

Analysis of Manner of Non-Fulfillment of Grice's Maxims in Comments on a Selected Piece of News on Facebook

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Abstract

Although Grice's Cooperative Principle has, for decades, attracted many linguists, it has been noticed that many of the research done in the area have only paid attention to non-fulfillment of the principles by participants, failing to acknowledge the manners of such non-fulfillment of the principles. Therefore, this research focuses on investigation of comments on the selected piece of news on Facebook with the aim of exploring how commenters may fail to fulfill the maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle 20 comments are selected under the piece of news "Why I Approved Redesign of Naira Notes Locally – Buhari", shared by the Daily Nigerian on Facebook. The comments are selected using non-probability, judgmental sampling technique. The analyses show that all the 20 commenters fail to fulfill at least a maxim with two commenters failing to fulfill two maxims at the same time. The paper discovers that the case of violation is the most frequent case caught, appearing 15 times while the case of infringement is caught twice. Also, the case of opting out is caught three times while the cases of flouting and clash are caught once apiece. Finally, the research concludes that although commenters on pieces of news on Facebook fail to fulfill Grice's maxims, the manners of such failures vary.

Keywords: Cooperative Principle, Non-fulfilment, Maxim, Facebook

Introduction

This research seeks to analyze, using Grice's Cooperative Principle, comments made on a selected piece of news on Facebook. The aim is to find out where commenters fail to fulfill the maxims of Cooperative Principle and the manner of such failures. Grice's Cooperative Principle is a theory of conversational and conventional implicatures. According to Grice (1975), to implicate something is to utter something beyond the uttered and which must be understood from the guidelines of communication and cooperation. The theory is an assumption which states that interlocutors cooperate to form a meaningful discourse.

Taiwo (2010) explains that Grice has identified four precepts called maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner; which interlocutors would have to abide by to produce a meaningful conversation. Additionally, Grice (1975) states that interlocutors may fail to fulfill the four maxims in several ways in conversations. It can be flouting, violating, opting out, and facing a clash. Yet since the emergence of Grice's Cooperative Principle in 1975 a great number of the researches done in the area of the theory have been restricted to only "non-fulfillment of the maxims", failing to pay attention to the manners of such non-fulfillments.

Okanda et al. (2015), for example, study violations of Gricean maxims by Japanese preschoolers (4 - 6 years) and adults. The research establishes that people's being cautious about the maxims increases with age. Preschoolers understand maxim of relation first while having greatest difficulty understanding maxim of quantity. Children and adults differ in their comprehension of what the research terms as "maxim of politeness". In essence, the study fails to account for the types of violation. Again, Fahmi (2016) examines violation of Grice's maxims in daily

conversations. The research uses EZC students of FPBS IKIP MATARAM daily conversations as its data of analysis. It is established that the students violate the maxim of quantity more often than the rest of the maxims. Even though the research accounts for the factors responsible for such violation in the form of cultural and social distance factors, the research fails to record the manners of the violations.

Furthermore, Ayunon (2018) explores Facebook conversation posts, with the intention of finding out how the participants fail to abide by the Gricean maxims and what implicatures can be generated from such foregroundings. The study finds out that participants fail to fulfill the maxims for certain purposes amongst which are humour and sarcasm. Again, this research fails to pay attention to the kinds of non-fulfillment of the maxims. Recently, Akpulu and Udemmadu (2024) examine Grice's Cooperative Principle in an Igbo phone-in programme. The study discovers that the participants violate the principles of quality and manner for personal reasons. However, this research fails to acknowledge the types of non-fulfillment committed by the participants.

As a result of the aforementioned, this research is necessitated by the lack of attention paid to the types of non-fulfilment of Gricean maxims as seen in the foregoing studies. Also, the research is intended to join the pacesetting of conversation analyses on Facebook, considering how the platform is a great hub to source data for such studies.

Review of Related Works

Grice's Cooperative Principle has been used to study several linguistic phenomena (Frederking, 1996). Zor (2006) uses Grice's Cooperative Principle and its maxims to analyze coherence problems in Turkish and English essays. The research studies 20 essays written in English and 20

essays written in Turkish by the same participants. It is discovered that the violation of the maxim of relation in the English essays correlated with the violation of maxims of relevance, quality, and quantity in the Turkish essays. The violation of the maxim of manner in the English essays, correlated with the violation of quality and relation maxims; whereas, the violation of the maxim of manner in Turkish essays correlated with the violation of the maxim of quantity in English essays.

Ahmed (2007), studies the relationship between Grice's maxims and humorous discourse. In the study, certain Arabic jokes were translated into English and studied under Grice's maxims. In its analysis of the Arabic humorous expressions, the study found out that the violations of the maxims were interdependent. A joke would violate more than one maxim at a time. However, the research concludes that the maxim of relevance subsumed the other maxims: quality, quantity, and manner.

