



Analysis of The Flouting of Grice's Conversational Maxims By Arab Leaders During Arab Spring

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Abstract: Theoretically, in communication, speakers must apply the cooperative principle that consists of four maxims of conversation. They are maxim of quality, maxim of relevance, maxim of manner and maxim of quantity. Speakers must follow these maxims in order to have a successful communication without misunderstanding. In fact, speakers sometimes flout the maxims intentionally for a reason. Therefore, the main aims of this study is to investigate the analysis of the flouting of Grice's conversational maxims by Arab leaders during Arab spring and type of maxims flouted by Gaddafi and Assad during interviews with ABC and ARD channels and explain the reasons for flouting the maxims by both leaders in the interviews. Qualitative research design was used to collect data. This study reveals that the four maxims are flouted by the leaders by playing upon words in order to give them meanings in their favor and it shows how the Arab leaders color the choices to produce particular shades of meanings which are not always conceivable to all readers in order to gain the support from the masses.

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1. Background of the Study

Language is a vehicle to inform and to transfer ideas and thoughts through communication. Mankind has developed languages based on the need for communication; people involved in any kind of conversation intend to communicate their messages, so language is very important for mankind to maintain their life. Language is related directly to communication, and communication needs a speaker and hearer in every turn of speech. To have a successful communication, the speaker and the hearer have to cooperate to be understood and to understand each other.

In order to have a smooth and successful communication Grice (1975) suggests a principle called "cooperative principle". He claims that people will have a successful and smooth conversation if they follow the cooperative principles that are associated with the four conversation maxims. The conversation maxims are: Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relation and Maxim of Manner. Literature explained those four maxims as the following (e.g. Sadock 1976, Schiffin 2001):

- Maxim of Quality: Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence, do not lie or do not say

what you believe to be false, the keyword of this maxim is truth or instatement.

- Maxim of Quantity: Do not make the contribution less or more informative than is required. In other words make the contribution as informative as required for the purpose of the conversation.

- Maxim of Relation: Requires the speaker to say something relevance.

- Maxim of Manner: the speaker should avoid ambiguity and obscurity of expression and he should be brief and orderly.

Grice suggests that to have a smooth and successful conversation you should fulfill or observe the maxims and do not violate any cooperative principles of the maxims; in other words Grice proposes that to observe the maxims is to respect to the authenticity, amount, relevance and the way information is provided at each turn of a conversation.

However, not all communication fulfills the cooperative principles or the four maxims in their conversation. People fail to fulfill or observe the maxims in many contexts of everyday life and many occasions (Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi 2011). There are many reasons, for example some people are incapable of speaking clearly because of nervousness, fright, have stammer, anxious, do not know the

culture or are not fluent or because they want to lie on purpose or other reasons. Previous researches claimed that the violation of maxim are sometimes caused by misunderstanding by the hearers or when the hearer fails to make an inference from the speaker's intention (Gumpers, 1982, Cheirchia and Mc Connel-Ginet, 1990).

This research will analyze the Cooperative principle in term of flouting the maxims in a political context; the researcher will take two interviews, first by ABC News reporter with Libyan ex-leader Muammar Gaddafi and the other one by German television ARD with Bashar al-Assad, the leader of Syria to show how the maxims are violated and what are the reasons for violation. The interviews are chosen because they took a place during a critical period. Many Arab leaders caught in the uprising try to mislead the masses and for this reason they will cooperate with the interviewers and they will flout the four principles of maxims. Arab spring is a critical period since many leaders faced their destiny at the hands of their people. The Arab spring started on 14th of January 2011 in Tunisia. The Jasmine Revolution overthrew the dictatorship of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Starting with the revolution in Tunisia, the revolution spread to other countries in the Arab world - Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain. It brought down Hosni Mubarak on 11th of February, 2011 the leader of Egypt, and then Muammar el-Qaddafi on 21st of October, 2011 the leader of Libya (Peter 2011). It seems that next would be Bashar al-Assad, the Syrian leader as anticipated by some news channel and the situation in Syria is very critical and many countries including Jordan, Turkey, USA and Saudi Arabia had asked Bashar al-Assad to step down. Since it is dangerous time to the leaders as mentioned before, Arab leaders will not answer the interviews directly because they want to hide some critical information which can make all the people rise against them so they will try to mislead the masses. Hence, the interviews provide many examples of violation the maxims.

