sentative of two things. One reason might be that Christopher cannot convey in words what can be shown in a picture or graph. Another reason might be that hinting towards modes of presentation in children's literature may also hint towards Christopher's juvenile way of thinking.

Although or perhaps especially since such visual rhetoric is not used consistently but constitutes a unique narrative feature, it allows the reader to enjoy the narrative while creating a new impetus for reflecting on the autistic mindset of the character, as well as emphasising individual traits of different protagonists.

Pragmatics

Even more characteristic for autism portrayals than visual rhetoric – a technique that interleaves young adult fiction in general – are moments of misunderstanding in communication. These can easily be featured across different media and are thus more noticeable and consequently more likely to be linked to autism portrayals. Indeed, many conversations that autistic characters participate in are portrayed as unconventional, to say the least. Generally speaking, pragmatics focuses on the context-dependent meaning of utterances, whereas semantics is concerned with context-independent meaning (Cummins 6). Since dozens of theories on pragmatics exist, many of which are interrelated or feed off of each other (e.g. based on Austin/Searle or on Grice), I am ill-equipped to make any statements of significance. Indeed, pragmatics and autism are their very own discourse, fed from both a medical and a philosophical perspective. Thus, my findings mostly amount to a list of observations I made about the novels I read. Because most readers will have encountered the Gricean maxims before, I will use them to loosely categorise these ideas.

For Grice, the heart of the matter is that speakers generally expect each other to be cooperative and that other expectations about their behaviour naturally follow from this, concerning the quality and quantity of information that they provide, how they provide it, and how it relates

to the current discourse's purpose. Specifically, he proposes an overarching principle which he calls the Cooperative Principle (CP):

> Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 26)

The Cooperative Principle includes the following maxims:

> **Quantity:**
> 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
> 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
> **Quality**:
> Try to make your contribution one that is true.
> 1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
> 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
> **Relation**:
> Be relevant.
> **Manner**:
> Be perspicuous.
> 1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
> 2. Avoid ambiguity.
> 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
> 4. Be orderly. (Cummins 16–17, original highlighting)

Grice is indeed aware that people may fail to observe these maxims, either intentionally or, for example, by being "incapable of speaking clearly, or because they deliberately choose to lie" (Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction* 64). Different forms of non-observance include:

- **Flouting a maxim:** "a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim" (Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction* 65), including through the use of irony, sarcasm, or figurative language

- **Violating a maxim:** "the unostentatious non-observance of a maxim" (72), which leads to the assumption that the speaker intends to mislead the hearer (72)
- **Infringing a maxim:** non-observance of a maxim but "with no intention of generating an implicature and with no intention of deceiving" (74)
- **Opting out of a maxim:** the speaker indicates "unwillingness to cooperate in the way the maxim requires" (74), e.g. by being bound by an NDA
- **Suspending a maxim:** the observance of a maxim is not expected, thus a non-observance is of no consequence (76)

Only two of these are relevant to my analyses. Flouting a maxim will create some kind of implicature, i.e. the speaker "suggests, implies or communicates [meaning] beyond what she says" (Korta and J. Perry).[1] Implicatures are, according to Grice, figurative or non-literal, such as metaphors or irony. On the other hand,

> [w]hen the speaker's meaning is closed to the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered the speaker is said to be speaking literally. When it departs from conventional meaning [it] is considered non-literal. (Korta and J. Perry)

Flouting a maxim naturally requires the speaker to have mastered the language beyond the level of literal meaning. In contrast, infringing a maxim occurs when the speaker has no intention of creating an implicature, i.e. a non-literal meaning, but still does so (Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction* 74).

Language has a level of literal meaning, as well as a figurative or non-literal level, the latter being implied by the speaker and/or inferred by the hearer (Thomas, *Meaning in Interaction* 58). Here, linguists have pointed out that

1 (Grice made further distinctions here, which are of no relevance to this study.)

> the pragmatic force of an utterance is frequently ambivalent, even in context, and often intentionally so. For reasons of politeness or expediency, both speaker and hearer may deliberately exploit ambivalence. (Thomas, "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure" 93) [2]

Consequently, implicatures and inferences may remain ambivalent, too.[3] At worst, misunderstandings or conflicts arise, however, if both parties are equally pragmatically competent, they should be able to find common ground. Here, Thomas further differentiates linguistic and pragmatic competence:

> A speaker's 'linguistic competence' would be made up of grammatical competence ('abstract' or decontextualized knowledge of intonation, phonology, syntax, semantics, etc.) and pragmatic competence (the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context). (Thomas, "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure" 92)

