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A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE OF SALESPeOPLE IN ISLAMABAD WITH REFERENCE TO GRICE'S CONVERSATIONAL MAXIMS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to explore and examine the violation of the Gricean conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner in the discourse of salespeople in Islamabad, Pakistan. Furthermore, this study also focused on which Gricean maxim was violated the most by the sampled salespeople. The reason why the researcher selected salespeople was because it is well known that salespeople are very persuasive and in order to sell their products and services, they have to convince a lot of people for which they often manipulate language. This research draws on Grice's theory of conversation. Quota sampling has been used in this study. The findings of this particular study highlight that there are 10 instances of maxim violation in the discourse of the sampled salespeople. Out of the 10 violations, the most often violated maxim is that of quantity, it was violated 5 times, followed by the maxim of relevance which was violated 3 times and the remaining two maxims, that are; quality and manner were violated 1 time each.

Keywords: pragmatics, analysis, language, discourse, salespeople, Grice, maxims, conversation, Islamabad.

1.0 Introduction

Aristotle once said, 'man is a social animal'. This is a significant thought as it encompasses and elaborates the basic nature of humanity. Human beings cannot live without other human beings. In order to form and maintain a society, some sort of communication is required. Language can most aptly be described as a system of communication. Within human life, communication is of paramount importance. According to Yule (1985), language is a social tool. It is through language that people communicate their ideas, desires and emotions to their human counterparts. One of the characteristics of language as identified by Palmer (1971) is the fact that human language has a quality of creativity. Language can be utilized in order to perform various

functions through manipulation. Language can be used in such a way that aids in the fulfilling of the speaker's motives. Language can be manipulated in order to induce the desirable emotional state; it can be manipulated to produce a fearful, joyous, humorous, effect on the hearers.

Salespeople can be found all around Pakistan. Sales as a profession started in the United States during the last half of the nineteenth century. With the advent of the industrial revolution and the urbanization of the modern world, many new businesses and companies propped up all around the globe, presenting different products to consumers and customers. Salespeople are very good at manipulating language in order to persuade their customers into buying the products or the

services that they are selling. In the capital city of Pakistan, that is; Islamabad, there are many businesses and companies located at commercialized areas such as Aabpara, Blue Area, Super Market, Jinnah Super, Kohsar Market etc. In Islamabad, many salespeople can be easily found within or outside of many large businesses located in such areas. The kind of language that is used by salespeople is a concoction of indirect and implied communication techniques. A salesman's discourse is one that is highly persuasive; they make use of language in such a way as to manipulate people's feelings towards a certain product or service so that more and more customers would opt for that particular product or service.

Keeping the above mentioned assumption in mind, the researcher of the present paper has analyzed the discourse of salespeople from the reference of Grice's maxims in order to examine and explore the ways in which salespeople deviate from the cooperative principle of language in order to manipulate or convince consumers into buying a specific product. The main aim of this particular research is to highlight the extent to which Grice's maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relevance are violated by salespeople in their discourse.

Problem statement:

With the emergence of industrialized and highly urbanized modern, metropolitan cities, the numbers of salespeople have drastically increased. In the contemporary world, businesses and companies have to try and survive in a highly competitive environment. Salespeople are valuable assets for any business. Through their effective use of language, they are able to convince people to buy products that they don't necessary need. Their persuasive use of language is a distinguishable trait. In order to achieve their goals, salespeople often deviate from conversational norms by violating or flouting Gricean maxims which navigate the flow of a cooperative or effective communication.

Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because the researcher has investigated Gricean maxims in the discourse of salespeople which augments the scope

of Grice's (1975) maxims violation. The present paper can be useful for researchers and students of linguistics who are interested in learning about certain linguistic techniques and strategies and in developing the language communication principles concerning with Grice's maxims. This study will also help the general public in understanding the manipulation of language and the violation of maxims by salespeople in order to fulfill their agenda and to sell their products and services. This particular study focuses only on analyzing the violation of Grice's maxims in the sampled salespeople's language.

