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A Pragmatic Study of Non-Observance Maxims in Selected Political Speeches

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Abstract

The paper is to explore the application of Paul Grice's Cooperative Principles in analyzing political speeches in order to know how these principles are observed and how politicians in their speeches do not observe the conversational maxims. The study is a qualitative research, that is, the excerpts are taken out in order for the researcher to analyze them. Based on analyzing the excerpts, the study aims at finding the non-observance of the Conversational Maxims and to know their occurrences applied throughout the dialogues. The findings of the present study show that, making their speeches, politicians often rely on distinct non-observance categories of Conversational Maxims, including (flouting maxims, violating maxims, suspending maxims). Besides, the study found that different situations lead politicians to fail in observing conversational maxims.

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دراسة تداولية لعدم الأخذ بالمبادئ في خطابات سياسية مختارة

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الخلاصة :	الكلمات الدالة: -
يهدف البحث إلى عرض تطبيق (مبدأ التعاون) لكرائيس في تحليل الخطابات السياسية لمعرفة كيفية اخذ هذه المبادئ بنظر الاعتبار و كيفية عدم الأخذ بمبادئ (المحادثة) من قبل السياسيين. تعتمد الدراسة المنهج الكمي حيث يقوم فيها الباحث بتحليل مقتطفات من الخطابات السياسية، وتهدف الدراسة على هذا الأستناد الى ايجاد (non- observance of the conversational maxims) ولمعرفة كيفية تطبيق وقوعهم بالأخطاء من خلال المحادثات. وتبين نتائج هذه الدراسة ان السياسيين غالبا مايعتمدون على (non observance categories of conversational maxims including flouting, violation and suspending maxims) في خطاباتهم وتوصلت بالأضافة الى ذلك الى ان المواقف المختلفه تقود السياسيين الى عدم استخدام observing conversational maxims	-مبدأ التعاون -الأخذ بالمبدأ -عدم الأخذ بالمبدأ -مبدأ المحادثة <u>معلومات البحث</u> <u>تاريخ البحث:</u> الاستلام: 2021_12_28 القبول: 2022_2_10 التوفر على النت

Introduction

Pragmatics can normally be described as the study of language use; it investigates language not only in an abstract sense, but as a medium of communication between individuals for various purposes based on specific circumstances and contexts with specific intentions and ends respectively (Jucker and Taavitsainen, 2013: 1-2). That is to say, pragmatics accounts for the language used in communication in different situations between the speaker and hearer; it sheds light on whether the interlocuters interact collaboratively, since interpersonal relations need to be cooperative (i.e. pragmatics copes with the gap between what is said and what is really meant in communicative scenarios).

Edmondson and Burquest (1998:95-96) believe that “language is a kind of code, and communicating is the process of encoding concepts and its inverse decoding”. This is so called “code model of communication” which is originated with (Sperber and Wilson, 1986) quoted in (Blackburn, 2007: 1) and describes it as “a basic model of communication and expresses the idea that communication is the transmission and reception of information between a human source (encoder) and receiver (decoder) using a signaling system”. Therefore, communication needs more than knowing a language and how to encode thoughts to messages and transmit them to the second party, who normally through decoding messages to thoughts comprehends what the

speaker intended to say. Hence, conversation is the activity that needs collaboration and through the context of it, meaning can be attained.

Grice (1975) proposes Cooperative Principles and provided the model with Conversational Maxims, to share the idea that communication is a cooperative activity. Grice (1989: 26) states that “Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did”. The talks are cooperative in nature to some extent, which they pertain to a specific end or a number of ends. That is, interactions are established collaboratively between participants so as for their communication goes on smoothly. Hence, the present study is aimed at exploring how politicians neglect to observe the conversational maxims while delivering their speech publicly.

Theoretical Background

Implicature

Cummings (2010: 86) “By way of introducing his cooperative principle, Grice began with a characterization of his notion of implicature”. Grice (1989: 24) introduced the term as follow “the verb *implicate* and the related nouns *implicature* (cf. *implying*) and *implicatum* (cf. *what is implied*)”. Here, Grice has thrown light on the speaker meaning or what a speaker implies, implicates, or says beyond the literal meaning and how it directs the hearer to reach to the intended meaning.