However, if one person is linguistically or pragmatically more competent than the other, the latter will find themselves in an inferior position unless the first one chooses to cater to their difficulties. I may apply this to parent-child or teacher-student relations, but I may also apply it to negotiations. Referencing Keckeisen once again, I will assume that a linguistically or pragmatically less competent individual is more likely to be labelled deviant, for the simple reason that they are inferior in a verbal negotiation. If they were previously presumed to be more capable but turned out to be less so, their deviance will entail a loss of status. This also suggests that mastery of language equals power and social standing, not only within discourses or when it comes to influencing the public, but also in face-to-face conversations, implicatures, and deception of

2 Humorous statements exploit literal and non-literal meanings as well as pragmatic force.

3 For this reason, it seems almost impossible to analyse the non-literal meaning of utterances exhaustively and I apologise in advance for the next section being rather lengthy.

others. Vice versa, a person who can only understand and communicate on a literal level will always suffer disadvantages.

In fact, pragmatic competency alludes to two of the stereotypes discussed in Chapter 3.3. The first one is the stereotype 'Childlike', explicitly stating literalness and difficulties with pragmatics. I will also include naivety (failure to observe floutings or violations of maxims, as well as potential infringements of the same) and honesty (over-observation of the maxim of quality to the point of face-loss, see below). Secondly, the stereotype 'Robot' refers to a communication barrier when it comes to conveying feelings and emotions. However, as discussed before, this communication barrier poses an obstacle to both sides. Body language that is generally considered normal by society's standards may feel foreign or unnatural to autists. Similarly, autists might struggle with figurative language that is often used to express abstract concepts, such as 'feeling blue' or 'having one's heart broken'.

Before I use these findings for my analysis, I wish to include some thoughts on what appears to be the only study on this topic in the field of literary theory[4]. In 2014, Semino analysed three novels (*Curious Incident, Speed of Dark* by Elizabeth Moon, *The Language of Others* by Clare Morrall[5]) regarding 'pragmatic failure'. This particular term was coined by linguist Jenny Thomas in the context of 'cross-cultural' interactions, including "any communication between two people who, in any particular domain, do not share a common linguistic or cultural background" ("Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure" 91). Similar to linguistic and pragmatic competence, Thomas distinguishes between a semantic level which spans "the range of possible senses and references of an utterance" (92) and a pragmatic level, which she further differentiates. Here, pragmatic principles provide "sentence meaning" (level 1) and "speaker meaning" (level 2) (92).

4 With the exception of another study by Semino, which I have chosen to disregard because it solely concentrates on *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*.

5 Because these two novels feature adult protagonists, they are not part of my study.

"At level 1, pragmatic principles, particularly the Gricean maxim of relevance, allow one to assign sense and reference to the utterance in context" (92), whereas at level 2 force is assigned to an utterance, e.g. " 'criticism' or 'disapproval' or 'commiseration'" (83, 92–93).

> Strictly speaking, it would be logical to apply the term 'pragmatic failure' to misunderstandings which occur at either level one or level two, since both levels involve H in pragmatic inferencing; but I reserve the term exclusively for mis-understandings which arise, not from any inability on the part of H to understand the intended sense/reference of the speaker's words in the context in which they are uttered, but from an inability to recognize the force of the speaker's utterance when the speaker intended that this particular hearer should recognize it.
> We can say, then, that pragmatic failure has occurred on any occasion on which H perceives the force of S's utterance as other than S intended s/he should perceive it. For example, if:
> a. H perceives the force of S's utterance as stronger or weaker than S intended s/he should perceive it;
> b. H perceives as an order an utterance which S intended s/he should perceive as a request;
> c. H perceives S's utterance as ambivalent where S intended no ambivalence;
> d. S expects H to be able to infer the force of his/her utterance, but is relying on a system of knowledge or beliefs which S and H do not, in fact, share. For instance, S says 'Pigs might fly!' to an H unaware that they do not, or S says, 'He's madder than Keith Joseph', to an H who believes Joseph to be perfectly sane. (Thomas, "Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure" 94)

My main point of criticism with Semino's study lies in the fact that she uses 'pragmatic failure' rather loosely and with no obvious system of classification. Not only does she forgo the level 1/2 distinction completely, but she also states that there are:

> [t]hree main types of pragmatic failure [that] occur across all three novels: problems with informativeness and relevance in conversa-

> tional contributions; problems with face management resulting in unintentional impolite behaviours; and problems with the interpretation of figurative language. (Semino 141)

