

A Study of Maxims Flouting in Malala Yousafzai's Interview

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Abstract

Effective communication is a vital aspect in the process of conveying information from one individual to another. In order for communication to be successful, it is essential for both the individuals who are listening and those who are speaking to have a grasp of the message that is being delivered. In 1975, Grice established four cooperative principles that should be followed to in order to have a conversation that is considered to be successful. According to his point of view, a conversation has to be straightforward, trustworthy, informative, as well as relevant to the subject matter that is being discussed. In the context of Grice's "Conversation Maxims" as a theoretical framework, the study makes an effort to identify only two conversational maxims in the interview of Malala Yousufzai. These are the maxim of quantity and the maxim of relevance. It is beneficial to have an understanding of how the conversational maxims influence the overall message that is being sent when they are being flouted by the speaker during conversation. The research shows that there is a lack of relevance and quantity in Malala Yousufzai's interview, which results in uncertainty in her conversation.

Keywords: Flouting maxim; Conversation maxims; Cooperative principles; Pragmatics, Malala Yousufzai.

1. Introduction

Communication is the act of transferring a message in the form of ideas, opinions, thoughts, or conveying meaning among a specific entity or group of people through the use of language. In order for a message to be conveyed successfully, a speaker and a hearer are supposed to act accordingly by having mutual understanding, so that both parties can clearly comprehend the intended meaning during their conversation. There are plenty of ways for different people to interpret the meaning of a text in different contexts. For example, what a person talks about might differ from what he actually means. This very subject was raised by Herbert Paul Grice (1975) in his work, in which he states that a hearer may receive different layers of meaning from the speaker that can either be expressed or implied meaning (Thomas, 2014). Moreover, Grice further states that a speaker should make his conversational contribution as required, at the stage at which it occurs and by the accepted purpose or directions of the talk exchange in which he is engaged (Yule, 1996).

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As stated by the Grice (1975), there are four principles for constructing a well-formed communication between the speaker and the hearer that give required information, truthfulness, relevance, and avoid ambiguity. What a speaker says and what he actually means differ. Therefore, the hearer needs to have a clear idea of four maxims that enable him to extract inferences from the speaker's intended or hidden meaning. Grice (1975) named those principles as "cooperative principles," which are further elaborated into the maxim of 'quantity,' 'quality,' 'relevance,' and 'manner.' Generally, participants in their conversation follow the maxims to make their communication effective, but sometimes the maxims are not followed properly, which results in flouting. This act of flouting enables the speaker to deliver the message accurately, and the hearer either misunderstands or misinterprets the speaker's word in a different way than the literal meaning of utterances.

The study focuses on the transcript of the interview between Jon Stewart and Malala Yousafzai, where she talked about her book, "I Am Malala: The Girl who stood up for Education and was shot by the Taliban" (Yousafzai, 2013) in The Daily Show dated October 8th, 2013. Jon Stewart is a television host and a political commentator. Malala Yousafzai is a Pakistani activist working for female education, and she is also the youngest Nobel Peace Prize laureate. During the interview, Malala Yousafzai did not follow the maxims accordingly, which caused the flouting maxim of quantity and relevance. After this interview, Malala Yousafzai was attacked by the Taliban because she raised her voice against them for not allowing girls to get education and called out for help which resulted in triggering Taliban and they ended up shooting her. In this interview, she was asked about her tragedy, viewpoints, but most importantly about how would she face the upcoming life threatening challenges. Hence, the researcher found this interview relevant for the study.

1.1 Problem Statement

In conversation, people often deviate from stating the relevant or to-the-point answers. Instead of providing a clear answer, they give vague and irrelevant responses, which make their position as a speaker doubtful and untrustworthy. The speaker often deviates from stating the truth, which may or may not harm his reputation. Therefore, this study aimed to find out the cooperative maxims of quantity and relevance flouted by Malala Yousafzai in her interview conducted by Jon Stewart in The Daily Show. It further aimed to analyze how flouting maxims change the overall message that is delivered to the audience.