Research Questions:

1. How are Gricean Maxims violated in the conversations of sampled salespeople?
2. Which of the Gricean Maxim is most frequently violated in the conversation of the sampled salespeople?

3. Research Objectives:

1. To investigate the violation of Grice's Maxims in the conversations of the sampled salespeople.
2. To identify as to which Gricean maxim has been violated the most in the conversations of the sampled salespeople.

Delimitation

This particular study is delimited to the three salespeople working in Kohsar Market in the city of Islamabad.

2.0 Literature Review

A structured system used by humans to communicate or interact is called language. It can be conventionally verbal, written or manual symbols which are used by humans to take part in their cultural activities and to express themselves in different ways. It has a dynamic role to play in human's life, i.e., not only human can convey the ideas or opinions as speaker but also they can comprehend someone's emotional feeling (which are commonly taken as abstract feelings) as the receivers. According to Yule (1975), language has multiples characteristics such as; it is arbitrary,

creative, systematic, social, conventional, symbolic and non-instinctive in nature. It is a social tool which always learnt through exposure and experience.

Yule (1975) highlights that pragmatics refers to decontextualized meanings which relates to the manner in which words are being used to get to know more about the meaning other than literal meaning that includes simile, metaphors or implications. In the simplest words it can be said that basically the production and comprehension of language in a social context is referred as pragmatics. In the 1930, a psychologist and philosopher Charles Morris coined the term *pragmatics* after declaring it as a study of a linguistic form with reference to context.

A conversation is supposed to be effective, conveniently audible and comprehensible; only then can it be called a successful communicative event. For that, Paul Grice has proposed a theory of conversation which highlights the various factors that promote and facilitate a smoother and smarter process of conversation for all the participants. The theory presents four maxims; known as the Gricean maxims. Those four maxims are maxim of quality, quantity, manner and relevance. The accuracy, clarity, truthfulness and information of any conversation is judged with the help of these maxims. The researcher will discuss the Grice maxims in the discourse of sales people that how salesperson violate Gricean Maxims while interacting with customers. Dornerus (2005) focuses on breaking maxims in conversation while analyzing how maxims are used in TV shows to create comical, emotional and dramatic conditions. The researcher finds out that in order to create comical and dramatic situation, the maxim of relevance and maxim of manner has frequently been flouted for humorous situation, and maxim of quality and quantity are flouted to make characters unreliable and shifty. The study concludes with describing the importance of maxims for scriptwriters as they evoke feelings in their viewers through that.

Thomas (1995) believes that people do not pay heed to maxims while speaking; they are more concerned about their agenda to speak or what they want to achieve from their communication. This is

how they violate maxims on regular basis and for that speaker must be responsible as it deceives the listener. This point is further elaborated by Waget (2005), according to him, it is the failure on the part of speaker when he violates the maxims and does not deliver the accurate information on the right time. The information is not authentic and unclear which creates the ambiguity and the information cannot remain in its actual form. The maxim of quality is violated when the conversation is not truthful. When irrelevant information is given out; the maxim of relevance is violated. Similarly, the maxim of manner is violated when the speech is ambiguous in nature by speaker.

Hammadi and Muhammad (2009) have done a research on which they examine the recorded interviews of politicians and how they violated maxims. The researcher finds out that the maxim of quality is constantly violated by the politicians. The study is a mixed research and concludes with the remarks that quality maxims is the most significant Gricean maxim to be followed; if it is violated (either intentionally or unintentionally), the speech is hard to comprehend.

Likewise, another researchers, Khosravizadeh and Sadehvandi (2009) conducted a research and in this study researchers analyze the extent to which maxim is violated or flouted the most by the two characters of the selected movie. The findings suggest that there are five events when a maxim of quality is violated and three places where it is flouted. Also it suggests that in order to facilitate the process of conversation, cooperative principle proposes the best practice of communication.