Regarding the relationship between “what speakers say and what their words mean” Thomas (1995: 55-56) considers three examples:

1. *The following, which happened at a seaside resort in Kent, was published in great number of national newspapers in July 1994.*

The Coastguard in Kent states that man on giant inflatable lobster rescued a girl, who was drifting out to sea on an inflatable set of false teeth.

2. “Your telephone bill hasn’t been paid yet”, she said, implicating that Louise had uttered too much . ‘bye’, said Louisa, calling off. It means that the rich to be aware one of bills, she pretended.
3. *Late on New Year 1993, a car is sent to lift up a poor man who has fainted in the London down town. The man is sick and spews all over the driver who wants to help him. The driver says:*

‘Great, the case is great! It is really new year celebration!’

The first example reveals that the correspondent reports the exact proposition he intended to convey. In example 2, the prolocutor says more than her intended meaning; by uttering *Your telephone bill hasn’t been paid yet*, she implies that she has the intention of ending the telephone call. Whereas, example 3 manifests the entirely opposite idea of what the driver intends to convey with his utterance. That is to say, in everyday communication people use words to implicate what they mean explicitly or implicitly, or sometimes they utter what is totally opposite.

To Cummings (2010: 86) in “cases of implicature...a speaker says one thing, but means something over above and above the words they have said”. She elaborates as follow;

Smith, Layla and Janet share an apartment:

4. *Smith: Is Janet asleep yet?*

Layla: His TV is on and I can watch the game.

The example shows that, in the conversation Layla replies Peter indirectly, as he asks her to inform him by *Yes or No*, she has responded with information about the TV in John's room and some programmes she can watch. However, most of us, even in the absence of any form of extended context, share an understanding that Layla has implied – or 'implicated', to use Grice's linguistic sign – that Janet has not gone to bed yet. This would be the implicature Smith gets it.

Grice (1989: 26) Pinpointed that there are two kinds of implicatures: conventional and conversational.

1. Conventional Implicature

Levinson (1983: 127) states that conventional implicatures are "inferences that are not derived from superordinate pragmatic principles like the maxims, but are simply attached by convention to particular lexical items or expressions". These lexical items including (*but, even, therefore*) are used in a few standard examples that conventionally implicate.

5. *He is an Arab; he, **therefore**, knows how to ride horse.*
6. *John is poor **but** he is honest.*
7. ***Even** his son has a lot of sum spending on a lottery.*

The conventional implicature shown by the use of *therefore* in example (5) which provides reason for his ability to ride horse, meanwhile in (6), the use of *but* conventionally implicates contrast. In (7) *even*, conventionally implicates some sort of unexpectedness, surprise or unlikeliness (Cummings, 2010: 209).

2. Conversational Implicature

Conversational implicature reveals that there is always hidden meaning beyond what is uttered. Thomas (1995: 58) "Conversational implicature arises only in a particular context of utterance". To (Mey, 2001) "conversational implicature is something which is implied in conversation, that is, something which is left implicit in actual language use" (45). To put it the other way, conversational implicature takes the hearers' understanding into account in conversations. To exemplify, if one asks another:

8. *What time is it?*

It makes perfectly good sense for the hearer to answer:

The bus just went by. (Mey, 2001: 46-47)

Here, the respondent may be aware of the way of answering or may give the reply as if the person who asked knows the exact time that the bus goes by.

In the example below, the addressee's answer does not, as it stands, appear relevant to the question, although, the addressee thinks that the answer can supply the addresser's needs. Here, the addressee conversationally implies that Smith has, or may have a girlfriend in London.

9. A: says '*Smith has no friends and also girlfriends these days* and
B: replies, '*He always travels to London*'. (Chapman, 2005: 103).

Cooperative Principle

The linguist and philosopher Paul Grice introduced the theory of Cooperative Principle (CP) to show that how a conversation can go smoothly, if interlocutors follow them. Grice delineates the rules of CP as follow: “Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage in which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Yule 1996: 37).

Levinson (1983:101) states that “Grice's theory is essentially a theory about how people use language. Grice's suggestion is that there is a set of over-arching assumptions guiding the conduct of conversation”. (Ibid, 101) “Grice identifies as guidelines of this sort four basic maxims of conversation or general principles underlying the efficient co-operative use of language, which jointly express a general co-operative principle”.