1.2 Research Objectives

- To identify the flouting maxim of quantity and relevance by Malala Yousafzai.
- To analyze the effect produced by the use of these maxims on audience.

1.3 Research Questions

Q1. How are maxims of relevance and quantity flouted by Malala Yousafzai in her interview?

Q2. What is the impact of these flouting maxims on the audience?

1.4 Significance of the Study

The research aimed to contribute in terms of a theoretical aspect, as it helps in comprehending the theory of flouting maxims as a tool of discourse and how people, especially in political positions, use this tool to shape up their answers during interviews in order to mislead the audience from receiving intended or hidden meaning. And, it would further guide other researchers who will conduct their work in the same field to comprehend their knowledge in pragmatic study in a broader scope about analyzing the intended meaning.

1.5 Delimitations

The study is based on discourse analysis that focuses on analyzing the act of flouting in the interview of Malala Yousafzai. The study did not explain the intonation, hedging, rhetorical acts, or stressed words used in the interview. It only showed how the maxims of quantity and relevance are flouted and their effect on the audience.

Many linguists have given various definitions of discourse. It is basically a language that is used to reflect the political, social, and cultural identity of an individual or a whole community. Discourse is a way of thinking and producing different meanings. It basically constitutes the 'nature' of the body, which includes the unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern (Weedon, 1987). Moreover, it is an organized act that is performed repeatedly and is shaped by the people, which ultimately acquire the status of truth. It is organized by the world, and the world is organized according to discourse. It is a two way process where ideas and thoughts are communicated to shape our social practices by people.

Discourse analysis is a qualitative method of analyzation that explores how meanings are produced by the use of language and communication (Yliopisto, 2010). In order to study the discourse, we first should focus our study on the relationship between form and function of any verbal communication, which, in order words, come into the field of pragmatics. The theory of pragmatics concerns the inference of implicatures, pre-supposition, and also participant's entire knowledge of the world and a general principle of the use of language (Nailufah, 2008a).

The cooperative principle was first introduced by Zhuanglin (1980) in China. H.P. Grice, a philosopher of language at Oxford University, quoted it as "cooperative principle, means make your contribution as required, at the stage where it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you engaged" (Li, 2015). These principles deal with how the listener and the speaker are involved in a conversation and mutually understand each other's intended messages. Grice (1975) divided the cooperative principles into four further subcategories; termed 'Gricean

maxims.' It talks about the connection that occurs between what is said and how is it interpreted. These are the maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner. But since my study has focused on finding maxim of quantity and relevance. Therefore, I have only explained these two conversational maxims.

1.6 The Maxim of Quantity

An individual should contribute as much information as necessary to exchange it (Grice, 1975). Speaking sentences should match the subject. He will miss the point of gaining actual knowledge if he exaggerates or gives incomplete answers. By following suitable answers, the statements are rational and logical.

1.7 The Maxim of Relevance

The Speaker's contributions should be relevant. It is related to the maxim of quantity, but the speaker must constantly be relevant in their remarks and statements. He or she must stay on topic (Grice, 1975).

A number of scholars have studied Grice (1975) "cooperative principles" and "flouting of maxims" in the same field. Nailufah (2008b) studied 'The Death of a Salesman' and highlighted how do characters break the four maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and method? sometimes intentionally but usually accidentally. Ibrahim, Arifin, and Setyowati (2018) found that the characters in *Se7en* flouted all four maxims for three reasons: competitive, collaboration, and conflictive. More than others, relevance maxim is violated.

