

## **Application of the Cooperative Principle to Political Talk-shows and Interviews in Pakistani Context**

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### **Abstract**

*Political discourse has been recently considered as a rich area for discourse analysis. In this regard, interviews of the politicians in TV talk-shows appear more interactive than newspaper articles. Conversational analysis of this genre may yield different interpretations –both implicit and explicit— as there is much to comprehend than what is said. The Cooperative Principle (CP hereafter) proposed by Paul Grice (1975) offer a deep insight into such chunks of conversation. The present study is an attempt to critically analyze the studies using the framework of Gricean Maxims in investigating Pakistani political discourse taking place in TV interviews and talk-shows. It enlists various implications of observing and violating CP, the reasons behind these two different tendencies, and its significance. The study also hints at many gaps during the review that are worth-researching for in the future.*

**Keywords:** Discourse analysis, Cooperative Principle, Gricean Maxims, Pakistani Political discourse

### **Introduction**

Communication has a vital role in any interaction. Language plays a dynamic role in everyday life and is used for communication, interaction, and expressing thoughts, emotions, and ideas. Language can be manipulated to perform different functions. It can be manipulated to produce required effects: such as to create an impact like humor, anguish, fear, command, etc., and to get one's aims fulfilled. The conversation can be motivating, exaggerating, or could be molded to any extent to get the speakers' motives accomplished (Renkema, 1993). Political discourse is a part of our daily life. Mostly, the interaction of politicians and masses happens through media. Politicians express their viewpoints in their interviews. There is a need to critically analyze their interviews from a linguistic perspective (Sumayya, 2012).

In Pakistan, TV interviews and talk shows of different politicians are well watched and observed by Pakistani people. People watch these Talk shows for many reasons covering conversations on different topics and getting information to increase their knowledge. Viewers in Pakistan pay serious attention to Talk-shows broadcasted on different TV channels for similar details and reasons. Generally,

the majority of the TV talk-shows work for entertainment. Talk debates on television are frequently used as a source of information (Wei Zho, 2016).

There is a growing body of research in the Pakistani context dealing with this genre. The present study attempts to critically review the studies investigating the genre of political talkshows and interviews by applying the CP. It uses the Gricean Maxims as a framework.

### **Problem Statement**

This research clarifies that the interviewers (host) perceive Grice's four maxims during interviews and different TV talk shows. It also elucidates if the interviewees (guests) violate or flout the four Maxims in the Cooperative Principle as proposed by Grice in their responses to the questions. If that's the case, how do the interviewers on talk shows tackle the issue? People communicate to convey their thoughts and intentions, yet as we all know, misunderstandings happen for a variety of reasons. Most of us are rarely aware of what creates such misconceptions, and if we are, we may employ Grice's Cooperative Principle to keep the dialogue flowing smoothly.

### **Objectives**

The study aims the following objectives:

- To highlight the studies investigating the genre of political talkshows in Pakistani context and interviews using Gricean Maxims
- To spot further areas for future research left unexplored by this body of research critically reviewed

### **Research Question**

The present study is an attempt to answer the following research question:

- What patterns, motives, reasons and strategies are explored by the research into the political talkshows and interviews in Pakistani context?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study aims to explore and critically review previous studies conducted on interviews and talk shows to examine if the hosts utilize cooperative principle, Grice's maxims in their interviews. The research also investigates to discover if Pakistani politicians in talk shows disobey or violate Grice's four maxims throughout their interviews. Particularly, this study intends to observe the four maxim of Grace's cooperative principle, how the Pakistani politicians violate them during their interviews and talk shows.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study uses the Cooperative Principle or Gricean Maxims as a framework adapted from Szczepanski, 2015.