Conversational Maxims

(Thomas, 1995: 63 and Leech, 1980: 11-12) Grice introduced four conversational maxims, “maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner”, which are discussed as follow:

Quantity:

- “Make your contribution as informative as is required” (for the current purpose of the exchange).
- “Do not make your contribution more informative than is required”.

Quality:

- “Do not say what you believe to be false”.
- “Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence”.

Relation:

- “Be relevant”.

Manner:

- “Avoid obscurity of expression”.
- “Avoid ambiguity.
- “Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)”.
- “Be orderly”.

Observing Maxims

The observance of maxims occurs when a speaker observes all the maxims and follow them in conversation, as the example given:

10. *A boss: Where are the receiving files?*

Secretary : They're above the cabinet . (Thomas, 1995: 64)

Being asked the question, the secretary has answered clearly (*Manner*) truthfully (*Quality*), given just the information needed (*Quantity*) and afforded him with the relevant information (*Relation*). In addition, she uttered precisely and orderly what she really meant without any ambiguity or obscurity.

Non-Observance of the Maxims

This is to describe when any context in which non-observed maxims are followed or obeyed is called non-observance. Thomas (1995: 64) “People may fail to observe a maxim because, for example, they are incapable of speaking clearly, or because they deliberately choose to lie”. Correspondingly, people do not observe a maxim in five ways:

Flouting a maxim

The situation that the addresser fails to observe a maxim, and without any intention of deceiving or misleading wants to raise the attention of the hearer to search for the intended meaning, is 'flouting a maxim' (Thomas, 1995: 65).

Flouting Maxim of Quantity

Maxim of quantity is floated when too little or too much information is mentioned.

11. A: *Well, has Ali's brother got high marks ?*
B: *It may rain heavily.*

In above-mentioned instance, A's utterance flouts the maxim of quantity, as A doesn't give the right amount of information needed (Cutting, 2008: 37).

Flouting Maxim of Quality

This type of flouting a maxim occurs when the speaker says something untrue or for which he lacks adequate evidence (Cutting, 2008: 37). To exemplify;

12. A girl says: *I am fighting as a man.*

This illustrates that the girl flouts the maxim of quality, although it may show that 'she is as much brave as a man'.

Flouting Maxim of Relation

The maxim of relation is flouted when the response made is very obviously irrelevant to the question being asked, that is, the response doesn't meet the needs of the question raised (Thomas, 1995: 70).

13. A: *how about Mr. Ross?*
B: *His Father is a gorgeous driver..* (Cutting, 2008: 39)

The example provided shows how B abruptly changes the subject and the answer is inappropriate to the question asked by A.

Flouting Maxim of Manner

Maxim of manner is normally flouted as the interlocuters deliberately do not avoid obscurity or ambiguity; they do not be brief and orderly in their talk exchange (Livenson, 1983: 107).

14. A: *What are you thinking about?*
B: *I was thinking of making a birthday party and getting that funny stuff for someone*
A: *Ok, but don't you think that the match is staring now.*

Responding, B aims at showing ambiguity in order for his child not to know what 'that funny white stuff' is and who the word 'someone' refer to, as the dinner is ready and they want to have their child 'Michelle' eat the dinner instead of the ice cream (Cutting, 2008: 39).

Violating a maxim

According to (Grice, 1975) cited in (Thomas, 1995: 72) "If a speaker violates a maxim s/he 'will be liable to mislead'." That is, in everyday interactions, conversation participants rely on telling lies, try to hide the facts, save face, satisfy the hearer, persuading the hearer, and so forth.

Violating Maxim of Quantity

To violate the maxim of quantity, the speaker gives inadequate or insufficient information in order to mislead the hearer. Being economic with the truth, in the conversation below the speaker does not follow the maxim of quantity (Cutting, 2008: 40).

15. A: *Does your animal hurt?*

B: *No.*

A: *Ow! You told me that your animal doesn't hurt !*

B: *That animal isn't mine.*

Analyzing the given instance, one can say that (A) is not truthful and answers wrongly to mislead the hearer.

Violating Quality maxim

It means that the truth is not told on the assumption that the hearer is not aware of that. That is, being untruthful is relied on in conversations.