Moreover, Jia (2008) clarified his points on how the cooperative principles are violated, considering the four maxims in psychological consulting, where she showed that the environment effects the violation of the cooperative principle due to some psychological things. In this research, she takes the data in the form of a conversation between a consultant and psychologist. The data is fiction and not real. Her research was more in terms of conventional implicatures and not only flouting of maxims. Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011) conducted their work on Grice's maxims to analyze the flouting and violating maxim of quantity of the main characters (Barry & Tim) in "Dinner for Schmuck." Based on the study's findings, it can be said that even though the cooperative principle outlines the best practices in communication to make conversation easier for both the speaker and the listener, people frequently ignore these rules in order to further their own agendas. The study's conclusions showed that the characters broke the quantity maxim five times. Similarly, Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012), in their research work, tried to implement the maxims on selected news. The study was conducted on the language of news forecasting and where the maxims can be implemented. As the news is delivered to a wide audience, maxims can be applied in order to flout or violate the statements and change their real meaning.

Xue and Hei (2017) worked on 'Grice's Maxims in Humour: The Case of "Home with Kids"'. Their work is restricted to the non-observance of

cooperative principles in order to see whether the humour is produced in the Chinese sitcom "Home with Kids". The result showed that maxims were violated and flouted for the humorous effect. It analyses all four maxims together, as it is restricted to only the production of humorous elements. A 2020 TIME political interview with Donald Trump was studied by Juma'a (2020) to employ Grice's Cooperative Principle. The statistics demonstrated that the president violates the four maxims of number, relevance, quality, and manner. Final results showed that flouting maxims aim to persuade individuals to consider the meaning of what is suggested but not stated.

Similarly, Zaidi, Mehdi, Sarwar and Mehmood (2020) conducted their study to find out how many the chosen beggars in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital city, break the rules of quality, number, manner, and relation. In addition, their study tried to figure out which of Grice's maxims these chosen people break the most often when they talk. According to the results of this study, the chosen beggars broke the rule of number five times. Based on the study's results, it can be said that the cooperative principle is the best way to communicate, so that both the speaker and the listener can get more out of the talk. Given that the chosen beggars often break the "maximum quantity" rule, it was clear that beggars often lie or give incomplete information to show how poor they are. They often leave out the important details in what they say so that their bad language can speak for itself.

Many works demonstrate how interviews, dramas, novels, news, etc. violate cooperative principles or maxims. In the book "Logic and Conversation," Grice (1975) explains the four maxims for proper conversation that will help your listeners understand your meaning and avoid misunderstandings. He adds that a healthy conversation requires mutual understanding and awareness of each side's facts and answers. He thinks the speaker's meaning is the key to communication, and the sentence can be formed from it.

Furthermore, in "Discourse Analysis," Paltridge (2012) explored discourse, society, ideology, conversation, and pragmatics. He adds that it investigates linguistic trends across texts and the interaction between language and social and cultural environments. In chapter, 'Discourse and Pragmatics,' Paltridge (2012) discusses maxims and how speakers intentionally break them to deceive listeners or make opaque statements to avoid the subject and make their answers irrelevant.

In the above researches, researchers focus on dramas, TV shows, news predictions, etc. Most study involves flouting all maxims or one of them, but none has focused on Malala Yousafzai's interview, in which she flouted quantity and relevance particularly. Thus, this study examined Malala Yousafzai's interview violation of these two maxims of quantity and relevancy. The study helps readers to understand how maxims are violated, so the speaker can gain audience sympathy and focus on their own challenges.

2. Research Methodology

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The study aimed to analyze Malala Yousafzai's interview conducted on The Daily Show in the light of Paul Grice's "Conversation Maxims," which worked as a theoretical framework on a semantic level. Grice's maxims work as a guiding tool for this study to conduct data analysis and interpret the sentences. It helps in working on the research objectives of how the overall message is affected when flouting maxims. Through cooperative principles, this study adheres to the maxims of quantity and relevance as the core object to achieve the desired objectives of analyzing maxims in Malala Yousafzai's interview. Grice's theory helped to find out how the meaning can be derived from the utterances that the speaker produced during the interview. A speaker may create the hidden meaning that cannot be easily inferred by the audience from his conversation.

