Mirna?"*]

W1 : *"5.12 – 5.15 mungkin."*

[*"Around 5.12 to 5.15 p.m., maybe."*]

J : *"Di mana itu?"*

[*"Where was that?"*]

W1 : *"Di depan Starbucks"*

[*"In front of Starbucks"*]

J : *"Di depan Starbucks. Terus? Setelah ketemu berdua?"*

[*"In front of Starbucks. Then? After meeting just, the two of you?"*]

W1 : *"Setelah ketemuan berdua di depan Starbucks, kita berpelukan, melepas rindu, setelah itu kita langsung jalan ke Olivier."*

[*"After meeting just the two of us in front of Starbucks, we hugged each other to show how much we missed each other, then we went straight to Olivier."*]

J : *"Olivier..."*

[*"Olivier..."*]

W1 : *"Euh.. Sebelumnya ketika saya bilang saya sudah mau jalan itu, balik lagi yang setengah...//interrupted---"*

[*"Euh... Before that, when I said I was about to leave, I was turning back halfway... //interrupted---"*]

J : *//interruption// "Set..Setelah ketemu dengan Mirna apakah saudara atau Mirna ada ngasih tau sama Jessica bahwa saya sudah ada di Starbucks."*

[*After meeting Mirna, did you or Mirna tell Jessica, "I am already at Starbucks."*]

- W1 : *“Enggak.”*  
 [“No.”]
- J : *“He?”* [witness was inaudible]  
 [“What?”]
- W1 : *“Enggak ada.”*  
 [“No.”]
- J : *“Oh, sodara langsung ke Olivier?”*  
 [“Oh...you went straight to Olivier?”]
- W1 : *“Iyah, langsung ketemu. Saya pikir, “udahlah semuanya pasti langsung ketemu aja”, gitu, kan. Tapi pas setengah lima saya mau jalan, Jessica bilang, “Hello, girls. I’m here atas nama Jessica”. Terus saya nanya, “Jess, cepet banget. Kita ngopi dulu, yuk”. Maksudnya di tempat lain dulu. “Somewhere else”. Lalu dia bilang, “Di sini aja. Bangkunya enak”. Lalu setelah itu saya tidak bilang lagi untuk ke tempat lain dulu.”*  
 [“Yes, we went straight to meet her. I thought, “Never mind, I’ll see everyone right away”, right? But at half past five, as I was about to leave, Jessica said, “Hello, girls. I’m here (order) under the name Jessica.” Then I asked (Jessica), “Jess, it’s too early. Shall we have coffee somewhere else first?” She meant somewhere else. “Somewhere else”. Then she said, “Let’s stay here. The seats are comfy.” After that, I didn’t suggest going anywhere else.”]
- J : *“Langsung. Berarti langsung ke Olivier?”*  
 [“Directly. So, straight to Olivier?”]
- W1 : *“Langsung ketemu Mirna, langsung ke Olivier, jalan sekitar [unfinished]. Starbucks dan Olivier itu di lantai yang sama. Mungkin kita jalan sekitar dua menit.”*  
 [“I met Mirna directly, went straight to Olivier, walking around [unfinished]. Starbucks and Olivier are on the same floor. We probably walked for about two minutes.”]
- J : *“Dua menit. Langsung ketemu sama Jessica?”*  
 [“Two minutes. Did you meet Jessica right away?”]
- W1: *“Iya. Sebelum masuk, euh...saya sempat menanyakan sama Mirna, “Mir, ini kita gak kepagian? Kita ngopi tempat lain dulu, yuk”. Mirna bilang, “Gak apa-apa. Jessica udah tunggu di dalam”. Ya udah, akhirnya kita masuk. Ketika masuk, kita menanyakan pada pegawai Olivier: “Atas nama Jessica?”. Lalu kita diarahkan ke meja nomor 54.”*  
 [“Yes. Before entering, uh.... I asked Mirna, “Mir, aren’t we too early? Shall we have coffee elsewhere first?” Mirna said, “It’s okay. Jessica is waiting inside.” So, we went in. When we entered the café, we asked an Olivier employee: “Under the name Jessica?” Then we were directed to table number 54.”]
- J : *“Nomor berapa?”*  
 [“Which number?”]
- W1: *“Nomor 54, yah?”*  
 [“Number 54, right?”]
- J : *“54. Terus sodara menuju ke situ?”*  
 [“54. And then you headed there?”]
- W1: *“Euh, dia bilang, “Itu Ibu Jessica ada di sana”. Lalu kita langsung ke sana. Begitu ketemu Jessica, aku langsung berlari kecil, langsung memeluk dia. Aku bilang [unfinished]. Cipika-cipiki, aku memeluk dia, setelah itu Mirna juga memeluk dia.*

Setelah itu, euh, Mirna bilang, "Oh ya udah, Han. Gua masuk dulu". Ya udah, saya [correcting] Mirna masuk, setelah itu saya duduk di sebelahnya. Mirna di tengah."