16. Husband: *How much did that new dress cost, darling?*

Wife: *Less than the last one.*

The example reveals that the wife hides the real price of the dress she bought. The wife violated the maxim of quality by not observing the conversational maxim of quality, as she was not sincere and gave her husband wrong information (Cutting, 2008: 40).

Violating Maxim of Relation

The speaker tends to violate the maxim of manner, if his/her answer doesn't match the utterance to the context, of course, to deceive or mislead the counterpart. In the example below, in her response, Friend 2 deliberately violates the maxim of relation, after being inquired the price of the car by his friend.

Friend 1: *How much did you buy that red car?*

Friend 2: *I see, why don't we visit a Cinema?.*

Violating Maxim of Manner

The speaker commits violating the maxim of manner when talks unclearly, ambiguously, with full of obscurity, and avoids being orderly.

17. Friend 1: *How much did you buy that red car??*

Friend 2: *with a small sum of my salary, in fact it is that sum of the salary of the American man sold that sold it to me.*

Infringing a maxim

This is not done intentionally to generate an implicature or a new idea. Thomas (1995: 74) the speaker does not do it to provoke the hearer to implicate a meaning. Infringing a maxim is a type of non-observance that could happen because of non-linguistic factors, including (being nervous, drunkenness, excited, brain impairment, or unable of taking fluently). For instance, (Cutting, 2008) someone (A) wants to offer someone else (B) a cup of coffee, and asking him (*Tea or coffee?*) B answers (*Yes*). That is to say, because of lack of knowledge about the language used by (A), (B) couldn't properly reply.

Opting out of a maxim

Refusing to create false implicature and not appearing as uncooperative, a speaker opts out of observing a maxim. Thomas (1995: 74) “Examples of opting out occur frequently in public life, when the speaker cannot, perhaps for legal or ethical reasons, reply in the way normally expected”. In addition, Thomas (1995) shows that the speaker’s reason for ‘opting out’ is that giving the required information may hurt the third party.

18. e.g., *Iraqi President was asked, a question about talks he did with Trump.*
‘Well, honestly, I don’t mention any; the reason is that it is clear to all.

Suspending a maxim

It arises as the speaker suspends his/her speech or comment on a topic due to “culture-specific” or “specific to particular events” (Thomas, 1995: 76-77) as in the given example from a novel set on a Navajo reservation, which manifests the suspension of a maxim:

19. *The speaker in this example is the daughter of a murdered man. She is talking to Officer Jim Ghee of the Navajo Tribal Police:*

“Last time when you saw that Congress man — questioning that somebody got killed,’ she said, showing appreciating to the Navajo taboo of not speaking the name of the dead.”

In the above example, the woman fails to observe the quality on more than one occasion, since she referred to the ‘FBI man’, ‘the one who got killed’, and ‘that man’ vaguely due to the culture, as among Navajo, mentioning the name in such circumstances is taboo.

Data Collection and Analysis: Analysis of Political Speeches

Maintaining mutual understanding, people tend to be cooperative in their verbal communication. That is, people need to use language communicatively and guarantee cooperation, for cooperativeness is essential to build understanding between the speaker and the hearer. In other words, addressers and addressees should observe Grice’s Cooperative Principles to keep the sustainability of cooperativeness in their conversation(s). However, if they do not observe Grice’s Cooperative Principle, it implies that the participants flout, violate, fringe, opt out, or suspend one or more Conversational Maxims.

The data of this paper is a transcript of Donald Trump’s interview with TIME (June 17th 2020) on his re-election campaign. The interviewer is TIME Editor-in-Chief and CEO Edward Felsenthal, Washington Bureau Chief Massimo Calabresi, Senior White House Correspondent Brian Bennett and White House Correspondent Tessa Berenson.

Analysis of Speeches

TIME: “It seems that as if you are sticking rather than you drew out. What are your major concern with Iran’s sudden raids?”