This study examines Malala Yousafzai's interview because, as a woman, she suffered life-threatening tragedies to promote girls' education in Pakistan and beyond. In her interview, she discusses her 2013 autobiography, in which she describes how the Taliban targeted her and her family and caused life-threatening tragedies and incidents, which gave her the courage to fight the Taliban for girls' education. But there are some answers given by her in the interview where the maxims are flouted which makes her answers irrelevant to the question being asked by the host. Hence, the researcher intended to work on this interview.

As the study was qualitative, discourse analysis was employed to analyse the intended meaning of interview statements and describe the flouting maxims of quantity and relevance. Second, because this study uses speaker utterances rather than numbers, a descriptive-qualitative approach was used. The researcher watched a random interview of Malala Yousafzai on YouTube, searched for the transcript, and then watched the interview several times to identify every sentence to highlight maxims violated. Since the study interpreted interview utterances, the analysis is in document form. The researcher choose to conduct the study on only two maxims; Quantity and Relevance due to short span of time. Only these two maxims will be analyzed and studied in-depth.

3. Data Analysis

The analysis of utterances by Malala Yousafzai showed how the H.P. Grice's (1975) maxims of quantity and relevance are flouted in her interview. The data from interview is in transcription form. The host Jon Stewart interviewed Malala Yousafzai, talking about her new book, in The Daily Show on October 8th, 2013. After the analysis of the interview, the researcher found that there were a total of six occurrences where Malala Yousafzai flouted the maxim of quantity and the maxim of relevance. Therefore, the data was analyzed and divided into two parts; the first part showed how the maxim of quantity is flouted, whereas the second part explained the flouting of maxim of relevance in the interview by Malala Yousafzai.

3.1 Flouting Quantity

Maxim of Quantity states that the speaker is supposed to contribute as much as is required and not exceed the answer in a conversation (Grice 1975). The following lines are extracted from the script and show how this maxim of quantity is flouted by the speaker.

3.1.1 Title: Arrival of Taliban in the Swat valley.

“JON STEWART: ...When did the Taliban come to Swat Valley, because before then, you describe it as a paradise of sorts?”

“MALALA YOUSAFZAI:Taliban came in 2004...started the real terrorism in 2007...blasted more than 400 schools in Swat...slaughtered people...”.

Considering the answer above, it is evident that Malala Yousafzai flouted the maxim of quantity in a way that the answer she provided was more than what the listener needed to hear or receive. She provided a detailed explanation regarding every life-threatening causality done by the Taliban. As per the maxim of quantity, she should have just mentioned the time period when Taliban first entered Swat, instead of giving each and every minor detail of their barbaric actions that endangered the lives of innocent people on large scale. Moreover, she misled the audience by grasping their attention to the things that Taliban did just so she could be considered someone who has been through rough incidents that threaten because she stood for her basic right of acquiring education. And, so the people could build up a sense of sympathy for her. There was no reason to mention the years in which Taliban attacked people; the whole idea of killing and attacking could have literally been summed up into few relevant sentences. Also, she extended and further exaggerated her answer because she wanted to be the center of attention; the more she explained the horrific conditions, the more people would listen to her every spoken word, because that is how human sentiments of sympathy and sadness are developed for the person who has gone through such harsh incidents while fulfilling his agenda. Had she given the relevant answer without exaggerating, she wouldn't have flouted the maxim of quantity and her answer would have been credible.

3.1.2 Title: How Malala Yousafzai raised her voice against the Taliban and fought all odds with bravery and courage?

“JON STEWART: ...you spoke out publicly against the Taliban, what gave you the courage to continue this?”

“MALALA YOUSAFZAI:my father was a great encouragement for me ...I raised my voice...I said, I need to tell the world what is happening in Swat...”

