

Probing into the Dialogue of the President of Pakistan: Application of Grice's Maxims

Hafiz Ahmad Bilal

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

E-mail: ahmadbilal.uos@gmail.com

Sumaira Naeem

Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan

E-mail: sari.warraich@yahoo.com

Received: January 31, 2013 Accepted: March 4, 2013 Published: August 25, 2013

doi:10.5296/ijl.v5i4.4157 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v5i4.4157>

Abstract

This particular work aims at revealing the fact how authoritative people exploit the language to rationalize themselves, and how they could be pointed out by the analysis of spoken discourse following Paul Grice's Cooperative Principle and derived Maxims (1975). This study tries to show how political personalities try to defend themselves by collectively using words when appearing in media, in order to promote their ideologies across the public. The mass media analyzes certain issues through the collaboration of the public and tries to expose the grimes of the powerful elites. The researchers have tried to expose how a strong attempt of self-justification has been made by Mr. President. It also advocates how powerful individuals can manipulate language by playing upon words in order to shield themselves. In short, this analysis shows how the speaker molds the language in order to inculcate meanings among the people, thereby, brainwashing them in the attempts of alienation and diversion from what is their actual political agenda.

Keywords: Spoken discourse, Cooperative principle, Conversational maxims, Power and authority

1. Introduction

Language is a human system of communication, either spoken or written. Language consists of the use of words in a structured and traditional way. Expressions are also a way of communication. Hence, the facial expressions and gestures are used as a nonverbal method of communication to express feelings, ideas and thoughts. Beecher (1987) says, "All words are pegs to hang ideas on." Horace, the famous Roman poet, says, "The secret of all good writing is sound judgement." In the words of Whorf (1958), "Language shapes the way we think, and determines what we think about." Words want to be free. Language is a specific system of nature that is used to communicate ideas and to express wants and needs. The study of language in use is called 'Discourse'. According to Collins Dictionary Discourse is defined as "Communication of thought by words, talk, Conversation." People use language to communicate and the way in which language is used is called Discourse Analysis. As Gee (2010) said, "Discourse Analysis is the study of the ways in which language is used in text and contexts"

Discourse Analysis focuses on the structure of naturally occurring spoken language as found in such "discourses" as conversations, interviews and speeches. Surface meanings are quite different from the real ones and the main purpose of discourse analysis is to expose those unseen meanings. In natural spoken discourse, utterances are rarely preplanned in a smooth flow, more clarified and informative. But unexpected utterances are full of pauses, and are group of words which are intermingled and obscure and not significant. Linguists attempt to apply the Cooperative Principles on the speaker's natural occurrences and they endeavor to be truthful, informative, relevant and clear.

In 1975 Paul Grice, for the first time put a fanciful device, a notion to be for the world describing as Cooperative Principles.

1.1 Grice Theory

According to Paul Grice, for an effective communication, the speaker and the listener, sender and receiver involved in a conversation try to be cooperative. There, Conversational principles stating that participants expect that each will make a "conversational contribution such as is by the accepted purpose or the direction of the talk exchange."

1.2 Conversational Maxims

Cooperative Principle is an umbrella term of nine components that guide how we communicate; these directed components are grouped into four categories called the Maxims of conversation.

Maxims of Quality: Truthful

Do not lie.

Do not say what you believe to be false.

Maxims of Quantity: Informative

Make the strongest statement you can.

Maxims of Relation: Relevant

Be relevant

Stay on the topic

Maxim of Manners: Clear

Be perspicuous

Be meticulous, and dedicated

Avoid unnecessary verbosity

Avoid ambiguity

Be orderly

These four maxims play a vital role to bend the conventional arrangement of a speech as flawless, accurate, explanatory and appropriate. The chief characteristics of these maxims are that they generate conversational Implicates.

1.3 Flouting of Maxims

The speakers might violate these maxims in order to deceive the hearer. It might also be a violation of cooperative principles, and this violation can be either intentional or unintentional. Speakers violate the maxims in order to understand the listener's curiosity. Thus, people refuse to follow these maxims quite often.