Similarly, Wardana (n.d.) watches out for the violation of Gricean maxims as verbal humour in *The Big Bang Theory*. The study finds out that throughout the 11 episodes of *The Big Bang Theory* Season 1, the characters violate the maxim of quality the most at the expense of sarcasm. It is also found out that the maxim of manner is often violated. The characters tend to use expressions that are obscure and longer than necessary. It concludes that the least violated maxim is the maxim of relation.

Like the foregoing, Iskandar (2010) studies the Season 5 scripts of the *Simpsons* as an attempt to identify the use of Gricean maxims. The researcher finds out that the maxims are used and violated. In the dialogues, the maxims are used and fulfilled whereas in some instances they are violated unconsciously or deliberately. The research concludes that the violations come in the form of giving misleading information and inability to fulfill one or another maxim, amongst

other things. This is in congruence with the findings of Andres (2013) which revealed that Gricean maxims are flouted to create comedy in the television series *Community*. The study aims at finding out which of the four maxims is flouted the most in the creation of comedy. The paper studies eight episodes of the series and finds out that the maxim of quantity is the most flouted.

It has been noticed that most of the works done around Grice's Cooperative Principle have paid more attention solely on the non-fulfillment of the maxims, neglecting the manner of the non-fulfillment. That is why, this research has its significance in adding to that by paying attention to the manner of non-fulfillment of maxims by the participants under study.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Methodology

This paper is a part of an M. A. research conducted between 2021 and 2023. It focuses on analysis of comments made under the piece of news headlined "Why I Approved Redesign of Naira Notes Locally – Buhari". The piece of news was shared on 3rd July, 2021, by the Daily Nigerian on their Facebook timeline. This piece of news was selected purposely because of its recency at the time of conducting the M. A. research. It generated 42 comments which was a reasonable number for this research. 20 comments were selected, using judgemental sampling technique, for the analysis. Judgemental sampling technique was adopted because the researcher intended to study only comments made in English language which were the selected 20. In the data presentation and analysis section, the summary of the news is presented, followed by the selected comments with each having its analysis below it.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopts Grice's Cooperative Principle theory. It is an assumption that people engaged in a conversation comply with certain principle to contribute to the conversation meaningfully. To support this, Grice comes up with four maxims in the form of maxim of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. The four maxims are summarized as thus: Make your conversational contribution 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, 1975, p. 48).

Maxim of Quantity: make your contribution as informative as it is required (for the current purposes of the exchange); do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Quality (Super Maxim): make your true contribution one; do not say what you believe to be false; do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Relation: Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner (Super Maxim): be perspicuous; avoid obscurity of expression; avoid ambiguity; be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity); be orderly.

However, according to Grice (1975), interlocutors may fail to fulfill the four maxims in several ways in conversations. It can be flouting, violating, opting out, and facing a clash. Thomas (1995) adds that interlocutors, while speaking, are not very much concerned about the maxims so, they violate the maxims every day. Amongst other things, violation of the maxims can cause deception. Waget (2015) also believes that speakers violate the maxims and describes the violation as failing to give the information required at the right time. He goes further to explain that lying, derailment, over-informativeness and under-informativeness, and ambiguity, among

many others, are violations of the four maxims. Andresen (2013), however, postulates that these maxims are sometimes not observed and the non-fulfillment can surface in five ways: flouting, violation, infringement, opting out, and suspension.

Flouting: Rizkiani (2013) opines that flouting a maxim is when a speaker obviously foregrounds a maxim not having the intention to misinform his listener. In contrast, Andresen (2013) disagrees and comments that flouting means when a speaker chooses to ignore a maxim or more by adding another meaning to the literal meaning of what is said. According to Noertjahjo et al. (2017) flouting can happen in all the four maxims. Maxim of quality, for example, can be flouted when what is said cannot be interpreted literally. Wales (2001) gives the examples of hyperbole and metaphor as some of the ways in which maxim of quality is flouted

Violation: this happens when a speaker decides to deviate from a maxim or more having the intention to deceive or mislead (Andresen 2013). Rizkiani (2013) agrees and explains that violation happens when a speaker misinforms the audience intentionally. That is the speaker is expecting his/her audience to look for a meaning different from what has been said. Mooney (2003) identifies two types of violation: successful and unsuccessful violation. He posits that a successful violation is one that is not detected. It is completely "quiet and unostentatious". Humour is not a successful violation because it is intended to be understood. Meanwhile, unsuccessful violations are those caught and detected.