In these above-mentioned lines, Malala exaggerated the scenario of how she and the girls of Swat together wrote diaries and spoke out their ideas in public instead of just putting her words to tell how she gathered enough courage that enabled her to stand against Taliban. It was sufficient when she mentioned her father's encouragement towards women's right, as it gave an idea of her struggle in fighting against Taliban. Initially, Malala mentioned that it was her father who became an inspiration for her by fighting against Taliban, and she also provided some details, but in the last part, where she gave more details of her own contribution in order to challenge the power of Taliban was not required at all because that showed she wanted herself to be on the spot too. She wanted the audience to get more insight into her efforts and hard work that she put in to stand against such barbaric people who were depriving them of their basic rights. What's the point of addressing something that is not required of the listeners? Generally, people are not interested in knowing about our efforts in any such circumstances unless we get engaged in them forcefully by telling overly exaggerated irrelevant stories which in Malala Yousafzai's case took place. Hence, flouting of maxim of quantity is clearly shown in the example. Instead of praising her father's support, she could have mentioned the people who were already under the attack of Taliban to show she was against the barbarous act and wanted to make a difference.

3.2 Flouting Relevance

Flouting relevance occurs when the speaker deviates from the subject and provides information that is considered to be irrelevant to the subject matter (Grice, 1975). The following examples will show how the maxim of relation is flouted by Malala Yousafzai.

3.2.1 Title: That moment when Malala Yousafzai realized she has been threatened by Taliban.

“JON STEWART: When did you realize the Taliban had made you a target?”

“MALALA YOUSAFZAI: ...in 2012...Taliban would come and he would just kill me...he comes, what would you do Malala?...just take a shoe and hit him...if you hit a Taliban with your shoe.....”

These lines give a clear example of how maxim of relation is flouted. Here in last lines, Malala talked how she would react if she met a Taliban, which was totally irrelevant to the question because it's misleading the audience from sustaining the real meaning as Malala was trying to portray herself as someone who believed in proper negotiation or having stable relations with such rebellious people. The question did not demand that she presented her views about how she will create a communication bridge once she encountered any Taliban. It seems as though she had already imagined such scenario where she would be uniting with Taliban in real life; hence, she had planned her part

ready to be played at that time. Also, no one actually demanded to know about her personal thoughts on the conversation that she would have with Taliban; all she was supposed to answer was how and when she actually realized that Taliban targeted her; the rest of the details were not required. There was no point in adding things that were outside of the subject matter because it would deter the listener from getting the actual answer to the question. Malala's own thoughts and opinions are contradict the relevant answers in the interview. The audience was not interested in her personal thoughts; rather, they wanted to know about the true facts and figures that led such situations to take place.

3.2.2 Title: Reason why people started turning their backs to Taliban and stopped following their teachings.

“JON STEWART: ...Taliban first came...they're bringing order... established a court that was faster than Pakistani courts...when that began to turn?”

“MALALA YOUSAFZAI: ...they were telling people, “We will just set up another court for you and we will provide you justice on time”...they started slaughtering people...blasted the electricity generators...But my father... bought a generator for the school...”
(Remaining part is in Appendix)

In these lines, the information provided by Malala was either too much or did not seem relevant to the subject matter. Although, she explained the cause that made people go against Taliban, as they were preaching wrong teachings of Islam by moulding them just to control the minds of people. So, that they could achieve their agenda, after that, when she provided the information related to her father's contribution in terms of buying generator, it was not significant to the question at all. She had highlighted her and her father's actions against the Taliban. There could be two reasons behind this: either she was too engrossed in her family's contribution or she was trying to put on a fake mask of being a philanthropist. She wanted people to know that although Taliban did put her life on stake, she was determined and did all she could fearlessly without thinking of her own life to eliminate their power. Furthermore, the way she talked about the services and social work done by her father throughout her interview gave an idea of being naïve to the actual answer that was required by the listener. She has portrayed his social actions for the people of Swat to create a comparison between the Taliban's barbarisms that were inflicted on helpless people and her father's role in stabilizing the harsh condition of Swat people. The interview was not about her father's contributions but about her being the central person.