Zaidi et al (2020), explores the violation of maxims by beggars in daily routine. The researchers analyze beggars' manipulative and persuasive language skills. He comes to the conclusion that almost all the cooperative principle's maxims are not followed rather violated. The beggars say lie, inaccurate information and irrelevant things to get money from other people. The mostly exaggerate their financial condition to gain sympathy and support. Lodari et al (2018) conducted a research in which the researchers focused on analyzing the interaction between Clinton and Trump during the

2016 presidential election debate. According to the researchers of this particular study, many times, politicians violate Grice's conversation maxims when interacting with their political opponents as a way of inserting dominance over the opposing party and to construct a positive self-image and a negative other image. According to this particular research Trump violated more Gricean maxims than Clinton and mostly the maxim of quantity was the most violated.

Even though so many works have been written and published on violation and flouting of Grice maxims, this study is unique in a sense that it will focus on the discourse of salespeople on which not much work has produced as such. Sales persons are actually very conscious of their language use. They manipulate and construct their language in such a way that it convinces buyers or customer to avail their product. The researcher will focus on how they violate maxims while manipulating and constructing their language.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The conversation model of Paul Grice (1975) formulates the theoretical framework for this particular study. According to Grice (1975), there are certain important components that that guides conversations and interactions between people to be more cooperative by giving importance to not only what is said but also to how it is said. Grice's (1975) idea regarding what constitutes a good conversation is considered to be one of the most fundamental and well-known theories in the field of pragmatics. According to Saghebi and Sobhani (2014), Gricean maxims highlight the flow of conversations and interactions among and between two or more than two people. Grice's maxims together create what is known as the cooperative principle of conversation. There are four Gricean conversational maxims, these are; quantity, quality, relevance and manner.

The Maxim of Quantity: According to Dorneus (2006), maxi of quantity states that the speaker must only give the required amount of information; a speaker's answer must not be too long or too brief.

There is no need to give unnecessary information. For example, when someone asks another person, 'would you like something to eat?' For this particular question, a simple yes or no would be sufficient but if a person replies to this question by going into details about their entire dietary habits than that answer lacks the conversational maxim of quantity.

The Maxim of Quality : This particular maxim states that the information that the speaker gives must be truthful and that the speaker must try not to say something that he or she knows to be false or something that is not supported by evidence. For example, if a teacher asks his student 'have you read the chapter I assigned?' and the student replies by saying that 'yes I have' even though the student has not read it than the student is violating the Gricean maxim of quality by deliberately lying to the teacher.

The Maxim of Relevance : As the name suggests, this particular maxim requires the participants of any conversation to be as relevant in order to make the conversation as cooperative as possible. For example, if some asks their child, 'have you done your homework?' and the child replies as 'I'm hungry, what's for lunch?' in this exchange the child's reply is not the relevant answer to the parent's question thus violating the maxim of relevance.

The Maxim of Manner : The maxim of manner highlights that in order to maintain a cooperative interaction, it is of paramount importance that the participants speak with clarity, there should not be any ambiguousness or obscurity in their manner of speaking and be brief and organized in their contribution.

Non-Observance of Maxims : Whenever a person fails to observe a conversational maxim, this is known as non-observance or breaking of maxims. This can be done intentionally or unintentionally. Grice (1975) identified and explained five main types of non-observances of Gricean maxims. These are; flouting a maxim, violating a maxim, infringing a maxim, suspending a maxim and opting out of a maxim. When the speaker does not have the intention to deceive the listener than this is known as flouting. It is important to remember that whenever someone flouts a maxim, it is most likely

not their intention to deceive or trick the listener rather the speaker wants the listener to find the implied meaning, in other words, to look for the conversational implicature. Violating a maxim refers to the act of intentionally not observing a maxim in order to deceive the other person. Opting out of a maxim refers to the act of not following or observing a maxim for legal or ethical reasons.

3.2. Research design

The research design opted for this particular study is descriptive and exploratory in nature. As far as the exploratory research design is concerned, for this particular part the researcher of this study has tried to identify and delineates the instances where Gricean maxims have been violated. For the descriptive research design the researcher has focused on describing the violation of Grice's maxims.