PRESIDENT TRUMP: “*Ok. It is a funny ridiculous. Do you want to take the information I knew yesterday – Those who get aids from the Straits? The big companies and some states. Just it is necessary to tell you something. 60% percent of oil goes to China. And 25% percent goes to Japan*”

The above conversation reveals that Trump flouted both quantity, quality, and manner since the answer to the question about (attacking Iran, raised by the interviewer) is too much. In connection with flouting the maxim of quantity, President Trump has not made any contribution as informative as is required (i.e., he has uttered more than required). The interviewee hasn't also taken the brevity of speech into account. That is, the interviewee was not brief and was not avoid unnecessary prolixity. Besides, President Trump gave more information that is required.

TIME: "It is clear that this issue means that you might take war over destructive nuclear weapons strategically and make problems in Strait of Hormuz?"

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *"That's right, I didn't say that that, but I might with no doubt control nuclear weapons,"*

From the dialogue provided, suspending the conversational maxim of quantity can be noticed as the interviewee (President Trump) suspends to answer the interviewer (TIME), for there may be no expectation on the part of the interviewee to make such a speech, or it might be because of the sensitivity of the current political issues and diplomatic affairs.

TIME: "So just telling us on your opinions of America's hands on all over the world, what about the demonstrators in Hong Kong nowadays precise your red message?"

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *"well be careful that my intended message which is a very huge concern obviously due to its pulling back continuously. My messages have been so effective in relation with China. You know very well that America and China have got a very good and fruitful relationship; it was clear they (I mean China) has been treating America unfairly in the trade processes and transitions. So I'm very happy now collecting 25% on \$250 billion, which is what we're doing."*

In the dialogue, the interviewee (President) does not observe the conversational maxim of quality. In other words, he violates the maxim of quality when saying "By the way, I have a very good relationship with China", since, the speech shows the liability of Mr. Trump to mislead the hearer (the interviewer). Besides, Mr. Trump flouts the maxim of quantity by providing more information answering the question of what message he wants to send to the protesters in Hong Kong. In addition, the interviewee (President Trump) flouted the maxim of manner as he has not expressed his opinion briefly, and has not been able to avoid unnecessary prolixity.

TIME: "Please tell us some of your big themes of your challenging Campaign in which you raise a sign that say "Promises Made, Promises Kept." Currently, one cannot say that the wall you promise to be built will be completed"

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *"No, no we are busy with constructing and building the wall at the present time no one can easily understand , it is our main concern."*

TIME: "The walls are 654 miles, you did only 61 ones—"

PRESIDENT TRUMP: *"Well, they are maximally 550."*

TIME: "—What about the fences—"

PRESIDENT TRUMP:

"By the end of 2019, we will have completed more than 460 miles with renewing great amount of construction. We are renovating and mending. All areas which don't have walls are also included"

The excerpt from the interview (that puts emphasis on a big theme of President Trump's presidential campaign, which is 'the wall on the border between the USA and Mexico') reveals that he violates the maxim of quality, for he deliberately tells lie about the accomplishment of the process of building the wall. To illustrate, during his presidency for three and a half year (to the day of the interview), he was managed to build 61 miles, how come he can build 450 miles in a year.

TIME: "How can you send and deliver the promises?"

PRESIDENT TRUMP: "*You can imagine that 3.2 is finished at the first quarter. The first process is slow and low. The strong economy will make us to come up with*"

The excerpt being italicized in the above dialogue shows how President Trump violates the maxim of relation as he provides the interviewer with an irrelevant answer. That is, one can notice that an implicature occurred in his speech that doesn't exactly associated to what the interviewer is seeking for.

<https://time.com/5611476/donald-trump-transcript-time-interview/>

(Access Date: 25/11/2020).

Conclusions

The important points that are drawn after analyzing the interview, can be concluded as follow. The researcher found out that the interviewee sometimes observed the Grice's four cooperative principles maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner, however, he hasn't observed the conversational maxims. That is, the uses of the non-observance of the Conversational Maxims Theory are found in the dialogues, such as flouting maxims, violating maxims, and suspending maxims. Analyzing the political speeches in the interview, the research noticed that the interviewee in his responses to the questions sometimes flouted maxims of quantity, quality, and manner. Additionally, maxims of quality and relation have been violated, which is often exploited by politician because of their responsibilities. Besides, the maxim of quantity suspended in the interview.

Thus, the study came into the conclusion that politicians sometimes do not observe conversational maxims proposed by Grice, in order for them not to be cooperative in the situations they are in need.

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