3.2.3 Title: What made Taliban successful in controlling the minds of the people?

“JON STEWART: ...the women cannot do these things... this is a wrong interpretation of Islam, of the Koran...why have the Taliban...been able to be successful, is it the fear that they bring to these towns? ...why the people have had a hard time throwing it off?”

“MALALA YOUSAFZAI: ... they had guns... misusing the name of Islam...telling people that “we are doing this for Islam, we are doing this for Allah, we are doing this for prophet, peace be upon him”...we spoke up for our rights...I believe in two paradises, one I'll get after death...other one...is Swat...you would be astonished when you see the lush green hills and when you see the tall mountains and the rivers that we have, the crystal clear water...”

In this last example, Malala initially clarified the wrong interpretation about women for not working or standing for their rights in the light of teaching of Islam. In later part, she talked about the specific reasons that why the people of Swat Valley could not speak against Taliban or could not object the rules that Taliban imposed on them. It was because Taliban were rebellious people, they won't think for a second before killing anyone, hence people were afraid of the consequences, but that part where Malala deviated from providing relevant answer to the question was when she mentioned about her city Swat and presenting her thoughts by calling it a “paradise” as it has enormous valleys and greenery, is simply off the subject matter. She misled the audience by telling them how they would be astonished if they see all such green hills and those tall mountains surrounded by rivers that were filled with crystal clear water containing trout and the pleasing sight. This showed she had clearly flouted the maxim of relevance as listeners had nothing to do with the beauty of Swat.

In short, throughout the interview, Malala Yousafzai spoke either too much than needed or she simple changed the subject matter by adding things about her father, the city of Swat, and her personal thoughts that misled the audience from getting the actual intended meaning. If a speaker falls into a situation where he or she could not utter relevant things then this enables them to add irrelevant references and information into their conversation. Also it has observed that during interview, Malala tried to extend her answers by highlighting the things which has nothing to do with the actual answer, it could be either she deliberately did that to get a superficial sympathetic support from audience or she could not provide relevant answers to the questions asked by the host. Hence in the light of Grice's theory of maxims, the interview of Malala Yousafzai presented the occurrences where the maxims of relevance & quantity were flouted to change the meaning.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The study addressed two research questions: identifying Cooperative Principles maxims like Relevance and Quantity that were flouted and analysing the audience's reaction. Flouting maxims showed that the speaker

deviated the audience from the real meaning by exaggerating the answers because they were too long and contained more information than needed and by focusing on irrelevant information like her father's work to alleviate people's hardships and Swat's natural scenery. Second, Malala Yousafzai's answers convinced the audience to believe and relate to her by creating a mutual emotional contact while imagining all the life-threatening causalities and hardships she had to endure to stand against all negative bodies, who tried to kill her by shooting her for educating girls. The speaker may have violated these two maxims to escape criticism by discussing her actions to garner audience sympathy and support. Some of the audience believed her and related to her feelings. Instead of thinking critically, they sympathised with Malala by agreeing with her.

The study addressed the analysis of the maxims flouted in Malala Yousafzai's interview. It also identified that maxim of quantity was flouted two times while flouting maxim of relevance took place three times. The study is limited to the flouting of these two maxims and the theory that was selected is of Grice's maxims but for the other research who intends to work in same field can either choose a different theory while using the same method or the tools can be changed. Also, there are many other Political figures who flout the maxims to achieve the desired public support, therefore this same method and Grice's theory can be applied on their interviews. Hence, this way readers' understanding will be more expanded by building up the knowledge of how political figures flouts the maxims in the interview in order to generate the intended meanings to the public. The interview could be interpreted differently by different researchers but as the goal of the study was to analyze the flouting maxims in Malala Yousufzai's interview, the study was interpreted according to the maxims' conditions which resulted in providing plausible results adhering to the principles given by Grice (1975).

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