The Gricean Maxims are the set of the following four maxims:

- Maxim of Quality: Make your contribution true; so do not convey what you believe false or unjustified.
- Maxim of Quantity: Be as informative as required.
- Maxim of Relation: Be relevant. (Stay on the topic)
- Maxim of Manner: Be perspicuous; so avoid incomprehensibility and ambiguity, and strive for brevity and order

### **Critical Review and Discussion**

A study by Asif et al. (2019) dealing with the frequency, purposes, and forms of flouting CP takes into account the interview of Mr. Imran Khan (Chairman PTI) in a TV talkshow. This interview format was a one-to-one live talk exclusive of interruptions made by other participants, instances of turn-taking, and frequent digression because of the counter-question posed. The total instances of flouting CP recorded and analyzed in this study were 41. In out of these total 41 instances, the Maxim of Quantity was flouted 18 times, followed by the Maxim of manner which was flouted 11 times. The Maxims of relation and quality were flouted 10 and 02 times, respectively.

The main reasons that were found while flouting the Maxim of quantity were: justification of one's actions or party's actions, comparisons made with other countries to undermine the policy and governance of the ruling party, expression of sympathy with the disadvantaged in the country, and criticism on other political parties. For all these purposes, the speaker had to narrate various Islamic, historical, and political recounts to lay a background for his answers. This caused flouting of the Maxim of Quantity. Yet, another reason which is not considered in the study is the use of metalanguage or metalingual expressions, mostly often at the outset of the answers, that caused flouting the Quantity Maxim by the speaker.

If critically analyzed, there are instances in which the Quantity of Maxim was flouted otherwise i.e. lesser was said than required. The speaker, on various occasions, made very slight references to events, facts, personalities and other pieces of knowledge which required brief elaboration. This can be labeled as 'given knowledge,' at least by the researcher, not necessarily for all viewers or listeners. Quantifying these instances with information from slightest to greatest from decoders (viewers/listeners) requires further research to analyze such discourse.

Flouting the Quality Maxim was recorded two times that the speaker's surmises and unconfirmed facts and figures. The Maxim of Manner flouted 10 times was mostly in the form of abrupt transition from one argument to the next that made the speakers' talk incoherent. Finally, the study located 11 instances of flouting the Relation Maxim. The reasons behind flouting the Relation Maxim is to avoid the discussion in which the speaker found himself uncomfortable. Further, the speaker wanted to shift the focus to the topic(s) which could badly exposed his political opponents.

However, the present study points out to the fact that determining the line between flouting the Quantity and Relation Maxims may overlap in this sort of conversation. This is because the apparent flouting of Relation Maxim at the outset of a reply may serve the purpose of setting the background for the upcoming argument. If the speakers' intention is to offer the relevant reply followed by the irrelevant start in order to strengthen his argument, it is best to be considered as flouting the Quantity Maxim instead of Relation Maxim. The interlocutor's role is important, and a decision in this regard; interrupting the speaker in the mid of reply may turn the reply as flouting the Relation Maxim instead of the Quality in conversation. Yet, drawing this line of division between the Relation and Quantity Maxims is difficult. From research perspective, there is the need to categorize instances of flouting, which are marked by interlocutor's interruptions in the form of turn-taking, counter questions, leading or supplementary questions, and comments.

Another study by Bilal and Naeem (2013) applies the Gricean Principles to the same talkshow. The anchor interviewed the President of Pakistan when he was about to complete his 5-year tenure. They particularly focus on the speaker's relative adherence to one or more Maxim(s) compared to flouting the rest as an artistic technique. This technique of flouting one or more Maxims (not all) by the speaker (Asif Ali Zardari) serves to promote his political ideology, guard him against the harsh criticism due to his government's poor performance, and offer justification for his failure in many respects.

The study found that the deliberate observation and violation of CP serves speaker's purpose. Flouting occurs both consciously and unconsciously- conveying meanings different from the literal sense. The conscious violation of CP by the speaker is made mainly to conceal the reality. The study analyzed that the intentional flouting of CP was made in an artistic manner. Also, CP were violated unintentionally that shows speaker's weaker position and stance. He molds the conversation by flouting CP in order to justify himself and his government. For instance, Instead of his required preference to sort out public's problems, he utters the attractive slogan of his party i.e., 'Roti, kapra Aur Makan'. Thus, by mentioning this slogan, he adheres to the Quality Maxim, violating the Maxims of Quantity, Manner and Relation.