To me, it is unclear how these are three 'main' types and not simply three cases Semino happened to come across.[6] I also believe that two out of three are not actually instances of 'pragmatic failure' as per Thomas's definition. Thomas explicitly states that the Gricean maxim of relevance is linked to level 1, thus this would not technically pose an instance of pragmatic failure. Secondly, figurative language such as metaphors is set between semantics and pragmatics or has at least been investigated by both sides. Now, Thomas herself states that if the hearer is unaware that pigs do not fly, he might not understand the intended force (in this case incredulity). However, I argue that in this case the hearer already fails to assign meaning and sense to the sentence on level 1. Taking a metaphor literally, in this case imagining pigs that fly, indicates unawareness of what Thomas calls pragmatic ground rules ("Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure" 107) and thus deficits in pragmatic competence. Although the communication barrier suggests that autists speak a different language or rather, communicate differently, they are native speakers and consequently do not have any other language to conceptualise their thoughts. In other words, although they might think differently or use different words to describe their emotions, they are still speaking English. I believe the issue itself needs conceptualisation on philosophical and ethical grounds. Even though autists may have a different or no understanding of implicit pragmatic rules, they do share a reality with us. Therefore, if the hearer is aware of the fact that pigs do not fly but unacquainted with this particular metaphor, they might perceive this utterance as an outright lie or simply nonsense but will nevertheless remain unaware that it has an entirely different meaning. Consequently, the communication failed at level 1.

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6 Semino does justify them with Thery of Mind deficiencies; however, the selection remains unclear.

I also believe that Semino stretches Thomas's definition of 'people who, in any particular domain, do not share a common linguistic or cultural background' by stating that instances of pragmatic failure "suggest that the three protagonists partly lack the ability, or motivation, to imagine the contents and workings of others' minds" (Semino 143). Here, it becomes a question of ability and willingness. I thus suggest extending the theory of the Cooperative Principle. Assuming that most people wish to make themselves understood during communication, I believe that all people apply the Cooperative Principle (CP) to their conversations. However, they will also weigh the Gricean maxims differently and observe or non-observe them according to personal and cultural dispositions. Therefore, the CP can be conceptualised as the willingness to make oneself understood by adhering to 'rules' that govern one's own understanding and thinking. In other words, misunderstandings might arise if the CPs of two people significantly diverge from each other. Because such misunderstandings might already arise on level 1, divergent CPs do not (necessarily) cause pragmatic failure in their original definition. However, I believe it will lead to negotiations of normality and deviance. Consequently, one person will win the negotiations, making their CP the dominant and thus normative one, whereas the other person is perceived as deviant for failing to adhere to 'common' rules. For example, metaphors such as 'pigs might fly', 'time is money', or a 'heart of gold' are so common that they are not renegotiated – not even as schema-refreshments. Unawareness of them will result in a perceived lack of pragmatic competence, which might then result in deviance, since deficits in pragmatic competence or unwillingness to incorporate such idioms in one's own CP will necessarily distance the individual from normality.[7] Put starkly, in a community where it is common to lie (non-observance of maxims), the truth-speaker will still have to admit defeat; morally they might have the high ground, but their deviance makes them powerless. Thus, I believe that pragmatic competence is a way of demonstrating de-

7 Here, 'normality' should be considered a discursive overlap of individual CPs, as well as explicit and implicit rules for language use.

viance in autism portrayals, and that portraying different styles of communication hints toward different Cooperative Principles.

Pragmatic Competence and Deviance in Autism Portrayals

In Chapter 6.1, I compared the commonalities of stereotypes portrayed with the diagnostic criteria as stated in the *DSM-5*. I found that while the stereotypical portrayals might represent one way in which autism symptoms could manifest, it fails to consider the multifaceted nature of autism. One aspect of the stereotypical portrayals included honesty and literalness. The *DSM-5* also refers to language difficulties, ranging from non-verbal individuals to stilted or overly literal language use. I also argued that individuals who communicate very literally are merely one form in which autism might affect language. In novels, such linguistic differences can be used as artistic devices but at times they are overused.

Thomas refers to pragmatic competence as 'the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context' (see above). I have also suggested that the Cooperative Principle can be considered the individual's readiness to make themselves understood to their best ability. However, the Cooperative Principle should also be understood as a set of cultural and social norms and rules by which language use is governed. Therefore, two individuals with the same pragmatic competence could employ different CPs and subsequently still arrive at a misunderstanding, e.g. misheard sarcasm. This simplified understanding of communication is sufficient to explain how normality and deviance can be negotiated through the use of language. I will assume that it varies based on age, upbringing, social status, cognitive abilities, cultural norms, native language, etc. Difficulties arising from a lack of pragmatic competence (in the following referred to as 'pragmatic difficulties') or a different CP may thus arise in a plethora