Several studies that have been done on flouting the Grice's maxims and they are in areas such as literature, religion, humour and jokes both in oral and written context. For example, "Flouting Grice's Maxims at Dinner" (Rundquist 1990), "Some Instances of Violation and Flouting of the Maxim of Quantity by the Main Characters (Barry and Tim) in Dinner for Schmucks" (Khosravizadehand and Sadehvandi 2011), "The Flouting Of Conversational Maxims By The Main Characters in Titanic Movie" (Purwanto, 2008) and "The Flouting And Hedging Maxims in the English Translation of Surah Yasin" (Mashudi 2007). On the other hand, it has been noticed that there is few research analyzed the

conversational maxim in the political context (Sikadar et al. 2012, Ayasreh 2014, Ayasreh and Razali 2018, Ayasreh et al. 2019). This research can be a good beginning to analyze the political context according to Grice maxims theory, and the findings of this research hopefully will add to the existing literature. The main objectives of this research are:

- To identify which type of maxims is flouted by Gaddafi and Bashar in the interviews.
- To find out how each type of maxim is flouted by Gaddafi and Bashar in the interviews.
- To explain the reasons for flouting the maxims by Gaddafi and Bashar in the interviews.

2. Procedures and Data Analysis

Data were collected by watching two interviews and writing conversational texts which were written in every conversation or dialogues acted. This study is a discourse analysis which focuses on analyzing the political conversations by the Arab leaders which is made on the basis of Grice's theory of maxim by using following steps: firstly, identified the places where the maxims are flouted. Then the researcher classified them in a number of categories according to Grice's theory of Cooperative Principle. Then describing and discussing the findings based on the flouting of the conversational maxim to answer research problem and concerning flouting of quality, quantity, manner and relevance. Finally; the researcher discussed the finding by relating finding with Grice's theory of flouting the maxims.

3. Discussion

It was found that the four types of maxim were flouted by both leaders. The study revealed that the maxim of quality was the most flouted by the Arab leaders. In terms of the way and reasons of flouting the maxims, the analysis show that there are a number of reasons of how and why the Arab leaders flouted the maxim. Assad and Gaddafi flouted the maxim of relevance to mislead the hearer when the question is very critical. They change the topic consciously by making their answers irrelevant to the topic. In other words, by un-matching their utterances. Example of such an answer is given below:

Case1:

Interviewer: *The question is this: There is a rebellion in this country. As a leader, what can you do about the rebellion?*

Gaddafi: *This is the first time I am meeting with the journalist in these few days, as a mark of respect for the establishment you represent and because I was informed you are here to tell the truth and relay facts to the whole world. I don't like to appear on television or give interviews.*

Case 2:

Todenhof: Mr. President, members of the opposition and western politicians say, that you are the main obstacle for peace in Syria. Would you be ready to step down as president if this could bring peace to your country and stop the bloodshed?

Assad: The president shouldn't run away from challenge and we have a national challenge now in Syria. The president shouldn't escape the situation, but from the other side you can stay as president, stay in this position only when you have the public support. So, answering this question should be answered by the Syrian people, by the election not by the president. I can nominate myself, I can run for the election or not run, but to leave or not to leave, this is about the Syrian people.

Both Assad and Gaddafi flouted the maxim of quantity - "make your contribution as informative as is required" and "do not make your contribution more informative than is required" when they made an exaggerated statement which makes the information too or more informative than that is required, or categorized as "overstatement." They flouted the maxim of quantity to strengthen and to explain their statement in order that people believe their contribution or to have an agreement and to show strong opinion or to show something is worse than it is appear. The example is given below:

Case 3:

Interviewer: So they're the people pulling down the posters and putting up the flag of the king?

Gaddafi: I would like to explain this point. Al-Qaeda is the one who started the killings and now they are terrorizing the people and they have taken to the streets. They have no claims, no demands. They are not staging such demonstrations at all. Anyway, whether it is Libya, Nigeria or Afghanistan, they are not taking to the streets and staging demonstrations. Those people who have weapons, are young people - youths - who do not know al-Qaeda. Now they have already started laying down their arms, selling them and returning to their homes. Now they start to recover from the hallucinogenic drugs which were given to them. These youths, they don't even know what al-Qaeda is. However the leaders of al-Qaeda, who are inside the mosques, have appointed themselves as pioneers. I would like to go out to see them. Some of them used to be Guantanamo inmates. This is another issue. They have nothing to do with al-Qaeda; some of these protesters lost their children during the terrorist attacks and some of them want some kind of revenge for the attacks. Al-Qaeda uses them. They are flying flags, they claim they have demands and they might announce peaceful demonstrations. Nobody can prevent them from organizing peaceful demonstrations. However al-Qaeda does not recognize these people. Just like the

mainstay you just talked about, he requested and he asked, but al-Qaeda doesn't recognize him. They told him that he is not infidel.