3.3. Research Method

This study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. It is a mixed research in the way that the conversations and interactions with the salespeople have been examined and analyzed qualitatively in order to find out how the sampled salespeople have violated Grice's maxims of conversation and furthermore, the findings have also been presented quantitatively as this study also highlights the Gricean maxim that has been violated the most by the sampled salespeople.

3.4. Procedure and Tools:

For this study, the researcher has recorded the conversations of three salespeople from three different shops located in Kohsar Market, Islamabad. The conversations were carried out in English and recorded using a mobile phone. Later on, the recorded conversations were transcribed and later analyzed in order to find out how and which Gricean maxims have been violated by the sampled salespeople during the conversation. Random pieces of conversation have been taken as examples in order to serve as objective material for this study. The answers of the salespeople in response to the researcher's questions have been recorded and analyzed in order to see how and which Gricean maxims has been violated.

3.5. Sampling:

For this study, the sampled population includes three salespersons. Islamabad is the capital city of Pakistan and it has become plethora of different people belonging from different regions within Pakistan. Furthermore, there are many foreigners living in Islamabad. Therefore it is quite normal for shopkeepers and salespeople in Islamabad to be fluent in English as they also have to deal with international clients too. The sampled salespeople were told beforehand to answer the researcher's questions in English and were also made aware of the fact that the conversation between them and the researcher will be recorded. For this study the researcher has used quota sampling. The conversations of the 3 salespeople was recorded and transcribed and later analyzed in accordance to the objectives of the study.

Data Analysis

For this study, the researcher analyzed the violation of Gricean maxims in the language of salespeople. The data was collected through interviews. The researcher interviewed three salespeople, from three different shops. The conversations were recorded using a mobile phone recorder. The conversation were afterwards, transcribed and analyzed in the light of Grice's conversational maxims in order to find out how the maxims were violated and which one was violated the most. For moral and ethical reasons, the names and the true identities of the salespeople has been kept anonymous. For the purpose of this study they have been referred to through their initials, so S.B, F.S and A.K are the three salespeople whose interviews have recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Before the interview, each salesperson was made aware of the fact the researcher was recording them in order to carry out a study. The researcher had approached five salespeople but two of them refused to be part of the study and as per their wishes their conversations have not been analyzed for this research. For this study, the researcher has examined all the recorded conversations from the point of view of Gricean conversational maxims and has identified and analyzed the instances where violations of Grice's maxims have occurred.

Violation of Maxim of Quality

The conversational maxim of quality highlights that the speaker used make his or her utterance as much as it required. The speaker should not be too informative or less informative. In the following lines some examples have been highlighted that showcase how the sampled salespeople have violated this particular maxim.

Example 1:

Researcher: AOA. What is your name?

S.B: Walaikum Assalam, my name is S.B. We have so many new products, we have concealers from various companies and we have water-proof eyeliners.

It can clearly be noted here that the researcher had asked a very straightforward question, the researcher only wanted to know about the salesperson's name but the salesperson goes on to talk about the products and services that are available in the store. The salesperson's reply clearly violates the maxim of quantity as the person gives more information than is actually required and goes on to talk about something that the researcher has not asked about. The most appropriate response in-keeping with the cooperative principle here would have been the fact that the salesperson should have just replied with their name.

Example 2:

Researcher: Do you have Maybelline concealers?

S.B: We have concealers from every company but I would recommend that you see these concealers from Mac, they are so good for your skin, they have a very creamy texture so it easily absorbs in the skin.

Over here a simple yes or no answer followed by the salesperson showing the concealers asked for by the researcher would have been enough but salesperson violated the maxim of quantity by giving a bunch of information that was not required. The question was simply regarding concealers from one particular company and the salesperson completely deviated from the company that the researcher was interested in because the salesperson was more interested in selling Mac beauty products because of the fact that Mac

products are more expensive and if a customer buys one than that leads to a bigger commission cut for the salesperson as well.

Example 3:

Researcher: AOA. What is your name?

F.S: Walaikum Assalam, my name is F.S. Why don't you come here and see these products you see on the table are 40% off. See brand new stuff.