In most of the instances, the speaker in this conversation, as analyzed by Bilal and Naeem (2013), the Maxims of Quantity and Manner are observed, but Relation and Quality are intentionally flouted. The focus of the conversation is shifted from the burning and attention-seeking issues to the idealist image of democracy and unrealistic goals by the speaker. While offering replies to the questions about their performance in the near past, the speaker offers solutions that are to be made in the future- knowing that it's the last time of their government.

The present study asserts that in analyzing this sort of conversation, there is a vital need to consider the speaker's status or relation between interlocutors. These two are the crucial factors that affect the conversation. The conversation analyzed by Bilal and Naeem (2013), the speaker is the sitting

President of Pakistan talking to a host of a private TV channel. His speech would be naturally different from an ordinary politician, spokesperson, and other representatives of political parties. Knowing his status, the speaker feels free to violate any of the four Maxims in conversation. This fact becomes obvious in the analysis of his discourse, though not taken into consideration by the researchers. The interlocutor (host in this case) may interrupt, cut, correct, remind, remarks, and reiterate if the speaker is frequently flouting intentionally or unintentionally either of the four Maxims. This is mainly possible when the speaker's status is not exceptionally greater as in the said study, or they sufficiently observe the CP. Both of these possibilities were rear in the study of Bilal and Naeem (2013). Future research may highlight the status of speaker or relation between interlocutors while applying Gricean Maxims to similar political discourse.

Political Satire is also a genre of growing interest in Pakistan. Various figures of speech are used to create comic effects in this genre. One such technique is the flouting of the CP in order to suggest different types of meanings. According to Grice, there are a number of instances, e.g., irony, metaphor, meiosis, and hyperbole (Brumark, 2006). The irony is defined as saying something that gives other meaning through its contextual use. Flouting either of the cooperative principle may result in irony in conversation (Attardo, 2002).

Taking this rationale, Noor, Mangrio, and Ali (2016) have analyzed ten episodes of the popular show of political satire telecasted on Geo TV by the name of 'Hum Sab Omeed Sai Hain'. They highlighted where flouting of CP creates irony that serves comic purpose.

They found that the Maxims of quality and manner are flouted to create verbal irony. This is done through the use of pun, equivoque, and allusion in the speech of dummies impersonating prominent political figures. Thus, flouting apparently the CP gives deeper ironic meaning. The interpretation of the speech chunks, by the means of implications by the flouting CP, helps analyze the meaning. It involves different processes in which an utterance communicates meaning beyond its semantic or literal sense. It also reveals how native speakers make sense of the non-literal meaning expressed by the speaker. The semantic meaning of the core words in utterance provides a basis for inferring the non-literal meaning of the expressions. The associative meaning, particularly the reflective meanings of the core words provides a wide range of meanings which further, in association with other words, become more meaningful than their literal forms. The variety of meaning of words and their manipulated use in the selected utterances offer the meanings in accordance with other factors such as context and shared knowledge.

The researchers found that the maxim of Manner was found to be the most frequently flouted one (10/10) in creating verbal irony. The second most frequently flouted maxim was the quality maxim (4/10), followed by the Quantity maxim (2/10). The maxim of Relevance appeared as the least violated maxim (1/10).

Based on their findings, Noor et al. (2016) proved Grice's statement as wrong as the Urdu scriptwriter's strategy is concerned. They show diversity rather than universality in this regard. Yet, they have neglected the vital role played by the shared cultural and historical knowledge of interlocutors in interpreting the underlying meaning of irony. Secondly, the purpose of communication is another factor that needs to be examined. The main purpose of political satire, as of this TV show, is comic. It can only be done by deliberately flouting either of the four maxims. But each instance of flouting requires shared knowledge between the speaker(s) and viewers or listeners to comprehend the hidden or implied meaning.

One of the immediate, direct consequences of flouting the CP is interruption by the interlocutor(s) - signaling the end or holding back the floor. In other words, interruptions are mainly made in the genre of interviews (political talk shows) when the speakers (politician guest) apparently flouts either of the four maxims.