2. Literature Review

Cooperative principles play a very useful role in any conversation, but exceptions are always there. For instance, according to Stenstrom (1994), "This does not mean, of course, that the listener always waits for the speaker to finish before taking over. Nor does it mean that speaker never disagrees, objects, or contradicts each other." (p.1) Therefore, violation of maxims is not a rare case. Much research has been conducted on Grice's cooperative principles and the four maxims.

Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2011) from Sharif University of Technology exercised their effort on the study of Grice's maxims. Their topic of study was "Some Instances of Violation and Flouting of the Maxim of Quantity by the Main Characters (Barry & Tim) in Dinner for Schmucks." Their study aimed at analyzing the maxim of quantity. Dinner for schmucks was a comedy movie and the language used by its characters was colloquial, so flouting of maxims was probable. They observed the violation of maxim of quantity through characters of this movie.

Nailufar (2001) from State Islamic University of Malang conducted research on drama "The Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller. In her thesis, Yuyun shows how the maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner are violated or flouted by characters in the drama, sometimes

intentionally and most often unintentionally.

Bethan Davies (2000) in his research article discussed true meanings of Grice's cooperative principle. Her aim was to distinguish between Grecian motivation behind Cooperative Principles and the "cooperation drift" usually used in literature. He has tried to clarify the intended meaning of cooperation.

Li Jia (2008) made his point on "The Violation of Cooperative principle And the Four Maxims in Psychological consulting." LI Jia focuses on the fact that violation of cooperative principle is largely affected by some specific psychological environment. For her findings, she takes the extracts from "The Female Psychologist" by B.I. Shumin.

Kheirabadi and Aghagolzadeh (2012) from Tarbiat Modares University, Tehran, Iran, in the article "Grice's Cooperative Maxims as Linguistic Criteria for News Selectivity" determine the application of Grice's maxims on news selection. In their research, they have tried to explain how Gricean maxims can be applied on selection of news forecasting. They claim that newscasters have an audience and maxims can be applied to it.

2.1 Application of Conversational Maxims

In this research paper, researcher has applied Grecian maxims of conversation on "AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW OF PRESIDENT". Researcher's focus is on the flouting of maxims in the responses made by the President. I have tried to analyze the specific purpose of flouting the maxims, in that particular context from the answers given by the President.

SAMPLE

Program: AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW OF PRESIDENT

PROGRAMME CAPITAL TALK GEO NEWS

Date: JANUARY 7th 2012

Time: 10 pm

Anchor: Hamid Mir

2.2 Opening and Background

On January 7th, 2012 Geo News Pakistan initiated a unique type of program in which President of Pakistan, after completing the four years of his government, interacts with Hamid Mir on public related issues concerning Pakistan.

Geo News is a public and commercial broadcasting television network as well as a mass media complex owned mega-corporation. It is one of the biggest private channels of the country so we can say that here public problems are discussed bravely and openly. There are biased concerns or unbiased within this crown corporation as well as the anchors. And an emphasis is put on public awareness of the political matters.

2.3 Topics of the Program

In this program, President himself answers the questions about the concerns of the people whether political, Economic, societal, and personal. So, avowal of any topic or topics under consideration in this discussion is nearly impossible. Anchor asked about suppositions and rumors regarding the dangers to democracy, unemployment, election, memo gate scandal, energy crises and educational system problems and so on. Hence, in this program, a variety of matters are answered or at least an attempt is made to address such issues.

Furthermore, within the programme there were two personalities. President and the other was the anchor of CAPITAL TALK, Hamid Mir. Program starts with an exceptional slogan for president, raised by the devotional but biased supporters with bigotry (based on racism) in favor of the President but now that slogan was mentioned by the host in its modified shape, invented by the opposition as well as anchor.