In this particular example, the maxim of quantity again being violated by the a different salesperson named F.S. one thing that the researcher has highlighted in this particular study is the fact that salespersons tend to be very forthcoming and try to take over the conversation by inducing several of their own ideas and thoughts about products and services that they are trying to sell in order to persuade the customer. In doing so, salespeople often violate the cooperative principle which dictates the flow of a smooth conversation. Over here, when the researcher asked for the salesperson's name, the answer should have only included that person's name and nothing more or less but F.S continued on to give unasked information thus violating the maxim of quantity.

Example 4:

Researcher: Do you have a Spiderman action figure?

F.S: Oh yes, we have all of them, if you come here I'll show you, we have Spiderman, hulk, superman, batman, iron man, captain America, see all of them and at very reasonable prices too, you can even buy an entire set of all the action figures.

Over here, again F.S violates the maxim of quantity by going overboard with the amount of information that is given in response to the researcher's question. In this specific example, it can be clearly seen that the salesperson has given unneeded and extra information. Many salespersons have the habit of giving unwanted information regarding products or even talking about products that the customer has not asked about because they want to sell as many products as they possibly can. The researcher over here only asked for one action figure but the salesperson goes

on to tell and show the researcher their entire collection of superhero action figures, thus violating the maxim of quantity as the salesperson did not give the adequate amount of information rather over did it by giving extra and unneeded information.

Example 5:

Researcher: Which phone would you recommend me to buy and why?

A.K: All of them are good.

In this particular example, the salesperson named A.K works a mobile phone shop. The researcher asked the salesperson as to which phone should the researcher opt for and the reasons as to why that particular phone is recommended by the salesperson but the salesperson reply violates the maxim of quantity as it is too brief and doesn't answer the researcher's query. The answer that the salesperson has given gives very little information.

Violation of Maxim of Quality:

Maxim of quality states that whatever is said during a conversation should be truthful and that the speakers should never say anything that they believe to be false or for which they lack evidence as it hinders the flow of a smooth conversation.

Example 1:

Researcher: Aren't Mac concealers are so much more expensive than Maybelline concealers?

S.B: No ma'am the prices are the same.

Maxim of quality was not violated as often as the maxim of quantity by the sampled salespersons because one the basic tenet of sales' is the idea that the salesperson must establish a relation of trust with their customer in order to be successful and in order to do that they have to be honest with the customer and not say anything that is false or for which they don't have the evidence. In this particular example, the salesperson named S.B, violated the maxim of quality. Maybelline concealers cost less than mac concealers and the salesperson probably knew that but still intentionally gave the customer the wrong piece of information. It could be the case that maybe the salesperson also didn't

know the difference between the prices but that's very unlikely that that was the case.

Violation of the Maxim of Relevance

The Gricean maxim of relevance states that whatever the participants in a conversation say should be relevant. This particular violation of maxim occurs when a participant of a conversation responds to a remark with a remark that is completely off topic. This is mostly done deliberately in order to change the topic or to turn around the topic of the conversation and stir it towards something else. Following are some of the examples of the violation of maxim of relevance that were noted in the discourse of salespeople during this study.

Example 1:

Researcher: Okay what's the price of Mac concealers?

S.B: Ma'am these are good, you should try them, and do you want me to check your skin tone for you so that we can find the best concealer for you?

In this particular example, the researcher asked a very simple question from the salesperson regarding the price of a specific product but the salesperson instead of addressing and answering the posed question, went off topic. One thing that the researcher noticed while conducting this particular research was the fact that many times salespeople refused to tell the price of a certain product or service to the customers. This example highlights that the salesperson more often tend to confuse customers through their use of language so that the customers feels like doing what the salesperson is saying and relies on their judgment regarding a product.

Example 2:

Researcher: How long have you been working here?

F.S: God is the provider, I am working and he is providing, Alhamdulillah.

Now in this particular example, the answer that the salesperson gave is alright but it is not relevant and it has nothing to do with the question

of the researcher thus the salesperson is violating the maxim of relevance in this example because what the salesperson says has nothing to do with the context of the conversation.