["Uh, he said, "Mrs. Jessica is over there". Then we went straight to her. As soon as I met Jessica, ran a little, and hugged her. I said [unfinished]. We exchanged air kisses, I hugged her, and then Mirna hugged her as well. After that, uh, Mirna said, "Oh, Han. I'll go in first." And then, I [correcting] Mirna went in first, and after that, I sat next to her. Mirna was in the middle."]

(Kompas TV, 2023a, 9:06-11:28)

#### Excerpt 6.

J1 : "Tadi saudara mengatakan bahwa ini kopi disingkirkan, ya? Di.. di...disisihkan, ya?"

["You said earlier that this coffee was removed, right? Set aside..., right?"]

[overlapped with answer]

W2 : [overlapping answer] Ya. ["Yes"]

J1 : "Diamankan, lah." [overlapped with answers]

["Secured." [overlapped with answers]]

W2 : [overlapping answer] Iya. ["Yes"]

J1 : "Itu diamankan di mana?"

["Where was it secured?"]

W2 : "Di dalam bar, pak."

["Inside the bar, sir."]

J1 : "Di dalam bar. Terus selanjutnya bagaimana ini nasib, euh, [overlapped with answer] kopi ini?"

["Inside the bar. Then what happened to, euh, [overlapped with answer] the coffee?"]

W2 : [overlapping answer] kemudian saya minta staf saya untuk dire...euh...di...euh, dipisahin ke botol, ya. Karena tadinya saya mau cek sendiri ke lab. Saya penasaran ini ada apa, sih, dalemnya? Gitu. Ini waktu saya kejadiannya belum tau kalo ada sampe seperti ini (Kopi itu menyebabkan kematian pelanggannya) kejadiannya. Gitu, lho. Saya tahunya masih sakit aja. Belum ada yang meninggal. Tapi //interrupted//.

[[overlapping answer] Then I asked my staff to take it... euh... to... euh, put the coffee into a bottle so I could send it to the lab myself. I was curious: what was inside? At that time, I didn't know what had actually happened even worse (the coffee caused the death of her customer). That was pretty much the situation. All I knew was that someone was feeling sick; I didn't know anyone had died yet. But //interrupted//.

(Kompas TV, 2023b, 21:57-22:35)

Excerpt 5 shows that the judge used both open-ended and closed-ended questions. In response to closed-ended questions: *Bertemu Mirna jam berapa?* ["What time did you meet Mirna?"] and *"di mana itu?"* ["Where was that?"], W1 gave concise and direct answers. Although W1 showed slight uncertainty about the exact time of the meeting with the victim by using the word  *mungkin* [maybe] and providing a time range of 5:12 to 5:15 p.m., this uncertainty is considered reasonable, given that exact times are often difficult to recall. Overall, W1's brief yet cooperative responses to these closed questions are consistent with conversational norms and do not violate any Gricean maxims.

Furthermore, this also emphasizes that W1 deliberately gave detailed, lengthy answers even when J asked closed questions, such as, “*Oh, sodara langsung ke Olivier?*” [“Oh, you went straight to Olivier?”]. Instead of providing a direct affirmative or negative answer, W1 provided a detailed description of the main events and related circumstances. Specifically, she not only confirmed that she had gone to Olivier’s without telling JW, but also explained how JW had sent a WhatsApp message in the group chat to inform them that she had arrived at the meeting location. In addition, W1 clearly remembered JW’s invitation to stay, quoting her exact words: “*Di sini aja. Bangkunya enak*” [“Let’s stay here. The seats are comfy.”], which demonstrates W1’s readiness to provide comprehensive information that exceeds the minimum expectations of the question.

The tendency of truth tellers to provide detailed responses can be better understood through a theoretical framework established in both communication and deception studies. According to IMT2 (McCornack et al., 2014), truth tellers tend to be more open because they do not experience cognitive load or anticipate negative consequences from their disclosures. Their narratives usually contain more detailed, contextually rich information, since truth tellers have direct access to the original memories and experiences they describe, which requires less cognitive effort to produce accurate and complete statements. In addition, studies on cooperative communication point out that truth tellers tend to provide informative and precise information, which in turn promotes mutual understanding and strengthens interpersonal trust (Grice, 1975). Elaborative responses build credibility and also demonstrate transparency, which are relevant in legal contexts where witnesses aim to support the investigative process. On the other hand, deceitful people often limit their answers or provide ambiguous details to avoid detection, as the complexity of their lies increase the likelihood of internal inconsistencies and cognitive load (Vrij, 2008).