Infringement: this is when a speaker fails to fulfill one or more maxims without any intention of deception or misleading. This happens with children or adult learners. Mooney (2003) explains that this scenario happens when a speaker has an imperfect command of the language or is unfamiliar with the language. Rizkiani (2013) adds that it might happen as a result of speaker

impairment or if a speaker cannot speak clearly. In addition, Noertjahjo et al (2017) propose nervousness, drunkenness, excitement as more factors that may lead to infringement.

Opting Out: this is when a speaker cannot respond in an ordinary way which is expected of him/her. It also happens when a speaker lacks the knowledge of the topic discussed (Rizkiani, 2013). Mooney (2003), in contrast, argues that opting out is when a speaker is unwilling to cooperate. Andresen (2013) also claims that opting out happens when a speaker entails that he/she is unwilling to abide by a maxim for some reason. Grice (1989) while explaining flouting maxim of quality gives the example of a professor writing a testimonial about a certain student, a candidate for a philosophy job. It reads as thus: “Dear Sir, Mr. X’s command of English is excellent, and his attendance at tutorials has been regular. Yours, etc. ” (Grice, 1989, p. 33). According to Grice (1989) the professor is not being unwilling to cooperate. However, Mooney (2004) believes it is opting out, backing up her stand with Grice (1989)'s claim that opting out is not necessarily opting out of all the maxims.

Suspension: Mooney (2003) sees suspension of a maxim as a form of opting out conditioned by cultural or communal norms. Rizkiani (2013) agrees and adds that it might be an event which forces the speaker not to speak directly. Andresen (2013) sees even a speaker withholding a piece of information which is confidential as a form of suspension of a maxim.

Clash: Grice (1989) explains that this is when one maxim demands the infringement of another. A clash may happen as a result of imperfectly informed speaker trying to cooperate. Essentially, there is a difference between not cooperating and not being able to cooperate (Mooney, 2003).

Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion

Summary of the Content

The piece of news reports President Muhammadu Buhari's reasons for his approval of Naira redesign. He explained that the new banknotes have security features and they would help the Central Bank of Nigeria to design and implement better monetary policies. He let the redesign because it was in line with the international best practice and Central Bank of Nigeria Act 2007. He also said that the act aimed at preserving the collective national heritage. He finally stated that Nigeria is one of the four African countries that print their money locally. The piece of news also reports the remarks of the Central Bank Governor, Godwin Emefiele who stated that the new notes would control inflation, make policies more effective and fight corruption. He in the end thanked President Muhammadu Buhari for his insistence that the notes must be designed and produced locally.

Comments and Analyses

The piece of news is about President Muhammadu Buhari's reasons for his approval of the redesign of 200, 500, and 1000 Naira notes. The headline captures aptly the content even though there are more. The first commenter writes as follows:

Comment One: "Thank you for using Snapchat."

This comment appears to be a mockery of the new notes by suggesting that the Central Bank has only used the Snapchat application to redesign the notes. This violates the maxim of quality as the commenter fails to provide any evidence that it was the application used in the redesigning.

Comment Two: "Brothers in the north, do you want to kill Baba with hard comments?"

This commenter chooses to talk to other contributors rather than to contribute to the content of

the news. This can be termed as opting out of maxim of quantity. The commenter does not contribute to the discourse in the piece of news.

Comment Three: “We know why. You are a rubberstamp!”

This comment makes a claim that the President approved the redesign because he is a rubberstamp which is not one of the reasons outlined in the content of the news. Therefore, this contribution violates the maxim of quality as there is no evidence to back it up.

Comment Four: “Repaint not redesigned.”

This comment asserts that the redesigning is just a repainting of the notes. However, nowhere is it mentioned that the notes are repainted. Thus, this violates the maxim of quality. It could also be a mockery of the redesign to mean that there is no significant change in the notes other than the colours. Whichever way, the contribution violates the maxim of quality.

Comment Five: “The worst president ever.”

This comment is not in line with the content of the news. Therefore, it violates the maxim of relevance as President Buhari being the best or worst is not what has been discussed. Also, the contribution violates the maxim of quality as it is not backed that Buhari is the worst president ever.

Comment Six: “Re-colouring please.”

This commenter is one of the commenter who believe that it is only the colour of the notes that have been changed, that there are no significant changes. This violates the maxim of quality as the notes are yet to be available. Therefore, there is no evidence that only the colours are changed.

Comment Seven: “Most worthless president in the world. Will you call this an achievement? Shame on you PMB!”

This commenter makes a claim that President Muhammadu Buhari is the most worthless president in the world. Unless all presidents are investigated and are found to be more important than Buhari, the claim lacks evidence. Hence, it is a violation of maxim of quality.

Comment Eight: “You are all insulting the new currency, is it the design and color that matter or the purpose of changing the currency? Currency was changed due to the fact that people are hoarding cash which disallows flow of currency. Y'all are here and there capping differently I don't even know if it is the design that matters or the purpose of changing it.”