Case 4:

Todenhof: A question that everybody is asking in the western countries and in your country: Who has killed the thousands of civilians who died in this conflict? The opposition blames you.

Assad: If you want to know who killed, you first have to know who has been killed. You cannot tell about the criminals without knowing about the victims. Those victims, you are talking about, the majority of them, are government supporters. So, how can you be the criminal and the victim at the same time? The majority are people who support the government and large part of the others are innocent people who have been killed by different groups in Syria.

Moreover, the maxim of quality that is "do not say what you believe to be false" is also flouted when both Assad and Gaddafi produced utterances in the form of rhetorical question and when they do not say the truth and when their contributions are not based on sufficient evidence. The example is given below:

Case 5:

Interviewer: People are also concerned that you have some kind of savagery. Would you do that?

Gaddafi: It is them who are trying to do such things. The terrorists are trying to do this. They go by 4*4 cars at night and they open fire at oil fields and oil companies. They go to the desert.

Interviewer: Do you have day-to-day control of the armed forces? Do you give the orders in this country?

Gaddafi: First of all there is not army in Libya. We have an armed people.

Case 6:

Todenhof: Who has committed the massacre of Hula, in which more than a hundred people were brutally murdered, among them many children?

Assad: Yes. Gangs came in hundreds from outside the city, not from inside the city and they attacked the city and they attacked the law enforcement unit inside the city. And then they killed many families and as you mentioned, children and women and actually those families that have been killed – they are government supporters, not opposition.

Todenhof: I was told by somebody who lives in Hula and who lost members of his family, he told me that the killers wore army uniforms. Why did they wear army uniforms?

Assad: Just to accuse our government. That happened many times. They committed a crime, they published videos, faked videos and they wear soldier

uniforms, our army uniforms in order to say "that was the army.

Furthermore, both Assad and Gaddafi flouted the maxim of manner when they made an ambiguous statement. It means that they did not give clear statement and this kind of flouting confused the hearer. The example is given below:

Case 7:

Interviewer: *Col. Gaddafi, the leaders of the United States, and of Britain and other of countries have called for you to step down and to leave Libya, and resign from your position of power. Would you do that?*

Gaddafi: *Step down from what position? I don't have a position. I don't lead Libya. Libya does not have a leader, president or king. Libya is a state of the masses and power belongs to the people, congress and committee. Since 1977, I have not had any power.*

Case 8:

Todenhof: *You think, you still have a majority behind you in your country?*

Assad: *If I have – if I don't have a support in the public, how could I stay in this position? United States is against me, the West is against me, many regional powers and countries and the people against me, so, how could I stay in this position? The answer is, I still have a public support. How much, what the percentage is – this is not the question, I don't have numbers now. Of course, in this position, in this situation you must have public support.*

Gricean maxims if observed or flouted in both cases serve a purpose. It is noticed from the interview that Gaddafi and Assad flouted the maxims in the interviews because sometimes they do want to show that they are against their people, while at other times they do not cooperate because they want to send an implied message to the world that there is nothing to worry about in their countries and the situation in the country is under controlled because they do not want NATO to interfere in the situation.

Both leaders convey information which excludes the reality on the ground. When observing or flouting maxims, there is a specific intention. In both cases, the flouting happens consciously. For both leaders, the purpose is to hide the truth from the general public, proving themselves innocent of the charges, justifying their governments' actions, while all along hiding behind their answers. With Gaddafi, the focus is on Al-Qaida while with Assad, the focus is on the criminals, terrorists and extremist elements. Throughout the interview, they do not say enough about the situation in their countries.

Both leaders were able to manipulate their answers because they wanted to show the world that they were in control of the situation in their countries. The bloodsheds taking place in their countries were

the results of foreign elements such as Al-Qaida. Their military forces were not responsible for the killing of their own citizens. The other reason is that due to their position as rulers of their countries, they believe that the masses would just accept what they had to say.

4. Conclusion

The four types of maxims are flouted by both Arab leaders during the interview by giving answers which they thought would convince their people even if though they were not cooperating with the interviewer and they flouted the maxims in such an artistic ways to gain social power and public favour. Leaders coloured the choice of answers to produce particular shades of meaning which are not always conceivable to all readers and in this way they are trying consciously or unconsciously to manipulate their people by using language to gain the support from the masses. This could be done by the flouting the four conversation maxims - Maxim of Quality, Maxim of Quantity, Maxim of Relation and Maxim of Manner.

According to the findings of this research, it is suggested that the findings will be one of the additional references in the field of the discourse. Moreover, it is also recommended that other researches can use Grice's maxims to conduct the research on the other areas. Furthermore, it is also suggested to the next researcher use other relevance theories to investigate different topics in the same area of the research.

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