The characteristics of W2’s response are very similar to those of W1. W2 recounts her experience directly and in detail. An in-depth analysis of the audio recording reveals that the interaction between W2 and J1 was highly dynamic, characterized by frequent interruptions and overlapping speech. W2 often answered before the panel judge had finished his question, which caused several instances of simultaneous dialogue. In addition to this lively back-and-forth pattern, W2 enriched her answers by including peripheral details, including when the judge asked, “*Terus selanjutnya bagaimana ini nasib, euh, kopi ini?*” [“So, what happened next with, euh, this coffee?”]. She further provided the answers, which contain perceptual, spatial, and temporal information. Table 2 summarises the statements classified into three types of information.

**Table 2.** The construction of perceptual, spatial, and temporal information from W2

|            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Perceptual | “ <i>Saya penasaran ini ada apa, sih, dalemnya?</i> ” (“I was curious, what was inside?”)<br>“ <i>Saya tahunya masih sakit aja. Belum ada yang meninggal.</i> ” (All I knew was that someone was sick; I didn’t know anyone had died yet.)  |
| Spatial    | “ <i>Kemudian saya minta staf saya untuk dire...euh...di... euh, dipisahin ke botol, ya</i> ” (“Then I asked my staff to [stuttering], pour the coffee into a bottle.”)                                                                     |
| Temporal   | “ <i>Ini waktu saya kejadiannya belum tau kalo ada sampe seperti ini kejadiannya. Gitu, lho.</i> ” (“At that time, I didn’t know what had actually happened, even worse (the coffee caused the death of her customer). That’s all I know.”) |

Another notable phenomenon in Excerpt 6 is the presence of filled pauses, such as ‘*Euh...*’, which may indicate an increased cognitive load. This is consistent with proposition CL1, which states that both truthful and false statements can cause varying levels of CL, depending on the specific information retrieved from memory. A speaker’s CL experience does not always correlate with an intention to lie. As a result, behaviours often associated with high CL, such as stuttering, filled pauses, or prolonged silences, should not be directly interpreted as signs of dishonesty. Instead, such behaviours should be understood within the broader linguistic and psychological context in which they occur, as they may simply reflect the speaker’s efforts to recall, process, or articulate specific details accurately.

The overall findings of this study indicate that deceptive communication encompasses explicit lies, strategic manipulation, and violations of Grice's conversational maxims. While truth tellers, such as W1 and W2, provide detailed and straightforward information with minimal cognitive effort, deceptive individuals often hide details, distort facts, or blend truth with falsehoods to preserve a sense of credibility. This behaviour is consistent with McCornack et al.'s IMT2 (2014), which defines deception as a deliberate manipulation of conversational norms to hide the truth while maintaining a pretense of plausibility. By analyzing natural discourse in high-risk forensic settings, this study highlights the role of conversational maxims in forensic linguistics, especially in detecting deception during investigative interviews and also court proceedings. Although the limited size of the dataset limits generalization, these findings demonstrate the practical utility of linguistically supported deception detection and also contribute to the future development of forensic linguistic study.

## CONCLUSION

This study investigates how deception occurs in real murder cases and reveals that deceptive communication is not always expressed through direct or overt lies. Instead, lies are often inserted into truthful statements, which allow the speaker to appear credible while concealing important information. These findings suggest that deception should not be viewed as a single act or isolated statement, but rather as an ongoing process shaped by interaction and conversation.

By analyzing the suspect's responses through the lens of Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), this study found that uncooperative behavior in conversation often indicates dishonesty. Truth tellers tend to communicate cooperatively by providing relevant and detailed answers that align with the maxims of quality and quantity. Conversely, deceitful speakers tend to violate these maxims, either by withholding information, avoiding direct answers, or providing false details. Far from arbitrary, these violations serve a strategic purpose, guiding interlocutors toward a false interpretation while maintaining credibility. This behaviour then reveals that deception involves deliberate manipulation of conversational norms to achieve specific goals, through McCornack et al.'s (2014) IMT 2.

However, the line between truth and deception is not always clear since what sounds cooperative or transparent in one context may be misleading in another. This ambiguity highlights how deception is shaped by context, intent, and social dynamics. In other words, deception is not just about the words themselves; it is about how meaning is negotiated and interpreted in the context of interactions.

From a forensic linguistic perspective, these findings highlight the practical value of linguistic analysis in investigative and courtroom interviews. Recognizing violations of conversational maxims provides a systematic way for law enforcement officers, legal professionals, and forensic linguists to assess the credibility of a suspect's statements. However, the generalizability of this study is limited by the dataset's size. More extensive empirical research, involving larger and more diverse datasets, will help refine current methods as well as deepen our understanding of how deception operates in real communication.

On August 18, 2024, JW was granted parole after receiving a nearly five-year sentence reduction (remission) for good behavior (Paramahansa & Santosa, 2024; Sari, 2024; Sidik, 2024). Although she was released early, public opinion remains sharply divided on her case, and she has yet to file a lawsuit to restore her reputation. Consequently, her status as a former defendant and/or convict remains valid. Therefore, the data collected in this study, which consists of statements indicating deception by criminal suspects, remains relevant for forensic linguistic analysis.

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