“Aik Zardari sub per bhari , tou,

Asif Ali Zardari sub per bhari ya ek siasi bemari” (Urdu)

The program further moved to disguise this slogan by the President, suggesting that, Asif Ali Zardari has no authority on anything personally, that Parliament is sovereign but facts are pretty obvious that Mr. President holds absolute command on the cabinet, being the president as well as the shared chairman of the party. As the president of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari has become a perilous cause of moral and economic dread among the people of Pakistan. People of Pakistan view him as a threat to the sovereignty of Pakistan and the interests of everyone in that country. There is no doubt that the current government of Pakistan is immensely corrupt and the politicians are blinded by their greed, and the rest are forced to live in poverty and unemployment among countless other issues. He also said after his death he should be recognize as

“Here lies the servant of the people”

(He wishes that these words should be carved on his grave stone)

The program further proceeded with a question from the host.

3. Analysis

Hamid Mir: App ne saray powers Parliament ko day diye hain tou kia Parliament ko article six k tehat Parvez Musharaf ka trial karna chahiye? (URDU)

President: “I think collective wisdom will prevail.” (ENGLISH)

Here, from researcher’s point of view, maxims of quality and relevance are followed by president. But there is flouting of maxims of manner and quantity. President wanted to prove his government as democratic and just. Through this response, he actually assured the collective approach of Parliament and his lack of interest as an individual in this matter. So, he is sharply playing upon words “collective wisdom”.

That is why; he made this violation he wants to give a stable and powerful impression of his

democratic rule.

Hamid Mir: Shaheed Bibi ka goal hai , **“DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST REVENGE”** lakin iss jamhuriat main bohat se qoami addaray tabahi ki taraf ja rahay hain?

President: “App ki nazar main”

Hamid: PIA?

President: “App ki nazar main”

Hamid: WAPDA?

President: “App ki nazar main”

Hamid: Railway?

President: “App ki nazar main, Dekhain addaray kamzore ho ray hain, tabah nae huey” (URDU)

Here, in this response the four speech maxims are flouted and violated badly. Anchor has raised the burning issues of democratic government but President has tried to justify the counterfeit performance of his government. As the President said in his every speech that he can provide **Roti, Kapra aur Makan** to the poor and sobbing public but he does not talk about other crises which nation is suffering from last four years. There is not only the crisis of the shortage of energy, but also the shortage of flour, terrorism and extremism, restoration of judges, economic down slide and above all, inflation and unemployment in the country at high level.

Now, when four years of government has been passed already, he is still boasting of solving the same issues. But **Roti, Kapra, Makan** has become a fantasy for the poor. Representatives understand that the deprived people are sensible and there is only need to inspire them so, they made their speeches full of spirit. Bourgeois group or the elites in charge of the resources of the country can afford education. They are further intermingled amongst other political leaders, hence, they are aware of the political games played by these elites so they are well aware of the use of the quarry of words. Their vision for well-established group is that can solve their problems by one self.

Hamid: **India k baray baat krein tou kia app India ko ‘most favorite’ nation ka status day rahay hain ya nae?**

President: “Main India k baray baat karta raha jub main Chairman of Pakistan People’s Party tha na k President of Pakistan.” (URDU)

In this response maxim of quality has been observed but the rest of three maxims have been flouted. Here, the President is trying to answer the anchor under the mighty words in order to avoid the interrogation about this matter. He strikingly dealt with anchor’s query. He has been intentionally avoiding and trying to prove his authority, and because of this, he molded his answer.

Hamid: Army chief aur DGI, ISI kehtay hain k memo scandal aik haqeeqat hai ar Prime Minister of Pakistan kehtay hain ye aik kaghaz ka tukra hai. President Sahib kia hum duniya main mazaq nae ban gaye iss puray scandal ki waja se?

President: “Main samajta hon k , It has been given unnecessary publicity.”