The study of Khan, Qadir, and Aftab (2019) has investigated the interruptions made by the anchor when the guests didn't observe the CP in political talk shows on Pakistan Television (PTV). Their analysis shows the pattern of the interactional aspect of interruptions in the agenda-setting of the political talkshows. They found that in 85% of instances, the interruptions made by the anchor are successful; only in 15%, interruption is disallowed by the participant's refusal to give up floor. These 15% instances of interruption can be taken as the result of flouting either of the four maxims. Moreover, out of this 85% only 30% of interruptions are cooperative interruptions made to assist the talk and provide a word or information to the participant most of the time. It employs that speakers in

conversation flouted the quality maxim that invited interruption on the part of the anchor. In 80% of the time these interruptions are disruptive and made to comment assertively upon the topic as or to take the floor and change the topic.

The above analysis also supports and suggests that anchors use interruptions to keep the agenda on point to the topical perspective they have expressed in the openings. The act of agenda-setting provides thus a standard for the maxim of relation. Sticking to the set agenda in conversation would denote observing the maxim of relation and vice versa. The pattern of interruptions in the talk-shows displays that 80% of the time the anchor changed his designated, institutional role of manager and performed the role of the commentator. The anchor made interruptions to assert his point of view. The next purpose served by interruptions is to control the perspective of the talk, or to re-direct the speakers' attention to the agenda set at the outset. Thus, it can be argued that the pattern of interruptions proves the agenda setting done by the anchors in Pakistani Political talkshows to avoid flouting the relation maxim. It also shows that interactive control of talk is used for manipulating the topics and controlling the talk. Their study, however, doesn't categorize instances of interruptions concerning flouting the four maxims. Further research into this area may yield significant results by ordering the four maxims in terms of causing the least to the most interruptions in political talkshows.

In another study in the Pakistani context, Sikandar, Nadeem, Noor, Naeem, and Nasreen (2019) attempted to expose how high-profile political personalities exploit language in order to justify themselves. They also took into account spoken language of the interview genre, applying Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle and derived Maxims (1975). The analysis made in this study is the conversation of sitting PM at that time with his people through live telephone calls, broadcast by PTV News entitled "Prime Minister Online Programme".

Sikandar (2019) argues that a person in such a position where he is answerable tries to win the favor of his audience. The speaker in their study is an example of such person. He utilizes different artistic ways to gain social power and his public favor. The main focus is the political dominance from the perspective of CP.

They found that CP is flouted to prove political dominance on the one hand and display personal power on the other hand. The next motive behind manipulating language is to counter criticism. However, these hidden motives aimed by the speaker can only be disclosed when these chunks of conversation are observed critically. In doing this, the researchers revealed how the PM makes a serious attempt of self-justification. They have also highlighted instances of flouting CP and showed how authoritative persons could manipulate language by playing upon words. Through these strategies, the speaker was able to give meanings of his own favor. The speaker made the deliberate violation of CP to use choices to produce particular shades of meanings. Without flouting CP, the speaker's intended meanings are not always plausible to readers.

The researcher says that Sikandar et al. (2019) have not fully realized the nature of the conversation they analyzed. Investigating the worth of CP, it is important for the interlocutors to be present face-to-face or live or virtually simultaneously. When the role of one interlocutor is limited – just posing question--, the next interlocutor may utilize the opportunity to flout either of the four maxims without being interrupted. Examining the relative role of participant(s) of one side in observing or flouting CP by the next participant is subject to further research.

Abas (2019) investigated flouting of the conversational maxims in Pakistani political talkshows. Her study particularly focuses flouting CP that appears in the pattern of hedging techniques and turn-taking. Politicians and educationists use these two techniques frequently in the political talkshows that result in non-adherence to CP. More particularly, this study examined how the maxims of manner and relation are flouted by the speakers in media discourse in the form of hedges and turn-taking patterns. The frequency of flouting CP using the two mentioned techniques has also been analyzed from a gender perspective. The study located the instances in which the maxim of manner is mainly hedged and instances in which the maxim of relation is flouted through turn-taking device by the speakers.

