

#JUST SHARING: REVISITING GRICEAN MAXIMS IN PUBLIC FACEBOOK COMMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Users of social media sites, such as Facebook, tend to violate numerous language rules and use informal language to convey a message. This scenario can cause misunderstanding between sender and receiver in conversation. In order to address the aforementioned concern, Grice proposes the cooperative principle as a rule of conversation. Anchored on Gricean Maxims, this study explored how these maxims were violated in selected Facebook public comments. Results revealed that the maxims of Quality and Quantity were the most violated maxims. These maxims were violated through flouting a maxim (53.3%) by “Not directly addressing the question or comment”, “Giving information without credible evidences” and “Using vulgar words.” Additionally, Coping with a clash between maxims (46.7%) were done “Providing unverified information” and “Using vulgar words.” Therefore, people shall be vigilant in spotting unverified information online. Since there are no rules governing the use of social media, individuals can easily claim something which is untrue.

Keywords: *Content analysis, Gricean Maxim, Facebook, cooperative principle*

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0, or commonly known as the dawn of social networking sites (SNS) such as *Facebook* and *Twitter* paved way to easier, faster, and “hassle-free” communicating. Social networking is in fact one of the most efficient and effective channel of communication as it offers convenient way of sharing thoughts and stories, and getting people’s reaction. Irrefutably, online platforms also became a venue for freedom of expression as it allowed people to deliberately express their thoughts, arguments, and rants without restrictions. Moreover, Khushu-Lahiri and Chakravarty (2014) argues that SNS are also channels for quick interchanges and interactions through a language which has fewer rules governing it. Hence, users of these sites tend to violate numerous language rules and use informal language to convey a message from explicit to implicit meaning (Yus, 1999). People imply a different meaning from what they say and expect the reader to know what they truly mean (Thomas, 1995). This scenario can cause misunderstanding between sender and receiver in conversation. Grice (1975) coined the term *implicature phenomenon* to refer to this issue. In order to address the aforementioned concern, Grice proposes the *cooperative principle* as a rule of conversation. This principle of “cooperation” is reinforced by a number of conversational maxims:

1. Maxim of quantity: make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purpose of exchange). Do not make your contribution more informative than required.

2. Maxim of quality: do not say what you believe to be false. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

3. Maxim of relation: be relevant.

4. Maxim of manner: avoid obscurity of expressions, avoid ambiguity, be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity), and be orderly.

Ultimately, this theory posits that a participant makes a –good faith and effort to contribute to and collaborate on the conversation as it proceeds.

Since people can communicate in Facebook and other social media sites without restrictions, violations of cooperative principle and conversational maxims occur. Grice (1975), as cited in Taghiyev, (2017) established four ways on how maxims are violated:

1. Quietly and unostentatiously

A: Do you love me?

B: Yes.

Supposing speaker B does not love really, he quietly violates the maxim of quality.

2. By opting out a maxim

A: How much are you paid per month?

B: Sorry, that is confidential.

This is explicit information given by the speaker B that maxim of quantity cannot be satisfied.

3. Coping with a clash between maxims

A: Where was that poet born?

B: Somewhere in the South.

The speaker B does not know exactly where the poet was born. To avoid violating the maxim of quality – providing information he knows to be untrue – he violates the maxim of quantity – providing less information than that was asked for.

4. Flouting a maxim in order to exploit it.

A: John is the CEO of the company, is he not?

B: Uh-huh, and I am the Emperor of Japan.

Speaker B, unlike someone who simply violates the maxim, flouts the maxim (here the maxim of quality) and expects the listener to notice it. (Grice, 1975, p. 49)

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This paper aimed at answering the following questions:

1. What are the types of maxims violations observed in selected Facebook public comments?
2. In what ways do these maxims violated as observed in selected Facebook public comments?

METHODOLOGY

This Basic Qualitative Research used Content Analysis to examine the types of maxims violated and how it was violated in selected public Facebook comments. Thirty (30) sample comments were selected through Critical Case Sampling, which is the process of selecting a small number of important cases - cases that are likely to "yield the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge" (Patton, 2001). The selected comments are from several viral posts such as political news from reputable news organizations in the Philippines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Types of Maxims Violations as Observed in Public Facebook Comments

Maxims Violation	QN	QL	R	M	Total	Percentage
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Quietly and unostentatiously				-	0%
Opting out a maxim				-	0%
Coping with a clash between maxims	10		4	14	46.7%
Flouting a maxim in order to exploit it.	5	3	8	16	53.3%

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of the Types of Maxims Violations as Observed in Public Facebook Comments.

It can be observed on the table above that the maxims of *Quantity*, and *Manner* are the mostly violated maxims among the selected public Facebook comments. In addition, these maxims were violated through *flouting a maxim* (53.3%), and *Coping with a clash between maxims* (46.7%).

WAYS ON HOW MAXIMS WERE VIOLATED

Types of Violations	Maxims	Ways of Violations	Frequency
1. Coping with a clash between maxims	Quality	Providing unverified information	10
	Manner	Using vulgar words	4
2. Flouting a maxim	Quantity	Not directly addressing the question or comment	5
	Quality	Giving information without credible evidences	3
	Manner	Using vulgar words	5
		Calling "names"	1
		Using "all-caps"	2

Table2. Frequency Distribution of the Types of Maxims Violations and Ways of Violation as Observed in Public Facebook Comments

It can be observed that “Providing unverified information” as a way of Coping with a clash between maxims and “Not directly addressing the question or comment” as a way of Flouting a maxim are the most prevalent among the selected public Facebook comments. It can be inferred that the users of the particular social media sites tend to give comments, opinions, and arguments without minding if they are providing true and correct information, thus violating the maxim of Quality. In consonance, they also likely to give unverified speculations without citing sources. Somehow, it proves the notion that since there is no rules and restrictions in Social Media Sites, such as Facebook, users apt to give merely opinions as a form of self-expression without minding the veracity of information or sometimes even the validity of arguments—which somehow contributes to the proliferation of “fake news” since some users easily believe what they see on posts or even comments. Moreover, since the selected comments are tackling political issues, the users are predisposed to supporting whichever side or personality they are in, to the extent that they miss to revisit their claims and arguments before posting. It can also be inferred that some users use vulgar words and impolite expressions, such as *ungas*, *demonyo*, *walanghiya*, *hunghang*, *gunggong*, using “all-caps” and calling “names” such as *yaya*, *tuta*, to other users of persons involved in the issue, thus violating the maxim of Manner.

CONCLUSION

1. The maxims of *Quantity* and *Manner* are the mostly violated maxims among the selected public Facebook comments.

2. It can be observed that “Giving insufficient information” as a way of violating the maxims is the most prevalent among the selected public Facebook comments.
3. Users of Facebook apt to give merely opinions as a form of self-expression without minding the veracity of information or sometimes even the validity of arguments—which somehow contributes to the proliferation of “fake news.”

RECOMMENDATION

1. Social media users shall be vigilant in spotting unverified information online. Since there are no rules governing the use of social media, individuals can easily claim something which is untrue.
1. Further research is needed using a different theoretical basis such as argumentation models and patterns as well as pragmatic point of views such as speech acts.
2. Further research also can be conducted in other different contexts aside from political news or issues (e.g. Business, Marketing, Education posts).

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