Example 3:

Researcher: Can I get a discount on the Spiderman action figure?

F.S: This figure is in very good quality and its part of the new products we have recently received.

In this example again the violation of maxim of relevance takes place as the salesperson deviates from the main topic of conversation. The researcher asked a simple question to which a simple declination or agreement would have sufficed but because for many salespeople the question of discount is an unwelcomed one the salesperson here tried to change the subject by giving a completely off topic answer thus violating the maxim of relevance.

Violation of Maxim of Manner

Maxim of manner is one of the four sub-principles on which Grice later based his cooperative principle on. According to this maxim, the participants of a conversation must make their responses or replies as clear as they possibly can. There should be no ambiguity in what is said and it should be brief and organized.

Example:

Researcher: How long have you been working here?

A.K: For some time.

Over here, the salesperson, referred to in this research as A.K has violated the maxim of manner. The question that was asked by the researcher was a relatively simple one but the answer given by A.K is very vague. As this research highlights that many salespeople do not tell the amount of experience they have in the sales business many times because maybe they feel like it hampers the customer’s trust or maybe because they feel like the customer would not like to deal with a person who hasn’t spent much time with the product they are selling.

Discussion and Findings

As a result of the analysis carried out in the above section shows that the salespeople in their discourse violate the Gricean maxims various times in their conversations as the instances taken showcase that all the four Gricean maxims have violated at time or another in the collective discourse of the sampled salespeople. The first part of the data analysis dealt with the idea how the four maxims of Grice’s theory of conversation have been violated in the recorded conversations. The second part of the data analysis dealt with the idea which Gricean maxim has been violated the most in the recorded conversations. In order to answer the second research question of this study, the researcher has analyzed the data quantitatively and the findings have been presented in the following table.

Table 1: Frequency of Violation of Gricean Maxims in Salespeople’s Language

MAXIMS	NUMBER OF VIOLATIONS
QUANTITY	5
QUALITY	1
RELEVANCE	3
MANNER	1

This study highlights that in total there were 10 cases of violations with regard to the Gricean maxims in the conversations that took place between the researcher and the salespersons. Out of the total 10 cases, the maxim of quantity was violated the most that is; it was violated 05 times whereas the maxim of relevance was violated 03 times and the remaining maxims of quality and manner were violated 01 time each.

This study focuses on the discourse of salespeople and how they violate Grice’s maxims of conversation. The findings of this study is the fact that all four of maxims are violated by salespeople in their discourse yet the maxims that they most violate the most are the maxims of quantity and relevance. The discourse of salespeople is very distinctive; they try to be as friendly as possible in order to persuade the customer to buy the product or the service that they are selling. In order to make the sale, they violate the maxim of quantity most of the times by providing too much information regarding a particular product or brand or by

providing less information about the specific brand. In both the cases, they try to be persuasive by withholding information because many times being honest about a product will not help them make the sale whereas outwardly lying to the customer would be unethical, therefore in order to avoid that they often violate the maxim of quantity or relevance by changing the topic in order to avoid answering a question regarding prices or discounts.

Conclusion

One of the main aims of this particular was to apply the Grice's conversational maxims theory to the discourse of salespeople in Islamabad in order to see how maxims are violated and which maxim is violated the most. The data for this particular study was in the form of recorded interviews between the researcher and the salespeople. The researcher had approached five salespeople but only three agreed to the interviews. The main reason as to why salespeople were chosen for this paper is because, salespeople are known to be very persuasive and they utilize and manipulate language in order to make a sale successful. This study concludes that salespeople often violate the Gricean maxims by sometimes giving too much or too little information regarding a certain product or service thus violating the maxim of quantity. Other times, they violate the maxim of relevance by giving irrelevant answers to a customer's query in order to change the conversation of the topic. Lastly, it should be highlighted that this particular study focused on salespeople's discourse with reference to Gricean conversational maxims, future researchers can conduct a study by analyzing salespeople's discourse from the perspective of different pragmatic theories such as Austin's Speech Act Theory.

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