The study found that the speakers flouted the maxims of relation and manner in political talk shows for the two purposes of hedging and turn-taking in greater number than the rest. Further, she found that female politicians used the technique of hedging more than their male counterparts. This study enlists these two main reasons of flouting of the conversational maxims by the speakers. Moreover, the tendency of interruption was made by female politicians more often than male politicians.

Male speakers made 42% hedges whereas female speakers made 57% hedges. Male politicians used the turn-taking technique 37% while female politicians used it 64% in the total of 12 talk-shows.

The point of the further investigation that remained with respect to the above mentioned study of Abbas (2016) is the number of participants in conversation. This is because accommodating other participants in conversation results in greater number of interruption in instances of turn-taking. The greater is the number of participants, the higher would be the frequency of instances of turn-taking, and interruption and vice versa. Further research in this direction may analyze the factor of the number of participants while focusing hedges and turn-taking techniques from the perspective of Gricean Maxims.

### **Major Findings**

Just like other genres of conversation, political talkshows and interviews is a rich genre for discourse analysis. The application of Gricean Maxims to the politicians' speech reveals much than what is obviously said. These interviews and talkshows can be analyzed on a continuum ranging from observing and flouting the Gricean Maxims. Both of these tendencies may occur intentionally and unintentionally. Yet, in both cases, speakers' motives, intentions, agendas, and mind-set are revealed if critically analyzed. The critical review of different studies dealing with Pakistani political discourse from the perspective of Gricean Maxims illustrated that non-adherence to any of the four maxims is done with a deliberate and hidden purpose.

The maxim of quantity is flouted either for the over-emphasis laid on one's own achievement or to undermine the contribution of political opponents. In other cases, lesser is said that required when talking about the issues of their weaker points. The maxim of quality is flouted while expressing unconfirmed facts and making surmises. The abrupt transition and less coherent talk violate the maxim of manner mostly. Molding the topics in conversation results in flouting the relation maxim. The motives behind flouting CP is to offer justification and promoting their ideology.

Politicians make the artistic use of language by flouting CP to be safe in audience's view. Moreover, the deliberate non-adherence to CP for comic effect may take the form of irony in comedy talk-shows. Different shades of meanings can be conveyed by flouting CP for ironic effect. Verbal irony can be created through the use of pun, equivocal and allusion in the speech of dummies impersonating prominent political figures.

Political talk-shows often follow the practice of announcing the topic/agenda at the outset; the conversation followed requires adherence to the stated topic. In such cases, violating the maxim of relation results in interruptions from the moderator's side. Politicians also flout CP to prove political dominance on the one hand and display personal power on the other hand. The next motive behind manipulating language is to counter criticism. These motives can only be revealed by critical analysis of their discourse and by applying the Gricean maxims. Non-adherence to CP, particularly the maxims of manner and relation takes the form of hedges and a means of holding the floor by the technique of turn-taking.

After critically analyzing these researches, this study adds that other multiple factors are vital to consider in analyzing political interviews and talk-shows. In this regard, the format of interview, number of participants, the status of the speaker, the relation between interlocutors and the role played by the moderator are some of the key factors that are worth considering in applying the Gricean Maxims to the genre of political talk-shows and interviews.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored and critically reviewed previous studies conducted on interviews and talk shows to examine if the hosts utilize cooperative principle, Grice's maxims in their interviews. It used discourse analysis (DA) to determine how Pakistani hosts in TV interviews and talk shows interviews and debates with guests from different political parties. The research mainly focused Grice's Cooperative Principle. The study investigated if there was any resemblance or differences between how the TV host observed Grice's four maxims, namely the maxim of quality, the maxim of quantity, the maxim of relevance, and the maxim of manner, in their interviews with the guests from different backgrounds of political parties in Pakistan. The results and findings of this study can help Pakistani learners in order to enhance their communicative abilities by adhering to Grice's Cooperative Principle

appropriately and accurately while debating to minimize their misconceptions. Moreover, this study also highlighted many research gaps during the review that are worth-researching in future.

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