In this response the maxims of quantity, relevance, and manner are flouted and the rest of one is on choice. In our country, democracy has always been facing dangers. In the past, it was attacked by army dictators and still this democratic government is in threat of army takeover. It is true that memo-gate is written by Mr. President. It was stated that *his government is in danger*, so at that time, it was important to write but now he is stating that “**it has been given unnecessary publicity**” which shows that it is not too important. One thing that is alarming in one and all minds is that, then why did he write this scandal?

4. Discussion

Observation and violation of Paul Grice’s maxims deliberately in both cases serves a purpose. Often flouting occurs consciously and sometimes unconsciously, although conveys literally different meanings. This conscious violation happens decisively, by a speaker to conceal the reality somehow it is just because to reveal the reality.

Similarly, at this instance, a researcher detected that violation of maxims of conversation has been made here intentionally in an artistic manner, as well as unintentionally to prove him right. Naturally, the President molds his speeches to whenever and wherever in order to justify himself and his government.

The basic needs of life, emotions and feelings of public must be the first concern of the president of a country; it is also required by his status. Instead of his preference to sort out the problems of his public, he defends his government and justifies himself by saying that he will provide Roti, kapra Aur Makan to the sobbing public.

President is building castles in the air metaphorically, rather than quarry of words to convince the frantic nation and yet he is singing songs for restoration. So, this is somewhat contrary to the fact that he is trying to conceal the realities with the use of his authority.

5. Conclusion

Finally, it is concluded from this study that an elected person, where he is answerable to the public, tries to win the favor of his people with colorful words. Here, some artistic techniques are used to gain the societal influence and civic courtesy. The political leaders use charismatic techniques and behaviors in order to win the hearts and minds of the public. However, often these techniques are used to manipulate the public into a euphoric world where the politicians promise to fix every problem for every individual. As seen repeatedly, these politicians have failed to meet the demands of the public and people are deprived of their necessities especially in the third world countries. These skills are used at altered positions as administrative issues being focused here Cooperative Principles and Conversational Maxims are applied to analytically analyze: how spoken discourse has been developed to verify the supremacy of government and to show individual influence and

attempt of adequate criticism. When approached critically, the underlined intentions become obvious which otherwise remain unappreciated by the common folk.

References

- Barber, A., & Stainton, J. R. (2009). *Philosophy of language and linguistics*. Elseiver. Oxford.
- Beecher, H. W. (1987). *Proverbs from Plymouth Pulpit*. Appleton & Co.
- Comerson, D. (2001). *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London: Sage Publications.
- Davies, B. (2000). Grice's Cooperative Principle: Getting the Meaning Across. In Nelson, D., Foulkes, P. (Eds.). *Leeds Working Papers in Linguistics*, 8, 1-26.
- Garvin, P. L. (1958). LINGUISTICS: Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf. John B. Carroll (Ed.). *American Anthropologist*, 60, 415-416. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1525/aa.1958.60.2.02a00480>
- Gee, J. P. (2010). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method*. Routledge.
- Grice, H. P. (1975). 'Logic and conversation'. In P. Cole, & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Studies in Syntax and Semantics III: Speech Acts* (pp. 183-198). New York: Academic Press.
- Jia, L. (2008). The Violation of Cooperative Principle and the Four Maxims in Psychological Consulting. *Canadian Social Science*, 4(3), 87-95.
- Kheirabadi, R., & Aghagolzadeh, F. (2012). Grice's Cooperative Maxims as Linguistic Criteria for News Selectivity. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(3), 547-553. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4304/tpls.2.3.547-553>
- Nailufar, Y. (2001). *Flouting Maxims on Grice's Maxim in the Drama of 'the Death of a Salesman'*. Sarjana Humaniora (S.Hum) Thesis, State Islamic University of Malang
- Parvaneh, K., & Nikan, S. (2011). *Some Instances of Violation and Flouting of the Maxim of Quantity by the Main Characters (Barry & Tim) in Dinner for Schmucks*. *International Proceedings of Economics Development & Research*, 26, 122.
- Stenström, A. (1994). *An Introduction to Spoken Interaction*. London: Longman.