The comment foregrounds the maxim of quantity by repeating the same information and making a claim that everyone is insulting the notes which is not backed by any evidence which is a foregrounding of the maxim of quality. The foregrounding appears to be infringements because the commenter appears to be someone still learning the language.

Comment Nine: “Just say you repaint our money.”

This is another commenter who feels that the new notes are only repainting of the old ones. The piece of news explains that it is redesigning. Thus, the contribution violates the maxim of quantity as it does not contain the required information of why the commenter thinks it is just repainting.

Comment Ten: “Locally means that everyone can make it.”

This commenter chooses to comment on only a "word" in the headline. Hence, the contribution violates the maxim of quantity by not giving the required information on the matter.

Comment Eleven: “So they can steal to finance election.”

This commenter seems to be drawing his own conclusion that the reason behind the approval is to let the politicians steal the money and finance election. This claim lacks basis as it's not stated

in why the President let the redesigning. Therefore, this violates the maxim of quality.

Comment Twelve: “Because your brother in-law is the boss and head of printing and minting company.”

This is another violation of maxim of quality. The commenter seems to have built his own reason seeing the headline. The claim is not backed by any evidence that Buhari let the change because his in-law is the head of the printing and minting company or he even has an in-law in such place or such place even exists.

Comment Thirteen: “Old leaders with old brain. God will save us from you people.”

This comment violates the maxim of relevance. The matter discussed is why the president approved redesigning of Naira. Thus, it does not relate to the matter. His opinion is on the leaders. Also, it is not clear of whom he speaks. Therefore, the comment violates the maxim of manner.

Comment Fourteen: “Papa you have done your best even though your best is worst in your performance. At least you redesign our currency. Nigerians will always remember your tenure as the most turf and rough period in the history of our country.”

This commenter faces a clash. His attempt to cooperate with the maxim of relevance by leads to his foregrounding of maxim of quality. The commenter stating that the president has done his best which is not enough and will be remembered as the toughest and rough in the history of Nigeria contributes to the discussion. However, the assertion in the statement may not be the case in the future.

Comment Fifteen: “How could this reduce inflation in this country?”

This comment flouts the maxim of quantity. The commenter should have added more, not just

one aspect of the discourse.

Comment Sixteen: “Sometimes I wonder the kind of school our leaders even attend.”

This commenter foregrounds the maxim of relevance because the discourse is not about his wonder about the kind of schools the leaders attend. This could be as a result of his lack of knowledge of the content of the news. Thus, this is a case of opting out of maxim of relevance. Nonetheless, the commenter may be questioning the brainpower of the leaders who feel the redesign would decrease inflation and corruption among other vices.

Comment Seventeen: “That man on the #500 naira note is my grandmother.”

This does not respond to the matter in the piece of news which is a violation of maxim of quantity and relevance. It could be a case of opting out, that he is not willing to cooperate with the maxims. However, the nature of the comment shows the contributor lacks the knowledge of the language by mixing man and grandmother. Thus, this is an infringement of maxim of relevance. Notwithstanding, it is noteworthy that the comment may be satirical, attempting to contempt the redesign. If treated as such, the comment becomes a successful violation of maxim of quality.

Comment Eighteen: “You don't call this redesigning of currency, you only approved for the color to be changed. In fact the CBN governor and Buhari don't know the meaning of redesigning a currency.”

This comment is a violation of maxim of quality for making claims without evidences. One, the claim that Buhari only approved the changing of the colours has no basis as well as the claim that the president and the CBN governor don't know the meaning of redesigning.

Comment Nineteen: “You did the right thing. I love new things. That's why I frequently change phones every now and then.”

The fact that the commenter loves new things does not make the redesigning a right thing. However, it could be a case of opting out of maxim of quantity. The commenter might just be unwilling to cooperate with the maxim of quantity as required by simply saying that it is a right thing.

Comment Twenty: “God bless you Mr. President. I trust you Sir. You will surely be missed by Nigerians because you are the best President that Nigeria has ever had throughout history. Argue with your keyboard.”

This comment violates the maxim of quality. The claims that Buhari is the best President throughout Nigeria's history and that he will surely be missed by Nigerians is not backed by any evidences. The commenter has to wait until Buhari leaves office to find out if he will be missed and it has to be investigated to find out if he is the best in history.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that all the selected 20 comments fail to fulfill one or another maxim, with two comments failing to fulfill more than one maxim at a time. Furthermore, it has been found out that the commenters' failure to fulfill the maxims differ from one another. The cases of violation are caught 15 times while flouting is caught once. Furthermore, infringement is caught twice while opting out is caught three times. Finally, a case of clash is caught once while there is no suspension of a maxim by any of the commenters.

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